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THE Preacher's MAGAZINE

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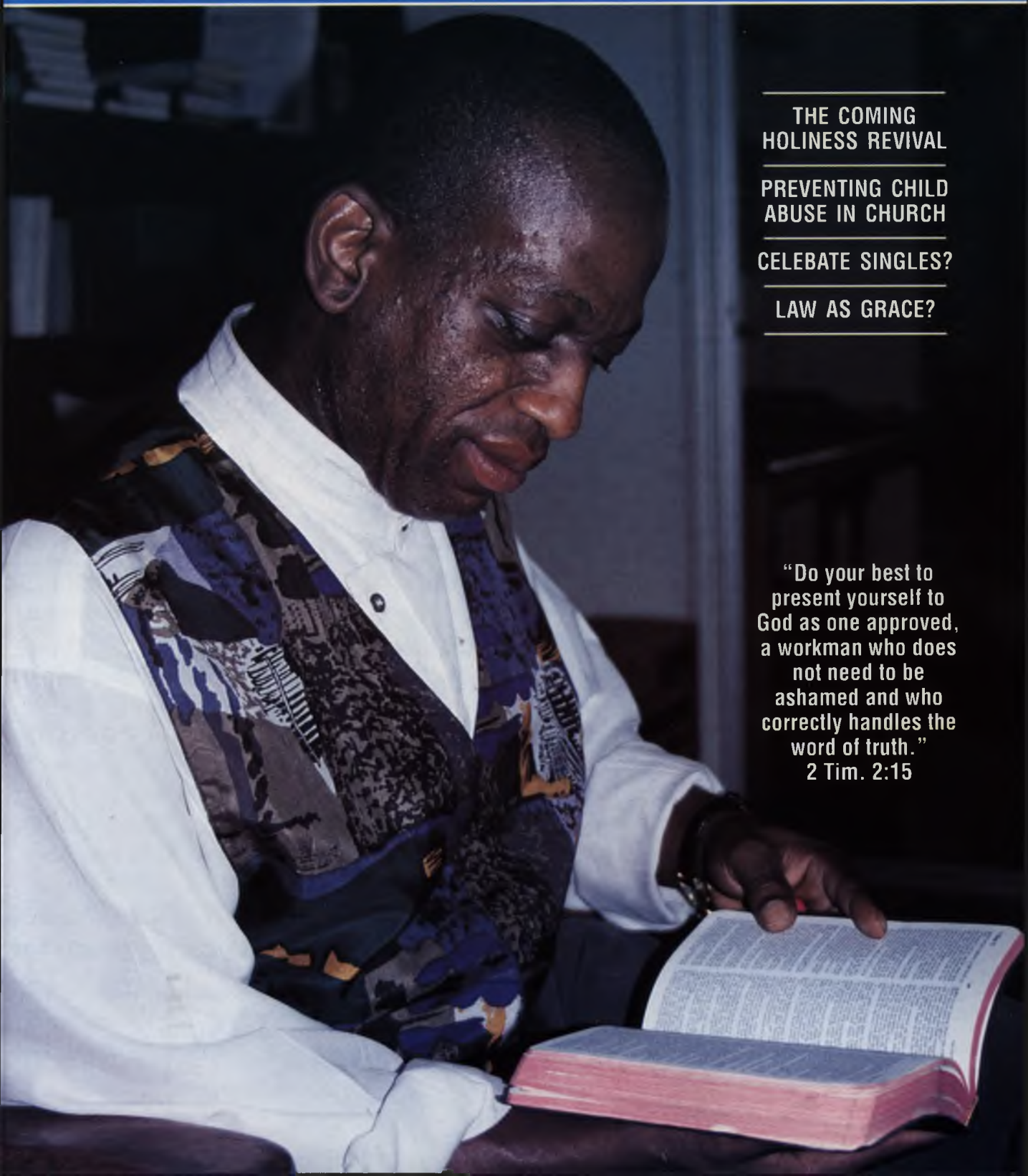

THE COMING HOLINESS REVIVAL

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE IN CHURCH

CELEBATE SINGLES?

LAW AS GRACE?

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."
2 Tim. 2:15

THE Preacher's MAGAZINE

Volume 70 June/July/August 1995 Number 4

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Encourage One Another

by Randal E. Denny
Spokane, Washington

The pastor seemed discouraged: "At my church, the members don't have any deep relationships with each other. They take no responsibility for helping one another. I guess they think that's what I'm paid to do. There's no support or encouragement between them. How can I communicate that they belong to each other as well as to Jesus?"

Paul said, "Encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thess. 5:11).

We can encourage one another with our example. Paul gives a powerful principle: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way" (Rom. 14:13). Give a clear example to your people and fellow pastors. By an example of generosity, we release people to encourage one another by acts of generous love. That attitude is highly contagious. Congregations will eventually follow a pastor's love in action.

We can encourage one another with our speech. Paul wrote: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up" (Eph. 4:29). Words can tear down or build up. Pastors have an opportunity to build people up every week. Words given in love lift a person.

Isaiah said, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (50:4, KJV).

We can encourage one another with our ministry. Paul wrote, "Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church" (1 Cor. 14:12). God gives us spiritual gifts only in order to build up one another. Pastor, aim your ministry to encourage your people—as Neil Wiseman suggested, "An Encouragement Revolution." "All . . . must be done for the strengthening of the church" (v. 26).

We can encourage one another with our love. Paul wrote, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Preaching finds a powerful definition in "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). I have discovered that when my people know that I love them, they are usually receptive to anything I need to tell them. That helps keep me preaching from inspiration instead of frustration. I may fall short in many areas, but I do love my people—and I think they know it. Thus, we find mutual encouragement.

We can learn something from geese. Studies reveal that by flying in that V formation, wind resistance is cut down by 71%. When the lead goose gets tired, he drops back, and another goose moves to the head of the formation.

Honking by the geese in the back encourages the geese in front. If one goose gets injured and falls, two geese drop back with it to help. If it lands, the two companions stay through the night, huddling around it to keep it warm until it can go again. Then they catch up with the flock. That picture needs to be applied by our congregations. Let's help one another get to our eternal destination! The Bible urges us all: "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another" (Heb. 10:24-25).

A longtime friend, and in recent years a neighboring pastor, visited my home this week. For reasons beyond my knowledge, he has felt it necessary to resign under some pressure by his church board. In two more Sundays, he and his family will be finished in that assignment, though he does not yet have a call elsewhere. I sensed his discouragement, the feeling that his work had been cut off prematurely. Taking him by the arm, we walked to my window-lined family room. I said, "I want to show you a special tree that God saved for me."

Behind my back fence stands a tall pine in a grove of trees. I had lived in this house for 12 years before I detected its uniqueness. That pine tree had received a powerful blow—either by lightning or man. About 40 feet from the ground, it had been cut off. But God placed in its heart a powerful drive to live and to grow beyond the tragedy. That tree sent out limbs in three or four directions, growing vertically a dozen feet or more from the trunk. Then it grew a beautiful crown on each of the limbs.

Pointing to that tree from God, I explained, "Almost 13 years ago, I thought my career as a pastor had been cut off. But God brought me to Spokane. He put in my heart a desire to keep growing and reaching upward. By the grace of God I am growing as a pastor, as an editor, as a preacher of the Word, as a friend to all in my circle of influence. God showed me this tree from my own backyard as an encouragement to keep on and never give up. I am enjoying 13 of my best years as a pastor right here in Spokane Valley Church."

Then I put my hand on my friend's shoulder and assured him, "God has a place for you to grow and reach up once again. Out of your hurt will grow your greatest ministry!"

My friend will stand tall once again. He will grow in more ways than he can imagine. I hope that I encouraged him as he waits upon the Lord for his bright tomorrows. After all, we are family!

The Coming Holiness Revival

by Robert E. Coleman
Director of the School of World Mission and Evangelism, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

Our Future Destiny

When the Congress on Evangelism at the Nazarene Theological Seminary asked me to speak on the coming holiness revival, at first I thought that I should address the expectations of the church in traditional revival services. Certainly that is a worthy program, one that I heartily support. But as I thought more upon the subject, I wanted to see revival in a much larger context, to anticipate it in terms of the ultimate destiny of God's people when the saints shall be gathered from every tongue, every tribe, every people, and every nation to praise Him forever. The movement of history toward this coming holiness revival should make us walk on tiptoes.*

Revival in the Bible means to come alive to God. In the Old Testament, the word "revival" comes from a root meaning "to live" (e.g., Ezek. 37:5, 6; Job 33:4; 1 Kings 17:22). The comparable New Testament word means "to live again" (e.g., Luke 15:24, 32; Rev. 20:5; Rom. 14:9). Other words liken revival to the rekindling of a slowly dying fire (2 Tim. 1:6) or to a plant that has put forth fresh shoots and "flourished again" (Phil. 4:10, NKJV). The basic idea is always the return of something to its true nature and purpose.

In terms of redemption, then, revival is the return of God's people to the purpose for which we were made in the divine image—to love the Lord, our Creator and Redeemer, with all our mind and soul and strength, and to love our fellowmen as we love ourselves. This finally is the fulfillment of everything written in the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31). This is holiness—the manifestation of God's nature of holy love in the hearts of His obedient people.

Revival brings this personal reality into focus. If we were living as God intended, revival would be the normal experience of the Church. That it so often does not characterize our life is no reflection upon God's desire, but rather upon our own unwillingness to let the Holy Spirit have His way.

Thankfully, through divine grace, there are those blessed ones who seemingly breathe the air of revival in their souls every day. They are the salt and light of the gospel witness in the world. In the course of church history, there have been times when multitudes of people have come alive to the love and power of God, sometimes moving whole nations to follow the Lord. Unfortunately, these great awakenings have been short-lived and have never fully captivated the church.

Is there coming a day when finally God's design for all His people will be realized? Will a true holiness revival ever sweep the whole earth?

A Universal Outpouring of the Spirit

There are scriptures that point in this direction, though the time and extent of this coming revival can be variously understood. Most of the biblical allusions to it are bound up with other historical events, like the return of the Jews from captivity and the restoration of their nation, thus making any interpretation tentative.

Yet, recognizing that we only see through the glass darkly, it is possible to discern an outline of a coming holiness revival that will grow to a mighty conflagration of Spirit-empowered evangelism and will usher in the return of the Lord of glory.

In this future day, the Church in all

parts of the world will know God's presence. No one will be excluded, as Joel prophesied: "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh" (2:28, NKJV). Peter associated this promise with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-17). Yet the universal application of Joel's prophecy was not then experienced by everyone, in that the Spirit's visitation was confined to Jerusalem. Of course, potentially the first Pentecostal outpouring reached to "all flesh," even to them that "are afar off" (Acts 2:17, 39, NKJV), but complete fulfillment of the prophecy awaits a glorious day to come.

Will a true holiness revival ever sweep the whole earth?

Certainly a spiritual rejuvenation around the world would be in keeping with the all-embracing love of God. In a dramatic way, it would give notice of the gospel mandate to reach "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NKJV), fulfilling, at last, the promise to Abraham that in him all peoples on the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). The worship of God by all families of the nations, so long foretold in Scripture, would then be a reality (e.g., Pss. 22:27; 86:9; Isa. 49:6; Dan. 7:14), and God's name would be great among the Gentiles, "from the rising of the sun, even to its going down" (Mal. 1:11, NKJV).

According to this reasoning, the Church Age began and will end in a mighty spiritual baptism. What happened at the first Pentecost may be seen as the "early" display of the refreshing rain from heaven, while the closing epic is the "latter rain" (Joel 2:23; Hos. 6:3; Zech. 10:1; James 5:7, all NKJV). Water or rain is often symbolic of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).

Catastrophic Upheaval in the World

The spiritual outpouring across the church will be accompanied by awesome displays of power amid unprecedented tribulation in the world. Joel foretells "wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD" (Joel 2:30-31, NKJV; cf. Acts 2:19-20). These phenomena are not mentioned as happening in the account of the first Pentecost; so apparently they are yet to occur.

Jesus spoke of days immediately "after the tribulation" in similar terms, adding that "the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Matt. 24:29, NKJV). It seems that God will summon the forces of nature to bear witness to what is happening on the earth.

Satan, of course, will do what he can to counteract the true work of the Spirit. We are warned of "false Christs" and "false prophets" of this time who will "show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24, NKJV). Anytime revival comes, especially in manifestations of supernational power, the devil will try to divert people by counterfeiting the real thing.

Those fearful conditions of the last days described in Matt. 24 and intermittently in Rev. 6 to 17 seem to characterize this period. And things get worse as the end approaches. Famines, pestilence, and earthquakes of staggering proportions will occur. Wars and intrigue will fill the earth. Hate will bind the hearts of men and women. No one will feel secure.

As moral integrity breaks down, apostasy in the church will increase. Believers who do not conform to the spirit of the age will be hard-pressed, and many will be martyred. Clearly the cost of discipleship will be high.

The adversities, however, will not hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. When God's "judgments are in the earth," people "will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9, NKJV). Calamities mingle with cries for mercy—the terrors actually create an environment for earnest heart-searching.

Not everyone will turn to God, of course. Some persons will remain unrepentant and become even more brazen in their sin. But the world will be made to face as never before the cross of Jesus Christ.

How it will all end is not clear. Possibly the revival will cease, and there will be a "falling away" before the Lord returns (2 Thess. 2:3, NKJV). Some Bible students believe that the worst Tribulation will come after the Rapture of the Church. Others think that Christians will be taken out of the world midway through this dreadful period.

However viewed, Scripture gives no reason to think that the last great revival will avert the coming catastrophe. The line of "no return" will have already been passed. Judgment is certain. Revival may delay, but will not prevent, the final day of reckoning.

Holiness Evangelism

What is most significant about this era is that through the sufferings, God's people will be brought to the true beauty of holiness. The trials of the last days will serve as fires to refine the gold of Christian character. Out of them, the Bride of Christ, "arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright," will emerge, ready for "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7-9, NKJV; cf. Dan. 12:10). Our Lord intends to present His Bride unto himself a "glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27, NKJV; cf. 1 John 3:2-3).

The devil will try to divert people by counterfeiting the real thing.

A purified church will be able to receive unhindered the power of the outpoured Spirit and thereby more boldly enter into the mission of Christ. It is also reasonable to believe that this greater concurrence with God's program will multiply workers for a great harvest of souls. People who are full of the Spirit want to express God's love to the world. Persecution is no impediment to evangelism. Significantly, Jesus said that during the terrible trials of this peri-

od, the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14, NKJV).

Doubtless, the passion to get out the gospel while there is still time will increase with the revival, even as witnesses multiply. As Joel said of this day, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . And . . . whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Joel 2:28, 32, NKJV; Acts 2:17, 21, NKJV).

Certainly the greatest day of evangelism is before us. The harvesting season may be short in duration, but it will be the most far-reaching movement toward the Savior that this world has ever seen.

That the gospel will eventually reach the ends of the earth is clear from the description of that Blood-washed multitude gathered around the throne of heaven. We are told they come from "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9, NKJV). The Great Commission is fulfilled!

This massive turning to Christ by people from the four corners of the globe will prepare the way for the coming of the King. Our Lord's return may be waiting now on this revolution of outgoing love. As James wrote: "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (5:7-8, NKJV).

Living Now in Revival

The fact that Christ has not already returned to establish His kingdom gives evidence of His desire to see the Church perfected and the gospel presented to every person for whom He died. God is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:8-9, NKJV).

But we dare not presume upon God's patience. None of us can be so sure of our understanding of prophecy as to preclude Jesus' return at any moment. Every day we should be ready to meet the Lord, the more so as the night approaches!

Whatever may be the prospect of a coming great revival around the world, there is no reason why each of us cannot live now in the reality of personal holiness—to love God with all our being, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. God wants His people always to be holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1:16). However limited our capacity to experience His nature, at least our desire to be like Him can be without self-imposed limitations. Evangelism is the natural overflow of that love when hearts are full.

> Terrors actually create an environment for earnest heart-searching.

Where we are convicted by the Spirit of any blockage of that flow of holiness, we must confess our sin. Thanks be to God, He is faithful and just to forgive the broken and contrite heart (1 Pet. 5:5; James 4:6; 1 John 1:9). The promise is that "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (v. 7, NKJV).

This is the bond of perfection in which we go forth to proclaim the gospel, even as we pray for the day to hasten when the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. In this experience of revival, though the times are evil, we can witness without fear of men or demons. Come what may, in Christ we are "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37).

Something great is on the horizon. While the particulars are not clear, we know that the King is coming. In the consummation of His kingdom, we know that "we shall be like Him"; at last "we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2, NKJV). Faith shall turn to sight; and every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess to the glory of God that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11).

*For a description of revival, especially as discussed in this paper, see my book *The Spark That Ignites* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1989).

Come Home, Rat!

by Ruth Friesen
Freelance writer, Hague, Saskatchewan

A rural minister visited a family in his congregation. Suddenly their 10-year-old son rushed in, holding a bloody rat by the tail.

"I clobbered him!" he shouted proudly to his mother. "And I jumped on him till . . ." Noticing the preacher, his voice dropped to a reverent whisper, "God called him home."

Just Call Me Pastor

by Gene Williams
Senior pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Wichita, Kansas

My first inkling that something was wrong was the flashing red lights in my rearview mirror. I knew that I had been driving safely but a little strangely as I came around the courthouse square. The horn on my '41 Chevrolet coupe kept shorting out. In order to keep it from blowing, I had to make wide, sweeping turns. I had been preaching all day at a little country church in Hohenwhald, Tennessee, and was headed home to Nashville. But there he was—blue uniform, gun, and badge—asking me if I had been drinking.

Imagine my chagrin when he said, "You're driving like a drunk man!" My friends in the car who had come from Trevecca Nazarene College to help me minister in this small church were having the time of their lives laughing at my imminent arrest.

Snatches of newspaper headlines began to race through my mind as I envisioned, "Preacher arrested for drunk driving in courthouse square!"

After the humiliating process of convincing the officer that I had spent the day preaching, not drinking, he said, "All right, Reverend, you've convinced me. I'm sorry for the inconvenience." Imagine my relief—no ticket, no arrest; I was free to go on my way.

That was the second time I had felt the hand of authority placed on me. But the first time I **was** arrested—and I'm glad!

On the last Sunday night of May 1949, I was apprehended by God! I had no idea what was in store, no concept of where the journey would lead, no vision of the outcome. All I knew was that the divine hand of authority had been placed on me. I had been arrested for an awesome adventure—that of being a partner with God in building His kingdom.

Had I known then what I know now, I would have gladly volunteered to "do time" for the arresting Authority. For, to me, being a God-called pastor is the most exciting option available!

I find it easy to identify with the joy that Esther must have felt when God chose to work through her to bring freedom to the Jews who were under the penalty of death. Esther was also "arrested" by God. But this capture provided the greatest experience of her life—signing the decree that brought freedom to "all the Jews—young and old, women and little children" (Esther 3:13). What joy she must have experienced when King Xerxes gave her the signet ring to send out the decree of freedom to her people!

It has been over 40 years now since God gave me His signet ring with the authority to proclaim freedom to all who would listen and receive it. What an incredible assignment!

In spite of the awesome adventure that is offered to us, many pastors feel discouraged, defeated, even despondent. Much is said about the pressure of the ministry. There **is** pressure in being a pastor. But what job doesn't have stress of some kind? I have four sons who work in various professional areas; three work in sales, and the other one is a policeman. Talk about pressure—all four of them really work in pressure cookers! Goals, quotas, reports, long work hours, customers to please, and bosses to be satisfied! These are the same types of things that seem to plunge so many pastors into distress.

I believe that a great part of a pastor's problems originates in his mental attitude as he approaches his assignment. Many have allowed the battle of their minds to exhaust them.

Charles Swindoll, in his book *Living on the Ragged Edge,* speaks to a major source of pressure and makes three observations concerning man's inability to enjoy what he has:

1. The sensual lure of something better tomorrow robs us of the joys offered today.
2. The personal temptation to escape is always stronger than the realization of its consequences.
3. The final destination if God is absent from the scene will not satisfy.

He further observes, "The good life, the one that truly satisfies, exists

Oscar C. Williams

only when we stop wanting a better one. It is the condition of savoring what is rather than longing for what might be." Finally, he states, "Satisfaction comes when we step off the escalator of the desire and say, 'This is enough. What I have will do. What I make of it is up to me and my vital union with the living Lord.'"

Choosing to "step off the escalator of the desire" in order to savor the incredible opportunity will go a long way toward keeping me focused on the great adventure rather than on the pressures.

A positive mental attitude in any area of endeavor has a tremendous effect on the outcome. This is true of sports, business—in fact, in all arenas of life. I am convinced that it is especially true of the ministry.

In his book *Man's Search for Meaning,* Viktor Frankl comments on why some people died in the death camps of World War II while others survived. He wrote, "Man cannot control his circumstances, but he can control his attitude. This is the key to survival." He went on to say, "If you can come up with the 'why' of suffering, you can come up with the 'how' to live."

Yes, pastors have some tough times, but their attitudes make all the difference in whether they are successes or failures.

Gary Collins points out, in his book *The Magnificent Mind,* the awesome power of the mind to work for us or against us. My mind works for me when I contemplate the pure joy of working with God.

I feel like John Donne, who stated in a message in London in 1620, "Who but myself can conceive of the sweetness of that salutation when the Spirit of God says to me in the morning, 'Go forth today and preach and preach consolation, preach peace, preach mercy.'"

Also, Samuel Chadwick is quoted by Dr. W. T. Purkiser in his book *Image of the Ministry.* He stated, "I would rather preach than eat my dinner or have a holiday. I would rather pay to preach than be paid not to preach. It has its place in the agony of sweat and tears. No calling has such joy and heartbreak, but it is a calling an archangel might covet, and I thank God that in His grace He called me into the ministry."

So, we're back to the basic issue. When the divine hand of God is placed on us to arrest us, what does that comprise? Is it an arrest for an adventure, or a sentence to a concentration camp existence?

Oh, what a joy it is to agree with James Stuart who says, "Every Sunday morning when it comes ought to find you awed and thrilled by the reflection. God is to be in action today through me for these people. This day may be crucial, this service decisive for someone now ripe for the vision of Jesus."*

The concept of adventure in the ministry doesn't stop in the pulpit. It's the awesome privilege of being used by God to bring salvation, comfort, strength, hope, and consolation to those at the point of need. It's sharing the greatest news of the ages with a lost, hurting, and dying world!

> The good life, the one that truly satisfies, exists only when we stop wanting a better one.

How often we have heard of someone rescuing and arresting a person in a life-threatening situation. I mentioned earlier that one of my sons is a policeman. Brent has received many citations of merit that hang on his wall. These include one that he received when he saved an elderly man's life by administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). He would be quick to say that he was simply doing his job. However, he would acknowledge that it was rewarding to realize that a life had been salvaged through his efforts. My son-in-law, Randy, is a physician in the emergency room of a hospital. Occasionally, one of his patients will come back to thank him for helping. It is a very special time for Randy when that happens.

It is incredibly rewarding when those to whom I have ministered respond with statements like, "You may not remember me, but you helped me find the Lord and get my life together." I have a very rewarding "warm fuzzy file" filled with such letters.

Some time ago I was preaching at a Sunday School convention in Ohio. A nice-looking young minister came up to me and asked, "Do you remember preaching at the Ohio Youth Camp in 1967?"

I responded, "I sure do. I'll never forget that wonderful week."

He then said, "That was the time when I settled the issues of my life, and I now pastor near here."

Truly, such testimonials are rewards for which I was arrested that May night 40-plus years ago!

I understand the need for pacing oneself so that burnout does not occur. No motor can run at full throttle constantly without blowing the engine. We cannot keep up a continuous pace without blowing something. Yet our attitude will take us a long way toward coping with all facets of ministry.

Recently, my wife, Joyce, and I spent a couple of days at The Barn, a bed-and-breakfast inn near Valley Falls, Kansas. At breakfast we asked Tom Ryan, the proprietor, what he did to get away from the pressure. His response was interesting. He said, "When you love what you are doing, you don't have to get away." Tom is enjoying the adventure. He doesn't consider it an incarceration to be "on duty" there every day.

Again, pastors must pace themselves and take time for vacations with their families. The adventure begins with our mental attitudes.

When we move from the frame of mind of "Woe is me, I **have** to be a pastor" to, "Thank God, I **get** to be a pastor," then the joy of this awesome adventure becomes amazingly arresting!

*James Stuart, *Heralds of God* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1946), 5.

Preventing Child Abuse in Church

by Al Miles
Hospital minister,
The Queen's Medical Center, Honolulu

Everyone at First Church loved Andrew. This talented, handsome man in his mid-20s had first walked through the doors of the parish nine months earlier. He seemed like an angel sent by God to fulfill the church's need for a children's minister. Andrew loved children, and they loved being with him. He had a unique way of sharing the gospel through stories, magic tricks, and music. He composed original songs that the children performed on Sunday evenings to piano and guitar accompaniment that he had arranged. Andrew gave of his time, talents, and money.

Four months after he first began to attend the church, the congregation voted unanimously to call Andrew to the position of children's minister. This gave him responsibility for more than 25 children, ages 1 through 12.

About five months later, during the Sunday morning worship service, a member of the congregation went to the basement of the parish to check on her three-year-old nephew. This was where Andrew always conducted children's church.

The woman noticed the older children working on crafts in one area and the younger ones being attended to on the other side of the room by a teenage assistant. She did not, however, see her nephew or Andrew.

The woman asked one of the boys to check the rest room. He found no one there. She continued her search. Both the kitchen and two adjacent classrooms were unoccupied. Her anxiety began to build.

Noticing the door to the rear storage room ajar, the woman peeked inside. To her horror, she saw her nephew standing in a corner looking terrified. His pants were below his knees. Andrew was kissing the boy's genitals.

How could this have happened? Why wasn't Andrew's background checked? What kind of church would so readily, so naively, give an unknown adult power over so many vulnerable children?

Had they made even one call to Andrew's previous employers, the members of First Church would have learned that he had been convicted of child molestation in three states. One call, and a three-year-old boy would not have become another in a series of child victims of sexual abuse.

In the United States, national statistics tell us that one out of every three girls and one out of every five boys under 18 will be victimized sexually by an adult. Most often, the perpetrator of this crime will be someone whom the child has every reason to trust: a parent, grandparent, sibling, baby-sitter, neighbor, doctor, teacher, or church worker.

Phyllis Roe, a pastoral counselor and ordained clergywoman, is the executive director of the Samaritan Counseling Center of Hawaii. During the past 17 years, she has worked with many adults who were sexually abused as children. She lists three different classifications of people who might sexually molest children. One includes those who might be at a vulnerable place in their lives. Many in this category are men going through a divorce, unemployment, or who are suffering other losses. This trauma

could lead a man over boundaries that he would not normally cross. In this case, the abuse could be a one-time event.

A second classification of sexual abusers of children are those who take advantage of their power. Sexual abuse, Roe says, is not only a sexual act but also a show of power.

"A male in the family, particularly the father, may be feeling deprived of his own needs by his wife, or he might feel that he has a right to whatever he wants. In any case, he is sexually aroused by the vulnerability and dependency of the child, and the feeling of power that this gives him. He rationalizes it as somehow being a sign of closeness with his children. There is also a lot of denial going on.

"Often," Roe continues, "this form of sexual abuse doesn't spread beyond the family. It is a particular kind of family dynamic in which there is a lot of rationalization and feelings of entitlement and justification."

The third classification of people who may sexually abuse children are those whose own sexual orientation have been formed around children. In psychological terms, this is called pedophilia.

"The actual pedophile," says Roe, "tends to be a male. He is sexually attracted to children in almost an addictive way. It could be male or female children. Usually it is one or the other.

"This is a particular sexual disorder that often starts in late adolescence. In fact, a couple of the churches that have come to me for consultation have had concerns about an older high-school or younger college-aged youth who is beginning to spend a lot of time with younger children. In one case, a clinical interview with the young man revealed a pedophiliac orientation."

Though the disorder of pedophilia starts in adolescence, it may not reveal itself until a person is 30 or 40 years old. Experts do not know what causes it. It is not always evident in public behavior. In-depth interviews, in which a person discloses his patterns of sexual attractions, fantasies, or actual behavior, may reveal it. Unlike fathers who sexually abuse their own children, many pedophiles do not feel sexual arousal toward their own children.

All three classifications demonstrate that perpetrators cannot be spotted simply by looks. They could appear, like Andrew, seemingly out of nowhere. They could have been attending our churches for a few months, or they could be that faithful member or church leader who has been in our parish for years.

> One phone call, and a three-year-old boy would not have become another in a series of child victims of sexual abuse.

How can churches better screen the people who will have contact with children? Is there a way that we can reduce and, perhaps, totally eliminate child sexual abuse from our midst?

We cannot screen out all child molesters from our ranks. True, in Andrew's case, a single police background check would have revealed his criminal past. But unless someone has been convicted of pedophilia or some other crime, a police background check will tell us little or nothing.

When a church representative calls a job candidate's previous church to obtain a background check, he or she usually receives the worker's dates of employment or church attendance. True, some suspicions may arise, but often churches are so hungry for people willing to work with children that they suppress their doubts. Trina Zelle, a pastor in El Paso, Texas, suggests the following rules for screening children's workers:

A church should check the background of all staff and volunteers. Know, however, that this process cannot determine for certain whether a person might abuse children. If former supervisors offer vague or conflicting responses, Phyllis Roe recommends erring on the side of caution.

Screeners need to be educated and trained. They must realize that people who molest children are not immediately recognizable; they look just like us.

Zelle recommends these further steps to protect children:

Churches need well-defined policies and procedures regarding child abuse. Most denominational offices can help congregations develop such policies.

Churches should structure children's programs so that one person does not have unlimited, unhindered access to children.

Parents need to realize that they have to stay active in their children's lives.

There are no guarantees; we may

not be able completely to prevent child abuse. However, Zelle offers a challenge: "Church leaders have to create as much safety as possible. A plan must also be in place in case the worst happens. This is very important so that not everyone can deny, out of fear or horror, that the abuse happened."

Jim Harper III, director of children's ministry at one of the largest churches in Honolulu, suggests further cautions:

Be suspicious of people who are overeager or overanxious to work with children.

Volunteers should work alongside trusted professionals.

Ask for and check references of new people wanting to volunteer. Even if their references speak well of them, place new people with trusted workers.

The church must face the issue of child abuse head-on. "Allegations must be investigated," Harper says. "We must not sweep this issue under the carpet. If churches are going to cover up these matters, it becomes easier for someone else to try to abuse our children."

Perpetrators cannot be spotted simply by looks.

Even volunteer youth workers, especially those who are parents, understand the need for careful screening. Ann and Ray, parents of a nine-year-old son and three-year-old daughter, have been faithful churchgoers the entire 16 years of their marriage. Both have served as volunteer youth counselors at churches. They could not, however, recall undergoing any screening process. Ray is filled with terror as he looks back. "In hindsight, we can recognize several situations where some of the youth counselors were abusing their authority with kids in one way or another," he remarks.

In a case where abuse is suspected, Phyllis Roe recommends that churches consult with a clinically trained chaplain or pastoral counselor. "It is important not only that the situation be dealt with effectively," she states, "but also that everyone involved has an opportunity to examine his or her feelings and reactions."

Churches need well-defined policies and procedures regarding child abuse.

What further complicates this issue is that our churches, like many secular organizations, fear being sued. Even if we win our legal battles with a staff member or volunteer, the bad press that we might receive could damage our image within the community.

Thus, church leaders often might prefer a legal settlement with offending employees. In such a settlement, the church leaders might allow the staff member or volunteer to resign and promise not to discuss the circumstances with anyone. In turn, the individual also pledges not to discuss the matter nor bring litigation against the church or its leaders.

Most people who provide guidance and support to our children in churches are both loving and responsible. But we must not ignore the fact that some people, even likable churchgoers, misuse authority over children for their own psychological, spiritual, and sexual gratification. Child sexual abuse occurs in churches as it does in every other corner of our world. It is an epidemic that has no vaccination. It is a nightmare that will not disappear upon our awakening. Though we will never be able to rid ourselves of this problem completely, church leaders must do everything possible to protect children from being sexually abused in the parish.

