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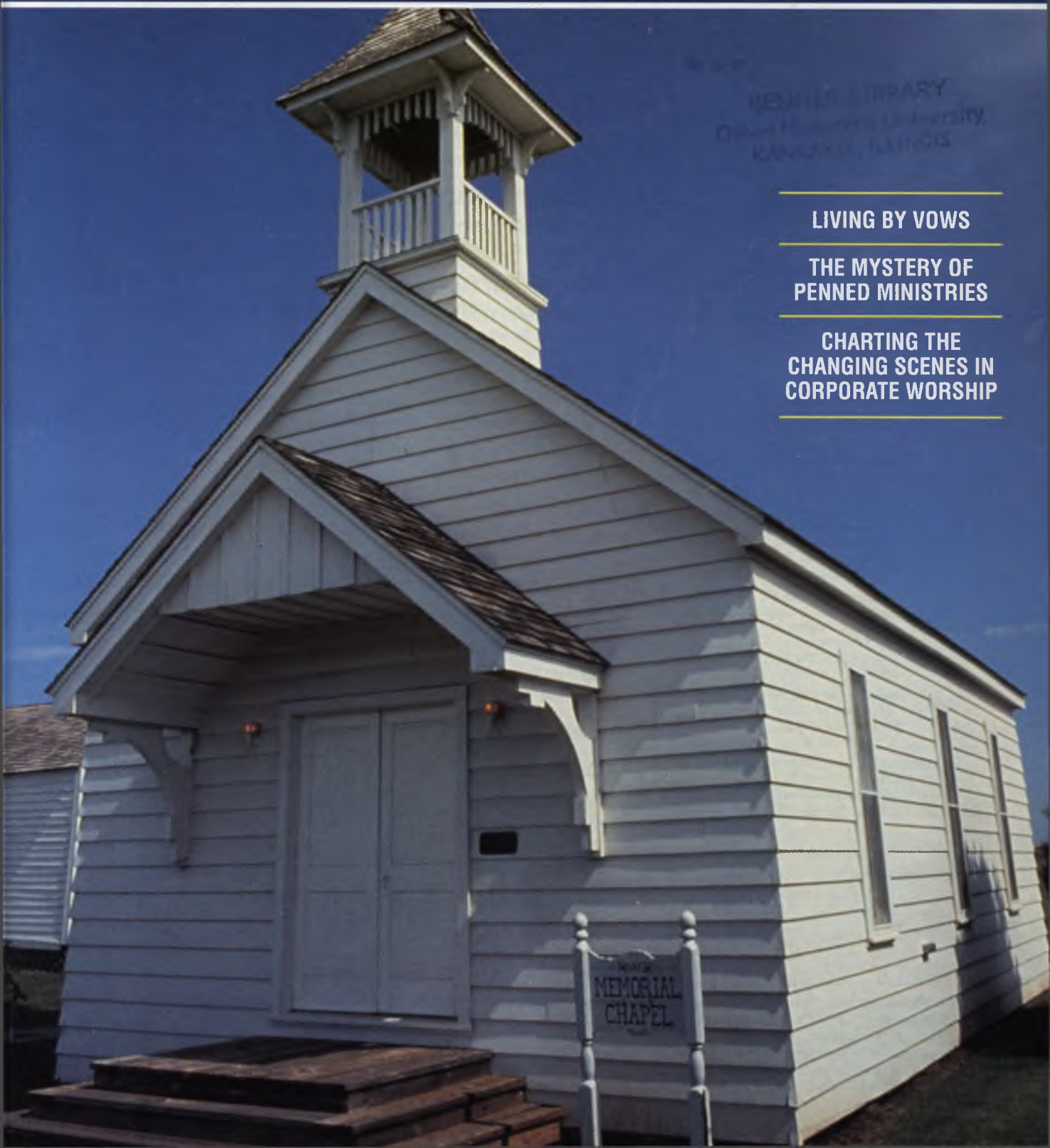
THE

Preacher's

MAGAZINE

DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY 1997-98

"...SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE..." Eph. 4:15



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LIVING BY VOWS

**THE MYSTERY OF
PENNE MINISTRIES**

**CHARTING THE
CHANGING SCENES IN
CORPORATE WORSHIP**



THE Preacher's MAGAZINE

Volume 73

December/January/February 1997-98

Number 2

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We Rocked the Ark

As a pastor, one tries to keep everybody joyful and to minimize friction. As an editor, one learns that the clash of opinions is the stuff of life. In the "Ark Rocker" column of the June/July/August 1997 issue of the *Preacher's Magazine* conflict of opinions became obvious.

As an editor, I have learned that letters arrive in four categories: "hot" letters (attacking the writer or the editor or both), "con" letters (attacking the idea), "pro" letters (sympathetic with the idea), and "encouraging" letters (appreciation to the writer or the editor or both). We got them all—somebody is out there!

Charles Hail sent a "con" letter worthy of note. I congratulate him. Here are some excerpts, with his permission.

The first thing I noticed . . . was that in spite of all the Wesleyan denominations listed . . . Mr. Ark was obviously not a Wesleyan . . . not a true child of the heritage passed on to us by John and Charles Wesley. . . .

We forget what a radical step it was in John Wesley's day for a respected clergyman to leave the stained glass and elevated pulpit and to preach outdoors to unrefined crowds. In fact, when it was first suggested to him, he wasn't certain it would be "proper" to proclaim the Word of God outside of the holy sanctuary. The results of [people being] saved convinced him of the worthiness of his new methodology. And then . . . this scandalous thought, John and Charles put Christian words to secular tunes to attract the attention of the crowds. This also served as a way to teach Christian doctrine. . . . Ever wonder how Charles learned the tunes of those barroom songs . . . ?

Children of Wesley ought to be on the cutting edge of creativity and innovation in outreach and worship. Mr. Ark seems to want to lock on a 20-year period of Christian history (1950s and 1960s) and make it the norm for the rest of the 20th century. Instead of Paul's and the Wesleys' philosophy of "by all means save some," Mr. Ark told us, "Only by what



by Randal E. Denny
Editor, Spokane, Washington

worked in another time and culture, save some." . . . Why can't he recognize some others are also saved through these "new means"? . . .

Mr. Ark raised issue with drama. Is God's creative inspiration limited to a special song before the sermon? If a song can set the stage and prepare the congregation for the sermon, is it possible that drama could do the same? The arguments against drama boil down to the fact it's new. "Oh," but Mr. Ark would say, "some drama has been terrible." Yes, and so have some choir specials, but we haven't condemned the use of music in church because of that. . . .

Mr. Ark seems critical of using drama because "they show up in droves." Sounds like Wesley's critics for his preaching at the coal mines. Then Mr. Ark demonstrated his non-Wesleyan theology by saying he'd rather preach to the "few"—the elect who share his own taste. I feel called to take the pure, unaltered gospel message to as many as possible. . . .

Next, Mr. Ark complained about various worship styles. Once again, remember the risk the Wesleys took. Granted, some contemporary music is not thought out. When it is done well, lost people can look around and say, "Wow! These people really love God!" That is worship! . . . In the book *Beginning a Seeker-Sensitive Service*, Ed Dobson points out that there are some biblical absolutes with clear scriptural statements—the Virgin Birth, the deity of Jesus, etc. Then there are other issues with scriptural basis that leave room for disagree-

ment—the timing of Christ's return: pre-, mid-, or post-tribulation; etc. We all have personal convictions conditioned by our culture and environment. We often attach proof texts to these. The problem comes when we take our personal preferences, especially in areas of music and worship style, and treat our preferences as if they were biblical absolutes.

Mr. Ark railed against Saturday services. Please, look around and count the percentage of people whose jobs require them to work on Sunday—about 20 percent. Rather than whining that it shouldn't be that way, why not seek a creative way to minister to these people? Is it wrong to give nurses, policemen, the cook at the restaurant where you eat Sunday dinner, etc., an opportunity to hear the gospel and participate in a worship service? I am glad hospitals are staffed on Sundays.

I feel a duty to share the gospel with all people in the same measure I have received it. I cannot in good conscience say, "Because of your trade, I will not give you opportunity to participate in church." We must not write off 20 percent of the population as unworthy of our evangelistic efforts because they cannot come to us at our time and place. The Great Commission says to "Go" to the lost, not to sit in our sanctuaries fussing over why people do not come.

Finally, Mr. Ark, you imply that because I use "modern methods," I must be watering down my biblical holiness message. If we were on a mission field, we would do all of the above and more to win people. For some reason, creative outreach seems to be our last resort. God's capability to inspire creativity and innovation did not run out in the 1700s nor in the 1930s. What seems to have run out is our willingness to break out of our comfort zones and to prayerfully do what has not been done before in an unselfish effort to evangelize our culture. If that means rocking the ark, I wonder, what would Jesus do?

Rocking the Ark stirred up this excellent response. Thanks, Charles Hail.

Living by Vows

by J. Robertson McQuilkin

After his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, college and seminary president J. Robertson McQuilkin found himself torn between two commitments, two divine callings. At the request of the Christianity Today editors, he shares the story of his struggle.

It has been a decade since that day in Florida when Muriel, my wife, repeated to the couple vacationing with us the story she had just told five minutes earlier. *Funny*, I thought, *that's never happened before*. But it began to happen occasionally.

Three years later, when Muriel was hospitalized for tests on her heart, a young doctor called me aside. "You may need to think about the possibility of Alzheimer's," he said. I was incredulous. *These young doctors are so presumptuous—and insensitive*. Muriel was doing the same things she had always done, for the most part. True, we had stopped entertaining in our home—no small loss for the president of a thriving seminary and Bible college. She was a great cook and hostess, but she was having increasing difficulty planning menus. Family meals she could handle, but with guests we could not risk missing a salad and dessert, for example.

And, yes, she was having uncommon difficulty painting a portrait of me, which the college and seminary board—impressed by

her earlier splendid portrait of my predecessor—had requested. But Alzheimer's? While I had barely heard of the disease, a dread began to lurk around the fringes of my consciousness.

When her memory deteriorated further, we went to Joe Tabor, a neurologist friend, who gave her the full battery of tests and, by elimination, confirmed that she had Alzheimer's. But because she had none of the typical physical deterioration, there was some question. We went to the Duke University Medical Center, believing we should get the best available second opinion. My heart sank as the doctor asked her to name the Gospels

and she looked pleadingly at me for help. But she quickly bounced back and laughed at herself. She was a little nervous, perhaps, but nothing was going to get *her* down.

This time we accepted the verdict. And we determined from the outset not to chase around the country every new "miracle" treatment we might hear about. Little did I know the day was coming when we would be urged—on average, once a week—to pursue every variety of treatment: vitamins, exorcism, chemicals, this guru, that healer. How could I even look into them all, let alone pursue them? I was grateful to friends who made suggestions, because each

was an expression of love. But for us, we would trust the Lord to work a miracle in Muriel if He so desired, or work a miracle in me if He did not.

One day the WMHK station manager, the program manager, and the producer of my wife's morning radio program, *Looking Up*, asked for an appointment. I knew an occasional program she had produced was not used, but the response to her monologue of upbeat encouragement continued to be strong. Though the program was designed for women, businessmen often told me how they arranged their morning affairs so they could catch the program.

As the appointment began, the three executives seemed uneasy. After a few false starts, I caught on. They were reluctantly letting me



know that an era was ending. Only months before, they had talked of national syndication. I tried to help them out. "Are you meeting with me to tell us that Muriel cannot continue?" They seemed relieved that their painful message was out and none of them had to say it. So, I thought, *her public ministry is over*. No more conferences, TV, radio. I should have guessed the time had come.

She did not think so, however. She may have lost the radio program, but she insisted on accepting invitations to speak, even though invariably she would come home crushed and bewildered that her train of thought was lost and things did not go well. Gradually, reluctantly, she gave up public ministry.