Rev. Al Miles serves as coordinator of hospital ministry with Interfaith Ministries of Hawaii at The Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu. A frequent contributor in numerous national and international publications, Miles has counseled many survivors of childhood sexual abuse. He is also a consultant on this subject to clergy from various faith groups. Miles is a Certified Chaplain Fellow with the College of Chaplains. He has been an ordained minister with the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) since 1983.

Who's Caring for the Caregivers?

by Betty B. Robertson
Freelance writer,
Roanoke, Virginia

Bonnie's mother lived in a nursing home. One day Bonnie read 1 Tim. 5:8, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." She clearly understood the Lord asking her to do something she had once thought impossible: move her mother in with her family.

Melba cares for her mother, age 79; her mother-in-law, age 85; and an 82-year-old aunt. She and her husband assist with home and car repairs, insurance forms, and business affairs.

Iris, 76, cares for her 99-year-old mother. There are no family members to help except her husband.

In her mid-30s, Dianne and her husband have been married 10 years and have three young children. Dianne's 70-year-old mother-in-law has moved in with them.

An estimated 7 million Americans are caring for elderly or ill parents at home. Parent care, often unexpected and unplanned, causes bewilderment. There are caregivers in your church who feel isolated and alone. Family and friends often don't understand what the caregivers are going through. Most people are not comfortable talking about old age and death.

A lady wrote me recently saying, "About a year ago my husband and I became active in the 'sandwich generation,' following my father's death and moving my mother here to be close to us. Maybe it's just because we're in this stage in our lives now and I'm more aware of it, but it seems like this is sort of a neglected area of ministry."

Pastor, how can you minister to those persons in your congregation who are caring for aging parents?

1. Read parent care books and be aware of available resources. One minister said, "I am not involved in parent care myself. However, I feel I should be prepared to reach out to those who are distressed because of the heavy burden that is inherent with this added responsibility."

2. Schedule a one-day seminar or provide ongoing training. *T*L*C for Aging Parents* (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, PA083-411-4569, $9.95) is a new Christian book designed for seminars or elective Sunday School classes. It contains end-of-chapter discussion questions and is the only parent care book on the market with an appendix of reproducible charts.

3. Send notes of encouragement to people in your congregation who are caring for aging parents.

4. Organize a "Prayer Partner Program."

Enlist individuals in your church who are not caregivers but would be willing to serve as prayer partners. Make assignments for one year at a time.

Provide suggestions for prayer partners:

- Take the initiative to contact your caregiver.
- Ask if there are any specific requests for which you can pray.
- Record prayer needs and intercede daily.
- Contact weekly for answers and new requests.
- All information shared with you must be kept in strict confidence.
- If it is possible for you to provide periodic relief for your caregiver, by taking him or her to lunch or watching an aging parent to allow time away, be sure to take the initiative.

5. Establish a caregivers' supportive fellowship group.

Caregivers have learned that people do not want to hear about their elderly parents. If someone does listen, they hesitate to talk, fearing others will think they are critical or complaining. Yet they desperately need to unload their feelings.

A fellowship group is helpful for networking with others in the congregation who have similar experiences. Such a group needs to revolve around the definition of a supportive fellowship found in Gal. 6:2, 9-10. You as pastor, or someone not involved with caregiving, should serve as group leader. Ample time should be given for prayer and seeking God's answers to specific problems.

6. Find individuals within your congregation willing to minister to caregivers by providing respite (periodic relief).

Caring for the frail elderly at home is often possible only with round-the-clock attention. Most caregivers consider this a labor of love, but being responsible for an aging parent takes a heavy toll in fatigue, health problems, frustration, and disrupted family relations. No one can work 24 hours a day with no time off.

Caregivers are often reluctant to ask for help. A respite program should be organized through the local church whereby caregivers are given regular, scheduled time away by providing adult companions.

Make a list of people in your church caring for aging parents. Locate persons who would be willing to minister by serving as a companion one day a week. Have caregivers and companions schedule the time. Companions should be given ideas of what to do with the senior adult such as: read aloud, play games, do craft activities, watch Christian videos, and write letters.

The Seismic Church

by John E. Moore
Pastor, Concord Church of the Nazarene, Concord, California

Seismic tremors as jarring as any geological quake are surging through today's Church. The "socioquakes" of the '90s promise to remap the Church of the 21st century, leaving an observer of the once-stable institution to write, "We are at the front edges of the greatest transformation of the church that has occurred for 1,600 years. It is by far the greatest change that the church has ever experienced. . . . It may eventually make the transformation of the Reformation look like a ripple in a pond."[1] Church consultant Carl George warns, "I believe that the choices challenging Christians today are so great that, for many local churches, their very existence is, or will soon be, at stake."[2]

Judged to be boring and irrelevant, the Church has been abandoned by many who have opted for other involvement. Theologian H. Ray Dunning reflects on the subterranean forces that are reshaping the Church's landscape: "Many have become disillusioned with the institutional church, and even those who have not shared this loss of optimism have been puzzled over the failure of the church to manifest significant success in its relation to the world, either evangelistically or in influencing society toward justice and righteousness."[3]

After surveying this ecclesiastical landscape, George Barna concludes, "We currently develop churches based on a model that was developed several hundred years ago, rejecting the fact that the cry of the unchurched—'the church is irrelevant to the way I live'—cannot be addressed until the model itself is renewed to acknowledge that the times have changed."[4]

If the Church of the 20th century is to connect with society and its new realities, it must experience five colossal paradigm shifts.

1. The emerging model of the Church must be one in which all the people of God are viewed as ministers.

While new to the contemporary Church, this model is firmly rooted in both the Old and New Testaments. God originally commissioned the entire nation of Israel as "a kingdom of priests" (Exod. 19:5-6). Tragically God's people rejected their calling and urged Moses to represent them on Mount Sinai. Consequently, simultaneous to the development of Israel as a nation, there developed an elite and cumbersome priesthood. "By the time of Jesus, the authority of the priestly caste had become intolerably oppressive."[5]

The tragedy of Israel's refusal to be a "kingdom of priests" is reflected in the contemporary Church's failure to be the same. Peter the apostle makes it clear that even the Gentile believers serve as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

While Israel and the Church differ, Peter shows that through the ages the people of God follow the same purpose. In referring to the continuity of priesthood that exists between Exod. 19:5-6 and 1 Pet. 2:9, Walter Kaiser comments, "In both Testaments we

are all intended by God to participate in that priesthood who would be agents of blessing to all the nations of the earth."[6]

When searching for a term that would convey the idea found in the Old Testament word *am,* Greek translators adopted the word *laos* for the Septuagint. *Laos* appears over 2,000 times in the Old Testament and over 140 in the New.[7] Throughout the Bible *laos* refers to "all the people of God." It has always been God's intention for all of His people to view themselves as priests and ministers.

A priest is a mediator or a bridge builder. As such, every Christian has been strategically placed in fields of mission, gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to construct bridges, allowing those disconnected from God to meet Him. Every believer is uniquely gifted to perform particular functions of ministry (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). For the apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit within the individual believer summons each one to "serve in newness of the Spirit" (Rom. 7:6, NASB).

Imprisoned in a German camp during World War II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer promoted the priesthood of every believer through his writings: "The most experienced psychologist or observer of human nature knows infinitely less of the human heart than the simplest Christian who lives beneath the cross of Jesus. . . . In the presence of a psychiatrist, I can only be a sick man; in the presence of a Christian brother, I can dare to be a sinner."[8] The New Testament promotes the weakest and seemingly most insignificant parts of the Body to a place of value and importance.

The Church of this century has grown far too dependent on an elite few—pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. If the Church is to regain contact with an increasingly divergent and distant society, it must return to an all-inclusive ministry where all the people of God minister through their spiritual gifts.

2. In the emerging model of the Church, we must come to understand ministry as taking place outside the walls of the church, Monday through Saturday.

Currently, the typical model conceives that *ministry* occurs on Sunday, at the *church,* under the direct supervision of the clergy. For decades, we have refined the art of getting people to *come.* Today we must learn again how to *go.* Jesus sent His first-century fledgling disciples into the world. He said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Christians must once again view themselves as ministers, sent out by the Holy Spirit and Christ's Church to do the work of God in their everyday world. The same God who called the Church out nearly 2,000 years ago calls her out again—out of her cloistered subculture into face-to-face encounters with human pain and disillusionment. The mission frontier can no longer be seen as existing solely across an ocean, but at our front door. Jerry Appleby has pointed out, "Many of those who live in our neighborhood, whose customs, ways, and color may be different than ours, could be the same as those to whom we sent missionaries just a few years ago."[9]

Judged to be boring and irrelevant, the Church has been abandoned by many.

In this new mission environment, canned answers or quoting Scripture will not be effective. Faced with nonbelievers who do not accept the Bible as ultimate truth, we must learn what they believe, where reference points exist for communication, and how to present the Good News without distorting it. The new mission frontier must be matched with a new vision, fresh creativity, and firm commitment. As this happens, the results will be as astonishing as they were in the first century. "The word of the Lord spread through the whole region" (Acts 13:49) because the laity, as the whole people of God, took the Good News everywhere they traveled. Today laity have access to the marketplace, community, and neighborhood that clergy do not have. Laity are streetwise, taking into their everyday arenas a contextual understanding and language, by virtue of their exposure and ministry, that clergy lack. Laity are unencumbered by the hidden motives of which clergy are often suspect: e.g., "He must want my money." To the person on the street, clergy are often intimidating, while Spirit-led laypeople are not.

Because we live on a new frontier, both in terms of ethnic diversity and the impact of modernity, the shapes ministry will take are yet to be defined. The potential is as great as the number of Christians who gain a vision, develop their spiritual gifts, and follow the Spirit. Loren Mead, founder and president of the Alban Institute, writes, "We badly need innovators, people and groups who will take a stab at a new way with freedom to fail. . . . Churches must learn to encourage innovators and even fund it rather than handicap and punish it. We must encourage innovation to find some new paths and to get models of innovation widely known."[10] Today it is apparent that the Church at large "has yet to learn what it means to be God's people sown in the world, alongside the sons of the Evil One."[11] We are still trying to determine what innovation in our day means. We are still trying to determine what some of the questions are. However, we must not get discouraged or cynical. The life-giving Spirit is at work to bring people to the Father. This day's challenge resembles that of the Early Church, which struggled to know what it meant to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

3. The emerging model of the Church will make primary the equipping role of the pastor.

The pastoral gift is one of five spiritual gifts whose function is to equip others in the Body to do works of ministry and to upbuild the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12). The Greek word translated "equipping" means "putting a thing into the condition in which it ought to be."[12] It can be translated "to prepare" or "to make

ready or competent for service or action." C. Peter Wagner defines an equipper as "a leader who actively sets goals for a congregation according to the will of God, obtains goal ownership from the people, and sees that each church member is properly motivated and equipped to do his or her part in accomplishing the goals."[13] Equipping is far more than modeling or teaching people techniques and skills for doing ministry. It includes strong pastoral leadership that understands where the church needs to go and how to get it there. It also includes equipping the "environment" of the local church.[14] The entire atmosphere of the Body of Christ is equipped so that it breathes and pulsates with freedom and spontaneity for all God's people to perform priestly functions. In this environment, every Christian fully expects to be used by the Holy Spirit through ministry in the Church and in the world.

> We are all intended by God to participate in the priesthood.

Further, equipping involves spiritual formation. As noted earlier, equipping has to do with "putting a thing into the condition in which it ought to be." The discovery, development, and use of spiritual gifts evolves along the road to maturity (Eph. 4:11-16; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12—13). This implies growth in the ways of discipleship. As a pastor leads a congregation in spiritual growth, he or she is in a very important way equipping them for ministry.

Having emphasized the point that church programs too often are designed to equip people for ministry within the walls of the church, Celia Hahn reminds her readers that most lay ministry occurs Monday through Saturday outside those walls. "If the church is a training camp for the battles of life, it's ridiculous for you to be kept so busy manicuring the campgrounds that you don't have any time for the battles."[15] If the laity are to be properly equipped for ministry, the focus of their training will go beyond in-house ministries to the world of their work, home, civic, and neighborhood relationships. The church must gain this wider view of its ministry field if it is to accomplish the role of equipping.

Laypeople must be allowed to give input to the equipping agenda. Hahn encourages churches to ask the "laity to bring their concerns to church with them, listen to them with interest and respect, and then bring its special resources to the dialogue." She warns, "As long as the church as an institution insists upon controlling the agenda, it will be limited to private ministries to the sick and dying, assistance with a sanitized segment of personal and family concerns, and getting people to help out in church."[16] This is not to minimize the importance of ministry within the body. It is to emphasize the point that "the church's task is not to keep Christians off the street but to send them out equipped for Kingdom tasks."[17]

Several roadblocks keep pastors in the traditional role of doing all of the ministry of the church themselves. Many pastors, still unaware of their scriptural role and responsibility of equipping, serve under a traditional paradigm. Some pastors understand the equipping ministry to be a mandate but have no idea how to go about fulfilling it. Other pastors have tried equipping people for service but have found it easier and safer to do it themselves. Further, many have ego needs that can find satisfaction only in a relationship of codependency. They need to be needed. Still others are intimidated by the thought of laypeople with authority to perform ministry. Some pastors jump too quickly to fix or to do what otherwise would be done by a gifted layperson, given the opportunity and encouragement. Finally, some laypeople refuse to allow the pastor to serve in his equipping role. They keep the pastor tightly locked into his or her traditional role by their expectations and complaints when he or she attempts to function as an equipper. If the Church would once again penetrate every strata of society, pastors must have the courage to return to the biblical role of equipper.

4. The emerging model of the Church will be structured for pastoral care and personal healing.

Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, in a recent speech to alumni and friends of Fuller, noted that a predominant characteristic of American culture is homelessness.[18] We have lost touch with ourselves and with each other. We have lost a sense of connectedness with history and, therefore, destiny and purpose. The breaking apart of the family has left us hurting, angry, and without models of wholeness. Modernity has left us feeling disenfranchised, uncertain, and alone.

If the emerging Church responds to a culture reeling from modernization, it must provide new structures for intentionally connecting people with people. The Church must once again model and teach what it means to be human. Robert Banks observes, in his book *Paul's Idea of Community,* that the most significant aspect of the New Testament house church "was neither a book nor a rite but a *set of relationships,* and that God communicated Himself to them not primarily through written word and tradition, or mystical experience and cultic activity, but through *one another.*"[19] Lay pastors must be equipped and deployed to care for small groups of Christians meeting in homes, in restaurants, in the Sunday School, in vanpools, and other places of life and service. Pastors must equip laypeople in ministries that can bring personal healing to those who are seeking wholeness. The emerging Church must shift from institutional relationships to relationships of inti-

> Every Christian has been strategically placed in fields of mission.

macy and healing through smaller communities of God's people.

5. The emerging Church will be receptor-sensitive.

In any communication, the burden of understanding rests on the party conveying the message. The first questions a communicator asks are "Who is my audience?" and "How can I speak so they will understand?" Packaging the gospel to be understood by the receiver is not a novel idea. When God the Father wanted to convey His message, He stooped to humanity's level of comprehension. The Incarnation is history's ultimate illustration of contextualization. Harvie Conn succinctly portrays "God as lisping that we might hear and understand, lowering Himself to the level of baby talk."[20] The apostle Paul utilized the same principle: "I have become all things to all [people], that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22, NKJV). Wagner notes that "those who wrote the Scriptures used language, thought forms, proverbs, idioms, and cultural assumptions that made what they wrote perfectly intelligible *at face value* in only one culture setting at one point in history."[21] It follows, then, that every generation, culture, and setting must contextualize the gospel so that, while true to the original intent, it relates contemporarily.

Church programs too often are designed to equip people for ministry within the walls of the church.

Preaching styles must be altered to connect with the various subcultures in our changing society. Generally the old style was formal, loud, scripted, intense, and humorless. With preacher credibility plummeting, authenticity and relatedness are valued. "The new style explains the issues, presents the alternatives, and then seeks to persuade—but clearly leaves the decision up to the listener."[22] Communication styles of the emerging Church will be largely inductive, starting with explanations, and then stating conclusions. Deductive reasoning is best suited for audiences who are already convinced that what you are saying is true. People are less ready than ever to believe what is coming from the pulpit. As we attempt to relate to generations more attuned to images than linear logic, emotive stories that convey biblical truth will be more successful in winning and making disciples.

The receptor-sensitive Church will carefully consider the evangelistic nature of music. Musical tastes shifted dramatically with the revolution of the '60s. Millions of Westerners born between 1945 and 1965, commonly known as the boomer generation, were born dancing to the music of the Beatles. Classical music, 16th-century lyrics, and pipe organs were suddenly judged foreign by a major portion of society. Music for the boomer is far more than just music—it is communication. Singing Scripture, lifting the hands, and closing the eyes becomes an expression of love and fellowship. Eddie Gibbs observes, "This is not just an exercise in self-indulgence."[23] It is a cultural expression of genuine worship that has its basis in the musical forms reflective of Western society over the last 30 years. If it is to reach contemporary culture, the Church must learn to present the gospel through language and forms it understands.

CONCLUSION

The Church today can be compared to a city in the aftermath of a 7.5 earthquake. Many of its structures have been rendered useless and inadequate by the seismic shaking of modernization. Architects bringing creativity and innovation are needed to reconstruct the Church so that it relates to people of the 21st century. George Hunter III summarizes it well when he writes, "Our greatest priority is to raise up a very great number of intentional missionary congregations."[24] This will require a remaking of the Church so that it resembles more the New Testament community of believers: the whole people of God prepared for ministry to the world through pastors with a focus toward equipping. The Church itself must be redesigned to connect with an increasingly alienated culture, bringing those who respond into communities of intimacy and care.

The Church must once again penetrate every strata of society.

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When It's Time to Change Channels

Remember the Joyous Occasions

Something about memory seems paradoxical. One can remember the sad, the negative, and the failures, but so soon forget the joyful, the positive, and the successes. Pastors are no different. The hurts sting a little longer than ordinary experiences, while the joys fade with the onrushing episodes of life.

The admonition for pastors is to remember the joyous occasions of ministry. Keep them etched on your mind as points of reference. Savor them for the troubled times. Draw inspiration and strength from them when you walk through the tight, tense spots of ministry.

A few months ago I dropped a note of encouragement to a pastor who I knew had gone through some rough weeks. He is a dedicated pastor who has done a terrific job in his church. He cares for people and gives good leadership to his flock. But the financial downturn in his community created a crisis in his church, as several had to move to secure jobs. The exodus was taking its toll on the pastor and on his people. I tried to encourage him by my letter, affirming his ministry and his efforts.

One of the treasured letters I will remember for a long time was a response from the pastor whom I had affirmed. In part he said, "You will never know what your note meant to me. The timing could not have been more perfect. I have put your note in a place where every morning it reminds me that someone cares, believes in me, and affirms my ministry."

As I laid the note on my desk, I paused to pray for this pastor. My prayer was that, amid the gloom with which he was working, he would remember the joyful notes of ministry. I prayed that he would remember the young man who had knelt at the altar just a few weeks before, or the good

by C. Neil Strait
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response he had to an innovative ministry, and the note he had shared with me from a man in his church to whom he had ministered.

Every pastor needs to work on remembering the good times of ministry, the joyous occasions, the treasured experiences, the high moments of service. We need to know and remember that some things do work out. There are victories! God is alive and at work in His Church. Satan sometimes spreads his gloom and doom so thick that it beclouds the work of God and the work of His people.

May I share some things that will give us a strategy for ministry and especially help us keep the joyous and the unpleasant in perspective?

DEVOTION AND PRAYER

First, one's devotional and prayer life cannot be overlooked. Hardly anything new can be said at this point. We have heard it all a thousand times. But may we be reminded, no improvement has been found for personal devotions and prayer. One may find better ways to do these spiritual disciplines, but nothing better will replace them. Times of prayer and Bible reading give God an opportunity to put the events and experiences of ministry in perspective. Moments with God give the Holy Spirit occasion to be Paraclete to us—to come alongside us in our endeavors, especially the tough things, and be Helper, Encourager, Enabler, Strengthener—all that we need to cope with ministry in effective ways. Prayer gives God opportunity to have a part in our ministry.

FOCUS OF THOUGHTS

Second, one's mental focus determines attitude. If one focuses on the negative, the problems, all the things that are not working, they can snowball into fear and create near paralysis. The better strategy is to stay positive, to think solutions, to remember that all is not bad. A positive attitude keeps hope alive and nurtures its potential. Every pastor can choose his or her attitude. The attitude chosen will determine the future.

BEYOND FAILURE

Third, failure is only part of any story. True, it is the only part of significance if one gives up and accepts failure as the last word. But too often we have seen beauty come out of ashes, success come out of failure, and joy rise out of sorrow. We need to have a ready reference in our minds and hearts of those successes, those joyous occasions that can motivate us when failure stalks our ministry. We need to find a way to cope with failure, to resource its urgings, to forbid it from painting with broad strokes. Where one keeps the joyous occasions fresh in one's mind, they can be a helpful resource for recovery and renewal. God, too, has resources for us and invites us to draw upon them. Jeremiah's words come as a fresh reminder of this: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (33:3).

What do you choose to remember from ministry this past week, or month, or year? Keep a ledger of the good and joyous occasions, for they are the rewards that become resources for the hard times.

Strengthening Staff Relationships

Someone quipped, "I've been rich, and I've been poor; rich is better." Many staff people feel the same way about the relationship between senior pastor and staff member; senior pastor is better. Witness the number of young seminary and Bible college graduates who start off as youth directors and ministers of Christian education, only to jump ship for the pulpit at the earliest opportunity. Perhaps that wasn't their intention at first, but they soon found that working for themselves was easier and more pleasant than working for someone else. Until their first experiences with a church board, of course, but that's a different relationship altogether.

It doesn't have to be that way. Staff relationships need not be second-class, nor staff members second-class citizens. Senior pastors need not act, nor be perceived, as the only first-class passengers on the ship. Staff relationships can be productive, highly profitable, and personally enjoyable if both senior pastor and the members of the staff will approach their association positively.

by Bill O'Connor
Evangelist, Church of the Nazarene, Newberg, Oregon

Let me suggest some guidelines for the maintenance and improvement of the church staff. I write from experience on both sides of the fence, having served two churches as their one and only pastor, three churches as a staff member in staff groups ranging from 3 to 47, and a sixth church as a senior pastor with staff members of my own. That last connection lasted for 16 years. Here, then, are 10 powerful ways to maintain and strengthen staff relationships.

PRAY TOGETHER

The strength of a church staff is no greater than the spiritual strength of its individual members and is equal to the depth of their mutual spiritual commitment. Men and women who pray together stay together. Personality differences and procedural disagreements diminish when the person on the other side is someone with whom you meet to pray on a regular basis. For that reason, the effective ministry team spends time in prayer, preferably on several occasions each week. Times of prayer together are appropriate in devotional sessions, at the beginning and end of staff meetings, before services of worship, at planning sessions and retreats, or whenever any member of the team expresses a need or concern.

PREPARE TOGETHER

Some of the most memorable times in my staff experience were the Wednesday mornings each week when the entire team met for devotions from 8:30 to 9:00 in the morning before beginning the day. We gathered around a circular table with one of us chosen as a leader; we read from God's Word, heard a devotional thought, and spent a few minutes sharing answers to prayer, personal needs, and prayers. Those times drew us together as friends, as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Adversarial relationships were few when we took time to maintain the family feeling these times of sharing produced.

Another significant time of prepara-

tion has been when those responsible for leading worship have gathered to plan and rehearse the service. The tasks of choosing songs and choruses to fit the sermon of the week, selecting Scripture passages for congregational reading, picking choral anthems to fit future themes, draw staff members together. Learning unfamiliar words and tunes, practicing multiple-part readings, searching out poetry and other worship resources, produce a sense of harmony and purpose that carries over into the service itself. This weekly ritual builds a tremendous team.

PLAN TOGETHER

The weekly staff meeting is as common as the fruit fly or the chest cold. And I've been in a few staff meetings that were every bit as irritating, but that was because they missed the point. They were meetings called to tell the staff what the pastor wanted them to do. These were times when the puppet master pulled the strings. If that's the weekly meeting, it could do more harm than good. Such meetings foster the idea that being senior pastor is the better choice.

In a good staff meeting, everyone has his say. The senior pastor may express concerns or give direction, but, hopefully, every staff member will have the freedom to do the same. These times allow personal interaction, sharing of dreams, expansion of vision, and the development of plans. Every staff member should feel free to throw out new ideas as the team seeks to expand existing programs, create new ones, or bring about a change in direction.

> Staff relationships need not be second-class.

Staff meetings should be the highlight of the week, times to which team members look forward with anticipation. They are like a periodic family reunion, when everyone gets together to share the excitement of everything that's new in their lives. The best meetings are filled with laughter and tears as staff members support and encourage one another in whatever way is most needed by the ministry demands of the moment.

PLAY TOGETHER

A good staff meeting is a protracted event. The ones I remember most fondly often lasted three to four hours, beginning with lunch and ending with a game of pool or volleyball. After dining, devoting, planning, and praying together, we took time to play together.

Times designed just for play are vital for staff development. A staff family picnic or swim party, a backyard barbecue, an overnight camping trip, or a raft trip down a river are wonderful ways to draw people together and create a sense of unity and shared purpose. Staff Christmas parties and other special celebrations also serve to increase the camaraderie and strengthen the bonds of friendship.

Birthday celebrations are another must. The senior pastor should take every staff member out to lunch on his or her birthday, and the entire staff should take the pastor out on his. Our team did that for 15 years. Those hours together were always special.

PERFORM TOGETHER

Don't let any single staff member be a prima donna, and don't let any person take center stage alone. Minister together. Support each other's programs. Volunteer to help each other succeed. Staff members can be youth sponsors for teen activity trips, sing in the choir, teach Sunday School classes, or support the ministries of their team members in a variety of ways.

Members of the church staff ought to be visible in public worship, leading the singing, reading a scripture passage, leading in prayer, taking the offering, participating in a drama, and occasionally sharing the preaching load. The entire congregation should understand that staff ministry is always a team effort. They ought to be able to see the team concept in action everywhere they turn.

PROMOTE EACH OTHER

Staff members need to build each other up in the eyes of the church family. They should talk up one another's programs, praise one another's efforts, and encourage involvement in activities beyond their own. Each member of the team should be a cheerleader for the others. Each should be devoted to helping the others succeed. After all, the success of an individual means the success of the whole. When every member of the staff talks about every church program and ministry as it if were the greatest thing going, the congregation will soon believe that they have the greatest church to be found.

> Staff meetings should be the highlight of the week.

This approach has an added benefit for team ministry. It is difficult for staff people to find themselves in conflict with team members whom they genuinely support and whose ministry they encourage.

PROTECT EACH OTHER

If members of the congregation come to any member of the staff with complaints, those complaints ought to be referred to the senior pastor *without comment.* Then the senior pastor ought to stand behind the staff member 100 percent. When I was a youth pastor in a large church, I succeeded in building a group of several hundred junior and senior high young people. Most of the new youth were right off the streets of four surrounding communities. One family in the church—a very influential family—didn't want its daughters associating with "kids like that." They threatened to leave the church. The senior pastor heard their concerns and informed them that they could leave the church if they must, but he would support my desire to reach as many young people as possible for Christ.

Staff members must not allow com-

plaining constituents to drive a wedge between them. Even when problems really exist, they should be dealt with in private staff meetings, or one-on-one between the senior pastor and staff person. The team should stand together in defending each other. Loyalty of team members to each other and to the senior pastor, and of the senior pastor to the members of his team, is essential to a healthy staff.

PROP EACH OTHER UP

There will be times when team members make mistakes. Programs will fail. Problems will develop in one area of ministry or another. The responsible staff member will be hurt, discouraged, or begin to feel defeated. At times like that, the staff must rally behind the hurting member of the team. It's time for a solid dose of encouragement.

Knowing that members of your ministry team believe in you is frequently all you need to see you through. The willingness of team members to step in and help shoulder the load, or help you pick up the pieces, is a great source of strength.

> Each member of the team should be a cheerleader for the others.

Everyone fails occasionally. Success is never a constant life experience. Everyone grows weary and needs some time to rest. Everyone experiences an occasional setback and the discouragement that comes with it. Recognizing those facts and being alert to each other's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs will help keep the staff strong and healthy. When a person stubs his toe, his entire body becomes focused on the point of pain. When a staff member is in pain, the entire team should focus on him until the ache begins to ease.

PRAISE EACH OTHER

I don't know why it is, but church members often take the programs and ministries of their church for granted. Many members are quick to criticize, but slow to congratulate or compliment. Thus, staff members need to commend each other often for a job well done. They need to give each other a pat on the back whenever a pat is appropriate or needed.

The senior pastor should be lavish in his praise, both privately and in public. Nothing means more than the words "Well done" from the person in charge. And there's no better place for those words to be spoken than publicly, before the entire congregation. Like children seeking the approval of a parent, staff members appreciate the endorsement of their leader. In my staff years, nothing would encourage me to try harder, to give even more, than the knowledge that the pastor believed I was doing a good job.

PRESS EACH OTHER FORWARD

Every member of a team has potential not yet realized. It's up to the members of the team to draw out that potential, to encourage its fullest implementation. Staff members can see areas where ministry effectiveness might be increased, and lovingly point them out. They can stimulate the discovery and activation of spiritual gifts. And they can hold each other accountable for the best possible effort.

The more effective any aspect of ministry becomes, the more effective the team. The church staff that will "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24) will be cheering for its own development and success.

These 10 points lead to staff strength and effectiveness. None of the points is excessive. You need them all. Each is vital to the health and wholeness that a staff must possess to lead a church into all that God has in mind for it to be. If senior pastor and staff work together to make these things happen in their relationships, they will be a dynamic team capable of accomplishing anything that needs to be done. After all, as goes the staff, so goes the church.

Cool Philosophy

by Fred W. Hinrichs
Elk Grove Village, Illinois

Johnny told a falsehood. His mother anxiously said to him, "Johnny, the Bible says that no one who tells lies can go to heaven."

"Mamma," he asked, "did you ever tell a lie?"

"I dare say I did, my son, when I was very small like you. I did not realize how wicked it was."

"Did Dad ever tell a lie?"

"Perhaps he might have, when he was a little boy, but he would not do it now."

"Well," remarked the young philosopher, "I don't know as I care about going to heaven, if there isn't going to be anybody there but God and George Washington."

Restoring the Stolen Faith

by Bernard A. LoPinto
Freelance writer, Herkimer, New York

Even though they were friends, there was no way Thomas could believe them. The three years with Jesus had been wonderful and exciting; but now He was dead. To insist that Jesus had risen from the dead was either cruel or insane.

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it" (John 20:25). That was Thomas's final word on it.

This past Easter, when our church staged *The Living Last Supper,* I was given the part of "doubting Thomas." As I studied his life, I found parallels between his battle of faith and one going on in some quarters of today's Church.

Thomas had been one of the chosen Twelve. Like the others, he had received authority over demons and the power to heal the sick. He had seen Jesus walk on water and calm the stormy sea. When Jesus fed the multitudes, Thomas was there.

Thomas knew that Jesus was the Messiah. When Lazarus was dying, the other apostles were afraid to make the trek to Bethany with Jesus because they feared the murderous plans of the Jews. It was Thomas who said, "Let us go also, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). This was a man of no small faith.

Finally, it seemed the Jews had won. Jesus was dead and, with Him, the dream of the new Kingdom. The Master had raised others from the dead, but to raise himself would be impossible even for Him. The stalwart faith of Thomas could not survive the death of his Lord. In effect, the authoritarian leaders of the Jews had stolen Thomas's faith from him.

Today, thousands of Christians face a similar crisis of faith. Trapped in churches where God's grace is earned through their performance, they have been intimidated and manipulated by dictatorial pastors. Leaders using authority wrongly have stolen their faith: in the church, in themselves, in their very "God-giftedness"; and no one—no matter the authority—has the right to do that.

I have had firsthand experience with this type of abuse. As a "tentmaker" minister, my responsibilities included youth pastor, Sunday School superintendent, junior high teacher, children's church leader, and van driver (my van). I spent only one Sunday a month in the sanctuary. When my health failed and I could no longer maintain this intensity of work, I was told that I needed to get my mind off my own problems and commit more of my life to the ministry.

One woman was hauled before the congregation and berated for being an unfit grandmother after she lost custody of her grandchildren to their unstable mother. The effect of this has been to drive the woman and her invalid husband out of church altogether.

In another church, an elder ordered a woman to quit her job, a move that inflicted severe financial hardship on the family. Abusive churches have divided families and put stumbling blocks in the path of many of the Lord's "little ones." Jesus' stern warning about the reward for such indifference should keep us all on our knees.

Some abused Christians leave church, never to return, and this is our loss as a community of believers. Of those who stay, many plod through their ministries more out of habit than homage to the Lord. Their prayer time dwindles, and reading Scripture becomes a hollow exercise. This loss of nurturing, nourishing interaction in faith leads to guilt at not performing satisfactorily, and the abuse perpetuates itself.

Thomas was restored by the direct revelation of the risen Christ. Our abused Christian needs a similar revelation that must come through today's Church.

In their book *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* (Bethany House, 1991, PA155-661-1609, $9.99), David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen explore four things needed for abused Christians to be restored. "The first step is for the victims themselves to realize that they have been abused and to ask for help. It then becomes the church's responsibility to give them the information and *permission* (emphasis added) necessary to call what they have experienced 'abuse.'"

Next, the church must communicate the good news about the Christian's *"gift-based identity"* (italics theirs). I was one of those who had been "spiritually brainwashed" into thinking that my worth to God was measured by the level of my "job performance." Johnson and VanVonderen state that victims "must be immersed in the truth about who God really is and what He has lovingly done to settle the issue of their value and acceptance."

Then, the church must provide safe relationships in which abused Christians can "heal from their emotional, psychological, and spiritual wounds."

Finally, the church must provide abused Christians with "permission and opportunities to practice getting their sense of identity as a gift from Jesus."

Still, nothing will change in the church until we address the needs of the abusers. Just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem who murdered the proph-

ets, He weeps over the abusive minister as one gone wrong.

The ministry that damaged my family's faith started out as a loving church reaching out to one of the poorest neighborhoods on Long Island, New York. The abuse emerged as our pastor succumbed to the pressures of ministry and the damage done to his own spirit by an abusive parent. He was merely perpetuating a cycle of abuse he did not start.

According to Arterburn and Felton (*Faith That Hurts—Faith That Heals,* Oliver Nelson, 1994, PA084-079-6579, $10.99):

> The greatest thing anyone can do for [an abusive minister] is to force that person to seek help. The visible behavior that is deplorable is only a reflection of a deplorable and broken heart in critical need of repair. . . . Allowing the [abuser] to continue without change sentences that person to a lifetime of misery and pain. Hold him or her accountable to make those changes. Although it is painful, it will save many future heartaches.

Abusive ministers have pushed their pain out of the way and thrust it onto their congregations. Arterburn and Felton assert that "[abusers] must resolve [their own] unjust persecutions with forgiveness as we share in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings."

Johnson and VanVonderen extend this invitation to abusive ministers:

> Even when we have acted badly in the name of God, His heart is still to gather us to Himself. When we relinquish our wrong control and turn to Him, He desires most of all to redeem, heal, and protect.
>
> Even if you have abused others, God still extends His arms to you and says, "Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Kneeling before his risen Lord, Thomas proclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Jesus' appearance in the Upper Room restored Thomas's faith and gave him the courage to make this powerful affirmation. Likewise, through the work of a caring church, believers who have been victimized by false ministries and the abusive ministers themselves can experience the same healing power.

Search Committee Report

Michael D. Thomas of Logos Language Institute wrote to say their church has been investigating candidates for pastor. They found only one to be suitable. He sent me the scratch sheets used by the committee—with their comments on the other candidates—in case your church is interested in investigating any of them for future jobs.

Noah: has 120 years of preaching experience, but no converts.

Moses: stutters; former congregation says he loses his temper over trivialities.

Abraham: took off to Egypt during hard times. We heard he got in trouble with the authorities and tried to lie his way out.

David: unacceptable moral character; might have been considered for minister of music had he not "fallen."

Solomon: reputation for wisdom, but doesn't practice what he preaches.

Elijah: inconsistent; known to fold under pressure.

Hosea: home in shambles; divorced, remarried to prostitute.

Jeremiah: too emotional, alarmist; a "real pain in the neck," some say.

Amos: no training; suited only as a fig-picker.

John: calls himself a Baptist but lacks tact and dresses like a hippie; would not feel comfortable at a church potluck supper.

Peter: horrible temper; was overheard denying Christ.

Paul: writings lack tact, too harsh; appearance contemptible; preaches too long.

Timothy: has potential, but too young for the job.

Jesus: often offends church members with His preaching, especially Bible scholars; too controversial; even offended the search committee with pointed questions.

Judas: practical, cooperative, good with money, cares for the poor. Search committee agrees he's just the man for our church.

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How to Get Along with Your Church Board

by Woodie J. Stevens
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His name was Allen. He served on my church board. Allen boasted, "I consider myself the devil's advocate." And indeed he was. It didn't matter how brilliant my ideas were, Allen constantly irritated me. He asked a million different questions, probing for any weakness in my plan.

His name was Fred. He served on my church board. Fred announced, "I think of myself as the church boss." Indeed he was. Nothing much happened around the church unless he controlled it. Fred constantly offended my sense of leadership as he tried to dictate to the church board and the congregation the decisions that should be made.

Then there was Marjorie Sue. She also served on my church board. "I don't like change!" Marjorie Sue proclaimed. Indeed she didn't. When I asked the board to alter the order of service, she exploded. Marjorie Sue constantly resisted any change I introduced. Her favorite expressions were, "We've never done it that way before." And, "We've tried it. I didn't like it. It won't work!"

Then there was Roger. His attitude: "I love to have fun!" Indeed he did! Roger always made sure we had plenty of excitement at the church board meetings. He never let things get dull, and he always complained if it got too late. Whenever things were tense, he tried to crack us up with a wild story. He was a cutup. But when someone else spoke, he wouldn't listen. He was either writing a note or talking to the guy next to him; and when he spoke, it was obvious he hadn't been listening. His comments were shallow and superficial. I could hardly wait until he finished. But it was a long wait.

What's the Answer?

So there they were: Allen, Fred, Marjorie Sue, and Roger. All on my church board. What was I supposed to do? These folks really needed to get right with God, I decided. If we could have revival, they'd get straightened out, and we'd all get along fine. So, I prayed, preached, and gave altar calls. We had wonderful services. The result? Revival!

Yet to my dismay, at the next church board meeting, Allen still asked too many questions. Fred still tried to run things. Marjorie Sue wouldn't budge. Roger couldn't keep his mind on church board business.

In total frustration, I turned to God's Word. I discovered that the Lord himself had to deal with people just like Allen, Fred, Marjorie Sue, and Roger. He had to put up with Moses, Paul, Peter, and Abraham.

God and the Question Man

In the Scriptures, Moses was always asking God questions. When the Lord called Moses from the burning bush and told him to go to Pharaoh, Moses had the audacity to question God: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh . . . ?" (Exod. 3:11). He continued, "Suppose . . . they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (v. 13). "What if they do not believe me or listen to me . . . ?" (4:1). "LORD . . . I am slow of speech and tongue" (v. 10).

The Lord patiently answered all of his questions. Finally, Moses, still not wanting to go, questioned God one more time: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (v. 13). It was one time too many!

God's response: "Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses" (v. 14)!

That got his attention! He obeyed. But that *didn't* change Moses' basic style. Later, Moses questioned God again: "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms . . . ? Where can I get meat for all these people?" (Num. 11:11-13).

Moses was God's "go by the rules" man. He intended to live by the highest standards. Can you imagine yourself questioning and complaining to the Lord God because you don't think He's living up to His commitments to take care of His own people? Moses did. Allen asked questions just like Moses.

God and the Dynamic Dynamo

Then I encountered the apostle Paul in the New Testament. Talk about a take-charge church boss! Paul ran the show—just like Fred. When Barnabas decided to take John Mark on the second missionary journey, Paul wouldn't hear of it. After all, Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia during their first journey; he might desert them again.

The argument between Paul and Barnabas was so explosive that they came to a parting of the ways over the issue.

I would have hated to debate Paul. He could state his position so forcefully and clearly that he made his lis-

teners feel there was no other way to see it. Usually Paul was right. Talk about a powerful personality! Give that man a mission and get out of his way—or get run over!

Before his conversion, Paul was convinced he was doing the will of God in destroying the Church. His superiors reinforced the idea. Saul reveled in the prestige and power. He actually enjoyed the challenge of trying to smash this stubborn sect of believers.

He was going to win. No wonder all the Christians feared him. So how did the Lord deal with this strong-willed man? He used a sudden force of bursting light. It struck Saul, knocked him to the ground, and blinded him. Hitting him right between the eyes, the Lord got his attention.

The Lord spoke directly to the point: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4).

Is it possible that when dealing with some people you need to be direct? Have you discovered those who seem to respond better when you're blunt than when you're subtle?

Ask Paul if he thought the Lord was too hard on him. Paul would probably respond, "No way! It was what I needed."

God and the Life-of-the-Party Man

Contrast focused, mission-minded Paul with fun-loving, impetuous, adventuresome, always-talking-when-he-should-be-listening Peter. Simon loved it when the Lord said, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18).

He liked being the spokesman for the group and loved being their leader. But when crunch time came, he buckled under the pressure of a slave girl.

Paul would never have crumbled under such pressure. But Peter, desperately needing approval and acceptance, yielded to the pressure. When the cock crowed, he realized what he had done and wept bitterly. Do you think Paul would have wept?

When Jesus dealt with Peter, He didn't knock him to the ground with a flash of lightning demanding, "Why did you deny Me?" Instead, Jesus used an approach He knew Peter would like: a fish fry.

The mood must have been rather somber on that boat. Their Lord had been crucified. Their mission was incomplete. There was nothing left to do but fish. Even that wasn't working.

Then the Lord called, "Breakfast is ready!" A fire glowed, and the smell of fried fish enticed the weary seamen. Only after everyone had enjoyed themselves, the Lord took Peter aside and gently, yet firmly, asked, "Peter, do you truly love me . . . ?" Jesus could have nailed him. (We really want the Lord to grab Peter, shake him, and say, "See, I told you so!") But Jesus didn't. It wasn't necessary.

If He'd been dealing with Moses or Paul, He might have. But not with Peter. Emotionally, Peter was like putty in the Lord's hands. Jesus gently confronted him, restored him, and gave him a plan for life—all in one brief command: "Feed my lambs. . . . Take care of my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

How tenderly Jesus dealt with Peter! Could it be that some people, like Roger, need to be confronted gently?

God and the Family Man

One other biblical personality worth considering is Abraham. He liked things secure and unchanging.

He must have been extremely threatened when God told him to step out from Ur and leave his family and friends. Family meant everything to Abraham. If the Lord had rebuked or confronted him for taking them, Abraham would have been crushed. Emotionally he couldn't have handled it. Abraham had deep loyalty to his family. It was difficult to say good-bye.

Abraham was the kind of man who needed time to think about changes, time for decisions. If there was going to be a big change in the status quo, he needed ample notice. Though extremely loyal, he could not respond when asked to change often or fast. God never used confrontation in dealing with Abraham. He always approached him as a friend. When Abraham needed to be rebuked, the Lord used others to do it. To Abraham, the Lord was always supportive, always patient, always a friend, and always relational.

God and the Pastor Man

So what does all this have to do with getting along with your church board? Have you not encountered folks like demanding Fred, stubborn Marjorie Sue, questioning Allen, and fun-loving Roger on your church board?

It was the greatest day in my ministry when I accepted the reality that God has made us wonderfully different. He deals with each of us uniquely, according to our personalities. Therefore, I shouldn't always expect others to respond exactly like I do, nor to always agree with me.

It was wonderful to realize that as God was at work in my life, so He was at work in the lives of my church board members. I didn't need to line them up, crack the whip, and insist they all act like me. Instead, I could shift my leadership response according to the needs and personality of the person.

I found I could respond to each individual as Jesus responded, *not* as I naturally wanted to respond. Sometimes Jesus was directive and confrontational, sometimes relational and nonconfrontative. Sometimes Jesus challenged and motivated. Sometimes He delegated responsibility and authority.

The key to effective church board relationships—and staying more than three years in one assignment—is to change one's leadership style according to the need of the person and the requirements of the task. The Bible expresses it this way: "And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else" (1 Thess. 5:14-15).

I need to urge some church board members, while warning others. Some I need to encourage; others I need to help. With all of the unique people on my church board, I need to be patient and kind.

It is amazing how wonderful my church board members have become since I started loving and serving them according to the needs of their personalities rather than mine.

If You're in the Ministry Today, You Need a Sense of Humor

by R. Wayne King
Senior major gifts officer, Oklahoma State University Foundation, Stillwater, Oklahoma

In times of economic uncertainty, questioning of basic values, and competition with the sights and sounds of television and videos, a sense of humor is invaluable. You need to be able and willing to laugh at yourself and your situation to keep it all in proper perspective.

You need to be able to communicate with a sense of humor. The greatest challenge you face is to make the presentation positive and memorable. I believe this can be accomplished if you speak with humor.

Here are five steps to speaking with humor that will enable you to make a memorable presentation.

1. Use humor to create interest and win over your audience at the beginning. You will make or break your presentation in the first 30 seconds. Choose your opening humor carefully to relate to the points you will try to make.

Example: The evening before the day I was to address a meeting of pastors in North Carolina, my wife called the motel to ask if I would fill in the pulpit in my home church the following Sunday. I agreed. The next afternoon, when I was introduced to the conference, I said, "Last night at 11 P.M. in the Days Inn here in Greensboro, I was called to preach." I had their attention.

2. Use humor to build a bridge between yourself and your audience. A dinner meeting speaker, giving a presentation to a group in Washington, D.C., that was advocating a car-pooling program, began with this story:

Example: As I was driving here today, caught in traffic, I noticed the man beside me in animated conversation with someone on his car phone. He looked over at me, rolled down the window, stuck the phone out, and shouted to me, "Would you please tell my wife where I am!" There are too many cars on the highway.

3. Use humor to overcome a poor introduction. There are, for example, those occasions when, despite your best efforts, the host goes overboard with the introduction. To let the audience know you really are human, try this:

Example: That was an awesome introduction. I think we should pause and pray for forgiveness for him for saying all those nice things about me—and forgiveness for me for believing them!

4. Use humor to illustrate a point. Members of your audience will remember your point much longer if you illustrate it with a funny story. On the importance of understanding the complex question of what ethics is all about, consider this:

Example: One Saturday afternoon, there was a businessman who was trying his best to explain ethics to his 17-year-old son, with no success. There came a knock at the door. The visitor was a man who lived several houses down the street, who, two weeks earlier, had borrowed $100 and had now come to return the money.

They talked for a moment, and the neighbor said, "Thank you so much for the loan," and with that, handed the businessman a crisp, new, $100 bill in repayment. They chatted for a moment more, the neighbor said good-bye, turned, and walked down the sidewalk to his house.

As the businessman closed the front door and began to walk back to the study where his son was waiting, he began to finger that crisp, new, $100 bill. Much to his amazement he discovered there were actually two crisp, new, $100 bills stuck together. His mental lightbulb went on, and he thought to himself: Now here is the perfect situation to help my son understand ethics.

He rushed into the study, quickly explained to his son what had happened, and said, "Now, Son, this is the perfect ethical question for you to consider. And the question here is simply this: Do we tell your mother about that extra $100 bill?"

5. Use humor to make information memorable. Your primary goal in a presentation is to inform and often to motivate a response. People need to leave the meeting remembering your message. If you want members of your audience to remember the importance of investing in your ministry, try this story to close:

Example: I had checked into the motel, and as is my usual prac-

tice, gathered up all my loose change and walked down the hall to the vending room. As I stood before the candy machine contemplating my choice, a young boy, 9 or 10, walked up to the machine and began putting in quarters. He put in 3, 5, 8; and after he dropped in the 12th quarter, I said to him, "Son, you've put way too much money in the machine." "No, Sir," he told me. "I know the more money I put in, the more candy I get out!" He is right. The more we put into the work of the ministry, the more we get out.

At this point you might be saying, I agree with the importance of using humor, and I understand the benefits; but I can't tell a joke! Yes, you can use humor effectively!

Here are three tips to help you.

1. Collect good stories, anecdotes, and one-liners. Always have a pen and paper when you listen to someone speak, and write down their stories.

2. Review the presentation you are going to make, and select one or two stories that will fit with each presentation. Remember the importance of using humor to begin, to illustrate your main points, and to close.

3. Practice, practice, practice using humor. You must be willing to take the risk.

It is important to develop a healthy sense of humor, for your own personal benefit and to enable you to communicate effectively with others. If you are in the ministry today, you need a sense of humor.

Pastor, Don't Give Up

by Jill Jones
Freelance writer,
Spokane, Washington

EDITORIAL NOTE:

In a recent sermon, I mentioned how recent literature and surveys reveal discouragement among many pastors today. Jill Jones, a lady in my congregation, wrote these words to encourage pastors:

Don't give up, Pastor!
Sometimes I rely on the hours you study;
for I haven't reached for my Bible on my own.
Sometimes the order of service is of
special blessing to me;
because I haven't prepared my heart to worship.
Sometimes the prayers you lead say the words
I am too hurt to allow my mind to utter.
Sometimes the story in your sermon
touches a chord in my heartstrings
that I have closed the door upon.
Sometimes the counsel you offer
to my burdened life is the lifeline I reach for;
because I'm about to go under.
Sometimes the challenge you demand
is the fire that leads me to grow
and mature in Christ.
Sometimes the sermon you preach
is the hope that brings me peace;
because peace is what I have been searching for.
So, next time you feel you can't go on,
when you are discouraged,
when you are facing trials of your own,
don't give up.
You have been a tool used by God's almighty hand.

The Sermon That Bites

How to Get Your Congregation As Excited About Your Sermon as You Are

Today, a sermon has to bite. If it doesn't, the people sleep.

It used to be that parishioners would be courteous enough to sit up straight, cock their heads in the pulpit's direction, and start to listen from word one.

Today things have changed. From the first word in the message, it is a challenge to the pastor to keep the people's attention. Of course, he wants to do more than that. He wants to challenge them, convict them, set them on fire!

That takes some doing.

How can we do it better?

1. Get that sermon inside you so that you yourself are bitten. Feel the bite. Let it make you squirm. Get hold of it enough to really get turned on to what you are trying to get across.

The way to do this practically is to start that sermon early in the week—no later than Tuesday afternoon. It will begin to grab you, then you will wrestle with it, finally you will fall in love with its bite.

By Thursday you will be so smitten with the message that you will not be able to wait until Sunday morning. Now when that really happens within you, you will have been caught up one more time with the romance of your calling.

2. Mull the sermon over in your head throughout the week. When you can get that far into the heart of the message, then the sermon will have become a part of your heart.

So it will be that a *Time* magazine piece will leap up at you. In no time you will have slid that article—or a portion of it—into the middle of Sunday's message.

A story staring at you from the eleven o'clock news will slip right into place near the end of that sermon-to-be. You will jot down its vitals on a scratch piece of paper, then slip it into the main notes before preaching them.

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.
Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Windham, Maine

3. Let the sermon trip along. That is, don't be too tidy with it at first. A rough edge here and there will only add to the final creative delivery.

However, along with the untidiness at the start will be a healthy frustration with its lack of form. That very irritation will be the energy to mold the message smoothly, carving it into a piece for showing come Lord's day morning.

The rhythm of give-and-take, untidy to tidy, rough to smooth, is one of the delights of preaching preparation. There is no panic in all this, for the work will have begun early enough in the week to allow for time in the ebb and flow.

4. Go with the variety of preparations. Sometimes you will use the red marker to slice up Bible pages before your very eyes. Margins will fill in with jottings. Words will be circled. Phrases will be underlined in green to contrast with the red.

In another week, you will tear and tape. That is, you will tear out a saying from this source and then tear out an illustration from another. A quip here and a poem there. Before you know it, you will have gone back to first grade with scissors and tape.

In front of you will be two or three white pages with slips of paper attached to them—all in the order of your presentation. Your eyes will adjust to the array. You will become increasingly familiar with the scheme the more you marry yourself to the pages.

5. But the real bite comes when all alone. You are there in the sanctuary (or it may be a vacant parking lot or backwoods or cellar room). Before you is your sermon—open Bible with marginal markings or several sheets of paper or a few scraps of scrawled notes, scratched enough for you to know what you are doing.

The watch is on your wrist or on the tabletop in front of you. Perhaps, if standing alone in your empty sanctuary, the clock on the back wall stares back at you as on Sundays. You take note of the time. You know how much you do not like sitting through windbag sermons. You are determined that you will never fall into that trap yourself.

Go! You start with the first word of that untidy message. You keep slipping and sliding. Point one. Point two. Truth here. Story there. Scripture accented for emphasis. Humor creatively molded in—not too much, just enough.

Another go at it. No time for a break. Try it again, maybe a third time with a couple of minutes in between each preaching. You've got over that initial irritation with the sermon's awkwardness. You are now starting to like your own work. "Thank You, God," you pray, righting the matter from self to Him.

6. Time for other things. Phone calls, visitation, bulletin lineup, this and that.

Another day you will come back to the bite. You will want to get to it. You know that the more you get with it, the more you will be excited about Sunday.

Make It Clear—Give the Meaning

The Levites . . . instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read" (Neh. 8:7-8).

by Robert L. Tauber
Associate pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

As young people, we sometimes played a game while sitting in a circle. Someone would whisper a brief message into the ear of the person beside him, who then repeated what he thought he heard to the next person—and so on. The last one would then repeat aloud what he had received as the so-called original message. Inevitably, the words of the original sender were hilariously distorted.

That old parlor game is reminiscent of the adage: "I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize what you heard is not what I really meant."

Most communicators can identify with that statement. Words are delivered, but the meaning is distorted—more than we care to admit.

Communication is the exchange of meaning, not just words. We are, therefore, duty bound to evaluate all aspects of our communication skills. Failure to do so has daily repercussions, ranging from minor misunderstandings to major international incidents with catastrophic consequences. Our case in point follows.

THE GREAT MOKUSATSU MISTAKE

This story came to light in the aftermath of the Japanese capitulation at the end of World War II.

History has generally credited Japan's surrender to the atomic bomb. Often overlooked is the fact that Japan was a defeated nation long before August 1945.

According to Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz and other American military leaders, Japan had already sued for peace before the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Did Japan blatantly reject the Potsdam Proclamation, which called for her surrender? Or, was there a tragic misunderstanding in the exchange of words between the Allied leaders and the Japanese government? What indeed took place gives credence to the latter.

Since the Japanese had first heard the terms of the Potsdam statement through their radio listening posts, it was decided in cabinet to keep silence for a while pending further developments.

When Prime Minister Suzuki met the press the following day, he said the cabinet was holding to a position of MOKUSATSU, a word that has no exact counterpart in English and is ambiguous even in Japanese. Suzuki intended to convey the cabinet decision to make no comment at the present time. However, the word fatefully chosen by Suzuki could also be translated "to ignore."

The double-character word (Moku—silence; and Satsu—kill) literally means "to kill with silence." To a Japanese, it can mean either to ignore or to refrain from comment.

The Domei News Agency chose the wrong meaning, and from Radio Tokyo the news crackled to the Allied world: The Suzuki cabinet had decided to "ignore" the Potsdam ultimatum!

Reaction was immediate and devastating. The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6 by the Allies, who believed Suzuki's government had refused to accept the Potsdam Proclamation.*

THE PROBLEM

This incident could well be the costliest communication breakdown in recent history. However, the accumulation of message distortion on a variety of levels also leaves its share of human suffering on an ever-escalating scale.

Relationships deteriorate, fights begin, couples divorce, and churches split—not so much over substantive reasons as simple misunderstandings! Even our best intentions are often misread and distorted.

An awareness of the communication process can help minimize the frequency and degree of devastation and distortion in interpersonal communication.

THE PROCESS

Communication begins with the

FIGURE 1

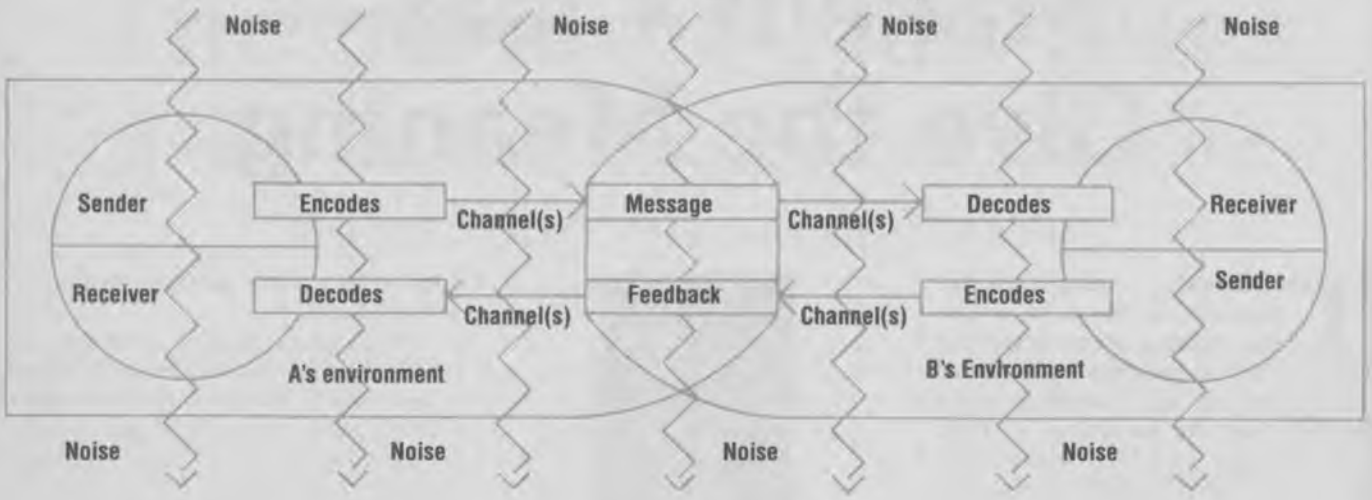

Chart adapted with modification from *Looking Out/Looking In: Interpersonal Communications*, by Ron Adler and Neil Towne (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978).

desire to express an idea. Unfortunately, ideas do not come in carefully capsulated carousels of words. They spring out of mental images, feelings, and needs.

Our task then is to translate this mental information into language or symbols that others can understand. This process is called "encoding."

Our next responsibility is to send the message. This can happen in a variety of ways—talking, letters, phone calls. However, emotions, gestures, physical appearance, etc., are also an integral part of the sending process.

As illustrated in our opening anecdote, there are a number of channels through which a message travels. All play a vital role in the exchange process.

When a message reaches the other person, the process described earlier is repeated—only in reverse. The receiver now goes through a decoding process whereby he endeavors to make sense out of your message. Ideally, the mental image of sender and receiver should match. If this occurs, we have a successful exchange of meaning. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, as poignantly illustrated in the "mokusatsu" story. Fortunately, not all repercussions are as devastating.

We recently called a food catering service to supply a noon luncheon at church. The message was sent: "Have the food in at 10 minutes to twelve." The hastily written directive to the delivery people was decoded to mean, "Someone would be in between ten and twelve," presumably to pick up the food! This misunderstanding resulted in nothing more than a delayed lunch and some embarrassment. However, once again, we were reminded of the potential for breakdown in even the simplest communication procedures.

The environment of both sender and receiver must be a major consideration in the communication process. They can differ vastly. This factor has profound implications for public communicators.

Using the phrase "Washed in the blood of the Lamb" can convey thrilling identification for the mature Christian. Yet, the biblically illiterate person will envision nothing more than "a bath in animal blood."

The wise teacher understands how a well-rested, alert, young person from a peaceful home environment will be far more apt to grasp and retain instruction than the one from a dysfunctional background.

The touch of a hand communicates care and comfort to the child raised in an atmosphere of love. The same gesture triggers fear in another from an abusive background. The potential for a clear message is directly related to the understanding of environment.

Another critical consideration is what communicologists call "noise." "Noise" can be categorized as physical, psychological, or spiritual.

Physical noise! Try talking to a mother with a crying child clinging to her skirt. A headache, fatigue, media racket, or traffic of any description can compose physical noise and inhibit clear communication.

Psychological noise! Fear, worry, anger, hatred, guilt—the list goes on. The presence of any such factor affects communication.

Spiritual noise! Christian communicators must know: **"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but . . . against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12).**

To be sure your message has overcome the barriers of environmental variation, noise, and language limitations, provide opportunity for feedback. This necessitates listening skill. Listening involves far more than being within earshot of the source of the sound.

The Chinese ideograph for the verb *to listen* is made up of symbols for the words *ears, eyes, you, individual attention,* and *heart.* Indeed, an active listener will employ all aspects of his person to indicate attentiveness. Body language and eye contact are excellent indicators of what is going on inside. Listening intently enhances the ability to restate the message and engage in feedback.

WE CANNOT NOT COMMUNICATE!

The old adage "What we are speaks

so loud, the world can't hear what we say" is rife with truth. Smiling, frowning, laughing, crying, sighing, posture, gestures, clothes, appearance, tone of voice—all may contribute positively or negatively to the communication process. Unusual silence on my part communicates volumes to my wife.

Does it sound complicated? Indeed it is! But since quality of life, conveyance of truth, and meeting our needs depends on clear communication, we are duty bound to make the process a lifelong study.

THE PROVISION

Fortunately, our most critical area of need was met through the ultimate demonstration of communication: Jesus came!

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

The problem of sin was addressed by the process of a loving God, encoding a message of hope, sending it through the channel of His Son, who used every facet of His being to invade our environment, dispel the noise, and hear the cry of lost humanity. He died to demonstrate the truth that He represented!

We who have been recipients of God's profound gift find ourselves with the mandate to perpetuate the message. **"God . . . has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors" (2 Cor. 5:19-20).**

What would ordinarily be an insurmountable task has been made possible with the knowledge of His power and presence.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

We who are responsible to care for the physical channel must keep in mind the following: **"If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8).**

Let us also add: If our message is not clear, who will prepare himself for peace—even the Prince of Peace?

We can indeed "kill with silence" when we avoid the Great Commission. Ignoring our mandate or refraining from comment will have eternal consequences! Remember "mokusatsu"!

Like the Levites of old, "Mak[e] it clear and giv[e] the meaning so that the people [can] understand."

*Research from the writings of William J. Coughlin, as recorded in *Looking Out/Looking In*, by Ron Adler and Neil Towne (Holt, Rinehart and Winston).

No Room at the Top

by Carlton Hughes
College Park, Georgia

While attending a church conference, a minister inquired about a room at one of the downtown high-rise hotels.

"Rooms on the first 25 floors are $75 per night," explained the desk clerk. "Rooms on floors 26 to 40 are $100 per night, and rooms on floors above the 40th are $150 per night."

"Why are the more expensive rooms at the top?" asked the minister.

"I guess because you're closer to God," joked the young man.

"Well, give me a room on one of the lower floors," said the reverend. "I'm a preacher, and we're already pretty close!"

Broadening the Vision Through Worship

Nearsightedness afflicts many small churches. Painful experiences such as splits, unhappy pastorates, vandalism, and extended periods without a pastor can nearly blind a church already suffering from nearsightedness. Surviving members stake out their individual territories in the church and build high fences around them. The buildings and grounds chairman lords over the property as though it were his own. The church board makes decisions behind closed doors and cherishes them like state secrets. The treasurer balks at every request for funds as though it were illegal. Everyone complains about paying budgets to a district and general church that "do nothing for us." Communication breaks down almost completely. *Unity* becomes a foreign word. Newcomers are regarded with suspicion. What can a pastor do toward turning walls back into bridges and restoring a clear, broad vision to his or her hurting flock?

In our small congregation, we have found a path to renewal through worship. By introducing a monthly rotation of Sunday evening services that focus on family evangelism, local ministries, district ministries, and world ministries, we have been helped to mend the bridges of communication and to restore unity and vision to a wounded church. Except for the family service, each service includes elements of information giving, music, small-group prayer, and ministry of the Word (not a full-length sermon), highlighting different spheres of church ministry. The program of worship adapts equally to a midweek worship setting.