Still, she could counsel the many young people who sought her out, she could drive and shop, or write her children. The letters did not always make sense, but then, the children would say, "Mom always was a bit spacey." She also volunteered to read textbooks for a blind graduate student. The plan was to put them on tape so that others could use them. I was puzzled that those responsible never used them, until it dawned on me that reading and writing were going the way of art and public speaking. She was disappointed with each failure and frustration, but only momentarily. She would bounce back with laughter and have another go at it.

Muriel never knew what was happening to her, though occasionally when there was a reference to Alzheimer's on TV, she would muse aloud, "I wonder if I'll ever have that?" It did not seem painful for her, but it was a slow dying for me to watch the vibrant, creative, articulate person I knew and loved gradually dimming out.

I approached the college Board of Trustees with the need to begin the search for my successor. I told them that when the day came that Muriel needed me full-time, she would have me. I hoped that would not be necessary till I reached retirement, but at 57 it seemed unlikely I could hold on till 65. They should begin to make plans. But they intended for me to stay on forever, I guess, and made no move. *That's not realistic, and probably not very responsible*, I thought, though I appreciated the affirmation.

So began years of struggle with the question of what should be sacrificed: ministry or caring for Muriel. Should I put the kingdom of God first, "hate" my wife, and for the sake of Christ and the Kingdom, arrange for institutionalization? Trusted, lifelong friends—wise and godly—urged me to do this.

"Muriel would become accustomed to the new environment quickly." Would she? Would anyone love her at all, let alone love her as I do? I had often seen the empty, listless faces of those lined up in wheelchairs along the corridors of such places, waiting, waiting for the fleeting visit of some loved one. In such an environment, Muriel would be tamed only with

Trusted, godly
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wife in an
institution for
the sake of
my ministry.

drugs or bodily restraints, of that I was confident.

People who do not know me well have said, "Well, you always said, 'God first, family second, ministry third.'" But I never said that. To put God first means that all other responsibilities He gives are first too. Sorting out responsibilities that seem to conflict, however, is tricky business.

In 1988 we planned our first family reunion since the six children had left home, a week in a mountain retreat. Muriel delighted in her children and grandchildren, and they in her. Banqueting with all those gourmet cooks, making a quilt that pictured our life, scene by scene, playing games, singing, picking wild mountain blueberries was marvelous. We planned it as the celebration of our "40th" anniversary, although actually it was the 39th. We feared that by the 40th she would no longer know us.

But she still knows us—three years later. She cannot comprehend much, nor express many thoughts, and those not for sure. But she knows whom she loves, and lives in happy oblivion to almost everything else.

She is such a delight to me. I don't *have* to care for her, I *get* to. One blessing is the way she is teaching me so much—about love, for example, God's love. She picks flowers outside—anyone's—and fills the house with them.

Lately she has begun to pick them *inside* too. Someone had given us a beautiful Easter lily, two stems with four or five lilies on each, and more to come. One day I came into the kitchen, and there on the windowsill over the sink was a vase with a stem of lilies in it. I've learned to "go with the flow" and not correct irrational behavior. She means no harm and does not understand what should be done, nor would she remember a rebuke. Nevertheless, I did the irrational—I told her how disappointed I was, how the lilies would soon die, the buds would never bloom, and *please* do not break off the other stem.

The next day our youngest son, soon to leave for India, came from Houston for his next-to-last visit. I told Kent of my rebuke of his mother and how bad I felt about it. As we sat on the porch swing, savoring each moment together, his mother came to the door with a gift of love for me: she carefully laid the other stem of lilies on the table with a gentle smile and turned back into the house. I said simply, "Thank you." Kent said, "You're doing better, Dad!"

Muriel cannot speak in sentences now, only in phrases and words, and often words that make little sense: "no" when she means "yes," for example. But she can say one sentence, and she says it often: "I love you."

She not only says it but also acts it. The board arranged for a companion to stay in our home so I could go daily to the office. During those two years it became increasingly difficult to keep Muriel home. As soon as I left, she would take out after me. With me, she was content; without me, she was distressed, sometimes terror stricken. The walk to school is a mile round trip. She would make that trip as many as 10 times a day. Sometimes at night, when I helped her undress, I

found bloody feet. When I told our family doctor, he choked up. "Such love," he said simply. Then, after a moment, "I have a theory that the characteristics developed across the years come out at times like these." I wish I loved God like that—desperate to be near Him at all times. Thus she teaches me, day by day.

Friends and family often ask, "How are you doing?" meaning, I would take it, "How do you feel?" I am at a loss to respond. There is that subterranean grief that will not go away. I feel just as alone as if I had never known her as she was, I suppose, but the loneliness of the night hours comes because I did know her. Do I grieve for her loss or mine? Further, there is the sorrow that comes from my increasing difficulty in meeting her needs.

But I guess my friends are asking not about *her* needs, but about mine. Or perhaps they wonder, in the contemporary jargon, how I am "coping," as they reflect on how the reputed indispensable characteristics of a good marriage have slipped away, one by one.

I came across the common contemporary wisdom in this morning's newspaper in a letter to a national columnist: "I ended the relationship because it wasn't meeting my needs," the writer explained. The counselor's response was predictable: "What were your needs that didn't get met by him in the relationship? Do you still have these same needs? What would he have to do to fill these needs? Could he do it?" Needs for communication, understanding, affirmation, common interests, sexual fulfillment—the list goes on. If the needs are not met, split. He offered no alternatives.

I once reflected on the eerie irrelevance of every one of those criteria for me. But I am not wired for introspection; I am more oriented outward and toward action and the future. I even feel an occasional surge of exhilaration as I find my present assignment more challenging than running an institution's complex ministry. Certainly greater creativity and flexibility are needed.

I have long lists of "coping strategies," which have to be changed weekly, sometimes daily. Grocery shopping together may have been recreation, but it is not so much fun when Muriel begins to load other people's carts and take off with them,

disappearing into the labyrinth of supermarket aisles. Or how do you get a person to eat or take a bath when she steadfastly refuses? It is not like meeting a \$10 million budget or designing a program to grasp some emerging global opportunity, to be sure. But it demands greater resources than I could have imagined, and thus highlights more clearly than ever my own inadequacies, as well as provides constant opportunity to draw on our Lord's vast reservoir of resources.

As she needed more and more of me, I wrestled daily with the question

It was a slow
dying for me
to watch the
vibrant, creative,
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dimming out.

of who gets me full-time—Muriel or Columbia Bible College and Seminary? Dr. Tabor advised me not to make any decision based on my desire to see Muriel stay contented. "Make your plans apart from that question. Whether or not you can be successful in your dreams for the college and seminary or not, I cannot judge; but I can tell you now, you will not be successful with Muriel."

When the time came, the decision was firm. It took no great calculation. It was a matter of integrity. Had I not promised, 42 years before, "in sickness and in health . . . till death do us part"?

This was no grim duty to which I stoically resigned, however. It was only fair. She had, after all, cared for me for almost four decades with marvelous devotion; now it was my turn. And such a partner she was! If I took care of her for 40 years, I would never be out of her debt.

But how could I walk away from the responsibility of a ministry God

had blessed so signally during our 22 years at Columbia Bible College and Seminary?

Not easily. True, many dreams had been fulfilled. But so many dreams were yet on the drawing board. And the peerless team God had brought together—a team not just of professionals, but of dear friends—how could I bear to leave them? Resignation was painful; but the right path was not difficult to discern. Whatever Columbia needed, it did not need a part-time, distracted leader. It is better to move out and let God designate a leader to step in while the momentum is continuing.

No, it was not a choice between two loves. Sometimes that kind of choice becomes necessary, but this time responsibilities did not conflict. I suppose responsibilities in the will of God never conflict (though my evaluation of those responsibilities is fallible). Am I making the right choice at the right time in the right way? I hope so. This time it seemed clearly in the best interest of the ministry for me to step down, even if board and administrators thought otherwise. Both loves—for Muriel and for Columbia Bible College and Seminary—dictated the same choice. There was no conflict of loves, then, or of obligations.

I have been startled by the response to the announcement of my resignation. Husbands and wives renew marriage vows, pastors tell the story to their congregations. It was a mystery to me until a distinguished oncologist, who lives constantly with dying people, told me, "Almost all women stand by their men; very few men stand by their women." Perhaps people sensed this contemporary tragedy and somehow were helped by a simple choice I considered the only option.

It is all more than keeping promises and being fair, however. As I watch her brave descent into oblivion, Muriel is the joy of my life. Daily I discern new manifestations of the kind of person she is, the wife I always loved. I also see fresh manifestations of God's love—the God I long to love more fully. 

J. Robertson McQuilkin resigned as president of Columbia Bible College and Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina, after which he was named chancellor, a position that draws on his expertise while still allowing him to care for his wife.

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The Mystery of Penned Ministries

As one reads God's precious Book, the Holy Bible, he is impressed with the importance of "penned ministries." Holy men of old transmitted their God-im-bued counsel on the printed page, much of which was done in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Our Christian heritage would have been greatly impoverished had not the apostle Paul been a great letter writer. His enlightening insights, touched by the Holy Spirit, have lifted many loads and have brought encouragement and guidance to millions across the centuries.

Could we not, as ministers of the God of all grace, be more adept in the use of our pens, buttressed with our typewriters, computers, and other modern aids, to share in lifting burdens, encouraging the discouraged, honoring the eligible, and extending the scope of our influence for good? The answer to this long question is "Yes!" As someone has remarked, "When all is said and done, more is said than done."

It appears often that when we get inspired through some seminar or motivational conference, we go home; but soon the inspiration has abated, and little is done with it. It disappears like snow in the summer



by Raymond C. Kratzer

*Retired elder, Church of the Nazarene,
Yakima, Washington*

sun. Without doubt, it is difficult to put feet to our prayers or to add action to our resolves.

I recall a story of a very successful minister in a conversation with a pastor who was having a difficult struggle in his church. The latter remarked to the successful pastor, "Some fellows are just lucky in their circumstances."

His friend replied, "Maybe so. But it seems the harder I work, the luckier I get."

There is no effective substitute for hard work. This ingredient, united with the touch of the Holy Spirit, is part of the "mystery" of ministerial success. Surely without the Spirit's help, we are helpless.

One pastor, in meeting with the leaders of his church, made this astonishing remark as he opened the meeting: "All of you need to be fired." With a short pause, he added to this statement: "With the Holy Spirit!" This is the real answer to a phlegmatic church.

To be more specific concerning the mystery of penned ministries, let us lift out some avenues where it can play an important part in the fulfillment of our calling. The writing of letters is never easy or convenient. One can find a number of reasons to put it off to another time. Answers to correspondence can lag so far behind, they may lose their effectiveness. One pastor schooled himself to answer mail the same day it came. This meant he only read it once and saved the few moments of a second reading because of his delay.

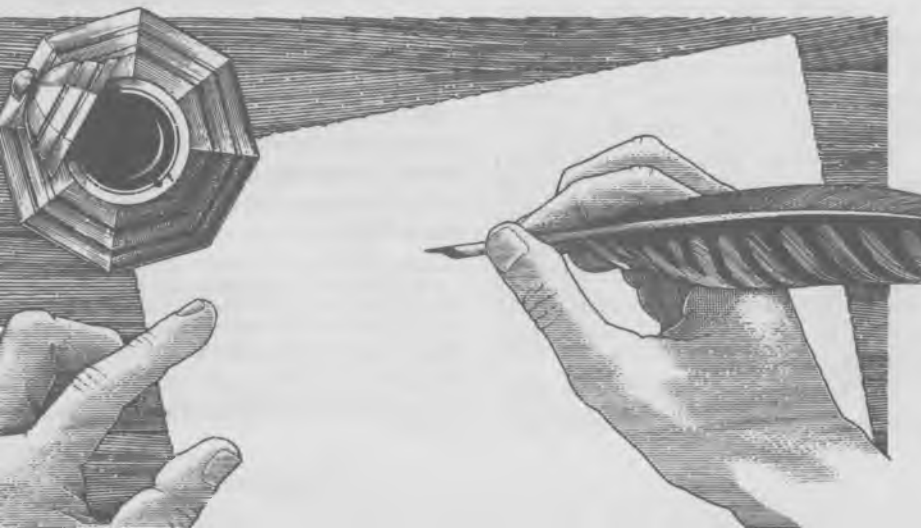
Many categories are available to a thoughtful pastor as he serves as an "overseer of the flock" (see Acts 20:28). For example:

Letters of Encouragement

A note from the pastor with a word from the Lord, citing a precious promise from God's Word, will cause an infusion of courage that may alter the whole outlook for good. There are many opportunities in this regard, and such ministries can be a healing balm. Just to know that the shepherd cares can change defeat into victory and enable a weary soul to see a rainbow around the dark cloud.