Family Celebration Service

The first Sunday evening of every month, and occasionally on the Sunday morning, we hold an upbeat service that is geared to reaching families with children, something in short supply in our aging congregation. The service includes a Bible quiz, based on material previously covered in Bible study or Sunday School or on an event in the Christian calendar such as Christmas or Easter. I have found this a great icebreaker, with even first-time visitors jumping in to answer questions. In fact, visitors have come with children in tow just because they knew there was going to be a quiz. I try to choose simple, upbeat songs for this service, with a few children's choruses included. Church families are organized on a rotation to provide special music for these services. Finally, I give an evangelistic message that is short and simple enough to hold the children's attention. An object lesson or a parable often forms the core of this message.

by Christi-An Bennett
Freelance writer,
St. Helens, England

This is not a heavy-duty evangelistic service, but more of a "fun" service for planting seeds. The adults often seem to enjoy the children's choruses even more than the children do. An additional benefit of drawing the quiz questions from Bible study material has been an increased interest in and attendance at our midweek Bible study.

Local Highlights Service

The second Sunday evening service focuses on local church ministries. This follows shortly after our monthly board meeting, so the news shared is "hot off the press." This service includes three- to five-minute reports given by participants in the various local ministries, e.g., adult Bible studies, Sunday School, evangelism. Sometimes board reports are read directly as well. Other times they are simply posted on the bulletin board for the congregation's information. After the reports are given, we break into prayer groups of five to six people each, to pray for local needs. These include our church leadership and programs as well as any personal (physical, spiritual, or material) needs in the church family or local community. I give each prayer group a different list of 5 to 10 requests to remember. This prayer time may come before or after the message, which usually focuses on some area of Christian discipleship. Music for the service is interspersed with the reports and times of testimony.

The common complaint of the people in the pews used to be, "We never know what's going on," even if the announcement appeared in the church newsletter. The local highlights service not only is answering this complaint through the reports, but also, through prayer, is building a unified commitment to local ministries and a loving concern for each other's needs. Recently, after a local highlights service that reported a growing children's work in need of more laborers, a woman immediately volunteered to take up the slack.

District Highlights

The district highlights service follows a similar pattern to the local service, except the reports and prayer requests are drawn from district ministries and concerns rather than local

ones. Besides the regular district ministries and leadership, we also pray for churches in crisis, new pastors, local youth groups, and those suffering illness or bereavement in other churches around the district. One study series we used for these services focused on the denomination's Articles of Faith, investigating the meaning and biblical basis of one article in each session.

District concerns (in England these are national) often get missed out from our churches' visions. We read of world concerns in our denominational periodicals. We hear of local concerns in our local church meetings, but sometimes we forget to consider in our prayers our district leaders and ministries and the churches nearby. Small churches can easily feel quite isolated from the life of the district and lapse into near independency. It is much harder to feel alone in our problems when we are praying for other churches nearby that have problems just like ours. By praying for those district churches without pastors, and those suffering break-ins and vandalism, our people begin to catch a vision that is bigger than their own small circle.

World Highlights

This service (you guessed it) focuses primarily on the world mission of our denomination. It usually includes the reading of individual missionary prayer letters and sometimes a quiz based on our *World Mission* magazine. I make a habit of writing regularly to several missionaries, so we always have plenty of prayer letters to read. Prayer time focuses on trouble spots in the world, our LINKS missionaries, missionaries from our district or personal contacts, and various other missionary concerns. The message is always related to missions, a great opportunity for the pastor to broaden his or her own vision as she or he studies. And, yes, the Bible has plenty of material from which to develop 12 short missionary messages a year.

We have seen an incredible increase in missionary giving since beginning these world services. We do have monthly missionary society meetings, but there is something more pressing about hearing the missionary cause proclaimed by one's own pastor. It is remarkable how the seeming magnitude of our own local struggles shrinks and the true magnitude of our vision expands as we pray for those more needy than ourselves.

SUGGESTED ORDERS OF WORSHIP

Family Celebration Service

Call to Worship — Mark 1:17
Sing "I Will Make You Fishers of Men" No. 206,* "I Love to Walk with Jesus"
Invocation
Sing — No. 738, "Jesus Loves Me"
Special Music
Quiz — Acts 1—14
Sing — No. 535, "Make Me a Servant"
Announcements
Offering
Sing — No. 481, "Where He Leads I'll Follow"
Message — Luke 6:39-40 "FOLLOW THE LEADER"
Sing — No. 468, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"
Benediction

Local Highlights Service

Call to Worship — Ps. 68:4-10
Sing — No. 17, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"
Invocation
Sing — No. 529, "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending"
Announcements
Offering
Responsive Reading — No. 530 on Generosity
Sing — No. 482, "I Give All to You"
Local Reports and Testimonies
Sing — No. 542, "When the Church of Jesus"
Local Prayer Circles
Sing — No. 540, "Give of Your Best to the Master"
Message — Luke 6:38 "THE MEASURE OF GIVING"
Sing — No. 531, "Because I Have Been Given Much"
Benediction

District Highlights Service

Call to Worship — Ps. 51:10-12
Sing Worship Sequence
Nos. 307-310: "Spirit, Come" "Come, Holy Spirit" "Holy Spirit, Thou Art Welcome" "Where the Spirit of the Lord Is"
Invocation
Sing — No. 303, "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove"
Announcements
Offering
Sing — No. 297, "Spirit of the Living God"
District Prayer Circles
Sing — No. 693, "Break Thou the Bread of Life"
Study — Article of Faith III The Holy Spirit**
Sing — No. 291, "The Comforter Has Come"
Benediction

World Highlights Service

Sing — No. 25, "He Has Made Me Glad" ("I Will Enter His Gates")
No. 48, "I Will Sing of the Mercies"
No. 149, "His Name Is Wonderful"
Invocation
Sing — No. 712, "O Christians, Haste"
Read — Missionary Prayer Letters
Sing — No. 711, "Your Love Compels Me"
Announcements
Offering
Sing — No. 629, "Soldiers of Christ, Arise"
Message and Prayer — Rom. 15:30 "PRAYING FOR YOUR MISSIONARIES"
(intersperse message with prayers)
Sing — No. 702, "Christ for the World We Sing"
Benediction

Conclusion

By regularly informing our people about the ministries and needs of the church—local, district, and international—we have found a way to bridge the communication gap. By involving the laity in reporting and praying together for the needs represented to them in these areas, we have found a way to deepen their sense of unity and to broaden their vision. By placing it all in the context of worship, we have been able to help the people to better understand what the Church really is and to integrate that understanding with their personal spiritual lives.

A different program of worship is, of course, not a cure-all for the problems of a nearsighted church; it is only one element in the treatment of church ills. It is an expression in worship of the doctrine of a holiness church that is committed to prayer and a gospel of Christian love for the whole world. I have found it a great help in the renewal of my congregation.

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*Songs selected from *Sing to the Lord* (Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing Co., 1993).

***Manual, 1993-97, Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1993).

A Prayer for Renewal

A Responsive Prayer to Be Used in the Assembly of "Called-Out Ones"

by Doug McVay
Pastor, Immanuel Church of the Nazarene, Camillus, New York

O Heavenly Father, there is a growing agony banging at the strongholds of my soul. I hear the cry of haunting questions being asked, demanding an answer:

Have I lost my appetite for the Atonement?

"God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13, NKJV).

Has the blessing of Your presence evaporated due to busyness?

O Father, "Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11, NKJV).

Has the weight of the world squeezed out all the wisdom of Your Word?

Jesus, renew me from within!

Have I gradually begun to cherish pleasure more than purity?

Holy Spirit, I allow You to do Your cleansing work in me.

Do I secretly desire the carnal more than cleansing and the eternal?

O Lord, You know "the thoughts and intents of [my] heart" (Heb. 4:12, KJV).

Am I guilty of careless and aimless living, rather than compassionately ministering to others?

Eternal Father, give me a broken and contrite heart, observing the fields already white for harvest.

Is it no longer a priority in my daily living for You to be Lord of all?

Jesus, thank You for Your patient reminders. Be Lord of my life today.

Are my listening skills cued only to the crude and degrading, instead of to the inner voice of the Holy Spirit?

O Lord, You have reminded me: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers" (Ps. 1:1).

Are all my great spiritual victories and blessings simply a faint memory?

Jesus warned His church: "Yet there is one thing wrong; you don't love me as at first! Think about those times of your first love (how different now!) and turn back to me again and work as you did before" (Rev. 2:4-5, TLB).

Do I find my daily walk with the Master a job or a joy?

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," I cry (Ps. 51:12, KJV).

Do I constantly saturate my system with the secular instead of that which is spiritual?

"Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips. Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers" (Ps. 141:3-4).

Am I more mature and holy today than I have been in a long time?

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).

Am I more often victorious in life, or a constant victim?

"Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer" (Ps. 4:1).

Do I find my focus consistently on my doubts, or on the facts of faith?

"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24, NKJV).

Is there a deep longing in my spirit for more of You?

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Ps. 42:1-2).

Can I honestly reply that there is a "hunger and thirst for righteousness" within me (Matt. 5:6)?

"Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you" (Ps. 73:25).

If Jesus returned today, would I need more time to prepare?

Lord, help me lift up my head and heart today unto You, knowing You could return at any moment.

I have a haunting sense that His "called-out ones" are, at best, cold or lukewarm in spirit. Let us repent and pray together:

"But I will call upon the Lord to save me—and he will. I will pray morning, noon, and night, pleading aloud with God; and he will hear and answer" (Ps. 55:16-17, TLB).

"But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble" (Ps. 59:16).

"They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders" (Ps. 107:27-32).

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad, and lead me along the path of everlasting life" (Ps. 139:23-24, TLB).

Those Sure Were Nice Slides

Dynamic Deputation Services

by Todd Eric Forrest
Pastor,
Parker City Church of the Nazarene
Parker City, Indiana

I vividly remember as a child the many missionary speakers who came through the doors of my home church. It was always exciting to see the film slides of elephants and zebras. Sometimes the missionary would hand out coins, chopsticks, or some other souvenir that would be put away in my dresser drawer for safekeeping. I still have many of those souvenirs.

I remember that they often told stories about one person or another becoming a Christian. The stories blended together into one giant tale. Somehow, the missionaries were a break in the regular Sunday schedule of services. In those days, I never quite understood the reason why these missionaries came to us.

As I became an adult, missionary deputation services lost some of their glamour. In my mind, they were fundraisers.

Missionaries are trained for what they need to do at a deputation service. Why aren't church leaders trained on how to prepare for and follow through on those services? Without preparation and follow-through, the whole idea of missionary ministry is wasted.

We need a plan to guide us in making missions and missionaries a vital part of our everyday life. Missions and evangelism are the reasons the Church exists. Therefore, we need to take advantage of the teaching and growth opportunities provided by the furlough service of a missionary.

First, we must build expectancy. Advertise well ahead of time, and do it creatively. Keep the deputation service as a focus for prayer. Encourage people to pray for the missionary, for the country to which he is assigned, and for people within the congregation who may be called to missionary service. The pastor should preach sermons on missions, emphasizing the church as the sender. Without the church sending, there would not be many missionaries going. Be sure people know that this is a service not to be missed. Missions are the cutting edge of Christianity. Missions are where the excitement exists. Invite friends!

Second, let people know that an offering will be taken for the missionary. We emphasize other special offerings; why not this one? Emphasize that giving makes us a part of the ministry of the speaker, who has obeyed Christ by going.

Third, plan the service to be special. Your creativity in advertising may be tied to your creativity in the service. Try decorating the sanctuary with flags. Have children dress in the traditional clothing of other countries. Let these children take the offering.

Fourth, enjoy the service. The missionary will almost always tell you about individuals who have come to Christ under his or her ministry. He or she will show pictures of the things that are happening, new churches being built, many coming to Jesus. The missionary does this to let you know that your prayers and General Budget giving are not being wasted. People appreciate tangible evidence that they are getting a return from their efforts. If properly prepared, the people will know where their money is going and will bask in the glow of God's blessings and the building of His kingdom. The emphasis becomes, "Look how God is blessing others!"

Fifth, follow through on the gains. If a challenge was made, keep proclaiming that challenge. Decorate bulletin boards emphasizing the challenge. Print the challenge in bulletins and newsletters. Keep the challenge as a matter of prayer. If an altar call was made, follow through on those individuals who responded. Encourage those who are called to missionary service. Begin training them now! Always announce opportunities for temporary missionary service. Keep children, teens, and adults active in mission education programs geared especially for them.

Sixth, encourage continued contact with the missionary. Invite people to become pen pals with the missionary and to send cards for birthdays and anniversaries. Read denominational magazines to keep track of what is happening on the field where the missionary is serving. Watch for the missionary's name. Keep people current with his or her activities. Adopt this missionary as your own, as if you have sent him or her out from your church. You have!

Seventh, schedule another missionary to speak at your church. Do this all over again.

The purpose for the congregation is more than keeping the church doors open. It is more than reaching our friends and neighbors. It is to reach our whole world (Matt. 28:19). Expand your church's world by making missions and missionaries a vital part of your church life.

What in the World Is Happening to the Church?

Converging Toward Significance

by David J. Felter
Continuing Lay Training Coordinator, Adult Ministries, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City

Four major epochs have touched the lives of most North American baby boomers.

First Was the Nuclear Epoch

I remember my uncles returning from World War II with stories about the South Pacific, Sicily, and their contact with combat. The big story, however, was the falling atomic bombs' obliterating two cities in Japan. To my uncles, it marked the decisive turning point in the war, saving many lives.

It was the first of several critical epochs that touched my life as a person growing up in America. The nuclear epoch gave us the cold war, nuclear medicine, and submarines running silently and rather quickly in the cold depths of the oceans. It also gave us bomb shelters and attack drills. It changed our lives as Americans forever.

The Second Epoch Was Space Travel

I was 14 when the Russians launched the first *Sputnik*. I was intrigued by something the size of a basketball orbiting our planet, spitting out telemetry in unrecognizable code. This epoch introduced my generation to a new vocabulary. Invisible boundaries once marking the presence of humankind were now forever erased. The adage I learned from my positive-thinking father was true: "Whatever the mind of man can conceive, it can achieve."

The Third, the Computer Epoch, Has Changed Everything.

Univac computers meant little to me in the early days of the computer revolution. Chuck Berry, Elvis, Pat Boone, and '57 Chevys were names with which I had closer affinity. It didn't take long, however, for this to change.

One of my first jobs was a maintenance assignment after hours in the offices of a large factory. I was working my way through college and happy to be earning a paycheck. Each night I stopped to look at a strange-looking apparatus, trying hard to figure it out. Thousands of cards with funny little holes were arranged in what appeared to be a sorting machine. What I didn't realize was that I was looking at the primitive, by today's standards, application of technology.

From palm-sized personal data managers, to laptops, to microprocessors in the automobile, computers are inextricably linked to modern life. These ubiquitous symbols of human creativity are no longer restricted to one's office. In many places, the personal computer *is* one's office.

The Fourth Major Epoch Is Bioengineering

Even now we await news on the latest findings of this fascinating science. New links to old diseases have been found in surprising places. Slowly but surely the seemingly impenetrable realm of microbes, genes, and chromosomes have been forced to yield their addresses to modern medical explorers.

So what does all this have to say about a convergence toward significance with regards to the Church in the late 20th century? I believe it offers an unusual time frame that promises much if we have the will and the courage to access it.

The Church is continually being affected by those to whom it ministers. While this in itself is not news, it is the recognition of an important truth. Many of our churches are increasingly influenced by the thinking, decision making, and collective wisdom of people for whom World War II is not a memory but only another date in history books. These individuals have lived through four major epochs with a lassitude and indifference that is not to be assailed but understood. For this reason we either rejoice or lament, depending upon our outlook and reading of history.

Many of us see tidal currents in the stream of history, offering the Church unparalleled opportunities that await exploration and implementation. We see the harnessing of computer power, telecommunications, and networks as the new tools of the Church. We have heard stories of how missions activities exploded with coinciding developments in global transportation and communications.

We, the clergy and laity of churches across North America, see a horizon filled with breakthroughs portending

new challenges and opportunities for evangelism, witness, and ministry. Virtual reality may change the way we train clergy. Interactive communications may open doors of ministry opportunity yet undreamed of by many clergy. Lay training is already taking on a flexibility tailor-made to laypersons who expect self-direction in learning. Empowering laypersons for new ministries via technological breakthroughs that allow sophisticated levels of local church education are just around the corner.

So, what are these streams in convergence, and what is their significance for the Church?

There Is the Stream of Technology

Make no mistake—technology is not the savior of the world, nor is it a pseudomessiah coming to the Church with a sackful of goodies. With every breakthrough, including those wrought by the epochal dimensions of the quartet mentioned above, there seems to be a corresponding problem heretofore undiscovered. The point is, the Church is in a position to seize a special moment in the history of humankind that is unlike those of the past.

Clearly, we are in agreement on those nonnegotiable issues concerning our need of a Savior, the problem of sin, and the sufficiency of Christ Jesus to meet its guilt as well as its power. There are several recognizable streams in these tidal currents that are converging, offering wonderful opportunities to local churches interested in ministry, evangelism, nurture, and worship.

There Is the Stream of Spiritual Formation

Wesleyan theologians and clergy have long realized the compatibility between the ethic of holiness and the development of spirituality. This stream is fed by crystal rivers of runoff falling from the peaks of compassion. The Church in many places is celebrating a spirituality that is best expressed as *Christians being in the world for Christ's sake.*

There Is the Stream of Compassionate Volunteerism

The aging of North Americans has brought about a number of interesting corollaries. Some persons have more time available to spend discretionary income and find personal fulfillment through giving and sharing with others in Christ's name. The Church can now mobilize an army of volunteers who can penetrate seemingly closed doors, bearing witness through acts of compassion and mercy. Armed with an understanding of grace as dynamic optimism based on the very nature of God in Christ, these individuals do not shrink from any open door, wherever it may be.

There Is the Stream of Lay Learning

It is no longer enough to conduct Sunday School in timeworn ways. Many laypersons sense a ministry obligation. They understand the need for preparation, training, education, and deployment. They know they can access a world untouched by conventional ministerial methodologies. These learners will not accept traditional "banking" concepts of Christian education. Merely depositing the knowledge of the preacher or Sunday School teacher into the minds of these laypersons has proven unsatisfactory.

Many laypersons insist on confronting theological, biblical, and doctrinal truth head-on. They want to grapple with the Word. They are aflame with a thirst that cannot be slaked at the stagnant pools of tradition-bound Sunday Schools. To these individuals, opportunities for empowerment through discovery, encounter, and hands-on learning are prerequisites to ministry. Its availability is a criterion by which they judge the seriousness of their church's appeal to Great Commission activity.

There Is the Stream of Praise and Worship

Nothing short of a revolution of worship understanding has occurred in the last few years. Unquestionably, abuses have occurred. The occasional worship leader or pastor, exercising more creativity than common sense, has managed to turn off some members of the flock. This does not change the reality, however, that God is moving through His Church on the updrafts of the Spirit in praise and worship that is truly centered upon the Divine. Pockets of resistance may linger as long as those of us from the Truman generation insist on an age-specific style of music and worship pattern. Nothing in the New Testament, however, dictates specific forms or patterns of worship approved by God.

There Is the Stream of Men's Ministry

Promise-Keepers is now a trademark, but it was born out of a burden for men in a coach's heart. I will never forget Boulder, Colorado, 1993, when over 50,000 men lit candles of promise and commitment. The Church has more resources for developing strategic ministries to men than at any time in her long history. The failed promises of machismo, and the empty loneliness of broken marriages combine to create a hunger in the human heart. Men are reachable through new strategies that accommodate themselves to the special needs attendant to reaching unchurched, unreached men.

How many streams are converging in these tidal currents of history? I don't know. I have only mentioned a few. Surely there are others. Perhaps you are discovering a new stream of the Spirit even where you are. Underlying this observation is my firm and growing conviction that grace, from a Wesleyan and New Testament perspective, is a dynamic optimism. Sin still stinks. It still stains. It still strangles. But there is a holy optimism let loose upon this world every time a simple believer sounds that sweet note: "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound . . ."

A good bass fisherman knows that the currents in the river hold promise of good fishing. Fish typically converge in these currents to rest, to feed, and to generally hang out. I believe fishers of men will stalk these tidal currents seeking those to whom the gospel is still Good News. The ministry of the Church is no "bait and switch" operation. We offer grace, a dynamic optimism, full of power to affect transformation. This optimism eliminates our fear of change and motivates our exploration of unclaimed territories for God and His Church. Truly these streams converging upon the Church offer enormous possibilities awaiting our exploration.

Celibate Singles?

This is a challenging time to be a Christian single. Immorality is flaunted on television, videos, advertisements, magazines, and on the job.

As a single parent I've experienced the challenges to overcome sexual temptations. I wondered if others have the same struggles, feelings of weakness, and fear of failing the Lord. Has their faith prevailed? Have others found a lasting sense of completeness in life without fulfilling love, romance, a spouse, and sexual relations?

To find the answers, I surveyed singles in Portland, Oregon; the Tri-Cities, Washington; Spokane, Washington; and Missoula, Montana. I asked 12 questions (see sidebar).

When only half the survey results were in, it appeared that the three recent decades of loose sexual attitudes prevailing across our nation had struck a blow against Christian singles' morals. And now, with only a few surveys still out, the rate stands at 41 percent not celibate, not feeling convicted—and not about to change. The largest age-group (30-40) is 65 percent sexually active. The reason the figures aren't higher is because many do not have anyone special in their lives right now.

It seems that, even for the Christian

by Rusty Hurst
Freelance writer, Kennewick, Washington

single, the fear of missing out on the sexual activities of life intertwines with the world's promoting a "grab all the gusto you can—you deserve it" philosophy. We are subtly told you can't be happy without romance—you need to be with somebody to be complete. "I just want someone to be with, to share my lifetime goals, to share all the parts of my life" is the response of many singles.

As years pass and dreams are not being fulfilled, singles hit the bars, fill out "pay for introduction" applications, and solve their single situation by jumping into bed with Mr./Miss Magic. Many find too late, as did a Washington woman, that "there is no Mr. Magic, and all this hunting is far worse than doing or being without."

A Montana single explained, "As more time goes by, the less desire for sex I have. It scares me that I may lose my sexuality, and along with that some of my sensitivity."

From Oregon, a divorced man in his 40s said, "I have a strong need to be validated as important to someone other than my children. I don't get it at my job nor at my church, where I and my ministry seem to be invisible and unrecognized. I lack that other half that married couples have to reassure me I am valuable. It makes me question many parts of my being—not just my sexuality and masculinity."

A multitude of emotional and spiritual facets of a single's personality affect his or her decision to be celibate or not. One is the category of single into which they fall. There is no typical single nor singles' reasoning pattern. But the struggle of the single-again group, along with those individuals who admittedly were promiscuous before becoming Christians, seems intensified because they have been sexually active in the past, and old habits and accustomed responses are difficult to break. The same decision is there every time the chemistry clicks, the other person seems right, and desires seem to fall into place all at the same time.

The never-marrieds have the same longings and heartfelt needs. Plus, they feel the pressure of the biological clock pushing them. One said, "We don't stop being human, full of weaknesses and needs, just because we are Christian and single."

The noncelibates

The survey respondents who were either "not celibate" or "not satisfied most of the time" appeared to have, according to their comments, a lack of knowledge of the biblical teachings of celibacy or a lack of desire or power to be obedient on the subject. People love to be soothed by certain elements of Christianity—God is loving and good, heaven awaits them, God only wants the very best for us, etc. They slide past the commands and go right to the promises when it enables them to do what they want at

the moment. It is grievous to see how some noncelibate Christians justify their disobedience on this issue of fornication. For instance, "The human sex drive is natural, God-given, and good. If I wish to sleep with a woman, I will, and I will thank the Lord for His gift without guilt."

Another said, "I like sex. I do not believe in being celibate, but I believe in protection. God helps me stay committed to my relationship in which sex is a part."

And, "As a human being and once married, I believe it is impossible to stay sexually uninvolved. Sex drives are natural and normal, and at my age very active."

"I am not celibate," one responded, "although it is my desire to be so. I have recently made some mistakes that I regret greatly and do not desire to repeat. Loneliness has made me do things that are compromising to my beliefs. I expect God will provide the means for me to have a celibate life if I desire to and if I obey Him."

And, "Neither being single nor celibate has anything to do with my spiritual sense of satisfaction. They are conditions of my physical person, and that's all."

> Recent decades of loose sexual attitudes have struck a blow against Christian singles' morals.

These decisions are based on habit, age, circumstance, personal comfort, fun, and focusing on immediate gratification of temporary desires. Where does God fit in here? Some obviously miss the fact that He is here to guide and teach us. (See Isa. 30:21; 41:10, 13; 42:6; Ps. 32:8.) And by His strength we have power over sin. (See 1 John 1:7, 9; Prov. 3:5-8.) We have to ask for help, then let Him take over.

The celibate but not satisfied

The next group of responses came from singles who are celibate, yet are not claiming the victory of being satisfied and at peace with their situation all the time. As one single confessed, "When I am not growing spiritually in Christ, I start to run on self-will, and that always gets me into trouble."

Another wrote, "No, I am not satisfied. I do not enjoy living alone, having no one to share anything with. I have emotional needs like anyone else, and having sex with your spouse is important to fulfilling those needs. In the [years] I have been a widow, I have not even been asked for coffee. I don't know where to begin socializing, much less worry about getting into sexual temptations. . . . I try to ignore my sexual drives. If you live the way the Bible teaches, the Lord will protect you emotionally and physically, but it doesn't guarantee satisfaction."

Also, "There are times when I truly miss the sharing and intimacy of married life—missing the physical closeness—yet being held makes me want it all the more. During such times I draw closer to the Lord and seek His best for my life. I expect from the Lord a satisfaction with the other areas of my life for obedience in celibacy."

Another responded, "I am tired of the single life and am ready to get married. It is especially difficult when a woman gets aggressive sexually with me. When my ex-fiancee and I got engaged, she kept saying it would be all right to have sex since neither of us were virgins. God showed me the truth and caused our separation. I believe in His time He will fulfill all my desires—spiritually, mentally, and physically—with the wife He will give me."

"Satisfied, yes. Sexually, no. Romantically, no," another confessed. "I have many friends I see socially. My beliefs stop me from going all the way. When it comes down to it, no sex is no big deal."

Yes, for some the subject of sex is no big deal. But sexual immorality is a big deal to God, and He laid out the consequences for sin. One cannot avoid the results of sin by believing what is being done is not wrong, when God has declared it to be sin and unacceptable. (See Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; 10:8; Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5-8; 1 Thess. 4:3-5; Matt. 15:19.)

> The same decision is there every time the chemistry clicks, the other person seems right, and desires seem to fall into place at the same time.

The celibate and satisfied

The survey respondents who were either not celibate or not satisfied lacked commitment to biblical teachings when compared to the 59 percent who are celibate and satisfied. They note how the Bible tells them to "honor God with your body" and "flee from sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:20, 18). They have learned that temporary physical satisfaction does not substitute for the deeper peace given according to God's plan. As committed Christians, we can turn to Jesus instead of giving in to sexual sin in order to live satisfying, victorious lives.

Even though the previously married Christian single does occasionally miss the sharing and intimacy of married life, many are trusting God for satisfaction and peace regarding their sexual life. They have distinct beliefs about the sanctity of sexual intercourse within a marriage. "Sex is not a pastime or social recreation. It is an expression of deep feeling and commitment to a spouse and to God," said a 30-year-old Spokane single. "I am satisfied to remain a virgin until God chooses to provide me with a mate."

The Word tells us to "lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways [sexual temptations, loneliness, grief over the denial of a traditional family life, etc.] acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6). Successful Christian singles have applied these promises and others to their lives and are victorious and satisfied through Him.

One person after another testified to God's faithfulness for deliverance and peace. Pss. 23 and 34 were most referred to by the men. The women turned the most to Isa. 54:1, 5-6; Pss. 68:5 and 146:9 for comfort. 1 Cor. 10:13 was most often claimed by both groups equally: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

The "rescues" reported included everything from phone calls to a rock thrown through the window. The key seems to be that the committed Christian seizes the opportunity and flees the scene of temptation. Here are a few testimonies:

"I am still a virgin. My friends tell me I'd feel differently if I did it. I'm sure I would, and not for the better. . . . I try to date Christian men because they seem more accepting, but they still try. I have to tell them to stop and take me home."

Another responded, "I am celibate, and God has given me a joy I've never known. I do have my days of wondering why I'm single, but that soon passes through the joy of the Lord."

"Through fasting and prayer I crucify my flesh daily," another said. "I live for Christ, not myself. Sexual love is a language reserved only for my spouse-to-be. I want this person to have been celibate, and I offer the same in return. Satisfaction comes by standing pure before my Heavenly Father."

> One cannot avoid the results of sin by believing what is being done is not wrong, when God has declared it to be sin.

And, "In the past I've given in, but I've since turned it over to the Lord and am being strong in Him. I expect to live a life of joy and contentment because I know the Lord has complete control over me and my well-being. I have the reassurance that His grace will be sufficient. In the meantime, I pray, pray, pray!"

And, "I am able to be alone and explore who I am in Christ and what I want to do with my life. I feel I am growing in different directions than if I were still married."

Another wrote, "Before I became a Christian, I was promiscuous. If I would now meet someone and fall in love, I would probably have struggles with temptation. As it is, through dedication and service to Jesus, I am kept distracted from such frustrations. When I do slip into self-pity, I force my attentions toward others and convert my energies into helping them. Besides, Jesus has given me a deeper joy and sense of fulfillment than I ever had with someone on the human level. He does supply all of my needs."

The key to celibacy and satisfaction with that lifestyle lies in being sold on Jesus, but that kind of commitment doesn't come easy. It takes an intentional investment in prayer and Bible study. The rewards in this life, as well as the hereafter, are well worth the effort.

The Survey

The 12 questions asked in Rusty Hurst's survey included these:

1. How do you define celibacy, and, according to that definition, are you celibate? If so, why and for how long?
2. Do you find yourself in sexually compromising situations? If so, what do you do?
3. Have you experienced God's protection or rescue in those instances? How and when?
4. What are your weakest areas regarding sexual temptations?
5. What do you expect from the Lord, if anything, for living a celibate life at this time, and why?

BEYOND BELIEF™

The Minister's Resource Library

Why should busy pastors care about theology? Haven't all the important issues been resolved? Can one really expect anything new? Besides, theology is just a set of abstract, static propositions for professionals to ponder. Who has the time? Theology belongs to seminaries and religion students!

With most of the lame excuses out of the way, let us admit that theological reading and reflection is disciplined hard work. But important work! Important because anything that passes for Christian ministry must be shaped and informed by theology that is faithful to the Bible. Every Christian minister worthy of the name must first be a theologian. Carl Henry put it succinctly:

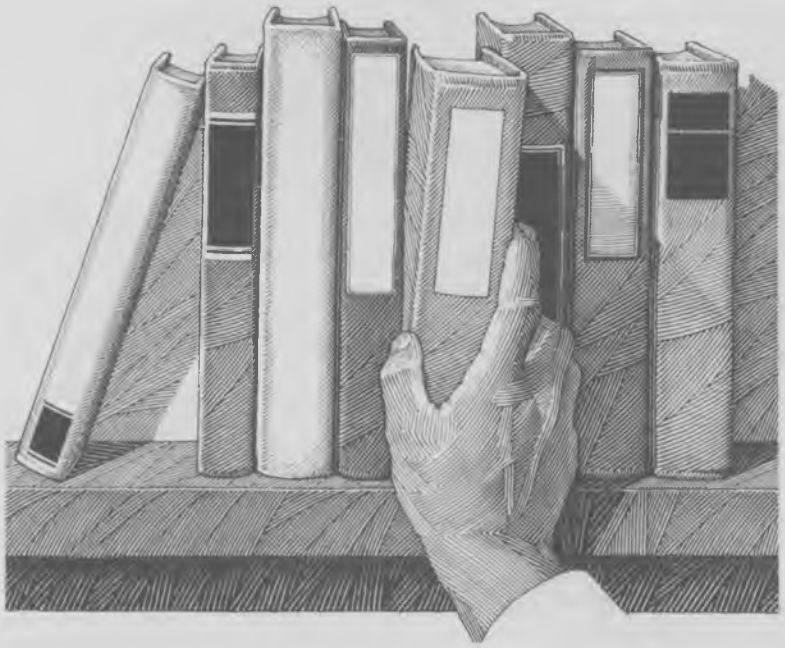
> Before the building there must be a plan, but before the plan there must be the vision. It is the theological vision which, in the final analysis, will make or break our ministry.*

by David Grosse
Director, Excellence in Ministry, Kansas City

What and how one thinks theologically—or doesn't—affects the direction, content, and integrity of ministry. Church work done without sufficient theological reflection may lack substance and credibility as authentic ministry. It may easily become self-serving gimmickry or, worse, quackery, unconnected to the Source and Foundation of faith.