Letters of Congratulation

It may be an anniversary occasion. Or some teenager may be cited on the honor roll of his school. Perhaps a player on the basketball team earned distinction by his play in an important game that was won. Such a lad will be lifted by a letter from his pastor.



Letters to the Newborn

A letter to a newborn baby—the first one he or she will receive—is in order and has heartwarming consequences. It welcomes the infant into this wonderful world and tells of the fine parents as well as the church who will minister to him or her throughout the years. Although the child cannot read it at the time, the parents will cherish it and present it to the child in the years ahead.

Of course, letters to those who are ill or just a handwritten note on a get-well card gives a lift. An alert pastor will not neglect those in any distressful situation without a word of thoughtful concern. The new convert will cherish a thoughtful communication from the pastor, congratulating that one upon the most important step in life—that of surrendering to Jesus as Lord and Savior. This situation is tailor-made to give some godly counsel concerning the means of grace and the ingredients of a growing, successful Christian life.

My own heart has been blessed numbers of times by the responses to hundreds of letters I have written. Not long ago a young pastor wrote to me saying that when he needed a lift, he went to his file and reread a communication I had sent him in his home mission church challenges.

In the business world, much of the success lies in the personal contacts made through the mystery of penned ministry. Jesus said, "For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light" (Luke 16:8). Dare we be outmaneuvered by the secular world in thoughtfulness, only to gain material advantage, when we have so much to offer with eternal dividends in focus?

Dedicated laymen often are alert to the value of the written word in a heartwarming ministry. I think now of a "mother of Israel" in one of my pastorates. Occasionally I would find a note in the mail, telling me how much she appreciated my ministry—perhaps received from a recent sermon I had preached. My heart was lifted and blessed. New courage was injected into my spirit to do a better pulpit ministry—always!

Through the years I've observed many other laymen who often outshone pastors in the area of human

kindness. Good men often fail to realize the power of "a word in season" to a weary person (Isa. 50:4, KJV). When time is taken to send a communication of thoughtfulness, the radiant faces in one's congregation reflect a joy that far outweighs any effort put forth.

A teenager had received a letter of commendation from his pastor for an honor he had received. The next Sunday his mother thanked the pastor for his thoughtfulness. Others in the congregation had heard about it from this enthusiastic lad. Points were earned for a hardworking shepherd.

Just to know
that the
shepherd cares
can change
defeat into victory
and enable a
weary soul to
see a rainbow
around the
dark cloud.

John's Third Epistle compliments a fine Christian by the name of Gaius. He says:

My dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth (*vv. 1-3*).

In my opinion, after Gaius read this note from the esteemed apostle John, a fresh incentive stirred his spirit to be the best Christian possible. Surely he would not want to disappoint his mentor. Likewise, spiritual leaders today can infuse many in their world of influence to rise to their highest and best. All because they took the trouble to pen a note, put a postage

stamp on it, and send it with a prayer for God's touch upon the recipient.

Think how deprived we would be today of spiritual insights had the apostle Paul found it too enervating, while in prison in Rome, to pen the majestic Epistles from this untoward environment.

Great sermons are important, adequate administration is invaluable, but personal acts on a one-to-one basis between a pastor and a needy person has immeasurable efficacy. May all of us who are considered overseers of the flock fulfill this office in deed and in truth. Incidentally, bona fide educators tell us that if we learn to write better, we will also gain more expertise in public speaking.

In closing this treatise on the mystery of penned ministries, a few vital categories should be highlighted. For example, missionaries who may be members of your church should not be neglected by their home church. A regular communication from their pastor will elicit a "warm family feeling" because the home folks care about them. They are far away in a foreign environment. They need the love and prayers and concern from their home church. A church bulletin would help them keep in touch.

College and seminary students from a local church should be kept in contact by their home church through their thoughtful pastor. Such communications will make them eager to spend holiday times with their church family, and they will be motivated to shine for Jesus.

Military men and women should have a high priority in a pastor's letter writing. Their environment and its temptations will find a net of safety through the prayers and concern of a godly shepherd and a cherished home church.

One final thought: there will be times when you are tempted to write a "hot" letter of rebuke or criticism to someone who irritates you greatly. *If you must, write that letter, get the sizzling missive off your mind, and then drop it in "file 13" (the trash can),* where it will disintegrate and do no harm. Never honor the Postal Service with such a piece of mail. Always let your communications be uplifting, encouraging, and without a hint of anything but love out of a pure heart (1 Tim. 1:5).

Helping a Church Rise and Walk: The Minister as Therapist

by Russel L. Jarvis

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As part of a chaplaincy training course offered by an area metropolitan hospital, a dozen local pastors, including me, toured various units of the hospital.

One morning we visited with the physical therapy staff. The nurse in charge of the unit related her experiences working with people who had been injured and brought to her for rehabilitation. She told of an older woman who, because of an accident and subsequent surgery, had not walked for some time. Her staff of physical therapists outlined a program to get the woman on her feet again. However, an unexpected problem arose. The woman showed no interest in implementing the therapy program.

One of the therapists came to her superior for advice. The answer: "You know your goals for her. Have you asked her what her goals for herself are?"

The staffer did proceed to inquire of her patient. The woman's answer surprised her. "I am the mother of 11 children. Why should I go through all of this work when they can take care of me? God knows I've taken care of them long enough!"

Many ministers experience great frustration leading congregations who seem slow and even resistant in catching a vision that includes health and growth. The word coming down in many seminars and books regarding effective leadership is "vision." What has been esteemed in the business world for a long time has caught on in the Church. Growing churches are

said to be those drawn by a vision that provides both direction and incentive. Nearly always that vision finds conception in the heart of the pastor. Yet the next step, not often addressed at these presentations, is this: "How is such a vision translated into reality? How does it make the trip from the pastor's heart to the congregation?" As John Maxwell has said, "He who thinks he leads but has no one following him is merely taking a walk."

Ministers find themselves often in the role of the well-meaning therapist who has a vision of wholeness and health for his patient that the patient does not share. No one could reasonably dispute the legitimacy of the therapist's ambitions for her patient.

In the same manner, I as a pastor may believe my vision for the congregation in my charge is biblically founded and culturally relevant. I may have a strong conviction about the place of the Church in God's cosmic plan. I may desire that my congregation be a vital contributor to the realization of God's will in this generation and culture.

How could my people have another agenda? Nevertheless, they often do. What can happen then is that sides get drawn up between pastor (along with the members who have joined since his arrival) and people (those who were here when he came). The conscientious leader finds himself in a dilemma: how can he remain faithful to a vision of the church's future that he believes to be from God while appreciating where his church is right now?

I sometimes find myself so focused upon what I want my church to become that I fail to respect my people as they are. Many potentially good pastorates are short-circuited at this point.

Not bothering to consult with her patient revealed something about the therapist: perhaps she was more focused upon seeing her skills produce results than she was in the health and happiness of her patient. The same thing applies in the relationship a minister has with his congregation.

How many times have I come back from a church growth conference where First Great Community Church was profiled, convinced that this was the way every church should be, including mine? How many hours have I spent drafting comprehensive growth plans and presenting them to my elders? Through it all, I unintentionally sent an offensive message that said, "Even though I have not asked your opinion, I know what you ought to be like." Such an approach raises a barrier between shepherd and flock.

Once I offended a couple in charge of the missions program of our church. Each year we hold a one-day rally during which members make yearly financial commitments to missions. I had an idea of a good missions rally and offered myself to the couple to help put it together. Actually, I took over. My goal was a successful rally when instead it should have been supporting them in the development of their administrative skills. Since I did not really trust them to do

it "right," I did not consult them about what they wanted to see happen. I made a lot of assumptions and then gave them jobs toward serving my agenda. All in the name of building the Kingdom!

I soon had a call from them asking for a meeting. They quickly made it clear that I needed to back off. They reminded me that, though I professed to be an equipping minister (Eph. 4), I wasn't practicing it. I apologized, the rally went on, and we have remained friends and coworkers. Incidentally, this year (1996) our church set its highest mission commitment ever.

I believe God makes use of several plumb lines that keep His workers at their best. The one I am most familiar with is the one asking, "Are you building your dream and using My people to do it, or are you building My people?" *Effective Christian leaders view their charges as people to be respected, not as projects to be completed. A large part of this is expressed in simple listening.*

This does not suggest that pastors wait on their people to take initiative. Leaders are the ones out front. Every qualified therapist, physical or psychological, has an idea of proper health toward which he or she works with every patient. The therapist has a higher responsibility than to please the patient.

So too with pastors. Who better for God to give the vision for health and growth to than the one who spends the most time pondering and praying over it? That which frustrates most ministers is not initiation but rather motivation.

The woman who saw no need to walk again had a future image of herself justified by what she believed were good reasons: the pain of exercise, the bother of going to the hospital to meet with the therapists, the expectation—reasonable to her—that her family would take care of her. She had no motivation to change. In a similar way, church people find many reasons to sustain the status quo.

Unlike some pastors, this therapist chose not to level guilt upon her patient: "You are being a bad patient by refusing to do what I tell you!" The turning point in her patient's recov-

ery was when she found a motivation already held by the patient: "Sure, your children would take care of you. But what if you are home alone and there is a fire?" "Wouldn't you want to use your legs enough to get to the bathroom, rather than use that smelly bedside commode?" The therapist wisely helped her patient visualize a better life than what she presently possessed. She did so by appealing to priorities her patient already possessed.

"Are you building your dream and using My people to do it, or are you building My people?"

One of my driving values is that God desires the local church to be a community through which He can reconcile the world to himself by means of the proclamation of the gospel (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

To become a tool of reconciliation as a church, we have needed to make our building larger and more visitor-friendly. For years we got by with cramped and inadequate rest rooms. Realtors will tell you that bathrooms sell a house. If our church was going to bring more people into the life of Christ, we needed to upgrade these facilities. The opportunity arose to expand them. Through my evangelistic lenses, I saw an opportunity for evangelistic increase. However, many others valued the project in terms of the convenience it would bring to themselves.

It sounds carnal, but even Christians act for reasons that seem good for themselves. They invest themselves best in those things from which they expect the most benefit. In the imperfect church, self-sacrifice remains mixed with self-concern. *Ef-*

fective Christian leaders recognize and accept this mixed bag of motivation, for they themselves share it!

Our auditorium is nearly 80 percent full, and we are landlocked. I and some others believe we need to relocate and to build as a strategic growth step. Yet this vision seems too drastic for the majority of the membership to attempt. This could become a divisive issue. A better course may be to start a second worship service. Is this a cowardly compromise, a people-pleasing move, an abandonment of God's true vision? Not necessarily. This could be a way to tap into a value that may allow people eventually to own for themselves the vision of relocation and building. By using the building to its maximum use and holding out the hope of a reunited congregation in a new and larger building, members may more readily embrace the difficult step of relocation. *Effective Christian leaders are willing to adjust the form of the vision while preserving the function.*

Bear Bryant, legendary football coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide, said that he didn't have the power to motivate any of his players. What he could do was create an environment in which his players could motivate themselves. After 17 years in ministry with three churches, I have come to realize that I possess no power to make my churches grow. But as a kind of minister-therapist, I can involve my people in spiritual exercises and diet that will allow a crippled body of Christ to act itself into health. *Effective Christian leaders are those who discover the latent motivations within their people as keys to convincing them of the profitability of change.*

Jesus followed this strategy when He tapped into both the unrest and the dreams of a man named Simon Peter: "Don't be afraid. From now on you will catch men" (Luke 5:10). Over the next decades, much of Peter's life vision was either deleted or fine-tuned. Yet when he came to the end of his days, he could say that Jesus had brought him where he had always wanted to go (2 Pet. 1:10-11). When all is said and done, may our congregations say the same thing of us who serve them. 