We must care about theology because doing so can give spiritual life and enduring substance to the practice of ministry. Where theology matters, all else follows, assuming the presence of the redeeming, energizing work of the Spirit. Where theology doesn't matter, nothing much matters. Theology serves as an anchor that steadies, a compass that guides, a ruler that measures. It is a plumb line and carpenter's level for constructing any "building"—strategic plan, program, or promotion—whose builder and maker is God.

Pastors care about theology because they recognize that their work is God's work. God alone has the right to etch His intentions upon the lives of His people. A theologically informed ministry helps insure faithfulness to the purposes of God in the world. Whether preaching, teaching, calling, planning, organizing, or leading, theology equips us to "do" ministry as servants of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Does that matter? Try on a few of these good books. They will help theologically inform and infuse your practice of ministry, for His sake and the gospel's!



THEOLOGY

J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994). PA083-411-5123, $47.95.

This is the major work of one of the most significant thinkers and teachers in the Holiness Movement. Grider systematically places Wesleyan theology in the wider stream of classical Christian teaching, but with explicit connection to the contemporary scene. Listed in the Yale *Theological Best Books* catalog (spring 1994), which applauds its "deep exploration of salvation and sanctification."

David P. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical*

Theology? (Eerdmans, 1994). Paperback. PA080-280-747X, $14.99.

The distinguished Gordon-Conwell theologian makes a case for the wholesale disappearance of theology in the church, the academy, and in modern culture. Western culture as a whole has been transformed by modernity, and the Church has simply "gone with the flow." Raises profound questions about the future of conservative Protestant theology.

Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity* (Zondervan, 1994). Paperback. PA031-075-321X, $22.99.

An eminent Wesleyan scholar works to systematize John Wesley's 18 thick volumes of writings, showing the remarkable degree of internal consistency found there. Based primarily on Wesley's sermons, subsequent volumes in the series will deal with his pastoral and ethical teachings. A "plain exposition" of Wesleyan teaching on Christian doctrine.

Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture* (InterVarsity Press, 1994). PA083-081-4124, $24.99.

In this second volume of his proposed seven-volume systematic theology, a foremost evangelical theologian explores the nature of truth, arguing against both evangelical rationalism and liberal experientialism. Contends for the value of biblical evangelicalism while providing lucid critiques of the various hermeneutical options.

Lewis Drummond, *The Word of the Cross: A Contemporary Theology of Evangelism* (Broadman, 1992). PA080-546-2554, $19.99.

The distinguished Southern Baptist professor of evangelism and Charles Spurgeon scholar places evangelism in a theological context when not much else has been published in the field. While not Wesleyan, the author discusses key theological issues in contemporary evangelism every thoughtful Christian needs to address.

Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians* (Baker Book House, 1994). PA080-103-2121, $29.99.

Thirty-three of evangelical theology's most influential thinkers are presented in this handy reference work. List reflects the breadth and diversity of modern evangelicalism, including Reformed, Lutheran, Arminian, dispensationalist, and Pentecostal traditions. Omission of a specifically "Wesleyan" category detracts from an otherwise highly useful resource for those seeking background on a single theolgian or caste of theology.

ETHICS

Lewis B. Smedes, *Caring and Commitment* (Harper and Row, 1988). PA006-067-4229, $9.00.

Learning to Live the Love We Promise (subtitle). The risks and rewards of making commitments in an age when transience and relativism are the norm. Compelling argument for keeping faith with one another, ourselves, and God: "Our deepest relationships are held together by an invisible cord called commitment." A book to grow on, by the popular and prolific Fuller professor of theology and ethics.

Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Eerdmans, 1987). PA080-280-2656, $12.99.

Calls us from a consumer-driven, success-oriented mentality and standards to the integrity of a biblical, theological, and historical basis for our ministry. Gives careful, insightful attention to "working the angles" of prayer and Scripture reading in order to discover spiritual direction and a pastoral ministry that is worthy and marked with integrity.

Walter E. Wiest and Elwyn A. Smith, *Ethics in Ministry* (Augsburg Fortress, 1989). Paperback. PA080-062-3916, $15.00.

Stimulating reflection on an impressive array of theological-ethical issues, e.g., truth telling, boundaries in relationships, fund-raising ethics, competitiveness, authority. The person and words of Christ point the way to integrity and responsibility in ethical conduct for clergy.

The editor of this feature welcomes suggestions of important and useful titles for review. Address them, c/o The Ministry Resources Group, Division of Church Growth/Pastoral Ministries, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131. Or fax them to 816-333-6271. All book titles may be ordered from Nazarene Publishing House. Be sure to include the ISBN when you order.

*Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 67.

Pontius' Puddle

Remeasuring Our First Mile

by Betty Thompson
Freelance writer, Mahomet, Illinois

I knelt with my husband to pray. When we finished, I pulled myself, one leg at a time, into bed. I had measured my mile too long, and by the time I reached the finish line, I was exhausted. I needed someone to carry me to the spectators' seats for rest and some refreshment. Going the second mile was out of the question.

Our last child, a son, was getting married. The entire week before the wedding was a continuous race with time. We had company arriving at different times from different states. It was wonderful having all our family together, and especially for such a happy occasion, but it required work. I wanted my house to be spotless when each family arrived. Menus were planned, and I baked and bought food to put in the freezer. The freezer was full, and I even laid my hands on it and prayed that it would run one more mile with me. It was not so young anymore either.

Meals for the family were important, but my thoughts and plans focused mainly on the rehearsal dinner. I wanted it to be beautiful, elegant, and delicious.

We were eating when several unexpected guests walked in. My beautiful, well-planned seating arrangement began to look like a bunch of dismantled scaffolding. None of our guests appeared to be bothered. They stood at the punch bowl table, crowded in together, and raved about the homemade pies some of the ladies from our church had made. They simply enjoyed being together.

Bedtime came, but my mile kept stretching. Sleep refused to come. I rearranged the tables, counted people and places, and wished I could do it over. I had almost enough food to do it over. We ate leftovers until our son-in-law, when asked to pray, joked about blessing the food for the third time.

Still resting from my marathon, I received a call, asking if I would give a 10-minute critique of Martha at a convention for women. I thought, Of all the people in the Bible, and they choose Martha! It isn't my favorite story from the Bible. I'm a Martha—and Jesus rebuked Martha. I had always felt a little sorry for her. After all, someone has to do the work. I have heard my pastor-husband preach about the "gift of serving." Why was Martha rebuked and Mary commended?

I agreed to do my best. As I began my analysis of Martha, I understood why Jesus reproved her. I knew that I must do something about my likeness to Martha.

Martha made the decision to fix a big meal. It was her house. Jesus had appointed the Seventy and sent them two by two into the cities where He would later visit (Luke 10:1, KJV). Jesus instructed them to eat what was put before them (vv. 7-8). The custom may have been to prepare a feast for guests, but the rebuke Martha received indicates that she was doing more than necessary. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things" (v. 41, KJV). The Bible says she "was cumbered about much serving" (v. 40, KJV).

Martha had measured her mile too long, and she took on a martyr complex when Mary didn't jump in to help. She may have gone off and shed a few tears in self-pity. I did when other family members didn't catch my vision and offer to help.

We needed to remeasure the distance to the finish line. Perhaps there were some shortcuts. Here are some questions that we can ask ourselves in remeasuring our mile:

1. Do I expect too much of myself, comparing myself to others?

Our society is geared to lengthening our mile. Consider the media: success, consumption, dieting, entertaining, etc. We are made to feel like failures because we aren't attaining the distance someone else has measured for us.

If we have grown up in a part of the country where hospitality called for food, and lots of it, it is difficult to let go of that way of thinking. Others find it difficult to keep it simple because a best friend is an excellent cook and enjoys it. People measure our mile for us on the role of hostess.

What about our house? I know a lady who is always immaculate in appearance. I couldn't imagine her

house being otherwise. We visited her home unexpectedly one evening. It definitely had the lived-in look. She commented: "If I invite someone to my home, I feel that I should have my house clean and neat. If guests come uninvited, then they must accept my house as it is without an apology from me."

What do people remember after a visit in our home? The guests in Martha's home possibly remembered her complaining to Jesus more than the service received.

2. Does my mile compare to the promises and to my abilities?

Jesus said Mary had chosen the good part, of ministering to Him and listening to what He had to say. The joy of spending time with Jesus before we begin our mile is what gives us strength to run it: "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. 8:10, KJV).

We cling to the promise "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13, KJV). In our heart, we know the task is beyond our ability. I would be foolish to say I could play the piano for a large choir if I can barely play "Jesus Loves Me." It is important to seek to improve our skills, but the end result is often frustration and discouragement when we attempt things for which we are not equipped. We can shorten our mile by adjusting it to our gifts and abilities.

3. What is the purpose of my mile?

Is it for self-gratification, or to glorify Jesus? Often we don't have a real purpose. No one else would do it, and so we were asked. Or, will it enhance the way I look to others? Our self-image is important, but our mile gets measured by the image that we perceive others have of us.

4. Is it adjustable?

If I am in charge of planning a banquet and need posters for promotion, rather than try something for which I have no talent, I can look for persons in the congregation who have the talent. Draw on available resources. The adjustment comes as we delegate various assignments. The same principle applies in work to be done at home. Training our children involves assigning chores to be done.

Another way to adjust is to say no. That's difficult for church ministry. We can say no easier to our biological family than to our church family. I have forfeited opportunities to do special things with my children simply because I didn't have the courage to say no at church. Now that my children are grown and the nest is empty, I have time to reflect on the past. I regret some choices I made. I neglected sitting with them in communion with the Lord as often as I should because I allowed others to measure out a mile for me. Learning to make choices means saying no occasionally.

It is better to say no than to accept a responsibility, then resent having to do it, or to do it with a self-sacrificing attitude. What we do should be done as unto the Lord. It is difficult to do it unto Him if we are overloaded. Marthas like to see a job done right. The only way to be certain of that is to do it yourself. However, it might surprise us how well someone else can do the job. It's worth a try!

Jesus said, "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain [two]" (Matt. 5:41, KJV). Martha and I were caught up in the first mile. We lacked freedom. Freedom lies beyond the first mile. She didn't have time to sit at the feet of Jesus and worship. I didn't have time to play with my little grandchildren who were here from another state. I hadn't measured them in. The second mile can be the enjoyable one if we shorten the first mile.

I suspect a great number of parsonages are inhabited by Marthas. The weekly sprints of a wife in ministry can be rather long.

If something unexpected comes up, no matter how enjoyable it could be, there isn't time for it. If we work it in, we're thinking of the things in the first mile that are yet to be done.

We must work to change a pattern that we've established. If we are encumbered with much serving and experiencing Martha's frustration, perhaps we need to remeasure our mile. If freedom for the second mile is lacking, we have made the first mile too long.

Pontius' Puddle

Picture Windows for Preaching

Compiled by Derl G. Keefer
Pastor,
Three Rivers, Michigan

AFFLICTION

Some years ago several little boys were camping out in an old building some distance from any house. In the night a terrific thunderstorm arose, and the boys were greatly frightened. In the midst of the storm's uproar they heard someone at the door, and, more frightened than before, they clung to each other in an agony of fear. One little boy, however, ran to unfasten the door and led in a man. "It's my father," he said quietly; "I knew he'd come." It takes faith to recognize the Savior in the storms of life.

G. B. F. Hallock, *Five Thousand Best Modern Illustrations* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931), 19.

HAPPINESS

A little boy and his daddy were looking at a litter of puppies, planning to buy one, and the daddy asked the boy which one he wanted. The lad pointed to a pup whose tail was wagging furiously and said, "That one with the happy ending."

Eleanor Doan, *The Speaker's Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 22.

FULL SURRENDER

What does it mean to fully surrender to Christ? To fully surrender to Christ doesn't mean to become a recluse, but a reformer; not a monk, but a manager; not a loner, but a leader. A Biblical surrender is a thinking surrender, carefully carved by thoughtful self-examination and submission to Christ.

To surrender is to be so completely preoccupied with Christ that you hunger for your life to reflect His life as though in a mirror. . . .

The goal of surrender . . . is to be conformed to the likeness (or image) of Christ, not as an exercise which leads to bondage, but to apprehend the true freedom that only Jesus offers. The irony of surrender is that it ends in victory, not defeat.

Patrick M. Morley, *Walking with Christ in the Details of Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 3.

CONVERSION

In *Illustrations Unlimited,* Maxie Dunnam is quoted as saying:

Paul's testimony is repeated over and over again as persons respond in faith to God's gift of Christ, as they are given His Spirit and become new creations. I heard of such a miracle recently. The American Red Cross was gathering supplies, medicine, clothing, food and the like for the suffering people of Biafra. Inside one of the boxes that showed up at the collecting depot one day was a letter. It said, "We have recently been converted and because of our conversion we want to try to help. We won't ever need these again. Can you use them for something?" Inside the box were several Ku Klux Klan sheets. The sheets were cut down to strips and eventually used to bandage the wounds of black persons in Africa.

Dunnam goes on to comment to the readers:

It could hardly be more dramatic—from symbols of hatred to bandages of love because of the new creation. Nothing else matters, says Paul.

James S. Hewett, ed., *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 51.

GOD'S KINGDOM

Charles Swindoll wrote the following in a devotional Bible:

Generally speaking, God's kingdom is a synonym for God's rule. Those who choose to live in His kingdom (though still very much alive on Planet Earth) choose to live under His authority. . . .

The Kingdom is the invisible realm where God rules as supreme authority. That's helpful news. The bad news is that we, by nature, don't want Him to rule over us; we much prefer to please ourselves.

Swindoll goes on to comment dramatically:

To put it bluntly, we don't want anybody other than ourselves ruling over us! Much like those people in a story Jesus once told, "We do not want this man to reign over us!" (Luke 19:14 [NASB]). Not until we experience rebirth will we submit to God's rule.

Charles Swindoll, *Time with God: New Century Bible Version* (Dallas: Word Bibles, 1991), 27.

Law as Grace?

by Gary L. Durham
Pastor, West Valley Church of the Nazarene, Yakima, Washington

Few terms are more precious to the Christian than the word *grace.* Paradoxically, no term is less understood concerning its total implications by the very Christians who claim it. In many circles, grace is either ignored or relegated to second place behind self-effort. In other circles, grace is watered down to a mere license for sinning—the kindly wink of a senile God.

Grace is the only place where God's interaction with fallen man can begin, and grace covers everything that follows in divine-human interaction. Unfortunately, our present understanding of grace has been artificially pressed into a very narrow definition. Grace has become more of a *connotation* word than a *content* word. The divine pattern of grace in the history of divine-human relationship is little understood or applied.

For example, the work of the law is dismissed as merely *pregrace* by many students of theology. An unfortunate reading of Paul's treatment of law is often cited to lend credibility for dismissing any possible relationship law might have been to grace. This kind of interpretation misreads the scriptural admonishments by isolating certain treatments from the greater context of Scripture.

For example, the Bible says, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). If you read that and ignore the rest of what Scripture teaches on this subject, you could misconstrue John to be saying there was no grace at all before Jesus came—and even more unthinkable, no truth either! However, a more informed reading would point out that in the Old Testament, before Jesus came, it was already declared that God "gives grace to the humble" (Prov. 3:34); and David prayed, "Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me" (Ps. 40:11). Balanced reading would make such an interpretation obviously unreasonable.

This kind of half thinking has caused a misinformed view concerning the relationship of law and grace. Many persons have misconstrued law to be the antithesis of grace, when in reality law is but the first applications of grace.

Any act of God that has as its ultimate purpose the moving of fallen man in the direction of righteousness and holiness must be perceived as an act of grace. This becomes clear when we remind ourselves of the primary meaning of the term. Grace is, first, the unmerited favor of God—God giving to man what he could never earn or deserve. This immediately places God's law in the category of grace. God's law comes to enlighten man, to define his sin, and bring a consciousness of his sinful state. In dealing with a volitional creature, this must always be the first step in redemption. God will not dehumanize us by bypassing our will. If He did, the end result would be the salvation, not of a human being, but of something less than human. The law brings the necessary illumination that brings us, as moral beings, into the salvation process.

Any development of a soteriology that does not preserve the dignity of moral freedom for man in the redemptive program and process misses the whole foundation upon which God in His wisdom has worked so tirelessly. In fact, such a "salvation" would be a contradiction because it would not be saving man as man. What would be saved would be less than personal and, in man's case, nothing of man as man (a moral being) would survive.

Therefore, the law is the grace of God reaching out to lift man from his darkness through moral confrontation. Since man cannot merit this illumination, the law is, therefore, a matter of grace. Of course, such illumination can only be the beginning of the work of grace. If grace did not go beyond mere illumination and offer hope of ultimate transformation, it would be a cruel torment. Since transformation is the ultimate goal, even the pain of illuminating a fallen man to his corruption is a redemptive act.

Law as Grace

Outside of Jesus Christ, there is no greater expression of love to be found in God's Word than the giving of the law. The giving of the law is the paradoxical foundation upon which true hope is first laid for man. The very character of the law and its effect on man gives birth to this hope.

First, the law introduces man to the character of God. Here man meets the standard of righteousness and holiness that he is intended to reflect. He begins to understand God's creative purpose for him, which in turn rekindles his awareness of his original dignity. This is love giving the first glimpse of hope—man learns that his despair is not normal. Not only was life once different, but also there is a God who is desiring that difference again.

Second, this hope brings with it the unavoidable condemnation that moral light brings to a fallen creature. Man's darkness is penetrated; his heart is illuminated. The presence of the light is hope, but the revelation that light brings fosters despair. This is the source of man's love/hate rela-

tionship with the law. In the work of the law, man is shaken from his illusions and made to face his real dilemma.

We must never forget how necessary it is for the law's work of moral illumination to precede transformation. God will not transform a man in the dark. He will not make his choices for him. Rather, God endeavors to enlighten man with truth as the first step toward equipping him for righteous choices. A volitional creature cannot be treated as a computer and remain volitional. As pointed out, if man is not truly left volitional in the redemptive process, he is no longer man, and there is nothing to redeem. Therefore, the law not only preserves the dignity of man and is the necessary first step in redemption but also does this while diagnosing the very corruption from which man must submit to be freed.

The law performs a dual role by providing a sense of *ought*. Without a sense of ought, man is lost in a directionless sea concerning his own identity. If there is no standard, there is no definition. If no definition, then no goal. And if no goal, then there is no purpose. Since the law is merely a manifestation of the character of God, it refocuses man on the holiness and beauty of God's nature, which he was originally created to reflect. Through the law, man rediscovers his created purpose and his redemptive goal in the revelation of God's moral beauty.

This new perspective revises our understanding of law. It brings us into the mind of Paul, who saw the law as a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24, KJV). The lessons of the law, says Paul, may cause sin to spring to life, but the law is nonetheless sinless, "holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:7-12). The law does not create sin in man but, rather, exposes it. It does not produce death in man but, rather, is the opportunity for the death-producing activity of sin in human nature to be revealed (v. 13).

Finally, *the nature of love in the law is seen in the immediate benefits it makes available to man.* This process of illumination not only shows man what he ought to be but also points to the pitfalls that impoverish his life and break his spirit. In other words, the law builds a bridge over the chasms of life where before no such bridge was available. As the Psalmist proclaimed: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. . . . Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end" (119:105, 111-12).

The law brings the necessary illumination that brings us into the salvation process.

If man were as uncorrupted as he often imagines himself to be, the illumination of light might be totally liberating. But, of course, he is not. His response to truth is usually to reject it in view of the fact that it points in a direction opposite his selfish will. This reminds us of Paul's conclusion that the law was powerless to change us due to being weakened by our sinful nature (Rom. 8:3). While the law is not the instrument of dealing with this deeper inner need of cleansing and transformation, it is part of the process by which each man is taken deeper in self-perception so that he is aware of this needed level of cleansing. The obvious conclusion is that man must have more than mere illumination if he is ever to experience true transformation. He not only must be shown truth but also must be equipped to choose a right attitude toward truth. Grace has much work yet to do. And not the least of it is to deal with the deceptive twistings and turnings of our independent nature as it tries to avoid the inner spotlight of divine revelation.

Man must have more than mere illumination if he is ever to experience true transformation.

Misuse of the Law

We need to consider man's misuse of the law—a subject about which Paul had much to say. Paul seemed to understand that the most dangerous attitude toward the law is not necessarily that of open rejection. Rejection is bad enough, but it has a built-in corrective that will draw the rejecter back to reconsideration—the certain failure of trying to live contrary to God's moral reality. Trying to defy the physical law of gravity by jumping off a 10-story building will not break the law of gravity but will ultimately demonstrate its unrelenting validity. So defying the moral law has its built-in correctives. We really don't *break* the law; we are broken *by* it.

The real moral danger is in embracing the law with the motive of bending it to our own purposes. Paul understood this process intimately because he had been saved out of it and almost daily had to contend with legalistic Jews who were trapped in such a mind-set. Misuse of the law is the very thing Paul fought so tenaciously to keep out of the Church.

To understand the misuse of the law, we must remind ourselves of God's intended purpose for the law.

First, the law is the standard of holiness. As an expression of the character and nature of God, the law points man back to the moral image he lost in the Fall. From this point of view, the law is a thing of joy because it reveals the beauty of the Lord: "The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes" (Ps. 19:8; cf. Pss. 1:2; 119:70, 77, 92, 174). The law of God is a thing of beauty. When a man looks honestly at the law, he must confess it is beautiful—the way everything should be.

Here is where the law moves to its second purpose: *To identify and ex-*

pose sin. When man sees the beauty of the law, he also sees the contrast of his own life in relation to the law. "The law is . . . holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12); but man is unholy, unrighteous, and wicked. This purpose of the law is to make man aware of his sin and hold him accountable to the moral standard of holiness that reflects God's glory.

For man, beholding the beauty of the law is a paradox. It is like that of looking into a glorious mirror filled with the reflection of magnificent things all around you, but you are shown in your horrible rags as disgustingly dirty and out of place. At this point, the law shows you unfit to be in the presence of a holy God. You couldn't survive; His holiness would destroy you. You realize that you are justly sentenced by the law to death—which is separation from the presence of God, His life, and His glory.

Man is caught in a real dilemma: When his material self perishes, through which he now indirectly receives blessing and resource from God, then this state of death will become complete and irrevocable. He will be eternally cut off from God in body as well as spirit. His present spiritual condition of being separated from God—death—is causing his material self to be locked into a process of certain destruction. Yet, he cannot come into the presence of God and reestablish the direct spiritual union that is needed because of his sinful condition. If man is to survive, he must be transformed—cured of his spiritual disease—and brought back to moral sanity in nature so he can then be *reconnected* to the life of God.

Paul fought to keep misuse of the law out of the Church.

This brings before us the third function of the law: *The law demands man to change.*

When the law demands change, the stage is set for the misuse of the law by man. Man's spiritual disease—pride—is characterized by an independence in attitude. The law points man in the direction of humbling himself before God. He needs to cry out for mercy and cling to God's promise, given at the gates of the garden, to send One who would crush the serpent's head. But pride—the very insanity from which man needs deliverance—sees *another* hopeful method of *salvation.* It sets up God's law and says to itself, "Ah, yes. God says if I were to measure up to these, then I would be acceptable to Him. That's what I'll do! I'll keep every one of these laws, and then I will make myself better. Then I can come to God and say 'Accept me; I am righteous according to Your law.'"

Man needs to cry out for mercy and cling to God's promise.

Of course, it won't really work. Man does not have the power to change. Part of the curse is not only the loss of righteousness but also the inability to consistently choose righteousness. Yet, pride doesn't give up that easy—"There must be a way!"

The *way* pride ultimately adopts is to set up an outward caricature of the law that has been emasculated of its true meaning and application. For example: The Ten Commandments are used only as outward rules, while the heart of the commands is ignored. This, of course, will only work with the first 9 commandments, since the 10th one is totally inward: "Thou shalt not covet"—"You are not even to want to."

"But," says man's proud heart, "if we make enough fuss about the first 9, maybe we can forget the 10th one." So, man adds hundreds of codices to the first 9 commandments. By the time Jesus came, the Pharisees had added nearly 2,000 to the first 9. Man adds rule to rule and turns the law into an attempt to approach God, which it was never intended to provide. The effect of this is to make the law into an outward straitjacket that binds man hand and foot. Then he presents himself to God in his moral straitjacket and says, "See, God, I'm righteous. I don't do this, and I don't do this; and I do this, and I . . ." All that his moral straitjacket really proves is that he is still morally insane—in need of a straitjacket! This is hardly what God could have in mind as His method of transformation.

This sad condition will nonetheless be made to serve God's purpose because the law will not bend to our design. If we will let God teach us, there is another effect of the law on our inner sinful nature that will expose this foolish attempt at self-righteousness. Paul described it this way: "Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died" (Rom. 7:9). Earlier he had said, "The law was added so that the trespass might increase" (5:20). There is nothing like a cage to make a beast gnaw at the bars. The beast of inner sinful passions may be caged, but it will pace the cell of inner sinful fantasy more fervently than before. Outwardly, the lid is clamped on tight. Within, there is a boiling tempest of every wicked thought.

Man adds rule to rule and turns the law into an attempt to approach God.

Build fences to keep us from going where we don't belong, and our *bullish* nature will begin running over them. Telling a rebel he "can't" is the surest way to bring his rebellious nature to the surface. So is the effect of the law on us: "Sin springs to life." It is not that the law is itself sinful. Paul asked that question and answered, "No!" (Rom. 7:7). As stated earlier, the

law does not create sin in man but rather exposes it. The law does not produce death in man but rather is the opportunity for the death-producing activity of sin to be revealed (v. 13).

Since the law does not answer to us and will not surrender itself to our agenda, it still continues to do its work of judging. But now we become aware of its judgments not only on our actions but also on the inner workings of our heart. When the author of Hebrews wrote, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (4:12), he was writing about the Old Testament scriptures, which contained the law of God.

The beast of inner sinful passions may be caged, but it will pace the cell of inner sinful fantasy more fervently than before.

When Jesus came, He refused to submit to the misuse of the law. For example, Jesus dusted off the 10th commandment and reapplied it to the previous 9. This is what He was doing when He identified hatred and lust as breaking the 6th and 7th commandments (Matt. 5:21-30). He also taught us the synergistic result of the law's designed interrelationship—how one command casts light and application on all others.

The misuse of the law boils down to this: Trying to make the law a means of being made right with God. Paul so strongly opposed this in his Galatian letter: "We . . . know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. . . . Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law" (2:15-16; 3:25).

Paul said to the Romans: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (3:28). Paul's contrast between law and grace is a contrast between trying to be justified by means of the law—which was not even acceptable in the Old Testament, as Paul argues concerning Abraham's case in Rom. 4 and Gal. 3:6-9—or being justified by the grace of God given us through faith in Jesus Christ. If anyone thinks Paul is throwing the moral law overboard, he is quick to retort, "Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law" (Rom. 3:31).

The law, as the standard of holiness, as the measuring line against which our faith and love shall be measured, is not nullified. The full flower of grace, seen in the work of Jesus Christ on Calvary, establishes the law by giving us the power to keep the intent of the law—love (Rom. 13:10). In this sense, law and grace are not opposites; they are allies. It is only the misuse of the law, in an attempt by pride to make oneself right by self-effort, which is rejected—it always has been.

The ceremonial law, a foreshadowing of the work of Christ, which was abolished when the reality came, was in its time and place a means of grace. Men came in faith by their submission to the enactments of the rites, believing that God would make them valid by fulfilling His promise to send the true Sin-bearer. Their faith looked forward. Our faith looks back. But it is all faith, just the same. "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Rom. 4:3).

Balancing Law and Grace

Truth is prebalanced by God—we must not add or subtract anything. When we do, we find that our theology will not run straight down the road of truth. It will tend to veer toward the ditches on either side. The ditches on either side of the road of truth concerning law and grace are legalism on the right and antinomianism on the left. Satan really doesn't care in which ditch he buries us. Either one will bring our progress in truth to a halt.

Law and grace are not opposites.

What is worse is to see those people who are stuck in one ditch throwing stones at those in the opposite ditch. If the holiness message is to stay out of these ditches, we will have to remember that reaction is not a valid method of arriving at truth. It only puts you in the opposite ditch. Conformity to God and His already balanced declarations in His Word is the only way to make continual progress on the path of truth.

Our tendency theologically in recent days has been toward the ditch of antinomianism. This generation of Christians has reacted to what it perceived to be legalism in former generations—and some of it was. Because of this, we have lost the needed understanding of the law of God in the full economy of grace. Lest I be understood to be calling for the pendulum to swing the other way, I remind us that reaction to each other is not the answer. Instead, I think we should call for conformity to Christ by a resolute focus on Jesus and His Word. This alone will stop the moral stagger on our road of truth.

Defensive and Offensive Financial Strategies for the Minister

by Don Walter
Director, Pensions and Benefits USA, Church of the Nazarene

Five key questions should be considered among the basic elements of financial planning for a minister. These questions represent sound defensive financial planning and good offensive planning as well. The questions require consideration of some unpleasant possibilities. However, good strategy must include options for many contingencies. One consolation is that all of these difficulties could not happen at the same time. To not consider them could leave one or one's family in critical financial condition.

1. "What if I die too soon?"

This question is related to the minister's responsibility to make provision for the needs of his family in the event of premature death. As a breadwinner for the family, there definitely is a financial dimension to being a spouse and parent. The premature death of such a breadwinner would present financial challenges for the family. Part of a good financial plan will include provision for replacing lost income. This part of one's plan is usually cared for by life insurance, which is meant to replace not a life but rather the lost income.

The logical question then is "How much life insurance do I need to replace the loss of income for my family?" A general answer is "Probably more than you think." For instance, if an insurance policy paid a death benefit of $100,000, that benefit amount, if invested at 7 percent *after taxes,* would yield $7,000 annually for an indefinite period of time. If the principal were also to be used, the investment would yield $14,237 a year for 10 years or $9,439 a year for 20 years. Remember, the primary purpose is to replace lost earnings, so projecting replacement of earnings beyond one's anticipated earning years may not be necessary.

One area sometimes forgotten is the Social Security survivors benefits paid for covered workers. Ministers who pay Social Security taxes are covered. Under the provision, a worker's surviving spouse and minor children are paid a monthly benefit based on the worker's average indexed monthly earnings. This payment will average around 40 percent of the worker's covered compensation. It reduces the amount of lost earnings needing to be replaced by life insurance. Information is available from your Social Security office.

2. "What if I live too long?"

This issue is that of outliving one's financial resources. It requires looking at retirement needs with the idea that one or both spouses may live as much as 30 or 40 years after retirement and beyond earning an income. Outliving one's financial resources would be tragic.

What sources are there for providing retirement income? Statistics released by the Department of Health and Human Services indicate that for all persons over age 65, 38 percent of income is from Social Security, 26 percent is from investments, 17 percent is from earnings, and 16 percent is from private pensions. The remaining 3 percent is from miscellaneous sources.

The twin resources of Social Security and a defined benefit pension are sometimes the extent of retirement planning by ministers. Such a limitation ignores the reality that those two only comprise 54 percent of the average income needed. Other resources must be considered.

One of the best resources for ministers is still the tax-sheltered annuity program as structured under Section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code. The provision allows ministers, as employees of nonprofit organizations, to have a portion of their current income deferred tax-free to a retirement plan. The deferred funds are allowed to accumulate interest tax-free as well. If administered by the minister's denomination, funds can be withdrawn as tax-free housing allowance. The im-

portant thing is that a minister start making contributions early so that the interest has a chance to compound and accumulate. Even small amounts contributed early and regularly can yield big dividends for retirement income if left to compound.

3. "What if I become disabled?"

Every sound financial plan should recognize the possibility of earned income ceasing while expenses continue. This is what happens in the event of disability. Because disability represents lost income but continuing expenses, it is often financially more of a hardship than death. However, more people insure against lost income from premature death than from disability.

There are three primary sources for extended income in the event of disability. One is the Social Security disability benefit for covered workers who meet the disability qualifications. Another is private disability insurance. Such insurance is relatively inexpensive for what it provides. There is also the disability benefit of one's private pension plan. Other sources may include personal savings and accumulated funds in a tax-sheltered annuity plan.

The probability of being disabled is not a pleasant thought. However, it is a possibility that should be included in financial planning.

4. "What if I get sick?"

With escalating costs of health care in the nation today, no financial plan would be complete without coverage for large expenses in the event of an illness. Very few persons have the personal resources to pay for treatment of severe or prolonged illness without significant financial setback. Yet such illness cannot be ignored; treatment must be undertaken.

Health insurance is a necessary and significant part of protecting one's financial well-being. A family without health insurance today is very vulnerable to significant financial risk. Even if only minimal coverage can be afforded, it should be obtained. Good financial planning is as much protecting one's resources as it is multiplying them. Health insurance is defensive financial planning.

5. "What happens if I get paid?"

This question deals with compensation structuring and how best to receive the money the local church has set aside in its budget for pastoral support. It makes a difference how the money gets from the church to the minister. *How* the church pays the minister can be just as significant as how *much* the church pays the minister in determining how much discretionary income the minister really has.

Good financial planning is as much protecting one's resources as it is multiplying them.

Over the years, tax laws have become more complex in defining what money received from an employer is and is not taxable. Ministerial employees have not been exempted from these details. Here are a few considerations for a minister, church board, and salary committee.

First, a minister should maximize the provisions of the tax law that allow for a tax-free housing allowance. The tax code specifically states, "In the case of a minister of the gospel, gross income does not include—(1) the rental value of a home furnished to him as part of his compensation; or (2) the rental allowance paid to him as a part of his compensation, to the extent used by him to rent or provide a home." Furthermore, IRS regulations define the costs of "providing a home" to include all expenses other than food or maid service. Therefore, any such expenses incurred by a housing allowance would not be subject to income tax to the extent that they meet the limitations of IRS regulations. It may be as simple as the church board declaring a portion of the salary already being paid as housing allowance and then making certain the money is spent within IRS guidelines.

A minister should also be certain all of his professional and business expenses are reimbursed dollar for dollar by the church employer. This would include church-related professional expenses for travel, entertainment, books, periodicals, gifts required because of one's role as a minister, and dues to professional organizations. These are expenses of ministry, not expenses of the minister personally. As such, they should be part of local church ministry expenses.

It is important that expenses be reimbursed according to IRS guidelines. This requires that receipts, mileage statements, travel logs, and other material documentation be turned in to the church employer. Only the amount documented should be paid. If the church is simply giving the minister an "allowance" and not requiring an accounting of how the money is spent, those funds are just extra salary in the eyes of the IRS. The minister must then show them as income on his tax return and then try to deduct them if possible. Under the latest tax-law changes it is impossible to deduct 100 percent of all such expenses. Therefore the minister who is not being properly reimbursed is paying taxes on local church ministry expenses. Understanding this, a minister would be better off to have his compensation restructured in order to have his expenses reimbursed, rather than to pay for those expenses with taxable "salary" and not be able to deduct them completely.

Another important element of compensation structuring is making certain your church employer is making payment for all allowable tax-free employee benefits directly to the benefit provider. This would include premiums for health insurance, group term life insurance for up to $50,000 coverage, disability insurance, accident insurance, and tax-sheltered annuity contributions. If the church is simply giving the minister the money to pay for these benefits himself, they may not be fully tax-free.

Sound financial planning needs both an offensive strategy and a defensive strategy. Protecting oneself against financial catastrophe is defensive financial planning. Preparing for retirement and proper compensation structuring are offensive financial strategies. In order to be a winner at financial planning, one needs both a good offense and a good defense.

Today's Books for Today's Preachers

THE OLIVET STORY

Besides the late C. A. McClain's important history of Olivet Nazarene University, we now have, from its only president emeritus, Rev. Leslie Parrott, Ph.D., a most significant history of the school, which goes all the way back to its beginning in 1907 and tells its story through 1990.

Its subtitle calls it *An Anecdotal History,* and it is indeed that; but it is much more than anecdotal. Its author, the writer of some 20 books previously, asked many persons who have been strategic to Olivet's story to tell what they have remembered and what they feel; and that material is interspersed in italics within its 189 slick two-column pages of print and drawings. But by and large, it is a history, commissioned by ONU's Board of Trustees, based on a thorough research of materials and written by one who has participated in it and who knows firsthand what the remembered past, here, is like.

Dividing the story into decades (nine), and thinking of its history as being similar to a river, Parrott tells of the auspicious factors that figured in revealing to people the need of at least an elementary school; of its inauspicious beginning in 1907 with 36 students; of its becoming an institution of the Church of the Nazarene after several years; of its bankruptcy in the mid-1920s; of its great fire in 1939, occasioning its move in 1940 from Olivet, Illinois, near Danville to Kankakee, Illinois, near Chicago; of its climb to full accreditation in 1956; of its development until it is now a real university with a physical environment worth twice its $36 million conservative appraisal; with a well-qualified administration, faculty, staff, and with almost 2,000 students (2,194 in 1993) preparing for lay and clergy service to God and country in the 21st century.

And all the time, the fact that it is a Wesleyan Holiness school with close ties to the Church of the Nazarene is unabashedly shown and stated, as in Parrott's detailed testimony to his own experience of entire sanctification (pp. 134-50) when he was a graduate student living with his wife, Lora Lee, in Salem, Oregon; and when he observes that its history has been "permeated by Wesleyan theology" (p. 179). Besides this, what happens in the wider society, and the influence of that upon the school, is often included in the story—e.g., the stock market crash of 1929, the depression of the 1930s, and World War II.

Many things are here that we might not know otherwise. One of them is that President A. L. Parrott (who was threatened and beaten by a dissident donor, p. 58) got the $200,000 debt for the Bourbonnais campus paid off in 1944, in 4 years instead of the allotted 16, and before any payment on it was due—and that he later gave to the college more than his salary had been for his seven years as president. I myself know something of how frugal he was because, as he took me with him during my freshman year ('40-41) to testify in churches, a green and terrified beginning learner would sleep with this distinguished leader in Nazarene homes as near as I could get to the edge of the two-person beds that were customary in those days. He and I also sometimes traveled with the local Nazarene district superintendent, E. O. Chalfant, Parrott's polar opposite in observable culture—who later reversed the decision of his Orders and Relations Board and had me ordained with only three months of pastoral experience.

You also learn here new things about Harold W. Reed, the school's longest-tenured president (it had 15, including acting presidents, during the 1910-19 decade), such as that he and Mrs. Reed gave toward one financial campaign $10,000—more than his annual salary.

Another special thing we learn here is one of President Leslie Parrott's overtures toward the Roman Catholics of Bourbonnais, who had lost their college to the Nazarenes, and the perhaps complete healing of the suspicions of each other previously held by both the Nazarenes and the Catholics. This healing became most evident in 1978, when Olivet returned to the Roman Catholics certain memorabilia it still had from their college, and when the pastor of the Catholic church adjacent to the campus arranged a service of reconciliation in that church, at which both he and President Leslie Parrott spoke—a hometown boy and son of the first president of the Bourbonnais-campus Olivet (see pp. 139-41).

People who have had, now have, or will have any connections at all with Olivet Nazarene University, and Nazarenes in general for that matter, will want to read this exceedingly well-written anecdotal-plus history of the school, a labor of love on the part of Leslie Parrott. Copies can be obtained by making a gift of any amount to the ONU alumni project for refurbishing Goodwin Hall (at ONU, Kankakee, IL 60901).

—by J. Kenneth Grider
Visiting Professor of Theology
Olivet Nazarene University
Kankakee, Illinois

LIFESTYLE DISCIPLESHIP: THE CHALLENGE OF FOLLOWING JESUS IN TODAY'S WORLD
by Jim Petersen,
Colorado Springs,
(Navpress, 1993
PA089-109-7759, $10.00)

Petersen's book encourages Christians in this post-Christian era "to become or remain 'insiders' and to help equip them to be fruitful in their place of service." Jim Petersen makes an acknowledgment, calls for a specific soldier, then seeks to arm that soldier with spiritual insight and understanding.

The acknowledgment that Petersen makes is that our culture has abandoned its biblical foundations and is sliding rapidly into paganism. As the slide accelerates, we must seriously reconsider our basic strategy for reaching nonbelievers. For they are less and less likely to come to us, to our buildings, to our services. Bluntly stated, for the masses "what we do in church is irrelevant."

So the author appeals to "insiders," Christians, to decidedly and devotedly present the gospel incarnationally in their own unique spheres of influence. The insider is the light of the gospel in an unbelieving world. Relationships with the preconverted are not to be cut away as weights that would drag us down but are to be cherished as highways by which saving truth is lived out before the unredeemed. The insider is a soldier with a clear mission within the dominant culture of our day. His or her everyday arena of life is the logical place of ministry.

The greater part of this monograph is devoted to equipping the insider for discernment and ministry. Its aim is double: first, to assist the insider to evaluate his or her own place and process in the journey to Christlikeness; second, to provide tools for helping others in their Christian growth.

Petersen cleaves several furrows deeply as he plows the field of discipleship. He uses the model of parenting as the best, most effective method of discipling, investing in personal relationships over time to produce spiritual maturity. He focuses on change, the dynamics of change, presenting simple but helpful schemata that enable one to discern the genuineness and durability of change. Of special note is the author's presentation of Christian spiritual transformation and personal development. His explication of the paradigm of Christian discipleship and its seven elements is as valuable as any literature in the field.

A fourth furrow of note is the material dealing with suffering and adversity.

The book is a challenge: a challenge to think, a challenge to move, a challenge to change. It is a source of help in meeting the challenge.

—by David L. Cox
Pastor
Meridian Valley Shepherd
Church of the Nazarene
Meridian, Idaho

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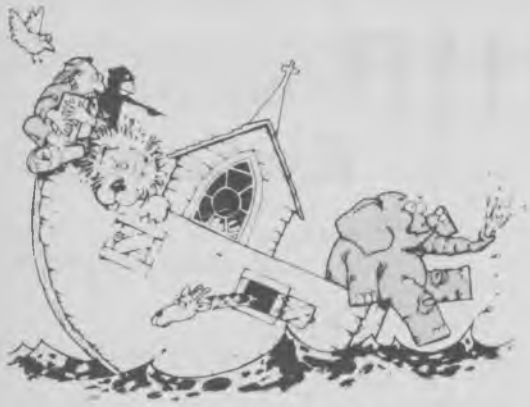
by July 1, 1995, so that I can take them with me as I return to Zambia, Africa.



Tradition Versus Change

Our district leaders for church, Sunday School, youth, and missions stopped in our city for their fall rally. Pastors, church officials, Sunday School teachers, and missionary society presidents were all expected to attend. Separate seminars for each department were preceded by an address by the imported special speaker. He took his text from Mark 7:5, 7, 8, 9, and 13. The phrase "the tradition of the elders" or its equivalent appears in these verses. His two major emphases were: (1) Traditions are only the commandments of men and are, therefore, evil. (2) Change makes for church growth and is, therefore, desirable and holy.

He began by asking how many of us were born before the year 1945. He followed his question with a long list of changes that have occurred in our culture since that year. Then he insisted upon our need for changes.

Then he followed with an exhortation on the fact that if our churches are to win people of this "New Age," churches must change to the use and presentation of things this "New Age" loves and approves. He reminded us that this "New Age" likes choruses that are "snappy" and singable, better than it does the unfamiliar "old hymns." The modern age loves rhythm and drumbeats, with a good amount of volume from the instruments and voices.

People are more important than doctrine or the old treasured values of Christianity. So, if they are to like our church, we must give people what they like. Entertainment, snappy sermons about modern issues, the privilege of dressing as they please, regardless of how sloppily they dress down.

Yes, change is holy. So the church must change! Not the guilty sinners or the worldly young people who attend only for the sake of the bowling party or the volleyball game that follows church.

I went home and did a little research on the term *tradition. Webster's New World Dictionary,* College Edition, defines it as "the handing down orally of stories, beliefs, customs, etc., from generation to generation." It has reference to "long-established custom or practice that has the effect of an unwritten law."

The term *traditional* signifies "the conventional or customary handed down from former generations." Hence *traditionalism* specifies: "(1) Adherence to or excessive respect for tradition or established customs. (2) The doctrine that the only valid religious belief is that handed down by a divine revelation, originally."

As to synonyms for the word *tradition,* the *Reader's Digest Family Word Finder* suggests the following: "Handed down beliefs, custom, habit, typical way, conventional usage, unwritten law, order of the day." For antonyms, the same source suggests: "Novelty, innovation, new wrinkle, new idea, and the latest thing." It informs me that the word *tradition* comes from the Latin word *tradere,* which means "to deliver over. Hence the knowledge, customs—customs transmitted from generation to generation." Hence we may apply the term to "the body of unwritten Christian doctrine handed down through successive generations." Thus, it sets forth a custom so long continued that it has almost the force of law. Also we may define *traditionalism* as "undue reverence for tradition in religious matters."

The word *change* means: "To substitute something for something else. To cause another *person* or *thing* or *activity* to take the place of; to alter, to cause to be different. A passing from one condition or form to another." As to synonyms for *change,* we find such terms as "to vary, to transform, to substitute for, to alter, to modify, or convert," suggested by *Winston's Dictionary.*

So what? We may very well conclude that any change may be *for the better* or *for the worse.* Hence, qualities may be *improved* or *degraded* by change. So what is our important question? Is it not: "What do we seek by change: values, convenience, relief from, more enthusiasm, or simply 'change for change's sake'?" So I boldly ask: Is rhythm sacred? Whence comes relief from monotony? According to Matt. 13:52, treasures may be either *old* or *new.* According to Jesus, we need some of both. However, we mortals seldom strike a balance in our activities and priorities. We go from one extreme to another. Of each we may say, "This also will pass away!" Can't there be such things as fads even in modern church operations and worship? If so, let us also raise the questions: "What next? What manner of being do we seek? Why are some of our evangelical (?) pastors so happy with *New Age* innovations in our order of service and manner of worship? Shall we dub each new arrival as a holy change?"

So here you have it, Mr. Ark Rocker! Right from one born before 1945. Incidentally, we had already shot off the first atom bomb in White Sands, New Mexico, and dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan by 1945. I was serving one of my most important pastorates by that time. Let me sign off as one who has "lost his *rocker"* along the Front Range of the great state of Colorado.

AN ANONYMOUS TRADITIONALIST

WORSHIP & PREACHING HELPS

Paul Barber

June/July/August 1995

Prepared by Paul Barber

INTRODUCTION

Paul Barber is currently the senior pastor at Lewiston First Church of the Nazarene in Lewiston, Idaho.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:1-2
June 4, 1995

INTRO:

As we walk into this first letter from Peter, we must understand that he did not casually write to a bunch of friends in Asia Minor to pass the time of day. He purposed to communicate hope, holiness, and life to people struggling for survival, spiritually and physically. Peter did not write to these folks, asking them to flee for their lives. He sent instructions on how to live where they were! These are instructions we all need, for we have a strong tendency to flee from the uncomfortable to the comfortable, i.e., schools, cities, politics, family, and sometimes even the church. We forget that we are called to be uncomfortable (1 Pet. 2:20-21).

Peter knew that if these folks were going to make it, they must know who they were in Christ. You find strength in knowing who you are! The people needed to know their identity, which in turn would give them a sense of purpose and a reason for the things they were experiencing. If a person falls spiritually, it generally happens because he forgets who he is as a child of God. He begins to let other things identify his life.

Perhaps one of the greatest needs in the Church today is for a renewed sense of identity as Christians. Then, when negative issues confront us, we let them bounce off, not of our emotions or feelings, but rather off of our identity as Christians, as children of God. Only then does life make sense.

What's the big deal? The big deal is that God's reputation is at stake as people watch to see how we confront life on a daily basis. So we better know who we are.

Peter identifies seven dynamic characteristics in these first two verses, which, if fully understood, will help you face every issue in your life. These words give hope; they promote holiness; and they define life. Let's see who we are as God sees us.

I. We Are the Elect

Don't be afraid of this word "elect." It simply means that God has provided a plan whereby there *will be* a people of God, and then He invites everyone to join. In 2 Pet. 3:9, we read that the Lord is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

In attempting to clarify this whole issue of election, Dr. Harry Ironside pictured a man wandering down a broad road leading to destruction. Along the way he comes to a building. Its door is open; over it, where every passerby may see, is written: "Whosoever Will May Come." But on its other side, where only those who have believed and entered in may see, there is inscribed: "Chosen in Christ Before the Foundation of the World." D. L. Moody said it simply: "The *whosoever wills* are the elect. The whosoever won'ts are the nonelect." The dictionary says simply that this word "elect" means "one who is favored or preferred." As one who believes, I am "favored" by God and given the privilege of being part of what He is doing in our world. It helps me to know I have been elected.

II. We Are Strangers

To understand that we are strangers in the world is to understand that we are called to be uncomfortable: never at home in the place that we live. To understand this condition, one only has to put himself in the position of one who lives in a country other than his own: a resident alien. As comfortable as the surroundings might be, he still doesn't belong. The old song that begins, "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passin' through," says it well.

Peter, however, is concerned about their lifestyle as resident aliens. He addresses the issue of how they live in this place where they don't belong. Sometimes it helps us classify our position by listing the ways in which we are uncomfortable living in the world.

As a Christian, it makes me uncomfortable to be surrounded by sin and sinful living. As children, we all remember the "friends" who tried their best to get us to disregard our parents' words. It made us uncomfortable because we loved our parents. In the same way, the sinful pressures of the world press against us. It makes us uncomfortable because we love our Father.

We are uncomfortable with broken vows, broken families, broken lives, and a broken world! God's ideal has been planted in our hearts and written in His Word. So we feel like strangers in the midst of the brokenness.

We are so uncomfortable with the worldly, profane speech patterns; the media, which glorifies sin; and the degrading music. It rubs against our spiritual sensitivities, hurting us to the core. We feel like strangers here!

We are so uncomfortable with the pressures, which never seem to go away, to conform to worldly standards and thus to betray our trust.

We long for home. We value our spiritual family. We look toward that day when the word "stranger" is not part of our vocabulary because we are living in that city where love resides, speech is pure, music is heavenly, vows are eternal, and sin is abolished!

Let's not talk about the fact that if we are not uncomfortable, we're probably not strangers! Knowing that I'm a stranger helps me understand why I'm uncomfortable. It also reminds me that there is a place *where I will be comfortable.* It helps me to know I am a stranger here.

III. We Are Scattered

The word "scattered" has *purpose* to it. It helps me to know that where I am is important in God's agenda of going into all the world. It makes me feel like a missionary, on loan from God to the people I am around. It helps me to know why my circumstances are different from another Christian brother. We are both scattered, but in different places. My job is to "bloom where I am planted" and enjoy the process.

It helps me to know I am one of the scattered ones of God.

IV. We Are Chosen

This word "chosen" has special meaning to me. If we were to simply say that in "election" God *provided* for me by the sacrifice of His Son, then in this word "chosen" comes the intimation that we were *planned for.*

ILLUS. One of my friends was adopted as a baby. His adoptive parents always told him, as he was growing up, that he didn't "just happen," but that they purposely brought him into their lives to love, nurture, and care for him. They planned all of this just for him.

It means something to be chosen. Peter says we are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God." What a privilege! Because of being *chosen,* God has developed a special plan for my life that involves the best that He has. It helps me to know I've been chosen.

What does it mean to be chosen by God the Father? Peter tells us that it is accomplished by "the sanctifying work of the Spirit"; i.e., He draws us to Christ, but more than that, He, the Spirit, sets us apart "for obedience to Jesus Christ." This identifies our purpose for living as a Christian. My purpose in life as a Christian is not to be successful by worldly standards; it is simply obedience to Christ. It puts all of us on a level playing field. Personal strengths have nothing to do with it. All of this is made possible by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, i.e., the "sprinkling by his blood."

CONCLUSION:

A blessing attached to these characteristics is special beyond measure. Peter prays that in the midst of being the elect of God, resident aliens, scattered everywhere, planned for or chosen by God, that "grace and peace" would be ours "in abundance." Grace and peace are two things money can't buy. Is the "uncomfortable" inconvenience of being a Christian worthwhile? Most certainly! Isn't it a wonderful thing to be reminded of who we are in Christ? When I know my *identity,* I have *purpose* and a *reason* for the things I am experiencing. My life is full.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Trumpet/Piano
Scripture	Ps. 93
Choruses	"How Excellent Is Thy Name"
	"How Majestic Is Your Name"
	"What a Mighty God We Serve"
Hymn	"Antiphonal Praise (We Worship You)"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"O Lord, You're Beautiful"
Offertory	
Choir	"The Lord Is Lifted Up"
Ministry in Music	"It's Real"
Message from God's Word	"WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?"
Hymn of Response	"I Know Whom I Have Believed"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

THANK GOD!

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:3-5
June 11, 1995

INTRO:

You can almost feel Peter exploding with great emotion. Having outlined for us in the first two verses God's wonderful truth, he began with election "from [or, before] the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 17:8, all KJV) and moved to our present experience as a child of God. Peter can't hold it in any longer, so he blurts out, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Pet. 1:3). This could well be translated: "Thank God! Thank God! Thank God! Thank God!" Peter is awestruck and overwhelmed that God would make such a wonderful provision for mankind. He knows it is his privilege to be a participant in all of this. Such joy is more than he can bear. This kind of praise ought to be the daily exercise of the person who wants to stay fit spiritually. In fact, for our greatest benefit, we ought to pray verses 3-5 every day in our personal devotions. Here is what excited him. First, he told us *who* we are, our identity. Now he tells us *why* we are.

I. God Has Given Us New Birth

Peter knew so well from his own experience that he was a new person in Christ. He had indeed been "born again." He did not get the proverbial patch job to make old Peter look good—he was good. He was a new creature. His sins had been forgiven; of that he was confident.

ILLUS. There is a commonly known story that comes from the life of Martin Luther. It is said that the devil approached Luther one day and tried to use the fact that every person is fallible. He presented the Reformer with a long list of sins of which he was guilty. When he had finished reading, Luther said to Satan, "Think a little harder; you must have forgotten some." This the devil did and added other sins to the list. At the conclusion of this exchange, Martin Luther simply said, "That's fine; now write across that list in red ink, *'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin'* [1 John 1:7, NKJV]." There was nothing the devil could say to that.

Peter had this kind of confidence. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:3, 5-7, KJV). Only the divinely affected new birth can make us new creatures in Christ. It is a great experience to rehearse the changes that have taken place in your life since you were born again. You might say, "I'm not all that I can be, but I'm not what I used to be." To that, we say, "Thank God!"

To become a recipient of this new birth, you must place yourself under the mercy of God and believe that Jesus paid the penalty for your sins on the Cross and that you are now free to live for Him. In this transaction you have moved from a position of spiritual death to spiritual life! You are a new person with a new destiny.

II. You Also Have a New Hope

The hope that Peter talks about has several aspects. It is, of course, the hope of heaven. Peter calls it a "living hope," which means that it's not just "out there" somewhere after we die, but that it permeates our new life right now. We are people of hope! Hope is a powerful emotion.

ILLUS. In 1965 naval aviator James S. Stockdale became one of the first American pilots to be shot down during the Vietnam War. Captured by the Vietcong, he spent seven years as a prisoner of war. During that time he was frequently tortured in an attempt to break him and get him to denounce the involvement of the United States in the war. Chained for days at a time with his hands above his head, he could not even swat the mosquitoes. Today, he still cannot bend his left knee. He walks with a severe limp from having his leg broken by his captors, and it was never reset. One of the worst things done to him was his being held in isolation away from other American prisoners of war and allowed to see only his guards and interrogators.

How could anyone survive seven years of such treatment? As he looks back on that time, Stockdale says that his hope kept him alive. Hope of one day going home! That each day could be the day of his release! Without hope, he knew that he would die in hopelessness, as others had done.

Such is the power of hope—it can keep one alive when nothing else can.

To say that, in Christ, we are a people of hope is a positive statement, but our hope is not tied to our environment. Our hope is not tied to the stock market; our hope is not with society's dreamers; our hope is not in the government. Our hope is in Christ, the Creator of the universe. Hope causes us to walk toward what we cannot see. Emily Dickinson wrote:

> *Hope is the thing with feathers*
> *That perches in the soul,*
> *And sings the tune without the words,*
> *And never stops at all.*

This powerful emotion called hope is so strong that Dostoyevsky said, "Totally without hope one cannot live." Once again, it might be well to define the hope that is in us because of Christ. In the midst of a negative world, we remain the hopeful people of God.

III. We Have an Inheritance

These amazing descriptions of our new life in Christ keep rolling out of Peter's heart. He now tells us that God has given us, in this new birth, an "inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you" (v. 4). Listen to a few of the biblical descriptions of this inheritance:

A. We are heirs of eternal life (Titus 3:7).

B. We are heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14, KJV).

C. We are heirs of the promises made to Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

D. We are heirs of glory (Rom. 8:17).

E. We are heirs of righteousness (Heb. 11:7).

F. We are heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7).

It goes on and on in Scripture, but perhaps 1 Cor. 2:9 says it best: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (KJV).

CONCLUSION:

As though all of this were not enough, Peter tells us that "through faith [we] are shielded by God's power" until Jesus comes again (v. 5). Think of it! We have avoided hell; we've gained heaven; we have a new, living hope and an inheritance that can hardly be described! All of this plus God's own secret service agents wherever we go, who are tapped into His own power. Now you know why Peter could say, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" or "Thank God!"

If you are not a Christian, wouldn't it make sense to become a follower of Jesus and be a part of all this excitement? I guarantee that the moment you do, you'll feel like Peter and only be able to exclaim, "Thank God!"

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Scripture	Ps. 16:5-11
Call to Worship	"Come into His Presence"
Choruses	"I Will Enter His Gates"
	"Give Thanks"
	"Be Exalted, O God"
Hymn	"To God Be the Glory"
Chorus	"My Tribute"
Call to Prayer	"He Is Our Peace"
Pastoral Prayer	
Choir	"All I Need I've Found in Jesus"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"When Answers Aren't Enough"
Message from God's Word	"THANK GOD!"
Hymn of Response	"I Know Whom I Have Believed"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

The NEW Exhaustive Concordance
for Pastors of the 90's!!!

FROM GLORY TO GRIEF TO GLORY

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:6-9
June 18, 1995

INTRO:

Peter knew that being a Christian in that day, or any day, was not easy. For that reason he has sought to remind us of *who* we are and *why* we are. He knew that if we don't know that, then most of life will not make any sense to us. This is called perspective. Earle Wilson says that perspective is "the ability to see the present moment and immediate event against the background of a larger reference." Peter has given us the larger reference and is now going to focus on the present moment or the immediate event. Here the rubber meets the road.

After I had preached on the new birth one Sunday, a man in the congregation left a note on my office door that said: "I have made that decision . . . but now I've got a whole bunch of others to make that are running a close second! Please help!" His reference point was life. What shall I do with my pain? What shall I do with my problems? What shall I do with some of the bad situations at work?

Peter would say that these situations shall always be here in lesser or greater degrees. It is how we *view* them as Christians that will make the difference in how we *handle* them. Corrie Ten Boom brings it together when she says, "I know that the experiences of our lives, when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do." So Peter takes us from glory to grief to glory. In other words, it's all good because it has purpose. Let's take a look.

I. Grief Comes to All

Most of us are not prepared for pain and trials. Something in the background of our mind says that being a Christian will make life easier because God will handle the trials and we can simply float through. Peter shakes us out of this thinking by saying, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer" (v. 6).

It's like what my dad used to do. "Son," he'd say, "let's go get some ice cream! *But* first, let's clean up the yard."

We've moved from glory to grief. The people to whom Peter was writing were right in the middle of grief. They stood as targets of hatred by unconverted members of their families and friends. They were tortured to recant their faith. Some were put to death. Many had their property destroyed or seized. They understood the fact of trials and grief.

I watched an interview on television the other night of a Rwandan lady walking back into her own country. When she had fled her country some weeks earlier, she had witnessed the hacking death of her six children and her husband. This is extreme, but all of us will experience the reality of grief and trials in our life. Life refuses to be neat and clean in spite of our expectations. Peter simply says, Expect it.

Peter wants us to learn to deal with grief and trials, transforming them from points of stress and anger to building blocks of faith and endurance. Paul said it well: "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed and broken. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going" (2 Cor. 4:8-9, TLB). Peter reminds us that all these happenings have purpose: "These have come so that . . ."

II. Purpose Finds Expression

"These have come so that your faith . . . may be proved genuine" (v. 7). In essence, trials simply serve as testing points in our spiritual life that drive us in one direction or another. We hardly ever grow spiritually unless we are pushed into it by a trial. James puts it bluntly in this way: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (1:2-3). Our testimony times in church ought to be full of people thanking God for all the trials in their lives, instead of prayer requests to get out of those trials. We need to know whether our faith is genuine or frivolous. Our reactions to trials will tell us that.

However, the purpose is more than the proving of faith. Our right responses to suffering will bring praise, glory, and honor when Jesus comes back. If we want to be where the action is on that great revealing day, then we must welcome the things that test us. It's then we will see our trials in the perspective of eternity.

III. Glory Is the End Result

Peter now brings us back to a sense of glory. This is a faith thing. Trial and grief are no fun. Physically we may be at our wit's end, so Paul reminds us that reality for the Christian is not bound up in physical circumstances; it's bound up in Jesus. Faith is *the One* we do not see transcending the things we do see. A deep, abiding, inexpressible, and glorious joy begins to bubble out of our spirits.

The songwriter said, "There's a deep, settled peace in my soul." Circumstances didn't bring that out—faith in Christ did. The glorious joy comes because, in Jesus, we know that *everything* that is brought into our lives works toward eternity! "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28, KJV).

CONCLUSION:

The words of Zech. 13:8-9 form a fitting conclusion. "'In the whole land,' declares the LORD, 'two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, "They are my people," and they will say, "The LORD is our God."'"

We move from glory to glory, with the fire in between. How much better can it get?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Hymn	"Faith of Our Fathers"
Men's Ensemble	"Find Us Faithful"
Scripture	Ps. 103:1-18
Hymn	"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"
Chorus	"Glorify Thy Name"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"The Lord's Prayer"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"My Father Watches Over Me"
Message from God's Word	"FROM GLORY TO GRIEF TO GLORY"
Hymn of Response	"Be Still, My Soul"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

"I'm afraid to go under, Reverend; can you just hose me down?"

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SANCTIFIED CURIOSITY

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:10-12
June 25, 1995

INTRO:

Peter keeps building on the excitement of this message of the gospel. Remember, he has shown us who we are in Christ and why. He has traced the steps from glory to glory with grief in between. Now, he is telling his readers that they are living in the greatest days of history. The prophecies of Jesus and of salvation have been fulfilled in their generation. Think of it. The basic essence of the message of the Old Testament prophets was now an open book in front of them. It was the fullness of time! No more mystery. No more delays. The Messiah had come according to the Scriptures.

Peter encouraged these folks not to give up because of persecution and trials, for the "fun" was just beginning. They were the privileged ones of God, having seen the things that the prophets could only search for, but this privilege was going to cost them something. This new life in Christ had to be defined; it had to be lived. First, Peter wanted them to exult in the fact that they were seeing, before their eyes, things that even the angels had longed to see. In other words, whatever else is going to happen, *it will be worth it all!*

I. Sanctified Curiosity Is Important

Curiosity always seems to bring two or three thoughts along with it. Old adages pick it up well: "Curiosity killed the cat," "Few people suffer as do people in a small town when a stranger drops in and won't tell his business," and "Bright eyes indicate curiosity, and black eyes indicate too much curiosity."