Fundamentalism and the Church of the Nazarene

Editor's Note:

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The theology of the Church of the Nazarene was clearly made distinct from Fundamentalism by actions of the General Assemblies of 1928 and 1932. This was done not by specific repudiation of Fundamentalism but by affirming the church's commitment to its Wesleyan-Arminian heritage. Language in the Articles of Faith was made more precise so that there was little room for a Calvinistic interpretation of the meaning. With this careful and faithful commitment to Wesley, the Church of the Nazarene had put itself outside of the Fundamentalist position. What is important to understand is that commitment to Wesleyan-Arminian theology necessarily divides the Church of the Nazarene from Fundamentalism. Also inferred is that Fundamentalism is a product of Calvinist doctrine. This historical situation is described in Timothy Smith's history of the early years of the Church of the Nazarene, *Called unto Holiness, Volume 1*, in chapter 13.

I

It is significant to remember that the issue of Fundamentalism was not a part of either the 1907 union Assembly in Chicago nor the 1908 union Assembly in Pilot Point. What happened in the 20 years that led to the concerns of the 1928 Assembly? A rather simplistic answer to that question will probably do for this presentation: Three things seem to be obvious contributors to the change. The first is the spread of the Fundamentalist controversy that had generated around the turn of the century. The



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second is the rapid growth of the Church of the Nazarene in the Midwest. The third is the uniting of the Laymen's Holiness Association with the Church of the Nazarene in the summer of 1922.

First, at the end of the 19th century, a theological controversy began to develop around the biblical scholars at Andover Seminary. Andover Seminary was established in 1808 and was the first theological school in New England. It was established by Calvinists to propagate and defend their theological concerns. In 1881 a major change took place in the faculty. This new faculty began to apply modern critical methods of literary study to the biblical text. This activity brought a reaction from constituents who were concerned to preserve the authority of Scripture. The ensuing debate hardened into two distinct positions. The professors and their supporters were identified as Liberals, and the critics were called Fundamentalists. The Fundamentalists gained that designation because of the five fundamentals that they claimed were a test for Christian orthodoxy. We shall consider these fundamentals later in the presentation.

The rapid spread of this controversy is most noticeable in the rural communities of New England, upstate

New York, and the upper Mississippi Valley. Perhaps due to the catastrophic collapse of humanistic expectations in the death and destruction of World War I and to rural economic frustrations, there developed a general pessimism about humanity and a specific distrust of the social order in these rural regions. Consequently, not only were the Fundamentalist principles embraced, but they were held tightly with a passion to protect the faith from the evil world.

Second, along with this general progression of the Liberal/Fundamental controversy was a specific impact on the young Church of the Nazarene. Against the backdrop of an unsure shift to second-generation leadership, the church began to grow rapidly in the upper Mississippi Valley. At the time of the 1908 union in Pilot Point, Texas, the Church of the Nazarene was clustered in the three geographic locations that represented the three uniting groups: New England and New York, the Far West, the old Southwest. The Far Western group had a relatively small outpost in Chicago. A rapid, significant, and dramatic change took place. By 1920 about 50 percent of the estimated property value of the Church of the Nazarene, more than 40 percent of church members, and four of the church's colleges were in the Midwest. This growth was not primarily the result of evangelism but of the Fundamentalist controversy. The Methodist churches of this region had become a battlefield in a theological war. The Church of the Nazarene became a home for those who had been influenced by their Fundamentalist leanings to leave the Methodist Church. Timothy Smith claims that this created a radical change in the focus of the church.

Third, the Laymen's Holiness Association was assimilated into the

Church of the Nazarene. The association was a movement within the Methodist conferences in the upper Midwest. A specific understanding of this group was a commitment to a Fundamentalist interpretation of Wesleyan doctrine. This was a relatively small group, but its vocal leadership and the resonance with the thinking of the new Nazarenes in the upper Mississippi Valley created the need for the Church of the Nazarene to assert its basic commitment to Wesleyan/Arminian doctrine.

II

Understanding that an affirmation of Wesleyan/Arminian theology is necessarily a denial of Fundamentalism brings one to the need to demonstrate some basic contrasts between the Wesleyan/Arminian tradition and the Reformed tradition (Calvinism). The focal point of these contrasts is James Arminius (1560-1609), a Reformed pastor and professor in Holland. He came from a poor family but through his scholastic performance became known to the civic leaders in Amsterdam. They funded his theological studies at the Reformed school in Geneva. Arminius's professor, a devoted disciple of Calvin, was careful to preserve and communicate the doctrines of his master. Arminius more than met the expectations of his professor and the leaders back home in Amsterdam.

After serving some years of pastoral duties in Amsterdam, the popular preacher took up the responsibilities of teaching as he joined the faculty at the University of Leiden. As pastor and teacher, Arminius tried to mitigate what he took to be the excessive theological claims that were being made by Reformed apologists in Holland. He believed that their responses to theological attacks by Catholic thinkers were an overstatement of the Reformed positions. His own response to this situation was an attempt to counter the excesses of the apologists. However, in this task he did more than just return to Calvin; he began to articulate positions that would eventually produce doctrines that were contrary to Calvin. Simply, Arminius wanted to gain a space for human responsibility, while Calvin's theological system was essentially deterministic. Arminius and those who

sided with him were known as Remonstrants.

What follows is an adaptation of ideas that Carl Bangs expressed in the H. Orton Wiley Lectures in Theology, Point Loma College, in 1977. Those lectures are contained in a small book titled *Our Roots of Belief*. All of the 16 claims below are accepted by both the Reformed tradition and Arminius; however, the Reformed position in each pair will lean toward the left-hand column, while Arminius's position in the same pair will lean toward the right-hand column. The first pair is Grace and Freedom. The Reformed (Calvinist) tradition would lean toward Grace, that God's grace alone is efficacious; while the Arminian tradition tends toward Freedom, that hu-

man freedom can facilitate or frustrate grace. Each of the 8 pairs will follow this pattern.

III

Most of us remember "TULIP," the memory device for recalling the basic theology of John Calvin. It is expressed as follows:

TOTAL DEPRAVITY—The image of God has been lost.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION—God chooses who will necessarily be saved.

LIMITED ATONEMENT—Salvation is only for those who are elected.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE—Humans cannot frustrate the will of God.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS—The elect cannot fall from grace.

CALVINISTS AND ARMINIANS CONTRASTED

CALVINISM

Grace

God will save those He chooses to save (monergism).

Faith

The human side of the saving act is faith.

Security

Those who are saved will not fall from grace.

Authority

The Bible is given by direct inspiration. Either it is wholly accepted, or it is rejected.

Doctrine

Theology is for acceptance and preservation. Innovation is discouraged.

Conformity

The Church is made up of those who are in agreement. Conformity is expected.

Separation

Believers separate from Christians who are theologically different and from culture.

Clergy

Authority is in the hands of those who are ordained.

ARMINIANISM

Freedom

Humans are responsible and can facilitate or frustrate the will of God (synergism).

Love

The human response to grace is love. Christianity is a heart religion.

Personality

Christians make choices, and choices imply risk. This is what it is to be human.

Nourishment

The Bible provides strength for Christian living.

Inquiry

Theology is a search for truth by persons who have experienced the love of God. Truth is passion rather than a tradition.

Tolerance

The Church is open to differences. Personal growth and individual understanding imply differences of ideas and actions.

Accommodation

Believers accommodate other Christians and the culture.

Laiety

Laypersons as well as clergy can exercise good judgment under the Spirit.

Given the claims above, one can see the force of Calvin's determinism. With that determinism there is no room for individual freedom in terms of one's eternal salvation. God will save those He chooses to save. This claim is a result of deductive logic. This defines much of what was going on with religious claims during most of the history of Western philosophical thought. It is, therefore, the basic tool of theological thought through the time of Calvin. The force of a deductive argument is that in the case that the premises are true, the conclusion is necessarily true. It is easy to see this in the following argument:

All bachelors are unmarried males.
John is a bachelor.

Therefore, John is an unmarried male.

This produces another necessary inference: if the conclusion is false, then at least one of the premises is also false. If John is not an unmarried male, then either all bachelors are not unmarried males, or John is not a bachelor, or both. When one understands this, there is no doubt that the religious claims that are produced by this deductive method must be defended. If a necessary inference is found to be false, then, necessarily, at least one of the earlier claims must be false. The danger to the edge is a danger to all.

It is important to note that the logic that developed through the thinking of John Locke was rooted in inductive rather than deductive reasoning. In this system, the premises only give some support for the conclusion. This is the foundation of modern thinking and of science. This means that knowledge claims are based in verifiable data, rather than universal principles. Wesley claims that Locke has it right about this and follows this kind of thinking in the development of his claims. This marks a significant difference between Calvin and Wesley. It also indicates an important distinction between the way that Fundamentalists and modern Wesleyans relate ideas.

IV

In the controversy that developed at Andover, the Fundamentalist side developed a set of criteria that they believed were tests for orthodoxy. They are as follows:

1. The Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures: The Bible is the exact Word of God and is, therefore, without error.

**Commitment
to Wesleyan-
Arminian
theology
necessarily
divides the
Church of the
Nazarene from
Fundamentalism.**

2. The Virgin Birth of Christ: Jesus did not have a biological father.

3. The Substitutionary Atonement: Jesus received the wrath of God for human sin.

4. The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus: The resurrected Jesus had a physical body.

**The things that
are important
are those that
have to do with
the restoration
of humans to
relationship
with God.**

5. The Premillennial Second Coming of Christ: The second coming of Christ will usher in the millennial age.

There is something to be said in

support of each of these: (1) The Bible is authoritative for the Christian community. (2) The Church's creeds have historically affirmed the virgin birth of Jesus. (3) The Substitutionary Atonement theory does account for some of the scriptural claims. (4) The Scriptures do indicate that the risen Jesus had a body. (5) There are scriptures that seem to teach that Jesus will come before the millennial age.

But there are also some problems: (1) The Bible is not a history or science book; it concerns itself with the reconciliation of humanity to God. (2) The Virgin Birth does not seem to be a concern of Paul, who could talk about the gospel without mentioning it. (3) There are several theories of the Atonement that can be found in the New Testament. (4) Bodily resurrection is not a focus of the Early Church's message; the resurrecting power of God is. (5) There is a variety of eschatological claims in the Scriptures; none seem to dominate.

Of greater concern than these possible alternative understandings to the principle of the Fundamentalists is a question about their significance. In the larger expression of the gospel, do these form a high level of concern? Well, they do if they are deductively derived. If these are necessary inferences, then either they are true, or at least one of the essential truths is false. In that sense, it matters that these claims are true. However, from our Wesleyan tradition, there is not an extensive emphasis on these issues. The things that are important are those that have to do with the restoration of humans to relationship with God. It is hard to see this emphasis when one looks at the Agreed Statement of Belief in the *Manual*. The following represents the essence of the statement:

AGREED STATEMENT OF BELIEF

1. One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Scriptures given by plenary inspiration.
3. Humans are born with a fallen nature.
4. The finally impenitent are lost.
5. The atonement is for all humanity, and whoever repents and believes is justified, regenerated, and saved.
6. Believers are to be sanctified wholly through faith.

7. The Holy Spirit bears witness to God's grace.
8. The Lord will return, the dead will be raised, and the final judgment will take place.