We think we have a good handle on curiosity until we stop to think that too much curiosity became a factor in Eve's temptation. Whatever the angle, I like Samuel Johnson's observation: "Curiosity is one of the permanent characteristics of a vigorous intellect." Sanctified curiosity might well fit into that description with the added thought that curiosity lures us toward the things of God. Let's look at some folks in our Scripture today who had a sanctified curiosity.

What was happening before their eyes, God had been planning since the beginning. The Old Testament prophets had written amazing things under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ about this salvation. They spent their energies trying to understand what God was saying to them. They wanted to believe that the Messiah would come, bringing salvation with Him in a blaze of glory and political might. They could understand concepts like that, but they found themselves writing about both sufferings and glory. It didn't make sense. Isa. 53:3 gives a clue of how hard it must have been to write one thing but believe another: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

What catches my eye in all of this is the phrase that the prophets "searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances" (1 Pet. 1:10-11). On that side of Calvary there was an intense, searching curiosity about Christ and His mission. On this side of Calvary I am wondering what would happen today if the Church had this same intense, searching curiosity and expectation about the mission and person of Christ. We get lulled to sleep, feeling we know about all there is to know. Maybe we even get a little bit bored by what we have heard so often before. Once in a while a light comes on when we read that even His mercies are "past finding out" (Rom. 11:32-33, KJV). We are stirred a little about the prospects of finding out, but we don't follow through. What do you suppose a good dose of sanctified curiosity would do for God's people today?

II. Unselfish Service Is Important

Peter tells us that God revealed to the prophets that they were actually serving, by their writing, generations not yet born. It would be an odd thought to understand that my reason for existence is not right now—but some time long after my death.

ILLUS. I have no idea where I picked up this letter, but it reinforces the fact that we live and work as much for others in the church as we do for ourselves:

> Friend, you enter this church, not as a stranger but as the guest of God. He is your Heavenly Father. Come then, with joy in your heart and thanks on your lips into His presence, offering to Him your love and service. Be grateful to the strong and loyal men and women who, in the name of Jesus Christ, builded this place of worship and to all who love this home of faith as the inspiration of their labor, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit—and may that blessing rest on you, both on your going out and your coming in.

What a wonderful thought—to thank those who unselfishly built this building that we are now worshiping in! We, in our generation, are so tuned in to the present purpose of our lives that I'm not sure we can fully understand this business of serving and living for the next generation. This might be one of the great downsides of our society and even of the Church. Our indebtedness, our morals, our social institutions all seem to focus on what we deem to be present need, when everyone would be better off if we were looking out more for the next generation than our own. It has been well said: "A politician looks to the next election; a statesman looks to the next generation."

A fine-tuned concept of not serving ourselves but others would change most decisions for the better. I have often thought that the people who built the church building in which we worship were serving us more than themselves. I ask myself, how much of what I do is for me and how much is for the generation that won't even know my name? Unselfish service in the Kingdom. Novel thought, isn't it?

III. Even Angels Understand the Importance of Our Message

Peter caps everything off with this great phrase: "Even angels long to look into these things" (v. 12). The inference is that if salvation is so intriguing to angels, how much more should it be to us! We might assume that angels would know all of these things. Apparently this is not so. Paul gives this insight: that his mission was "to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery [the unsearchable riches of Christ], which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 3:9-10). Angels—learning from us in the Church? Special? Yes. First Pet. 1:13 states, "Therefore, prepare your minds for action." This is to say, "Hang on, folks; nobody can top this! The angels will be learning from us what it means to live out the holy life!"

CONCLUSION:

These first 12 verses of 1 Pet. 1 have been laying the groundwork and justification for everything that is to follow. If God has provided all of this from the beginning, just for us, then the deepest cry of our spirits must parrot a phrase from Francis Schaeffer, "How shall I then live?" The rest of 1 Peter describes the life. But wait! You can't *live* the life if you don't *have* the life! What a shame to miss out on so much simply because you don't want to let go of sin in your life. Let's illustrate it in this way:

ILLUS. There is a gourd that grows long like a string bean and, upon reaching its full length, begins to swell. When the gourd is in the string bean state, a boy ties a cord around half of it so that half stops growing; the other half continues to swell, and thus a narrow-necked bottle is formed. Then the boy cuts the gourd off the vine, hollows it out, drops in a handful of rice, and ties the gourd to a tree. A monkey smells the rice and thrusts in his paw to grab it, but he cannot pull his paw back out. If he would drop the rice, he could get away; but as long as he holds on to the food, his paw acts like a cork in reverse; he is a prisoner of his own greed. Although the monkey chatters, pulls, and tugs, he still holds on to the rice, and the boy slips a bamboo cage around him and then breaks the gourd. The monkey eats the rice and is sold down the river.

That is the picture of many people who have their hands full of sin, full of themselves. God says, "I will give you salvation, fill your life with My righteousness, and take you to heaven; but you need to open your hand and drop what you're clutching."

What a trade! A handful of death for an eternity of life! If you are a person who has not been born again, I want to offer you the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ. He is the One who paid the penalty for your sins. I ask you to become a follower of Him. Then, get ready to watch the transformation of your life on this amazing trip through life and eternity!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Hymns	"It Is Well with My Soul"
	"Blessed Assurance"
Scripture	Ps. 85:8-13
Choruses	"I'm Loving You More Every Day"
	"Make Me a Servant"
	"I Give All My Life to You"
	"I Surrender All"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"I Will Serve Thee"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"Bring Back the Glory"
Message from God's Word	"SANCTIFIED CURIOSITY"
Hymn of Response	"Just as I Am"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

DISCIPLINED HOLINESS

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:13
July 2, 1995

INTRO:

In high school, I thought it would be fun to run in the cross-country races as part of the track team. Being young, strong, and fond of running, I thought to myself, This is going to be a snap! I disdained training and amused myself by jogging around the two-mile course as though I was out for a morning run. I was trying to give the impression to the coach that I was out to get in shape.

What a surprise when we ran our first race! I couldn't believe how fast everyone took off; but I kept up—for a while, that is. I wasn't even halfway through the course when I knew I was going to die of a heart attack. I had no choice but to stop and drop out.

What was the problem? Simple—I was out of shape. I wanted to join the team and be a star, but I didn't want the discipline of training. A lot of Christians are like that. We want to be Christians and to be part of God's family, but we don't want the discipline of training. A person might slop through like that for a while, but somewhere in the Christian race you'll pull up like I did and drop out, exhausted.

Peter calls to us like a coach: "You have the toughest race of your life ahead of you, so you'd best get yourself in shape! Let's start with the basics."

I. "Prepare Your Minds for Action"

There is a school of thought in church circles that the only two criteria for truth are faith and emotion. These folks judge the validity of an act by the degree of emotion involved and then place their faith in the emotional experience. The nature of emotions, like that of drugs, is that there is always the need for a bigger experience to prove your close walk with the Lord or to prove the validity of a new action. Paul would tell us that we are not transformed by emotional heights. Rather, we are to be "transformed by the renewing of [our] mind" (Rom. 12:2). What a novel thought this is for Christians who have to "feel" it.

Perhaps one of the greatest needs of the Church today is for Christians to prepare their minds. We need to start thinking again about God, grace, faith, salvation, holiness, heaven, hell, and endurance. Our minds need to be filled with the thoughts of God. We need to become lifelong students of the Word. We need to read good books. We need to *think* again! "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7, KJV). It's not as a man *feels* in his heart; it's as a man *thinks* in his heart. Peter tells us to start thinking about *action!* Until we do that, there is no real hope for our churches to be brought to life. Peter refers to action brought about by *obedience,* not simply the action of busyness, which we are so good at. More specifically, Peter asks us to prepare our minds for action because he knows that the holy life will be the most strenuous activity in which we will ever be involved. We've got to *think* it through!

II. "Be Self-controlled"

Lack of thought always leads to lack of self-control. When our mental patterns get sloppy, our lives get sloppy. In essence, the Christian is like an athlete in attitude. The athlete wants to win, or he wouldn't even be participating. Because he wants to win, he regulates everything in his life according to the training rules established by the coach. Sometimes his *feeling* will be to do what he wants to do, but his brain will bring him back to the rules. Sloppiness at this point will either get him kicked off the team or consign him to failure as an athlete.

Someone has defined self-control as the capacity to break a chocolate bar into four pieces with your bare hands—and then eat only one of the pieces. Now we may chuckle, but inwardly we know that life is like this when it comes to options that are presented to us. A holy person knows that for victory to be attained, there will be a number of strategic times in his life when he needs to make a particular response, and the response is a singular no.

Self-control is a vital part of Christian living. Paul would tell us to play to win. Our whole lives will change as we bring our bodies, minds, and emotions under the training rules of the *Heavenly Coach.* Like the athlete, nobody can do this for you. Self-control is always personal. Self-control is also an integral part of disciplined holy living. Paul kept his body under control because he knew it would want to do just about anything but be holy. It always wanted to do things to excess. Hence, his body needed to be reigned in like you would reign in an out-of-control horse. There is beauty in self-control.

III. Hope Is the Motive

Martin Luther said, "All worthwhile things materialize through hope." No farmer would ever plant a grain of seed if he did not hope that it would spring up and produce seed again. No pastor would ever plant a church if he had no hope for its success. No couple would ever get married if there was no hope for happiness in the relationship. We are driven by hope. Hope and faith are first cousins, inextricably bound up together in our spiritual life. Hope always reaches out in the same direction as faith, knowing what's out there but not being able to see it. As Christians, we have planted within us the hope of eternal life, which we can't see, but which we know exists. We base our existence on this hope. Hope becomes the driving motive for all our actions.

For Peter, to "set your hope fully" (1 Pet. 1:13) was like giving the runner instructions to keep his eye on the finish line. Perhaps one of the downsides of contemporary living is that we tend to be motivated more by the present circumstance than by future reward. How we care for our money indicates how strong an impulse this is. Easy to spend—hard to save. As we Christians concentrate on where Christ is taking us, then the present circumstances will affect us less and less.

Temptation? Succumbing doesn't lead to the goal. Suffering? It's all right—Jesus suffered too. Plus, suffering teaches endurance that will help me get to the goal. People? They're interesting, but I get my directions from the Coach!

Problems in the Church? They'll be there till Jesus comes; but the Church is eternal, while the problems aren't.

We could go on and on.

CONCLUSION:

As Christians, the toughest, most demanding race of our lives is the holy life. That is why so few people even try it. It is a great contest with wonderful rewards!

ILLUS. Every four years great competitions called the Olympic Games are held in the world of athletics. It is considered a great honor to be on the team that represents our country at these events. There are elimination contests, and finally the team is chosen with a great deal of anticipation. All of the team members are known as winners. As team members board the planes, there are many celebrations of anticipated victories. Our athletes compete against men and women from other countries. Some of them will be fortunate enough to be winners.

After the countries' teams have been chosen, the status of the athletes is fixed; they are on the team. Even though a team member doesn't do as well as expected, he is still a team member, even though he might not win a prize. Sometimes a person who thought he might only be a pacesetter may turn out to be a world champion.

It's fascinating, isn't it? Anyone can enroll in the competition; but few are willing to pay the price to make the team; and fewer yet go on to be world-class Christians. Being called to live a holy life is being called to be a world-class Christian. Nothing less than the best for the divine Coach who chose us to be on His team!

Are you going to make it? Perhaps that depends on whether you are mentally prepared for action, whether you are prepared to discipline and train the parts of your life that don't want to be disciplined and trained. The key to the motivation is in Peter's words: "Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Pet. 1:13).

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Hymn	"Rejoice, the Lord Is King"
Scripture	Ps. 34:1-4
Choir	"Bless God"
Choruses	"Praise the Name of Jesus"
	"Great Is the Lord"
	"He Is Exalted"
	"I Exalt Thee"
	"I Will Praise Him"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"I Love You, Lord"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"With All My Heart" (Manson)
Message from God's Word	"DISCIPLINED HOLINESS"
Hymn of Response	"The Solid Rock"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

HOLINESS? ARE YOU KIDDING?

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:14-16
July 9, 1995

INTRO:

Peter has established the "whys" and the "whos" and has promptly announced to us that we are not playing children's games. He doesn't call us to a life of holiness and then lay a trip on us about what this entails. He is up-front and direct. It's going to cost you everything.

First, it is going to cost you your own assessment of yourself. It is the clear look, the honest view from God's point of view; i.e., we have to stop kidding about our own goodness.

ILLUS. A lady discovered that her bathroom scale registered five pounds lighter if she stood on her left foot instead of her right. It made no difference to her that other scales confirmed the right-foot weight. She wanted to be lighter than she was, so she took comfort in standing on her left foot on her own scale.

Now, our old nature wants desperately to believe the best of itself. Its pride is that of Satan. It takes comfort in anything and everything that speaks well of it. Only in the Word of God do we get the true picture of what we are. Here the scales have no false springs and no positions that are off-balance. Here we find the slaying of pride and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any other balance is false and, therefore, an abomination to the Lord. Peter calls us to get rid of the evil desires we had when we lived in ignorance, and to live the God-called life of holiness. It will require the highest and best that we have in diligent living.

The old adage from the Scriptures, that if you are going to build, you had better "count the cost" (Luke 14:28, NKJV), applies here. You might say to yourself, If it's that tough, you'd better count me out; I'll never make it! Peter would answer that if you will follow his instructions, He'll walk you through it step by step. Each step will lead you to increased life. "Life by the yard is hard, but life by the inch is a cinch." Preparing your minds, self-control, and setting your hope (that is, keeping everything in perspective) are the first three steps that will help you to understand the issues.

Peter was talking to Christians, and so are we. Don't confuse these instructions with sloppy humanistic thinking that says, "I can do all that in my own power." We are talking to born-again, living hope, inheritance believers that need to jump into the deep waters. Some of what the world does is like what Christians do, but most of it isn't. We are citizens of another country; therefore—

I. "Do Not Conform"

The picture Peter paints with these words, "As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance" (v. 14), is of the school grounds where a teacher, who has watched the children be wild and out of control, has instructed them and then watched them do it all over again. Now she says to them, "I have told you all the reasons for not acting that way. If you are going to pass in my class, you must not . . ."

Peter could have laid out a whole list of desires that had become unholy: e.g., the desire for position, the desire for sex, the desire for money, the desire for popularity, the desire for power, the desire for things, the desire for clothes, etc., etc. He was saying that, up until now, we did some or all of these things out of ignorance or simply floating through life. Now we had to stop that nonsense. He knew that the process of conforming to these things would make it impossible for us to conform to Christ.

You can't have it both ways; so if you are going to be a holy person, you are going to get there only by purposeful living.

Are some of these aforementioned things legitimate? Are they all right? Yes, but they must be under the Lord's control. The Christian who wants to live a holy life is more interested in what the Lord says about these things than what his emotions are wanting to dictate about them. That is controlled living. It is knowledgeable living. To have sufficient time for the things that count, we must eliminate the things that do not count.

II. Holy Living Is What Counts

It's easy to get bummed out thinking about what it's going to take to live the holy life. The attitude in which we approach this life is extremely important.

To use a football analogy, are you pinned down on your 1-yard line or do you have a great opportunity to go 99 yards for a touchdown? It's an attitude issue, isn't it? Peter calls for the touchdown and asks us to join him. The march downfield will be coming out of a whole different playbook, which he will open up to us. When Peter says, "Be holy in all you do" (v. 15), he is saying that your life will never be the same again. What counts is being holy in our marriages, being holy at work, being holy in our public relations, being holy in our thought life, being holy when we are suffering, being holy when everything is easy, being holy in our recreation. This kind of holy living is possible because it is an inside-out issue. The outside conforms because the inside is changed. Inner beauty is a marvelous thing and is not deceptive.

ILLUS. A young officer who was blinded during the war met, and later married, one of the nurses who took care of him in an army hospital. One day he overheard someone speaking about himself and his wife. They said, "It was lucky for her that he was blind, since he never would have married such a homely woman if he had had eyes."

He rose to his feet and walked toward the voices, saying: "I overheard what you said, and I thank God from the depths of my heart for blindness of eyes, without which I might have been kept from seeing the marvelous worth of the soul of this woman who is my wife. She is the most noble character I have ever known. If the conformation of her features is such that it might have

masked her inward beauty to my soul, then I am the great gainer by having lost my sight."

It is inner beauty; it is inside-out living that God desires of us at every level of our lives. Why? Because our Heavenly Father is holy, and we are His children. Children need to bear the characteristics of their family; differing characteristics make us wonder what family they came from. The world's families have their characteristics; God's family has His (Gal. 5).

How do we get there anyway? Is it a matter of acting right in all that I do? No. It's a matter of *being* right, then our actions will follow. Is it all right to act right without being right? Sure, but you won't last. Peter knows that if we try to not conform to the world's ways before we are right on the inside, we will fail; he wants us to try so that we'll know we can't make it without starting from the inside out!

Practical holiness is all bound up in this issue—Jesus is Lord. If He is Lord of my life, then I have quit my old ways of life. If He is Lord of my life, then I relinquish control of my life to Him. If He is Lord of my life, then the only right I have is the right to be holy. If He is Lord of my life, then living like Him is the only thing that counts—nothing else matters! I've been born into His family, and now my greatest desire is to be like my Father.

CONCLUSION:

Holiness is an interesting topic. Roy Hession gives to us a wonderful illustration of the simplicity of receiving this life.

ILLUS.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with One who is already there, in our hearts. Take up a sponge and while it is in your hand squeeze it. In that condition, plunge it into water and submerge it, keeping it tightly clasped in your hand. It is now in the water and the water is in it but just around its edges. As you hold it in the water, open your hand; as you do so the water fills all the pores of the sponge which you release in this way. It is now filled with water. When we receive Christ, we are born anew and put into that sphere where the Holy Spirit is operating, but we are not filled with His Spirit. We are filled with His Holy Spirit and empowered to live the holy life in direct proportion to the "opening of our fist."

This is given as an illustration only, but we must realize that Peter doesn't give any other instructions about *how* to be holy other than "So be holy in all you do" (v. 15). He implies that there needs to be a stopping point of the old way of life and a starting point on the way of holiness. The starting point is the Lordship of Christ; it's letting the *Coach* be the *Coach*. I'm now playing on *His* field! "Holiness? Are you kidding?" No, I'm not kidding. It assures us of victory by putting us on a winning team, and every play brings us closer to a win.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Hymn	"Called unto Holiness"
Scripture	Rom. 12:1-2
Choir	"Seekers of Your Heart"
Choruses	"I Stand in Awe"
	"When I Look Into Your Holiness"
	"A Perfect Heart"
	"Create in Me a Clean Heart"
	"To Be like Jesus"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"More of You"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"Jesus, Lord to Me"
Message from God's Word	"HOLINESS? ARE YOU KIDDING?"
Hymn of Response	"Is Your All on the Altar?"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

EMPTY WAY/PRECIOUS BLOOD

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:17-22
July 16, 1995

INTRO:

Peter continues to press home the seriousness of his topic, holiness, by reminding us that God's standard for our lives will be the standard by which He will judge us. Objectively, His standard is *love,* and He calls it *holiness.* If you are one of those who feel that practical holiness is impossible, remember to sift it down to its most common element: love. Holiness is measured by love.

ILLUS. In a boiler room, it is impossible to look into the boiler to see how much water it contains. However, running up beside the boiler is a tiny glass tube that serves as a gauge. As the water stands in the little tube, so it stands in the great boiler. When the tube is half full, the boiler is half full; if empty, so is the boiler.

How do you know you love God? You believe you love Him, but you want to know for sure. Look at the gauge. Your love for people gauges your love for God.

We love to talk about the "theology of holiness." In reality, it could all be broken down to two words, "Christian love." Christian love does not violate holiness, and holiness does not violate Christian love. Is it impossible to love as Christ wants us to love? If so, then we are all lost, and we don't know this One we call *Father!* The fact is that the more we love as Jesus loves, the holier we are. No other standard is worth talking about. God calls us, changes us, and empowers us to live this holy life of love. Since *agape* love, or Christian love, is a self-giving love, then in the holy life we talk about getting rid of anything that smacks of selfishness.

ILLUS. A little boy and his younger sister were riding a hobbyhorse together. The boy said, "If one of us would just get off this hobbyhorse, there would be more room for me."

This may well be the classic problem in Christian living, and it seems to show up most in the two places where it's hardest to love: in the church and in our marriages. Jesus *is* interested in our conduct. That's what the rest of this letter, 1 Peter, is about. Peter tells us that we "call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially" (v. 17). In this context, we understand that "work" is the holy walk or our "labor of love." Since this is true:

I. We Must "Live . . . as Strangers Here in Reverent Fear"

Peter pictures a person who is living in a foreign country, a place that does not belong to him. Life is different there in so many ways: traffic laws, marriage laws, food, taxes, stores, language, clothes, social customs, and requirements of every kind. For Christians, life goes on in this "foreign" country, but we also live under the laws of the "homeland." These "homeland" laws identify who we are.

When we lived in Panama, we lived there in obedience to their laws, but we *belonged* to the United States of America. We were strangers who lived under two sets of laws.

We *Christians* live under two sets of laws. The higher law for us in all cases is the law of love. We are to be holy in an unholy world. Christian love identifies us as strangers here. The One who sent us is intensely interested that we live, not like the country we are living in, but like Jesus. We live in reverent fear, so that we maintain the identity of where we came from and where we are going to. The Christian should feel a certain uneasiness with life here—at peace with God, to be sure, but uneasy with the ways of the world, which are contrary to God's ways.

ILLUS. Ornithologists now know that the great albatross flies around the world several times in the course of its life. A single trip may take him all the way across the Pacific Ocean. These great birds can stand buffeting by ocean winds for days at a time, but they become seasick if they stand on the deck of a moving ship. God created that bird for the winds, not the rolling deck of a ship.

When a true Christian gets out of his element and becomes a part of the vacillating "deck movement" of this world, he gets "sin-sick" because he is out of the element for which God created him. He is a stranger to that way of life. As a "Christian foreigner," if I settle into *that* country's ways of doing things, I must realize that I am settling into an empty way of life.

II. The World Settles for an "Empty Way of Life"

The world doesn't consider its ways empty, but God does! Peter refers to the "empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers" (v. 18), in distinction from the *full* way offered in the life of holiness. Obviously, however, this empty life is taught as the "full" life in our society, the thing to be sought after at all costs.

You will recognize what fathers teach their children from this simple list: popularity, jobs, professions, investments, retirement, comfort, position, enjoyment, houses, pleasure, recognition, etc., etc. The problem with all this stuff is that it is empty of value. It tickles the emotions but does nothing for the spirit. The high use of drugs in our society indicates that our fathers were wrong in what they taught us. The most telling question you can ask the man on the street is this: "Do you feel fulfilled in your life?" Ask that of those who have had the most of this empty stuff, like the O. J. Simpsons and the Elvis Presleys and the Michael Jacksons of the world. We were not redeemed, Peter tells us, by the use of perishable things like silver or gold.

III. "Redeemed . . . with the Precious Blood of Christ"

We have been rescued from the empty way of life by that Blood! In verses 19-21, Peter lays out the essence of the gospel.

Jesus Christ was the unblemished or perfect Sacrifice for our sins. He is the eternal Son of God, "chosen before the creation of the world." He came in these last days for you, providing salvation, redemption from sins. Through Jesus you believe in and can approach God the Father, for the Father raised Jesus from the dead and set Him at His right hand. Through Jesus Christ, "your faith and hope" rest "in God."

It was important for those folks with Jewish backgrounds to be reminded that their belief was correct. It is important for us to know well in whom our confidence stands. Our faith is not in that which doesn't last; it trusts in the blood of Jesus. His blood redeems us, sanctifies us, and plants our feet on the highway called "holiness."

ILLUS. The great missionary David Brainerd spent his brief life ministering to American Indians. Before he died, prior to reaching the age of 30, he wrote in his journal: "I never got away from Jesus and Him crucified. When my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and Him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality. I found that one followed as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other."

He also said this in another place: "I find my Indians begin to put on the garments of holiness and their common life begins to be sanctified even in small matters when they are possessed by the doctrine of Christ and Him crucified."

Brainerd was saying: When a Christian realizes who Jesus is and what He has done for him so graciously, it has a dramatic effect on this life, not only in salvation but also in holiness.

CONCLUSION:

Peter helps us understand our accountability to God. If you reversed the order of these verses, you would see that we are redeemed by "the precious blood of Christ" from an "empty way of life." Hence, we should "live our lives . . . here in reverent fear," knowing that God will judge us all by His standard of love. We want to pray, "Dear Lord, how I long to be like You. Help me be the holy person You want me to be as I live in this unholy foreign country."

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Hymn	"My Savior's Love"
Chorus	"Oh, How He Loves You and Me"
Scripture	Rom. 3:21-26
Ensemble	"Communion Medley" (Cymbala)
Choruses	"Give Thanks"
	"Thank You, Lord, for Saving My Soul"
	"I Love You, Lord"
	"Father, I Adore You"
Pastoral Prayer	
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"Broken and Spilled Out"
Message from God's Word	"EMPTY WAY/PRECIOUS BLOOD"
Hymn of Response	"Redeemed"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

"Our fund-raising slogan will be 'The family that prays together pays together.'"

PURIFIED BY OBEDIENCE

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 1:22-25
July 23, 1995

INTRO:

Peter brings us to a point of transition that is critical to our understanding. He has told us *who* we are in Christ and *why*, i.e., the new birth. He has brought us to the point of hope, no matter what life does to us. He has asked us to bear all our energies toward one goal; that of being a holy person! Peter has asked us to focus our lives on Jesus to the degree that we dump our previous priorities rather than conform to the world's ways. We conform to the ways of Christ at all levels of our lives. God provided a way for us to accomplish this through the precious blood of Christ.

I. You Must Have a Heart for Obedience

One thing we will learn is that, while forgiveness and acceptance by Christ bring us into the family of God, obedience purifies our spirits. Peter tells us, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth" (v. 22). Some will want to argue with him about this statement, but he would be the first to tell you that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ. This cleansing gives you a heart for obedience. If you don't have a heart for obedience, you probably don't belong to the family of God. It is easy to talk obedience.

ILLUS. A husband and wife were discussing the possibility of taking a trip to the Holy Land. The husband said, "Wouldn't it be fantastic to go to the Holy Land and stand and shout the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai?"

His wife replied, "It would be better if we stayed home and kept them!"

The wife made an important point. It is important to know that the best obedience is the kind that is not done out of duty. Rather, it is done because the heart is in the obedient act, i.e., I do it because I really want to do so. If you obey because your heart is there, each act of obedience confirms your decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and that in turn maintains purity. "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word" (Ps. 119:9). "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). God's Word doesn't sanctify us because it's there; it sanctifies us when we relate it to our lives in obedience to it. God's Word is tough in what it demands because it touches the details of our lives. Over the years, we realize that God honors an obedient attitude.

ILLUS. A middle-aged man, who was a very young Christian, found in the Word of God that Christians are commanded to obey "every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Pet. 2:13, KJV). Rushing to a business appointment that involved catching a ferryboat, he was tempted to do 70 in a 50-miles-per-hour zone. He prayed as he slowed down to the legal limit, "Lord, You wrote the Book, I didn't. I am going to obey, even if it costs my appointment." He thought he would have to wait half an hour, but to his amazement, the ferry had been delayed 10 minutes; he made it. He had never known it to be late before. He thanked the Lord who wrote the Book and learned that God really does honor an obedient heart.

Incidentally, this man's life was being purified by this simple obedience, and the testimony of his life was authentic. Too many Christians are experience-oriented and forget that the real testimony of the experience is the life lived out. Old, grumpy, bitter, backbiting, "sanctified" Christians aren't sanctified. Their lips tell you one thing, but their lives tell the truth. Oh, my! "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth" (v. 22) . . .

II. "You (Must) Have Sincere Love for Your Brothers"

"Love one another deeply, from the heart" (v. 22). Well, here it is, the most basic characteristic of the holy person: "Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble" (1 John 2:10). The simple, unstumbling, obedient child of God brings great delight to the heart of God. An obediently pure heart cleans the cobwebs out so the Christian is free to love. Sin is selfish, killing whatever it touches. Love is pure, bringing life to whatever it touches.

ILLUS. A crippled girl, living in the slums, underwent an operation that might enable her to walk again. When the operation was over, she needed a blood transfusion. Her 14-year-old brother, a tough boy of the streets, volunteered. He was taken to the hospital to the bedside of his crippled sister. He stared in tight-lipped silence while the vein in his arm was opened so that the blood might flow into the body of his unconscious sister.

When it was over, the doctor put his hand on the boy's shoulder and told him that he was very brave. The boy did not comprehend; he had not understood the nature of a transfusion. After a moment, he looked up and said, "Doc, how long will it be before I die?"

As far as the boy was concerned, he had been dying; slowly and willingly, he had stoically watched the blood flow, drop by drop, expecting his sister's life to mean his own death.

This is the highest picture of human love. This kind of love always brings life to whatever it touches. Jesus himself said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:13-14). Since this is true, then I have a great obligation to remove from my life any hindrances to love.

The *hindrances* to love are the acts of the sinful nature. Look at them from Gal. 5:19-21: "Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies." All of these scream out selfishness, selfishness, selfishness, which is the opposite of love. To clear away any hindrances to love, I must purposely get rid of this stuff in my life. And why wouldn't I?

Look at the fruit of the Spirit in the same chapter: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Simply put, who would I want as a neighbor, a person who lives out the acts of the sinful nature or one who lives out the fruit of the Spirit? One brings death; the other brings life. The decision is easy!

Peter is saying, now that you've entered into the obedient life, the key characteristic you will have is not only a *sincere* love for your brothers but a deep-seated love for them, which is rooted in the love of Christ himself.

III. You Must Be Born Again

"Through the living and enduring word of God" (v. 23). Paul said about this new birth, "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:16-18). Because I'm born again, I'm a new person. Because I'm born again, I have a new set of instructions. Because I'm born again, I have learned to think God's thoughts through His Word. Because I'm born again, I think differently about people. Because I'm born again, I can be a holy person. Because I'm born again, my identity is seen in my love for my brothers. Because I'm born again, anything that happens in my life is worthwhile.

Am I overplaying the born-again experience? No! Unless a person is born again, he cannot be holy. Unless a person is born again, nothing makes sense in life. We are *born again* so that we can be the *holy people* of God. This is Peter's whole point.

CONCLUSION:

Peter closes this great first chapter by exclaiming, "The word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you" (v. 25). How confident Peter has been to bring us out of the clouds of the theoretical and plant our feet on the dusty roads where people live. On these roads our obedience is tried and tested. On these roads our holy life becomes more Christlike by our obedience. On these roads it either comes together or it doesn't. The great issues of eternity meet on these dusty roads, where either we learn to love because of Jesus, or we don't because of self!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Choir	"Praise You"
Scripture	Ps. 107:21-22
Choruses	"We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise"
	"I Will Enter His Gates"
	"Bless His Holy Name"
Hymns	"Praise Him, Praise Him"
	"O for a Thousand Tongues"
Choruses	"O for a Thousand Tongues"
	"To Thee We Ascribe Glory"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"I Worship You, Almighty God"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"Be Holy"
Message from God's Word	"PURIFIED BY OBEDIENCE"
Hymn of Response	"Jesus, I Come"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

THE BEST TASTE YET

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 2:1-2
July 30, 1995

INTRO:

They say that folks these days don't like negative things to be said in sermons. If that's true, then Peter blew it! Suppose 1 Peter 2 is a new sermon. Would you believe how he started? Check out the words: "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind" (v. 1). Some of the folks would already be upset that the pastor had been following them around that week. Oh, well.

Peter is being his direct self. Remember that his purpose is to shake us up a little and make us uncomfortable with anything that is not holy in our lives. The word "therefore" refers to his discussion of being purified by obeying the truth and loving our brothers. He doesn't want us to miss the point his by being too ambiguous.

I. We Have Some Things to Get Rid Of

Aside from the fact that these things are plain old sin and need to be gotten rid of anyway, let's view them from the perspective that, when we are indulging in these things, we lose our appetite for righteous things.