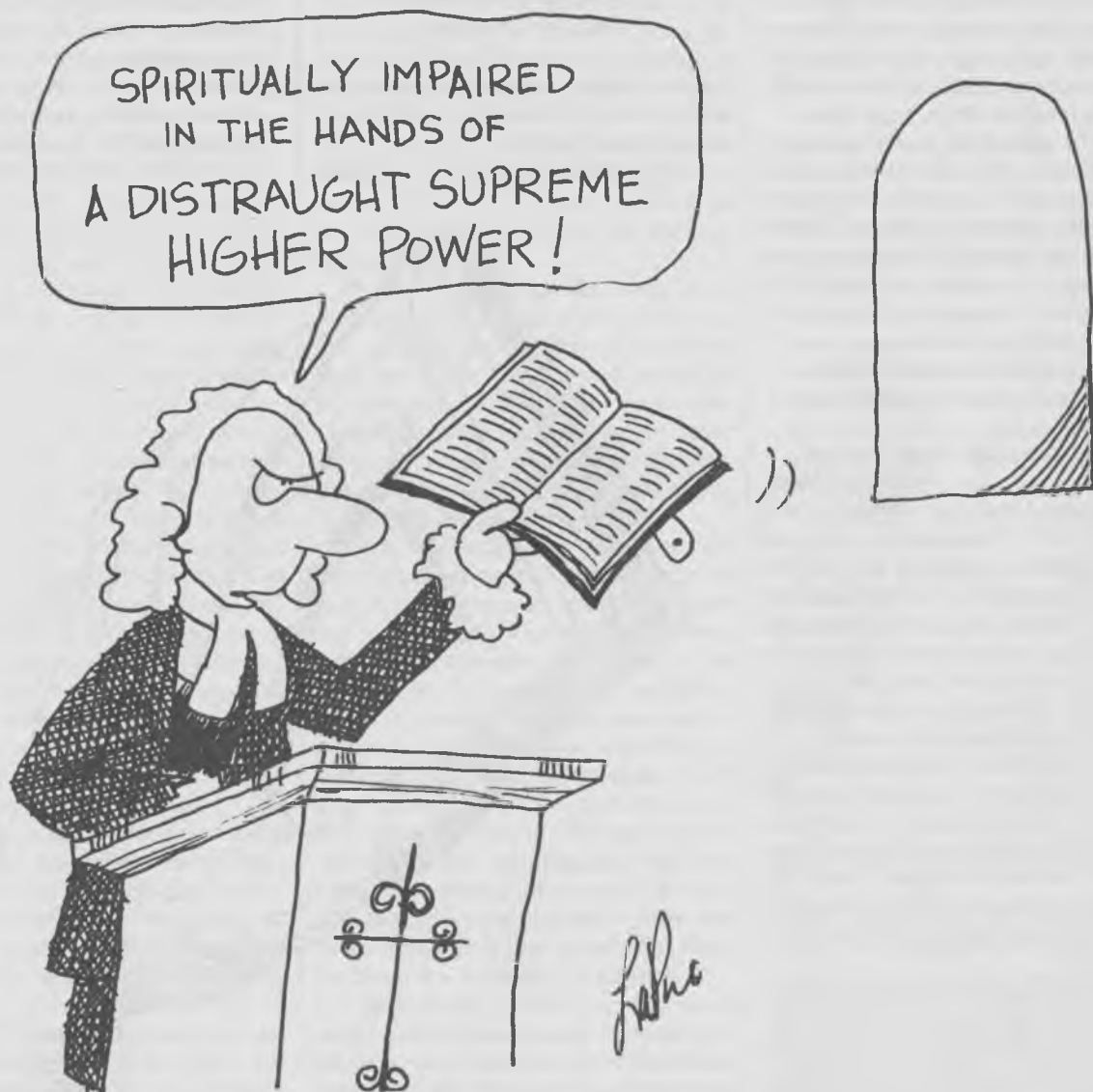
If one remembers that plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is the claim that all that is necessary to salvation is contained in the Old and New Testaments, then even the doctrine of the Bible has to do with salvation rather than epistemic accuracy.

When a side-by-side reading of the Five Fundamentals and the Agreed Statement of Belief is done, there is an obvious difference in both the content and the concern. In the Fundamentals, there are positions that are offered as true. In the Agreed Statement of Belief, there is an outline

Our brothers and sisters in Christ who follow other understandings of the Christian message are affirmed by us, even though we do not agree.

that represents the path to personal salvation.

The goal in this discussion is not to decide who is right or wrong. Rather, the objective is to show that there is a difference, and that difference is of such a nature that the acceptance of one of the positions is necessarily the denial of the other. Our brothers and sisters in Christ who follow other understandings of the Christian message are affirmed by us, even though we do not agree. However, those who have identified themselves with the Church of the Nazarene and its message of holiness and wholeness are committed to expressing the gospel message within the Wesleyan tradition. This is not a burden that we bear; it is a heritage that we celebrate.



A politically correct Jonathan Edwards

A Wesleyan View of Scripture

Occasionally you read or hear someone refer to Christians as "people of the Book." This is a faulty designation; Christians are "people of the Person." Followers of the Islamic faith may be properly designated as a "people of a book," since it is their belief that the Koran was dictated to Muhammad by Allah and is inerrant in the original; hence it cannot be translated and retain its authority. That is why there are persons who memorize and recite the Koran in the original Arabic, usually in a high-pitched, singsong fashion.

The Christian faith, to the contrary, is based upon the belief that God has made himself known primarily through the person of His Son. Hence the faith to which a Christian commits himself is to God as revealed in Jesus Christ. It is appropriate for the Christian believer to sing,
*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.*

.....
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand.

—Edward Mote

Having said that, the Christian faith recognizes that the only access we have cognitively—though not spiritually—to this revelation is through the record of those who were witnesses to the Christ event. Since that witness entails an affirmation that this revelation is the culmination of a preliminary divine self-disclosure, and an inspired application of the implications of the Christ event to many specific situations, the Christian recognizes that the Holy Scriptures contain more than the so-called Gospels. They also include the literature of the older testament and the letters of apostolic origin (?).

Thus the Christian within the Wesleyan tradition always defers to the authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice. This is not uniquely Wesleyan, however. It is distinctively Protestant, even though many who



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think of themselves as Protestants do not acknowledge the priority of Scripture in this way.

One of the most dramatic illustra-

tions of the "Protestant principle" is found in the confrontation between Martin Luther and the Catholic Church/state at the Diet of Worms. When asked if he would renounce his writings that challenged certain beliefs and practices of the church, he replied:

Since, then, your Majesty and Lordships demand a simple response, I will give one with neither horns nor teeth to this effect. Unless convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason—for I believe neither pope nor councils alone, since it is certain they have often erred and contradicted them-



selves,—having been conquered by the Scriptures referred to and my conscience taken captive by the word of God, I cannot and will not revoke anything, for it is neither safe nor right to act against one's conscience. God help me. Amen.¹

Subsequent Protestant orthodoxy did not always subscribe to the priority of Scripture over tradition in practice but formulated its own creeds that sometimes were honored above the Word. One signal illustration of this occurred in the Arminian controversies of the early 17th century. James Arminius, then professor at Leiden University, was under heavy attack from his opponents who had imported "high Calvinism" into the Dutch Reformed Church and were assuming a powerful influence in what had been, in the Low Countries, a rather tolerant, mildly Calvinistic ethos. Arminius kept calling for a national synod to hear the debate and pass judgment on the issues that centered on the matter of particular predestination.

However, such a synod never became a reality until after his death in 1609, and it was anything but what Arminius had envisioned. His followers were not seated and were declared heretics; and this meeting, known as the Synod of Dort, affirmed as orthodox what we today call five-point Calvinism. There was, however, a planning synod in which Arminius participated. Its purpose was to determine the protocol for the National Synod. One of the main issues was whether or not the participants could appeal to Scripture or only to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. Arminius argued for the former because he always bested his opponents when the Scripture was used. But he was outvoted, and the final court of appeal was determined to be the creed, not the Bible.

Within the orbit of the same complex of issues, one of the most fascinating cases that has come to my attention in my researches is the case of John McLeod Campbell. Campbell was a minister in the Church of Scotland (rigidly Calvinistic) during the 19th century, serving as pastor in the parish of Row (pronounced rue). He found a congregation of unhappy parishioners who experienced no joy in their religion. Upon determining

that the cause was their theology of a limited Atonement with its logical corollary of lack of present assurance of salvation, he searched the Scriptures and on that basis began preaching a universal Atonement. His people responded with a dramatic transformation of spirit, the congregation was growing, and visitors were attracted from the city to this vibrant rural church. But word of his preaching got to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and he was called on the carpet.

Before the church courts he appealed to Scripture and demonstrated, beyond their capacity to refute him, the truth of his preaching. Actually, no one attempted to meet the challenge. Instead, they argued that ordination in the church was based on commitment to the Westminster Confession, not the Bible, and he was deposed from the ministry. This set him free. With help from friends, he began preaching in Glasgow. His pulpit became one of the most influential in Scotland. He eventually wrote what some scholars consider to be one of the three greatest treatises on the Atonement in the history of Christian thought.

Those who are familiar with John Wesley will be well aware that he, too, insisted on fidelity to the Scripture above all. His avowed intention to be "a man of one book" did not exclude profound study in many other sources but did mean that all were brought to the bar of judgment for evaluation by the Word of God.

Thus, as Wesleyans, we do not appeal to creeds or tradition over the Bible but freely admit that all are human productions and, therefore, subject to error and correction by the Text. If, in fact, we elevate traditional ideas or even scriptural *interpretations* to a place of immunity from critique in the light of better insight into the Bible, we have aborted our Protestant heritage. This may often-times become painful, since it may entail abandoning cherished opinions that have been propagated by revered patriarchs. Yet it is a course that must be taken by authentic Wesleyans.

The logical question arising from these presuppositions concerns the basis of the recognition of scriptural authority. Although this question was implicitly raised by the Protestant Reformation and its *sola scriptura* prin-

ciple, and was first formally introduced in 1518 at the Diet of Augsburg, this question really moved into the center of theological discussion with the rise of biblical criticism in the 18th and 19th centuries. The stage had actually been set in the 17th century with the rise of Protestant scholasticism. With the numerous challenges that appeared during those centuries, the issue became a major one.

Within the ranks of those who give full credence to the authority of Scripture, there are differences of opinion as to how that authority is to be articulated or understood. As Paul Rees wrote,

But I reply, that the testimony of Spirit is superior to all reason. For as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own word, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit. . . . They who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason; . . . such a sentiment . . . cannot be produced but by a revelation from heaven. . . . The Scripture will . . . only be effectual to produce the saving knowledge of God, when the certainty of it shall be founded on the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit (*Institutes*, 1.8.4-13).²

By the 17th century, this dynamic view of biblical authority had been significantly transformed in Protestant scholasticism under the influence of Philipp Melancthon and Ulrich Zwingli. The "internal testimony of the Spirit" was felt to be too subjective, and thus they initiated a turn from the function of Scripture to a more rationalistic approach, emphasizing its form, specifically its inerrancy.

The transition of this scholastic approach to American soil found its central expression in what has been called the "Princeton theology," articulated by such persons as Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, and B. B. Warfield. Since these men were Calvinistic in their theology, a monergistic view of Scripture

felt comfortable in that context, since it logically excluded significant human input.

An additional interesting insight into these developments concerns the meaning of the concept of "error." Jack Rogers has clearly demonstrated that the use of the concept among the early fathers of the church, such as Augustine, carries the connotation of "intent to deceive."³ Hence, even if there were certain factual mistakes, such as New Testament writers misquoting an Old Testament passage or attributing it to the wrong author, there was no intent to deceive, and hence there was no error. If such intention could be detected, the integrity of Scripture would indeed be called into question. However, at least by the time of the Princeton theologians, "error" had taken on the connotation of absence of "technical accuracy" with regard to anything about which the writer spoke. This shift may have had something to do with a shift from an oral to a print-oriented culture. In any case, it led to some interesting developments.

Unable to sustain the argument about the inerrancy of Scripture in the English versions, with Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, the retreat was made to the original autographs. If there had been errors in transmission and translation of the manuscripts, the words from the hands of the inspired penmen were free from the contamination of error. This was a safe move, since no autographs are extant.

The major problem here is that, as any tyro in logic can immediately see, this argument is rife with logical fallacies and moves the base of authority from the Scripture itself to the person who guarantees the inerrancy of the autographs. Thus, no empirical verification is forthcoming.

Charles Hodge once said, "Every theology is in one sense a form of philosophy. To understand any theological system, we must understand the philosophy that underlies it and gives it form."⁴ Thus, it may be helpful to the philosophically inclined to note that these two approaches to the question of biblical authority are based upon two quite different philosophical theories of knowledge (epistemology).

The first stems from the Platonic

tradition, incorporated into the Christian tradition by Augustine. For this approach, knowledge is immediate, direct, and intuitive. The validity of what is known is self-authenticating and is not mediated by any other information.

The second reflects the Aristotelian tradition, which is empirical in nature and argues that knowledge is indirect, mediate, and inferential. Hence, knowledge begins with experience of empirical phenomena, from which is inferred any knowledge of nonempirical reality. Thomas Aquinas appropriated this theory of knowledge and, thus, argues that knowledge of other minds, God, and other nonempirical ideas are inferred as secondary from the primary knowledge of the physical world or various aspects of it or both.

It is relatively easy to see that the Platonic-Augustinian theory of knowledge informs the view of scriptural authority that acknowledges its self-authenticating power via the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit." Such knowledge is immediate, direct, and intuitive.

The theory that emphasizes the form over function appeals to the theory of knowledge that begins with empirically apprehended data and infers its conclusions from that. Hence, from the experience of an "errorless" Bible, one infers its authority. Knowledge is here indirect, mediated, and inferential. But as theologian Paul Tillich says about the implications of these two types of what he calls "philosophies of religion," with the first, atheism is impossible; whereas with the second, it is inevitable, since the inference need not be made. The same may be said about scriptural authority, since the inference from the data (which in any case is highly questionable) need not necessarily be made.

I have elsewhere argued that the fully developed doctrine of prevenient grace clearly identifies the consistent Wesleyan theory of knowledge with the Augustinian tradition with regard to both God and scriptural authority. I furthermore am convinced that experience verifies this as well.

I have often offered a challenge to my students when these issues are being discussed that if they would go to Lebanon Road in Donelson, Ten-

nessee, a suburb of Nashville, to the central headquarters of the Gideons International and gain access to their files, they would find many wonderful stories of people who were converted to Christ through reading one of their Bibles in a motel or hotel room, or a hospital or doctor's office, and so on. But, as I challenged them, I would wager any amount, if I were a betting man, that they would never find a letter that gave a testimony of someone who picked up a Bible, read a substantial portion of it, and was so impressed with the inerrancy of the information contained in it that they decided to become a Christian believer. Rather, there would be many of these marvelous tales of the existential impact of the *message* of the gospel of Jesus Christ that gave hope to the hopeless and meaning to those without purpose—and lives were transformed. And this, even though that organization is officially committed to a Fundamentalist view of Scripture.

H. Orton Wiley vigorously opposed dependence upon rational arguments based on form and affirmed, instead, the "internal witness of the Holy Spirit" as the authentic validation of Scripture as the Word of God written. He deplored the separation of the written Word from the Living Word and declared that those men and women "filled with the Holy Spirit, are not unduly concerned with either higher or lower criticism. They do not rest merely in the letter which must be defended by argument. They have a broader and more substantial basis for their faith."⁵

Timothy L. Smith, Nazarene historian, in a letter to the *Christian Century* written in the context of the controversies stirred up in the Evangelical community by Harold Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible*, wrote:

Evangelicals who reject the verbal inerrancy of the Scriptures on matters of history and cosmology are [not] taking their cues from modern biblical scholarship [as Lindsell had alleged]. On the contrary, I think many of them are, in fact . . . "recovering an Evangelical heritage."⁶

Paul Bassett, another Nazarene historian, has written:

It may be confidently asserted that by 1900, a distinguishing tenet of Wesleyan theology in contradic-

tion from the Calvinism of Princeton and those whom it influenced is the insistence upon the internal witness of the Spirit as a source of biblical authority—"internal witness" being taken in both an individual and a corporate sense."

The bottom line to all this is the patent fact that no theory of inspiration yet articulated does justice to the variety, diversity, and complexity of the total biblical material. Even if some of it can be subsumed under some theory, parts of it resist such a schema. For instance, no one, to my knowledge, has yet come up with any fully satisfactory way of talking about inspiration in relation to the wisdom literature, which is based upon experience and even is exceedingly self-critical of its own methodology (see Ecclesiastes).

The sage words of Paul Rees seem appropriate here:

Thus, the total task of interpreting and confessing the Bible's authority and reliability is by no means as simple as we perpetually try to make it. The Bible's human components and history are as honestly to be reckoned with as its divine origin and preservation. He who cannot acceptingly live with its humanity will always be tempted presumptuously to distort its divinity. After all, God could have *dropped* the Bible ready-made from the skies in 2,000 languages or more. He chose not to *drop* it but to develop it—over long periods of time and with the help of a lot of human agents. God didn't *bestow* it. He *built* it—piece by piece, event by event, writer by writer. If it was initiated and interpenetrated by heaven—and we believe it was—it was cradled and colored by earth.⁸

Yet, all of this is, in one sense, preliminary. The most important question pertains to how we use Scripture, what are the proper principles of interpretation. Even to commit to the theory of an "inerrant" text in terms of "technical accuracy" is no guarantee of sound doctrine, as is evidenced by the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christadelphians, all

of whom subscribe to that position.

An article in an earlier issue of the *Preacher's Magazine* has apparently argued for a thoroughgoing literalism, accusing those who do not accept the literal meaning of all Scripture of revisionism in the interests of a political agenda. While there may be rare cases of such, virtually all Bible scholars are rather looking for more adequate means of properly deriving the contemporary significance of this ancient text.

Since this article chiefly refers to Old Testament texts, two facts need to be noticed about such passages. First, the New Testament itself radically reinterprets the Old Testament in light of the uniqueness of the person and work of Christ. Since there is minimal correspondence between the literal meaning of many Old Testament expressions of hope for the future and the actual fulfillment in Jesus and the Church, Jesus himself—and His followers—reinterpreted the Old Testament hope in the light of the vision of the Suffering Servant depicted in Isa. 40–55. This is "revisionism" *par excellence*. Tons of paper and ink have been used exploring this phenomenon. We cannot here explore it more fully.

Second, the Christian church has never interpreted the Old Testament literally until recently, and then by a theological movement known as dispensationalism, which to do so has had to ignore the New Testament. The Church has recognized from the beginning that to read the Old Testament literally is to deny it a place in the Christian canon. Hence, during the earlier centuries, Christian scholars took refuge in an allegorical reading of the text. Since that approach impugns the integrity of the text, no contemporary Bible student will resort to this method out of respect for the text itself. Other methods of exegesis have been employed, such as typology of a modern type, but this also has questionable presuppositions.

John Wesley's method of biblical interpretation provides a pointer to a more adequate way of taking the Bible seriously while not being led astray by ill-advised proof-texting that

ignores the larger context. Repeatedly he enjoins his readers to take note of "the whole tenor of Scripture." Looking at Scripture holistically is an important clue to proper interpretation.

It is my opinion that what Wesley meant was similar to what we mean today by biblical theology. In any case, the way in which we can legitimately affirm the authority of the whole Bible is in terms of its theology. While that theology may come to expression in historically conditioned ways, or in terms of admonitions enjoined or forbidden that have been superseded by the revelation in Jesus Christ, the theology that informs these passages remains as the enduring word of authority. Such strange admonitions as not to wear cloth made of two types of fabric, if taken literally, would require many of us to discard our dress shirts, since many are mixtures of cotton and polyester. But the theological significance of it, which calls for integrity in the life of the believer, absence of duplicity, is applicable to me at the end of the 20th century. And so is all of the Old Testament. This also provides the most satisfying way of speaking about the way the New Testament appropriates the Old Testament. It takes the theology spoken through a B.C. word and translates that same theology into an A.D. word.

In this way, the Wesleyan may acknowledge the full authority of Scripture without resorting to question-begging ploys or appealing to ignorance. The Word becomes the vehicle through which we may encounter the Word. 

1. A. C. McGiffert, *Martin Luther, the Man and His Work* (New York: Century Co., 1911), 203.

2. Paul Rees, in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack Rogers (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1978), 10.

3. See Jack Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979). This study traces the history of the concept of authority from the patristic period to the present and demonstrates the truth of the statement in the text.

4. Rogers, *Biblical Authority*, 39.

5. H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1940), 1:141-43.

6. Timothy L. Smith, "Determining Biblical Authority's Base," *Christian Century* (Mar. 2, 1977), 198.

7. Paul Bassett, "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement, 1914-1940," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13 (spring 1978), 69.

8. Rees, "Embattlement or Understanding," 11.

Spiritually Single: Ministering to the Unequally Yoked

From the platform it's easy to spot Cindy. She always sits near the back with two small children pressed closely against her. A few people smile and greet her, but when the service is over, she usually doesn't linger to visit. Other couples leave in groups to meet over dinner, but Cindy and the children scurry to their car, knowing they won't be invited, knowing if they were invited, they couldn't accept. Cindy comes to church alone, but she isn't single.



by Marcia Dummier Mitchell

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Early in her marriage she had high hopes that her husband would soon join in her belief and accompany her to church. But the years have flown, and he shows no sign of changing. Although she is married, Cindy is spiritually single.

What Is Spiritually Single?

Cindy isn't alone in her situation. Our congregations embrace many spiritually single people. They come to church alone, struggling with the fact that their spouse doesn't share their spiritual beliefs, wrestling with the problems of raising children in a home where one spouse doesn't share or uphold the Christian faith. Because of the nature of their situation, these problems aren't readily solved by the solutions often shared in our Sunday services. So, if the usual answers don't fit, how can we as a Christian church minister to these hurting and needy people?

Struggle with Guilt

The spiritually single people struggle with guilt about how they came to be in their situation. Some came to know Christ after they were already married. Some were away from Christ

when they married, only to renew their faith later. Others weren't careful to select a Christian mate. One of the fallacies people believe is that it will be easy to convert their mate after they are married. But it usually doesn't happen that way.

It's important to help them understand that how they got there no longer matters, but rather that they can go forward from this point. Letting go of the past and committing it to Christ is the beginning of healing for this guilt. They need to learn that they can't go back and correct the mistakes of the past. Their task is to start with now, facing their current situations and seeking how they can deal with today.

Pain of Loneliness

Ryan doesn't always bring the children with him to church. So when he looks for a place to sit in the services, it's a dilemma. He doesn't want to sit in a crowded pew or wind up sitting next to a single woman. He often sits with his friend John and his family. But when John happens to be out of town, Ryan isn't comfortable sitting beside John's wife. Usually he finds a spot that's wide-open, yet he experiences a deep sense of loneliness because of the vacant space beside him. He wishes with all his heart that his wife would join him, but so far that hasn't happened. Ryan is lonely at church in the midst of a crowd. He's also lonely at home because he can't share his faith openly. Ryan feels that no one understands either of those problems.

Balancing Church and Homelife

Both Ryan and Cindy are struggling with balancing their church and homelife. For them, knowing how to



act in the church sphere is a constant problem. Week after week there are openings in areas of service that need people to fill them. Sunday School classes need teachers, boards need members, the office needs volunteers. The list is endless. Exactly how much the spiritually single person can be involved in these activities is a decision that must be made over and over again.