ILLUS. When I was a youngster, I used to spend what money I had on candy bars and chips. In fact, I used to keep a store of them in my hideout, hidden away from the view of my mom. After school I would "pork out" on several candy bars because I was hungry. By the time supper was on the table, I wasn't hungry anymore. When Mom would ask why, I just mumbled something about not feeling good. I think she knew that I wasn't being truthful, because she always gave me a little lecture on eating the right things and then made me sit at the table until my plate was clean.

Sometimes we Christians aren't any different from a child in why and how we deal with our spiritual appetite. We indulge in the things we shouldn't because we're "hungry," and then we lie to ourselves and others about why we aren't eating the good stuff, that is, spiritual food!

So let's take a quick look at these appetite chasers:

A. "Malice": Malice really has no appetite for good. It is basically a disposition or frame of mind that wants to injure people without cause. We had a bull in the pasture next to ours who had this kind of disposition. You would be surprised how many people there are who don't need a cause for nastiness other than their own discontent.

B. "All deceit": Peter put force to this by adding the word "all." Deceit, in its simplest form, is catching or ensnaring something or someone by the use of cheating, trickery, double-dealing, or deception. When you trap animals, you use deceit. You trick them into believing that they are going after legitimate food. A person who uses deceit is a manipulator who tricks you into a certain kind of action or thinking.

C. "Hypocrisy": It's simple; a hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something he isn't. It might be a person who is trying to cover up his malice and deceit, which really makes him bad. It's the wolf in sheep's clothing syndrome.

D. "Envy": Envy always starts with being discontented with who you are or what you have in comparison to someone else.

ILLUS. There is a story that Satan's agents were failing in their various attempts to draw into sin a holy man who lived as a hermit in the desert of northern Africa. Every attempt had met with failure. So Satan, angered with the incompetence of his subordinates, became personally involved in the case. He said, "The reason you have failed is that your methods are too crude for one such as this. Watch this."

He then approached the holy man with great care and whispered softly in his ear, "Your brother has just been made bishop of Alexandria." Instantly the holy man's face showed that Satan had been successful. A great scowl formed over his mouth, and his eyes tightened up. "Envy," said Satan, "is often our best weapon against those who seek holiness."

E. "Slander of every kind": Envy usually brings us to the point of saying things that are not true, or half true with a bent, to harm another person; this is slander. It may be one of the most common sins in the Church. "He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Prov. 10:18). Slander may be more commonly understood as running someone down in our conversations.

These characteristics mix so well with the sinful nature and have such a way of becoming habits. It is not hard to see that if we are hungry for this junk food, our appetite for the "good food" won't be there. Peter doesn't simply recommend that we stop these things—he orders us to get rid of them!

II. We Are to Crave the Good Stuff

As a child, I just knew certain foods were poisonous. I was assured by my patient mother that they were good for me for various reasons, but none of those reasons made sense to me. How could an all-American little kid like parsnips or those old gray canned lima beans that even the guys in the army wouldn't eat? I guess I got started wrong, for when I was born, they quickly discovered that I was allergic to every kind of milk, except goat's milk. Milk is something every baby desires and needs. Above all else, it is nutritious.

Peter equates the Word of God to milk (v. 2, NKJV). In essence he is telling us to crave God's Word like a newborn baby craves milk, or as a young man craves a glass of cold milk on a hot summer day. Job describes the value of God's words in our spiritual lives by sharing his in-

tense feelings: "I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread" (23:12).

As milk is exactly what a new baby needs, so God's Word, the Bible, is exactly what the Christian needs. It is God's perfect food for our spirits. In the same way as a child may not like certain foods that are good for him, so a Christian may come across some spiritual food that is not to his liking. Our Heavenly Parent then admonishes us to eat it anyway, because it is good for us.

It is absolutely necessary for growing Christians that we not only get rid of the bad stuff but also eagerly desire all the good spiritual food we can get our hands on. The reason there are so many weak, surface Christians today is that we have stopped eating and drinking from the Bible. The growing Christian is one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2).

CONCLUSION:

Peter knew that without life or growth or both, there would be no chance for maturity in our spiritual lives. Since he leads us toward the "holy life," the "deeper walk," the "better taste," he is convinced that, if we will taste the Word, we will love the life. It is important to Peter that we be fully alive, for in a coming verse he wants to describe us as "living stones . . . being built into a spiritual house" (v. 5).

Before we go today, I ask you two questions:

1. If you are doing anything that lessens your appetite for God's Word, are you willing to deal with that and get rid of it?
2. How is your appetite for spiritual food? Do you eat once a week, once a day, or three times a day?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Choir	"Only to Him Medley" (Cymbala)
Choruses	"God Is the Strength of My Heart"
	"His Strength Is Perfect"
Scripture	Isa. 44:1-6
Choruses	"There Is a River"
	"Cause Me to Come"
	"As the Deer"
Hymn	"Fill Me Now"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"Holy Ground"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"I Want to Know Christ"
Message from God's Word	"THE BEST TASTE YET"
Hymn of Response	"Fill My Cup, Lord"
Benediction	
Postlude	

LIVING STONES

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 2:4-10
August 6, 1995

INTRO:

Peter is giving his final justification for all the varied ways in which we are to live out this life of holiness. Peter paints a picture of the invisible Church, this spiritual house, which has a foundation, a cornerstone, and is made up of eternally live building blocks—all of which cannot be seen!

Peter is telling these persecuted, suffering, scattered Christians that they are eternally significant and valuable to the purposes of God. He knew that they might get so caught up with the negative aspects of their circumstances that they might want to give up, not seeing any purpose in their lives.

Many people today need the same encouragement. Life seems so real, so present. We can touch it, see it, and move around in it. The senses react to it in suffering or pleasure. The non-Christian senses that this is everything; it is reality. The Christian, on the other hand, acknowledges its existence but admits that reality is in the unseen world. In fact, the "living Stone" is invisible, the "living stones" are invisible, the "spiritual house" is invisible, and the "holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices" is invisible. We belong to another world! Reality? I've chosen to go with the things I cannot see, which are eternal, as opposed to the physical, which will soon be gone. It's the long-term view! Getting back to this building, this spiritual house, let's gain an appreciation for what makes it up and what its function is. We'll keep our feet planted both in the visible and the invisible, for we serve in both in our travels.

I. We Have the "Living Stone"

This dramatic description of Jesus refers directly to His resurrection. He was raised from the dead in absolute victory over sin, Satan, and death. This became the rallying point of the Christians. It continues to be the frustration point for nonbelievers. They have to deal with the *One* they thought was out of the way.

When Peter preached to the crowd at Pentecost, he pressed the point home with vigor: "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:23-24). In verse 32, Peter pushed harder: "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."

Peter calls Jesus the "living Stone" (v. 4). Elsewhere He is called the "cornerstone" (v. 6), the "capstone" (v. 7), and the "rock of offence" (v. 8, KJV). Christ, as the Living Stone, or as any of these descriptive words, is the mortar that holds everything together in this great spiritual house. In fact, there is no spiritual house without Jesus.

When considering what to think about Jesus, or what to do about Him, consider that God the Father chose Him from the beginning, that Jesus is precious to the Father, and that He is alive. Peter wanted these scattered, persecuted Christians to be reminded of the preeminence of this One to whom they had given their lives and for whom they were suffering. Who their Leader was gave them confidence in their following!

Peter knew that the One whom they had accepted had been, and is, rejected by the majority. Jesus never did make sense to most of the Jews because He didn't fit into their concept of the glorious, conquering, reigning Messiah. Death on the Cross didn't fit into their plans for the Kingdom. The majority isn't always right, is it?

II. We Are the "Living Stones"

Peter now likens all believers to "living stones." This is not a comment on us in the flesh. It is a comment on the fact that when we become Christians, our spirit becomes a living stone, eternal in its existence. Our flesh may die, but our eternal spirit in Christ never dies. Hence, when we become Christians, we are automatically linked to every saint who has gone on before us. This is the cause of both our hope and joy as we contemplate our eternal life in Christ. What a significant thought: that without you this great building of God would not be complete. Who needs self-esteem when you have purpose like that! Our psychologies don't hold a candle to what Jesus Christ brings to our spirit.

It is comforting to know that Satan can persecute our flesh, but he can't touch our spirit. Early martyrs knew that and willingly gave up their lives. Peter wants us to know that, so as we pursue and live out the holy life, we are not bothered by what we "give up" in the flesh. Because we are "living stones," spiritual in essence, the flesh is nothing, but Christ is everything!

III. We Are Becoming a "Spiritual House"

Who could possibly imagine what kind of building this is? You can't see it, but it's under construction. Our frame of reference begins with what we know about buildings, but the most magnificent building built by man can't even come close. You can let your imagination roll. It will be made up of multimillions of "living stones," of which I am one. How big are these living stones? Where is the building? Can you imagine its shape? Maybe our body, made up of billions of tiny cells, gives us a clue. Paul tells us we are the Body of Christ. Maybe all of this isn't important except to know that we are a functioning part of a great "spiritual house" that may outdo the universe itself! Every person snatched out of Satan's hands and brought into the kingdom of God brings this building one step closer to completion. By winning people to the Lord, we join the construction crew. This brings us to the point of understanding the purpose of the building.

IV. We Are a "Holy Priesthood"

This is really where we plant our feet in both worlds.

Our function as priests of God is both "now," in the flesh, and "then," forever. These scattered, persecuted believers understood the priesthood because they *had* a priesthood before Jesus came. New to them is that now they *are* a priesthood. We should live as though we were priests in the temple of God. What a privilege! What a vocation! What an implication for the holy people of God! It's not the collar of the priest that distinguishes us. It's the life of holiness that becomes our mark of distinction.

The spiritual sacrifices we make are varied in nature. The Bible tells us that we should present our bodies to Him as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2). Paul tells us that our substance that we share with others is a spiritual sacrifice (Phil. 4:18). The praise of our lips expresses our spiritual sacrifice (Heb. 13:15). The good works that we do also apply as we do them in Jesus' name. It's exciting to believe that we are all priests!

CONCLUSION:

Peter has laid the groundwork for the idea he will talk about to us next. Perhaps in the background of his mind, he is saying to himself: "I wonder how I would act in my marriage if I really knew I was a priest of God. I wonder how I would act at work if everyone knew I was a priest of God. I wonder how I would relate to my government if I really knew how temporary it was and how eternal I am in Christ. I wonder how I would relate to persecution if I really knew I was a priest of God." Peter wants us to understand who we really are. For then we hear and understand, "Be holy, because I am holy" (1:16). We say, "Yes, Lord!"

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Hymns	"Spirit of God, Descend"
	"Holy Spirit, Be My Guide"
Scripture	Ps. 27:1-4
Choir	"Revive Us, O Lord"
Choruses	"Spirit of the Living God"
	"Come, Holy Spirit"
	"Holy Spirit, Thou Art Welcome"
	"Where the Spirit of the Lord Is"
	"Spirit Song"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"Oh, the Glory of Your Presence"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"Cornerstone"
Message from God's Word	"LIVING STONES"
Hymn of Response	"Have Thine Own Way, Lord"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

THE HOLY WALK WITH AUTHORITIES

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 2:13-17
August 13, 1995

INTRO:

Peter brings us down to where we live. Holiness is not a theory, it is a life. Holiness is the subject of theology, and rightfully so, but holiness in the books is not where we must stay. Holiness works in the streets, in the homes, in the workplaces, and in the board meetings of our churches. When Peter said, "Be holy in all you do" (1 Pet. 1:15), he made a practical statement as much as a theological one.

In these next verses, submission to proper authority shapes the key thought. Submission is not considered a politically correct word these days. Society at large teaches that the ideal, in terms of personhood, is autonomy. Freedom serves as the password for all kinds of conduct. "I want to have freedom of choice in all areas of my life": abortion, obedience to government, obedience to parents and teachers, etc. This concept is so prevalent that when you talk about submission, even in the church, many people laugh about it as an outmoded idea whose time has passed. After all, they say, the highest possible good in life is to be free from all restraints. "Nobody, including God, has the right to tell me what to do or how to live my life." Many people think freedom gives the license to do whatever a person wants. In fact, true freedom is the ability to do what is right. That always involves submission to someone.

ILLUS. I can sit at a piano and be at liberty to play any keys that I want. However, I don't have freedom because I can't play anything but noise. I have no freedom to play Bach or even chopsticks. Why? Because it takes years of practice and submission to lesson plans to become really free at the piano.

The more we submit to God's divine lesson plans found in the Word, the more free we become. The prodigal son found his freedom only when he submitted to his father's will. Peter starts the whole session with this favorite word of the saint, "*submit* yourselves . . . to every authority."

I. "Submit Yourselves for the Lord's Sake"

Peter wrote these words during a horrendous time of history: corrupt government leaders, persecution, abolishment of property rights, exile. These folks experienced it! Peter could not have written more inflammatory words than these to such folks, as well as to us. Surely someone should have started an organization from the Christian community to combat this evil! But Peter kept them focused in the right direction. God takes care of the big picture; all we have to do is live a holy life in the midst of impurity.

ILLUS. I was stunned several weeks ago by a television interview. A network special reporter was interviewing a black Rwandan lady who was walking back to her country from Zaire, where she had fled. He asked her why she had fled in the first place and why she was going back. She gave a simple answer, "I am going back because it is my country, and it is where the rest of my family is. I fled because the government soldiers came to our house and hacked to death my six children and then my husband. I had no choice."

The reporter, in amazement, asked her if she wanted to get revenge on the government, and she gave a classic reply: "No," she said. "I am a Christian, so I don't need revenge. God does that!"

Peter couldn't have said it any better. He is saying, "Whatever your circumstances, submit yourselves to every authority instituted among men." Why? "For the Lord's sake." Radical? Yes! For our day too? Yes!

"For the Lord's sake" is the qualifying phrase. The message remains simple: God has instituted every authority, and He is responsible for them. He raises up rulers and puts them down (Ps. 75:7; Dan. 2:21). He has ultimate control in history. The Christian doesn't have to get stressed out over what the government is doing. He only has to watch himself, peaceful in the knowledge that "God does that," to echo the Rwandan lady.

"For the Lord's sake" would suggest that God's reputation is at stake based on the conduct of His people, not on the status of the government. Proud people rebel; holy people submit.

II. "For It Is God's Will"

Not too many times in Scripture is this phrase used. When people ask me what God's will is for them, I simply quote 1 Thess. 4:3—"It is God's will that you should be sanctified." In other words, God's only real will for you is to be a holy person, whatever else you are doing. We tend to concentrate on vocation, but God concentrates on living. Once again, in our present text, "For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men" (v. 15). You will notice that life is the issue.

Groups in the Christian community today try to "silence the ignorant talk of foolish men" by protesting, killing, and voting; but God's method, always contrary to the world's, is to simply *do* good and so silence their talk.

Power isn't the issue! Not voting power, not protest power, not position power, not anything except the power and example of a holy person living it out on the streets or in the marketplace.

Do you want to argue? Let's go back to the text: "For it is God's will."

III. We Have Some Practical Marks of the Holy Life

A. "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God" (v. 16). For the Christian, the only freedom we have is the freedom to do what is right. We are free to do that because we

are free from the bondage of sin, which ultimately restricts freedom. Holiness is freedom in that context. So we are to live as holy people but never to use our holiness as an occasion to disdain the law, even human law.

B. "Show proper respect to everyone" (v. 17). Peter implies that this includes people inside and outside the Church. Howard Marshall says, "They are not to be despised because they are not believers, nor hated because they are persecutors, nor treated with contempt because they are of lower rank or status, but treated with honor. It inevitably follows that people are not to be regarded as second-class citizens because they are of a different race or color." Respect has almost become a forgotten word. The tendency today is to esteem ourselves of higher value than anyone else. A holy person will "esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3, NKJV).

C. "Love the brotherhood of believers" (v. 17). This may be the hardest practical mark of all because of our close contact with each other. I have a favorite saying: "The church is the hardest place in the world to live the Christian life!" I suppose it's because of the high expectations we have of each other's conduct. The unholy person worries about everyone else's conduct.

D. "Fear God" (v. 17). Did Peter really need to say that? Probably. It's easy to fear people or those in authority over you, especially if they are doing harm to you! An old saying that may have come from this period says it well: "Fear Him, you saints, and you will then have nothing else to fear" (cf. Ps. 34:9). It may be one of the sad realities of our day that we fear just about everyone more than we fear God. Proof of that lies in our greater willingness to conform to our fears than to conform to God's ways!

E. "Honor the king" (v. 17). This simple command means to honor the position the king holds. Part of the dysfunction of our society lies at this point: we disdain the person, so we disdain his position as well. A holy person honors those in authority, for the position's sake.

CONCLUSION:

These are great verses. Peter shouts at the Church today, reminding us that any government is impossible without respect for rulers. Christians today should be reminded that God himself established government. The Scriptures do not talk about whether a government is autocratic, democratic, or whatever. Our job as holy people of God is to make it easy for them to govern, leaving the rest to Him. Instead of being the angry people of God, we should be the submissive "sheep of His pasture" (Ps. 100:3, NKJV).

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Scripture	Rom. 5:15-21
Hymns	"Amazing Grace"
	"Grace Greater than Our Sin"
	"Wonderful Grace of Jesus"
Ensemble	"His Grace Is Greater"
Choruses	"God Will Make a Way"
	"Gentle Shepherd"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"In His Time"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"More Grace"
Message from God's Word	"THE HOLY WALK WITH AUTHORITIES"
Hymn of Response	"O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee"
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

HARMONIOUS LIVING

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 3:8-9
August 20, 1995

INTRO:

A quick glance at the newspaper today will be all it takes to convince us that there is precious little harmony in our old world: "Man Kills Family; Takes His Own Life." No harmony exists on the crime bill; no harmony on health care; no harmony on the abortion issue; no harmony in world politics; no harmony on the city council; no harmony in our homes; no harmony in our schools. Is that enough?

Peter laid out God's principles for harmonious, or holy, living. He has taken us into our societies and told us to submit to every authority to make their work easier. He has taken us into the workplace and told us to submit to our employers, even if they are mean-spirited. He has taken us into our homes and told us that no matter how you spell it, men and women are different. Each has a function to make life easier, or more harmonious, in the home.

To the wives he said, "Be submissive to your husbands" (1 Pet. 3:1). To the husbands he said, "Be considerate as you live with your wives" (v. 7). I call these "Instructions for Holy Living." God's ways create harmony for the holy person of God and disharmony for the nonbeliever. The nonbeliever clings to his "rights." The holy person looks out for the rights of everyone but himself.

Let's take a look at Peter's list of common attitudes or actions that characterize us no matter where we are living or what our circumstances.

I. "Live in Harmony with One Another"

This slogan ought to be posted over the door of every sanctuary and home. One of our greatest acts of worship is the mind-set of harmony with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Many Christians today feel personally responsible for changing the government, their place of work, and their mate. Peter tells us that these issues are not ours. We certainly ought not to tear relationships up trying to make them ours. Peter wants holy living wherever we are. That will solve 99% of our problems.

Harmony exists when people go the same direction and share the same goals. The best formula to bring us to harmony with our brothers is to love as Jesus would love and to consider our brothers above ourselves.

ILLUS. Army life, even with all of the jokes about it, is a great picture of the way the Church should be: Same commander in chief, same nation, same uniform, same language, same orders, different jobs, same goal; but most of all you look out for the soldier next to you. It is a point of honor.

If this kind of harmony existed in the Church, "the gates of hell" could not stand "against it" (Matt. 16:18, KJV). If we had harmony, society would know we were Christians!

II. "Be Sympathetic"

Peter says that the mark of the Christian is that he lives in harmony with others, not in discord. He actually seeks to enter into the needs and concerns of others. Paul pictures the body parts living in sympathy with each other.

ILLUS. Your body may be living in harmony with itself as you walk down the street. That's wonderful. It's when you stub your toe that harmony is tested. If there is no sympathy for the toe by the other parts of the body, the body might go on down the street; there is no harmony because the toe is screaming to stop. If there is sympathy for the toe by the other parts of the body, they will enter into the needs and concerns of the toe.

Peter takes us from harmony to sympathy, a deepening of the Christian way. It is notable that many Christians today lack sympathy for our leaders at every level, whether the people for whom we work, or our marriage partners. Sympathy and love are two great witness tools of the Church because these are so lacking in the world. More sympathy for the sinner in his sin and less judgment might make us more like Jesus.

III. "Love as Brothers"

We have often heard the axiom "Blood is thick" (William S. Gilbert). A commonality among brothers and sisters transcends all other considerations. We have the same parents. We have the same heritage. We live in the same house. So we have special care for each other. A "family love" concept covers a multitude of sins. Families are not so concerned with defects as they are with common love.

ILLUS. A boy was asked why his father limped when he walked. The boy quickly looked at the questioner and declared that his dad didn't limp. The father *did* limp, but the boy loved his father so much he didn't even see the limp.

Isn't this what it means to exercise "brotherly love" (Moffatt)? Peter tells Christians to stop seeing the defects and to focus on relationships. Family blood among Christians is really thick!

IV. "Be Compassionate and Humble"

If harmonious living is the telltale feature, then kindness and tenderness given in a humble spirit must be lived out wherever we walk. Kindness and tenderness are synonyms of compassion. The Good Samaritan acted with kindness and tenderness. When we encounter difficulties in anyone's life, we need to express love. Jesus had compassion for us. It took Him to the Cross. His kindness and tenderness brought salvation to the least deserving.

I wonder what would happen if we Christians actually became kind, tender, compassionate, and humble people of God? I wonder how many people would be influenced by these wonderful characteristics? Kindness and tenderness instill life and hope, while a hard, calloused attitude quenches life.

V. "Do Not Repay Evil with Evil or Insult with Insult"

Peter nails us with the practical side of our faith. It is, without question, one of the hardest issues of Christian living. God will avenge anyone who transgresses one of His children. It takes every ounce of our spiritual strength not to answer back to an insult. When we don't answer back, or repay evil with evil, the world may say we are stupid. However, they will also have the most profound respect. Harmonious living requires that we don't respond negatively, because everything gets worse when we choose to take things into our own hands. Our text tells us that it is to this that we were called.

CONCLUSION:

We are called to the life of holiness. It will always require the most strenuous effort on our part. We have to swim against the current. Every attribute of Jesus that marks us opposes the world's way of doing things. For us, it's the "Lose now, win later" syndrome.

Winning later for us means the blessing of God for eternity. It also means blessings now! To "love life and see good days" (v. 10) are the rewards or earthly blessings that we will receive now. Peter talks to us about harmonious living and leaves us with this wonderful thought: Harmony is worth whatever it takes—first, because it is what we are called to; and second, because it carries its own blessing.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Choruses	"We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise"
	"What a Mighty God We Serve"
	"All Hail, King Jesus"
	"Majesty"
Hymn	"How Great Thou Art"
Scripture	Ps. 112:1-8
Choir	"He Alone Is Worthy"
Baby Dedication	
Hymn	"What a Friend"
Pastoral Prayer	
Chorus	"Surely the Presence"
Offertory	
Ministry in Music	"We Have Seen God's Glory"
Message from God's Word	"HARMONIOUS LIVING"
Hymn of Response	
Benediction	
Postlude	Organ

BY THE WAY, I WON'T BE NEEDING THIS LITTLE TEACHER'S PACKET OF HELPS... I'VE FOUND THAT MOST CHILDREN ENJOY STRAIGHT LECTURE

PATHWAY TO VICTORY

by Paul Barber
1 Pet. 5:6-7
August 27, 1995

INTRO:

Peter draws things together in a summation much like a lawyer might draw together all the threads of his arguments. We are these threads for Peter. Christians are a special people: elect, chosen, scattered, sanctified, sprinkled by Christ's blood, a people of new birth, a people with hope, a people with an inheritance that will never be diminished, a people of joy, a holy people, an obedient people, living stones in the building of God, a submissive people, a suffering people, a people set apart from the world, and a people who have been promised restoration and strength!

Listening to the list causes a great swell of emotion as we think of our wonderful privileges in Christ. It's the same feeling as when we come home from a great service at church, or a dynamic retreat, where the presence of God is so real! Coming home elicits another emotion as we watch these great feelings subside in the hurried pathways of our lives. Peter suggests two main issues in this diminishing sparkle to our Christian lives: pride and fear. To these he addresses himself, offering a pathway to victory to the interested saint.

I. "Humble Yourselves"

The instruction, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand" (1 Pet. 5:6) strikes directly at pride, the father of all sins. Pride causes a person to have an elevated view of himself, while the essence of humility is to have a low view of oneself. In our day, to have a low view of yourself is not "politically correct." Every message of advertising insists that this product will promote self-esteem. Every message of Scripture promotes a lowered view of self. Before you get too disturbed by that statement, remember that the Christian's esteem is not in himself, but in Jesus. "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28); "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

ILLUS. Phillips Brooks gave this test of humility: "The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is."

Andrew Murray gave a great definition of humility: "Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me. . . . The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself, he simply does not think of himself at all."

Humility is the only path to submissiveness. It is what makes possible our life responses, shown to us by Peter, concerning authority, employers, and marriage relationships. Humility is the backbone of holy living! It is the essence of Peter's comment, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord" (1 Pet. 3:15). This verse strikes directly at the issue of who is going to be in control of my life. Control pushes pride. Pride keeps me from putting myself purposefully "under the mighty hand of God" (5:6, KJV). Humility says God knows best. Humility is a willingness to follow. A humble person is clay that can be formed into a "living stone" in the building of God. When Peter tells us to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand, he knows it has purpose.

II. "That He May Lift You Up in Due Time"

In God's way of doing things, humility is the first step toward greatness. Greatness is being lifted up by God (5:6). Remember our hope, our inheritance, our joy? Remember all this, and heaven too. God plans to glorify His saints, to build them "into a spiritual house . . . a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" (2:5), for eternity. The Christian lives for the long haul. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11). Peter let these persecuted folks and us know that whatever happens to us is all right because our day is coming!

III. "Cast All Your Anxiety on Him"

Peter assumes that these Christians to whom he wrote were restlessly concerned about their future, their health, and their present. How natural, considering their circumstances. Many scriptures tell us not to be anxious about anything nor worry about anything. When we are anxious about something and someone tells us that, we want to say, "Excuse me!" Anxiety is primarily a thinking issue. Anxiety results from negative thinking and is not always warranted. The problem is that anxiety affects our whole body, mind, and spirit.

When Paul said, "Do not be anxious about anything" (Phil. 4:6), he finished the thought by saying, "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. . . . The God of peace will be with you" (vv. 8-9). His progression is interesting—anxiety, changes in your thinking, and God giving peace. Is it all that easy? Yes, it's as easy as bundling up all the worry and care and throwing it all on the One who can handle it!

I know that many Christians believe that positive thinking is a sin. However, if we all knew the harmful effects of negative thinking, we would run away from it as fast as we could. Everything in Paul's list is positive, so perhaps we can learn from that. Peter understood Paul's concept of being "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). We evangelicals need to focus more on the power of that concept, not because it's positive thinking, but because it's scriptural! We are to "cast all [our] anxiety on him because he cares for [us]" (1 Pet. 5:7).

IV. "He Cares for You"

From experience, Peter knew that God cares for His own. A glance through the Scriptures reveals that God cared for Peter in varied ways. In Mark 1:29-31, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. In Luke 5:1-11, Jesus gave him a full boat of fish. In Matt. 14:22-33, Jesus helped him walk on water. In Matt. 17:24-27, Jesus helped him pay his taxes. Peter knew that God cared for him. Do you know that God cares for you?

Each one of God's children is the object of the Father's tender care and unfailing protection. He watches them: "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous" (1 Pet. 3:12). He is before them on their journey: "When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them" (John 10:4). He walks with His children: "They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). He encircles them with His protection: "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them" (Ps. 34:7). He is with them wherever they go: "So do not fear, for I am with you" (Isa. 41:10). He walks with His children in the dark places: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4).

CONCLUSION:

On our pathway to victory, take comfort in knowing that the One who has already gained the victory cares enough to walk beside us. He is with you today in your struggle! Do you know that?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Hymn	"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"
Scripture	Ps. 25:1-5
Choir	"Hiding Place Medley"
Choruses	"God Is My Refuge"
	"You Are My Hiding Place"
	"Cares Chorus"
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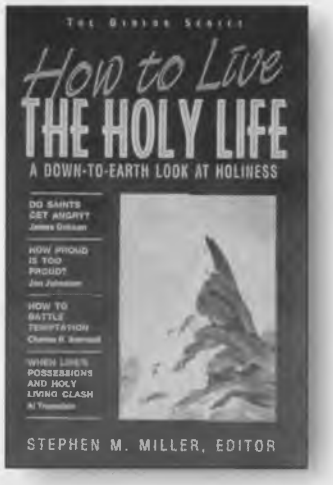

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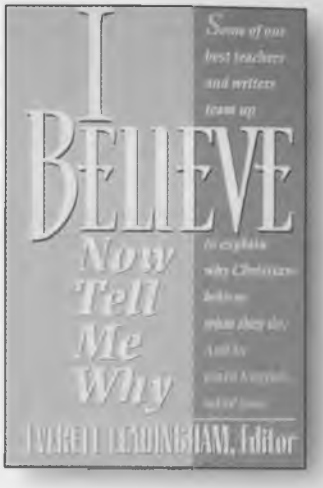

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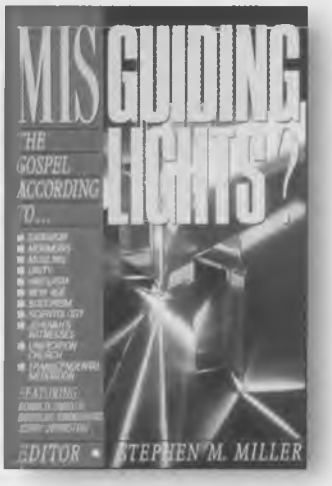

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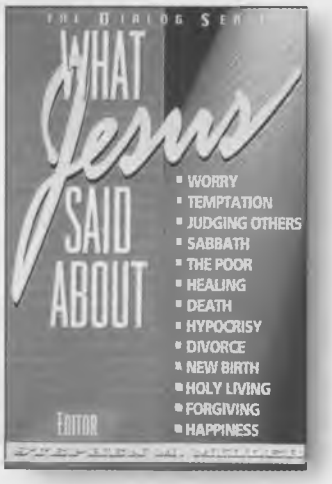

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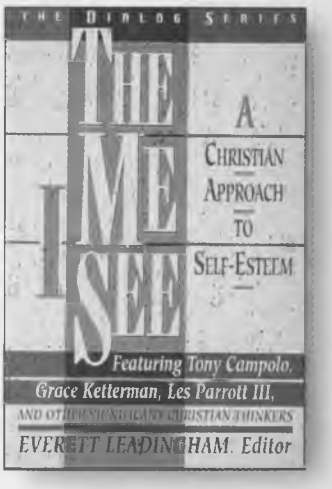

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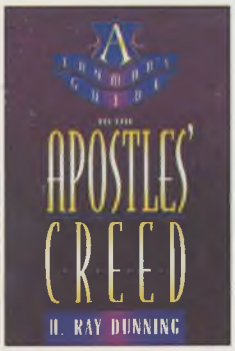

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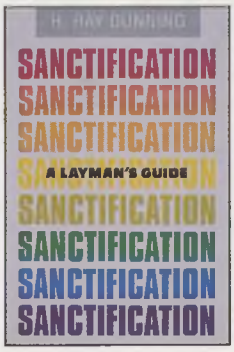

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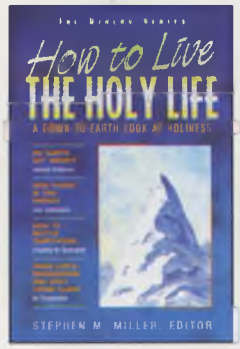

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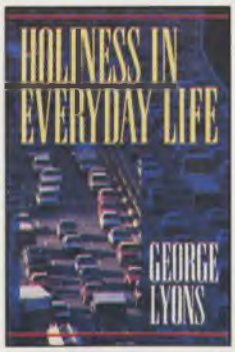

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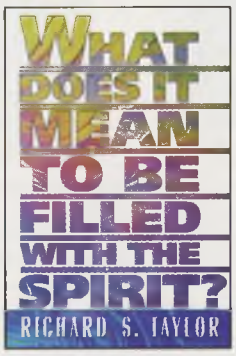

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