Part of the problem is that others in the church see only the attending person. If the mate doesn't attend church or many of its activities, the person is always seen alone. Maybe it's psychological—if they don't see a mate, he or she isn't in the picture. Because of that, church people often assume these spiritually singles are available for all sort of activities or responsibilities. Cindy, Ryan, and others hate to always have to say no when they are asked to participate, especially when a weeknight activity is involved. But how can Cindy tell her husband that she will be away from home even during the week? That means time away from him, an interruption of his plans, all for an activity that he views as unnecessary. When he sees the church and its program eating up her time and draining her energy, he will probably feel defensive and view it as subversive to their marriage.

Cindy feels caught between her husband and the constant pressure that church people place on her. She isn't single, she's married. Her first consideration in these matters is to her husband. If there are extra activities, she needs to plan them ahead of time with her husband so he doesn't feel as though she is deserting him. Scripture says, "Wives, fit in with your husband's plans. . . . Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words" (1 Pet. 3:1, TLB).

Preventing Spiritual Starvation

The balance between church and home is achieved by discovering what is necessary for sustaining and growing the spiritual life and what can be deemed extra. If Ryan has had to trim his church time to the barest minimum, one thing he needs to do is guard against spiritual starvation. The church can help him in this area by finding alternative methods. For example, some of the men could meet with Ryan for a weekly lunch Bible

study. At least one man should commit to becoming Ryan's prayer partner. Having a consistent Bible study and a prayer partner will enable Ryan to continue to grow spiritually without taking time away from his wife and family.

Living in Hope When There's No Change

Discouragement can creep up and attack the spiritually single person almost without warning. It's usual to become discouraged when year after year passes and, in spite of all the effort, there seems to be no change in sight. It's our place as the Body of Christ to offer hope when discouragement strikes.

One of the ways we can offer hope is through positive praying. While we all wait for the salvation of this precious loved one, there are positive things we can pray. We can ask God to create the kind of circumstances around the unsaved mate that will most likely produce results. Even as a farmer prays for sunshine and rain, so we need to include the right environment for this loved one. Jesus says, "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matt. 9:38, NASB). He doesn't say that we are to pray for the *harvest*. "The fields . . . are already white" (John 4:35, NKJV). He does say that we are to pray for workers. So we can pray for God to send people into the lives of these loved ones. Then, pray specifically for those workers: that God will bless and provide the right circumstances and opportunities for them to work with the unsaved. They will need wisdom and compassion too.

With the assurance that we are asking because of the right motives and requesting the things God himself suggests, we then have the promise: "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14-15, NASB).

That's the next thing we can do: offer the power of God's promises. We can search the Scriptures and keep pointing the spiritually single person to God's Word for His promises. Our

hope comes from knowing God's Word.

What Can Individuals Do?

If the spiritually single person is a woman, other women can be encouragers to her. They can help meet her spiritual needs, praying *with* her and praying *for* her. They can help her have a Bible study time and help her find books, tapes, and so on, that will enhance her Christian life. They can remember not to put pressure on her to be involved in too many activities. And not pressure her because her husband isn't saved yet. She already feels that pressure. Remember that her husband's salvation is his personal choice between himself and God.

The men of the church can be supportive to her husband. They can genuinely become his friends in a non-threatening way. They can go fishing or hunting or whatever with him, have lunch or coffee or both *regularly* with him. Couples can invite the couple or family to their home on a regular basis. Pray for him daily. Pray for the solidity of the marriage. Pray for the family relationships—children, in-laws, and so on. Pray about his job, his friends, and his activities. Be prepared to speak to him about God. Watch for the tiniest opening, but only fill that tiny opening; don't overwhelm him. Most of all, the men need to make sure *their own* lifestyle supports the stand they take for Christ. Remember, he's watching people in the church to see if they are phony!

As a whole the church can:

1. Encourage friendships and fill the empty spot in the pew next to him or her.
2. Eliminate the word "couples" from classes or activities.
3. Schedule some "ladies only" or "men only" activities.
4. Make sure tables are longer than "four only" for seating.
5. Quietly provide a class or training for spiritually singles.

Christ's Love, Shared Through Us

We need to reach out and positively minister to both halves of a spiritually divided home. The answer to their problems and needs is an overwhelming outpouring of agape love. Christ's love, shared through us, can minister tremendously to the spiritually single person. 

Truth or Sad Consequences?

A Game You Shouldn't Play

Most of you pastors will seldom have the heartbreaking task of deciding whether to tell a patient he has a terminal illness. In most instances this is, and should be, the doctor's responsibility. But you might have to someday. At the very least, you might have to participate in the decision. You should have clear in your mind what approach to take.

The very first step is this: *You yourself* must face the fact that this patient has a terminal illness.

If you've not yet had to do this, it may sound easy. If you have done so, you know it is difficult. If you decide it is not wise to tell a patient he is dying, *you* are not facing the truth. You are protecting *yourself*. As a surgeon, I have faced this countless times.

When you—when I—have finally admitted terminal illness and finally quit denying it, unquestionably we must tell the patient.

Dr. Kubler-Ross tells us that every patient, even a child, knows when he or she is dying. Listen carefully: *Every patient knows when he or she is dying*. Thomas Hackett did a study on 20 patients he was treating psychotherapeutically. They all had incurable cancer, but none had yet been told. Kubler-Ross found that *all* of those 20 patients knew they were dying. Most knew they were dying from cancer. So why should we play a game in the final part of living called death? This is a game we cannot afford to play.

Before going farther, you should settle in your mind once and for all whether a patient *wants* to know.

He or she does.

In one study, patients dying of cancer had been told their prognosis, then were asked later if they were glad they had been told. Nearly 90 percent said yes. In another study,



by Birney Dibble

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healthy people were asked if they would like to be told. Again almost 90 percent said yes.

Not knowing is harder than knowing. A patient wondering if he or she is dying is more distraught than one who knows for sure. Perhaps not at first—not until acceptance comes. But now uncertainty is over. The game stops. The serious business of dying can begin.

Not only does the patient want to know the truth, but also he or she has the *right* to know. If we withhold the information, we take upon ourselves a mission that only God should have.

You must respect the doctor's decision if he or she decides not to tell the patient of the cancer or another terminal illness. Unfortunately, many doctors themselves get stuck in the stage of denial. They can't face the truth, therefore they can't tell the patients they are incurable. This wreaks havoc as the cruel game of deceit and pretense begins. The patient knows deep inside that he or she is dying, yet the doctor won't tell. So the patient has to go along with the awful game. The mate and children play the game too. Open communication at this critical stage is replaced by subterfuge and euphemisms.

Occasionally a doctor who routinely does tell his or her patients will elect not to do so in a selected case. What if you disagree with the decision under either of these circumstances? Then I think it's very important that you sit down with the doctor and talk it over. Perhaps you know something the doctor doesn't; perhaps the medic knows something you don't.

You may have served your parish long enough to know the dying patient well. If so, you are in an unusual, if not unique, position. What is the personality like? Has he or she been a person in denial all life long, living in a dreamworld, and now will deny the fact of dying, making it difficult for that one and everyone else? Or will the patient pass gracefully through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and on to the final acceptance of physical mortality? You must learn where the person stands in this usually orderly progression. You simply cannot counsel wisely unless you know.

Will the *relatives* progress through these stages with the patient or come along at a different rate? I once had an elderly patient in the hospital who was dying of cancer. She complained one day of pains in her abdomen. Her husband asked me in all ingenuousness, "Doctor, what do you suppose that could be from?"

The patient answered for me, "Now, John, we both know what's causing the pain." They both knew she had cancer. She had accepted. He hadn't.

Remember that this dying patient needs all the help one can get. The person will not benefit from your ministrations if you are not honest with him or her, and therefore the patient cannot be allowed to be honest with you.

Ministry in the Second Half

I just mailed a birthday card to a fellow who was my associate in one pastorate. He will turn 81 in a few days, but he still ministers full-time to a congregation in New York. His wife, 10 years younger, works alongside him.

For the past several years this man has said he is going to retire. When it comes time, though, he postpones it for another year. "Why should I quit?" he says. "I'm healthy. I love the work. God is good to me, and the congregation is growing."

As I sent greetings to this friend, I received a note from a seminary classmate who lives in the Midwest. He has served as pastor here and there, mostly small congregations, for the 20 years since our graduation.

His letter was nostalgic as well as tragic. He had read that another member of our seminary graduating class had just been assigned to a church of more than a thousand members. "So where does that leave us?" he asked. And then he went on to write that he had just lost his job and that his wife had left him, saying that she had never loved him. He was asking for my prayers.

While thinking on these things, I stopped in to see a pastor friend in northern New England. On the front page of a morning paper, we chanced to see the news that a well-known Protestant church leader had confessed to adultery, leaving his congregation of several thousand.

My friend read the headlines with me. Then he looked up, astonished, and said, "Is there any guarantee that I will make it through?" He is in his early 30s, married, with two pre-school children. He is the pastor of his second church.

When I arrived home from that visit, the phone rang. A close pastor friend in Florida was on the line. He



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told me that he had just heard that a mutual minister friend on the East Coast had submitted his ordination papers because of immorality. His congregation was in shock.

Yet right across the street from

where I live, a clergyman will retire soon, after many years of faithful service to one congregation. The people have loved him dearly; he has given his all in service to their needs. When they finally bid farewell and call a younger man to that pulpit, there will be many tears. This man will know that he has lived the good life. He has fulfilled his calling and will retire with fond memories. Both pulpit and pew will be settled in the truth that a man of God has done his best.

I am at a crossroads myself. I am not facing retirement but the second half. And I catch myself looking both ways—backward and forward. From both directions I hear voices—some encouraging, others warning. What



can I do to be a better person for the Lord? Four suggestions come to mind for making the transition to the second half go smoothly.

RECOGNIZE CHANGES

Face up to the changing times. In many ways the ministry is not what it used to be. Consider musical tastes, for example. When I was a boy, our church was enthralled by the evangelist who brought along his pianist wife. Her fingers would fly across the keys. She could play the most fantastic offertories. And she would join him in singing rousing duets that made our spines tingle.

Today our religious entertainers come in threes and fours, bringing their orchestration with them in a collection of black boxes that glower at us from the platform. Microphone wires crisscross the stage or even hang from the ceiling. Some groups even bring along a choreographer!

Preaching styles have changed too. It used to be that in the "Bible-believing churches" a preacher or evangelist convinced his hearers of his earnestness with sweat on the brow, a high pitch to the voice, and a white handkerchief gripped tightly in the hand.

Today we have many messages delivered with a counseling cadence. Some even add props such as overheads, chalkboards, diagram charts, and colored slides. It is not uncommon for fill-in-the-blanks outline sheets to be distributed to the congregation prior to the sermon. Talk-back sessions have been scheduled in some places so that the hearers can dialogue with the speaker over refreshments in a fellowship hall.

Growing up in an evangelistically oriented church, I was accustomed to altar invitations. Never did a service close without an invitation hymn. Maybe a Christmas program could get by without it; even then, more times than not, the invitation was appended in order to make certain that no unsaved soul left the sanctuary without a chance to receive Jesus as Savior.

Today the invitation is still present in most Fundamentalist churches, but not necessarily at every service. Where it has disappeared, clergy may ask the hearers to take advantage of speaking with them after the worship or make an appointment to talk about spiritual things.

Camp meetings used to be special summer excursions for the church people. There they could get those heavy doses of evangelistic fervor, spiritual introspection, Bible studies for hours at a time, tent meeting shoutings and hand clappings and gospel sings. No one cared about the clock. All the saints prayed for the blessing to come down. Altars were lined with seekers, especially at the final service.

You can be a better person for the Lord in the second half of your ministry if you will recognize change, make room for younger ministers coming up, simplify and learn to enjoy your blessings, and go slower but steadier.

Today camp meetings are held here and there. But in addition to the evangelistic emphasis, there may be sports events, social pastimes, denominational promotions, craft hours, and teen extravaganzas. When it comes to the preaching, much of it rests on nostalgia, recalling for the hearers the old days when the glory descended, conviction came, and sinners fell to the dirt floor with tears streaming down their cheeks.

In gearing up for the second half, you will need to face questions about the old and new in ministry. What is good about the

new music, and what is not so good? How would God have us preach in a nuclear age with its fear, sophistication, calloused ears, numb innards, burned-out lives? Are altar invitations still effective? Are other means of reaching people just as effective? Will different approaches work at different times?

MAKE ROOM

My second suggestion for the second half is: *be prepared to move over and let someone else have a crack at it.* At this stage in my life, I see members of the hierarchy retiring or near retirement. These were men who commanded. They were in the driver's seat. People held them in awe. Annual reports were woven around them. District meetings catered to their whims. Denominational goals were hammered out on their anvils. Speeches that came from their lips were published.

But now they are fading. They are becoming shadows. They used to have the power; they don't anymore. Their word was law; now we hardly hear their word at all.

So it is meant to be. That is the way God intended it. He planned it all so that human egos would not grow too large. "All is vanity" (Eccles. 1:2, KJV). Only one Person is finally to reign, and He has seen to it that all others sense their subordinate status.

Now when I flip through church journals, I see new photos and read names I have never heard before. Impressive paragraphs follow the opening sentences—where the author attended school, what books he or she has had published, pastorates served, and offices held.

Yet given time, these too will begin to disappear, and still another set of cards will come up. Another line of faces and degrees and places.

If you want to enjoy the second half, be gracious to the young ones.

It just might be that if those in the second half treat the younger ones with winsome hand, the older ones may in turn receive Christian graces as time moves on. Among the young there is always a longing to have someone older to look up to, to revere, to learn from. Those who are smart will take kindly to the younger set

while moving on into the second half.

SIMPLIFY

Third, *learn to enjoy the simple things in life more and more.* As life moves on, it is good to count your blessings more frequently. Little things take on a special glow—good food, some favorite items of clothing, a fire in winter, one's spouse, a few particular books and records, a well-worn vacation spot, and some trusted friends.

When we are young, we have an ambitious agenda. We hear of the "step up" and determine to go for it. Even in the pastoral ministry, we have our temptations. Or should I say *especially* in the ministry, we have our baiting?

But when spying out the second half, your dreams can take on a more refined perspective. Questions may linger: Could I have it better in the second half? Can I now do the balancing act so as to have my cake and eat it too? Why must life pass by so quickly, with still so much unaccomplished? But deep inside you know that experience has already given you the answers.

As you move into the second half, it is time to take stock of your marriage and family. Family is always important to a minister, and it becomes even more so in the second half. With the empty nest period around the corner, husband and wife will have more opportunities to be together. Will it be a good time, rich in companionship, or will you just keep the treadmill moving?

An even higher regard for the pastor's wife should come to the fore in the second half. She should be allowed her individuality, allowed to exercise her creativity and to find fulfillment. She will be applauded for her strengths and achievements. The minister himself should shield her from those who would seek to rob her of her personal time.

SLOW DOWN

Fourth, in the second half you can anticipate a slower but steadier pace. When I was young, I never scaled a staircase one step at a time. I always skipped a step, maybe two. I can remember my mother telling my father

that there would come a day when all that would stop. It has.

For years I was never home evenings. There were too many souls to be won, too many programs to see through, committees to get under way, buses to run, lights to burn. I kept a checklist of things to do the next day beside my bed and checked them off one by one.

When the phone wasn't ringing, I was dialing it. I read books while driving and listened to tapes while falling asleep. Then came 18 trips to the hospital emergency room to get heart tests. Pains shooting from my chest down the left arm signaled trouble.

When the doctor completed his test, he would look at me and say, "Tension." I would climb off the examining table and head home, determined to slow down. But I didn't.

How I have slowed down. I realize now that all that running around was senseless. Of course, no one could have told me that when I first began. Some tried. But I couldn't hear them.

It is true that in one sense life is short. But in another sense, life is long. There really is enough time to do what God wants us to. So there really is no need to sacrifice one's family and marriage in order to do the King's work.

If we follow the Lord, not "run[ning] before Him, / Whatever betide" (W. D. Longstaff), there will be time for everything worthwhile. That includes hobbies, refreshments, reading hours, and walks by the brook. After all, if David had been caught up in the same sort of rat race we live in, we never would have had Psalm 23.

I think that the second half is the special time for cultivating the luscious gardens of the soul. When younger, we are fortunate to have a few dandelions sprouting; but when getting older, we should have some rare flowers blooming—even if we don't make the denomination's statistical charts.

To everything there is a season. Youth is so exciting with its outlandish promises and dreams. But following the Lord requires more than dreams and promises. Through the years, the currents that move more deeply take effect, and our ministry can grow stronger, even in the midst of our changing world. ♣

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News Release—Book Review

One Christmas I Met an Angel

by J. Grant Swank Jr.

PA083-411-5786; paper; \$6.99

For Christians, Christmas is one of the most treasured and yet stressful holidays of the year. With the aggressive commercialization of this season, it is a challenge for Christians to stay focused on its true significance and assure that Christ is given priority.

One Christmas I Met an Angel is a thoughtful book that puts Christ back in the center of Christmas through a rare and thoroughly refreshing blend of contemporary allegories, biblical insights, and thoughtful reflections.

From a convalescent home's dispiriting meeting room to a sanctuary brimming with gala optimism, this heartwarming book points us to the center of the Christmas celebration—the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus.

J. Grant Swank Jr. has written for numerous periodicals, including *Christianity Today*, *Psychology for Living*, *Preacher's Magazine*, *Herald of Holiness*, and others. He has also authored several books published by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City. He is currently serving as pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Windham, Maine, with his wife. ♣

The Awesome Power of the Children's Sermon

It was one of those moments when you could see the light bulbs go on in the minds of the children. I showed the wide-eyed boys and girls my crisply starched, bright white shirt and boasted that I bought this \$40 shirt for only \$2. They searched my shirt with inquisitive eyes as I described the large black stain that was on my pocket. The shirt was on the last chance clearance rack, and its next stop was to be discarded. Seeing past the stain and understanding the real value of the shirt, I took the chance that a good washing would return the dress shirt to its original beauty and purpose.

Our lives are like that shirt, stained by sin. Jesus sees our value despite our sin and redeems us, or buys us back. He cleans the stains and restores us to our original beauty and purpose. As the older children heard these words and scanned my shirt, the lightbulbs of their minds began to turn on, grasping for the first time, perhaps, the story of redemption.

There is an awesome power in children's sermons that many churches ignore or take for granted. Children's sermons communicate the gospel, affirm children, are overheard by adults, build a bond with children, and add a spark to worship.

Children's Sermons Communicate the Gospel

In the words of the Great Commission believers are charged with the task of making disciples. By communicating the



by Jeffery Warren Scott
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gospel message in a way in which it can be heard, the Church is able to carry out this important mandate. For instance, churches are increasingly going to great lengths to make their facilities accessible to the handi-

capped. Special sound systems are installed to assist the hearing impaired so that they might be able to hear the gospel. Doors and hallways are designed to be barrier-free for persons in wheelchairs. Churches are increasingly conscious of removing barriers to hearing the gospel.

In recent years, pastors have given greater attention to sermon preparation. Greater care is being given to illustrations and methods of sermon delivery that more readily communicate the timeless message in a way in which it can be heard and comprehended by 20th-century listeners. The children's sermon is a natural extension of this desire for all to hear the gospel.

Children do not have the same level of understanding of a sermon prepared for adults. Their vocabulary is more limited, their experience less broad, and their thought processes are quite different than that of adults. Children need to hear the gospel in words and ways they can understand. Stories, object lessons, participatory activities all play an important role in communicating the gospel to children.

Children's Sermons Affirm Children

In so many ways today, children seem to be pushed to the side. By having a special time in the worship service for the children, churches affirm them. This underscores the message that they are important to God and to others.

Jesus affirmed children.



He chided His disciples, who wanted to keep children from bothering Him. Jesus valued children by instructing His followers to welcome children in their midst. Jesus could be found with children on His lap, telling them stories of the Kingdom, and affirming their worth. We must do no less.

Children are delighted to be affirmed in this way. In our church, as the pianist plays the music announcing the beginning of the children's sermon, smiling boys and girls eagerly make their way to the front of the church to spend their special time with the pastor.

Children's Sermons Are Overheard by Adults

A third benefit of the children's sermon is that it is overheard by adults. While this should never be the reason for a children's sermon, experienced pastors are frequently told by adult parishioners that they got more out of the children's sermon today than anything else.

It is during the children's sermon that adults often let down their guard. They hear the gospel message presented simply, warmly, and creatively. For a moment they catch a glimpse of the Lord through the eyes of children and are compelled by a simpler, childlike faith. This is a healthy thing, to be sure, as Jesus held up a childlike faith as a model for His followers.

Children's Sermons Build a Bond Between Pastor and Child

Bonding between child and caring adults is an important process. For many busy pastors, the children's sermon represents a way to begin to build a relationship with the children in the congregation. Week by week, pastor and child share experiences, stories, and laughs. The result is that pastor and child grow closer together.

Many children develop a sense of ownership in the church through the children's sermon. They may invite friends to come with them to sit at the pastor's feet and hear the wonderful stories. Some children will choose to draw pictures of the children's sermon.

Some children whose lives are in crisis may find the time with the pastor to be a source of strength and encouragement. One sweet little girl who was working through the divorce of her parents drew a picture of her pastor giving a children's sermon while surrounded by children. The caption read, "World's greatest pastor!" Boys and girls can sense the love of a pastor as they interact with him weekly during the children's sermon. These bonds developed in childhood lay an important foundation for the challenges that the teen years may bring.

Children's Sermons Bring a Spark to Worship

Art Linkletter wrote a book many years ago titled *Kids Say the Darndest Things*. The hilarious anecdotes in the book came from the mouths of children appearing on his television show, *House Party*. He learned early on what many pastors discover quickly: that children are refreshingly spontaneous. No matter how carefully the time with children is planned, they have a unique way of bringing insight, humor, and surprise to the worship service.

During one visit with her pastor, a beautiful, curly-haired girl was asked how she got a juice stain all over her pretty dress. She quipped, "I got it dirty in Sunday School this morning; but don't worry, Mom can get it out with pray and wash!"

Children bring life to the worship service. Their bright minds and sharp wit will keep even the best-prepared pastor on his or her toes!

The children's sermon represents an area that is frequently ignored or taken for granted in some churches today. Children need to hear the gospel in a way they can understand. They need that affirmation that they are important to God and to the Church. When children's sermons become a priority, churches will blossom with excitement and growth. There is an awesome power in the children's sermon. Try it and see! 



No, Milford, the golden rule is not, "Whoever has the gold, makes the rules."

Charting the Changing Scenes in Corporate Worship

Just what goes into the Sunday morning worship service at your church and mine? Why do we do what we do? Why do we have Wednesday night Bible study? Why does there seem to be a conflict between some of the needs, interests, and purposes of various representative groups in our congregation?

What should we be seeking to accomplish in worship? Is worship a means to an end, or an end in and of itself?

Some of the tenets we stress, and some of the concerns we ignore, may reflect ecclesiastical and doctrinal battles that were old long before we were born. Some of the things we hold as absolutely sacrosanct may be handed down from scriptural times, or they could be derived from idiosyncrasies or personal convictions of some strong personality of comparatively recent years.

God has not been included in this study as a "component part" of wor-



by Russell Metcalfe

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ship, for He is what worship is all about. Worship is centered in God and is directed to Him—or should be. It is taken to be a given in this article that real worship will be *our* attempt to bring our best, our all, to the loving praise of God's glory; and that real worship is not complete unless and until a dynamic connection takes place, a **Presence**.

Seven elements of worship, according to James F. White in a fairly recent

book, are people, piety, time, place, prayer, preaching, and music. People are "the primary liturgical document." Piety, time, and place are what he terms the circumstances of worship; while prayer, preaching, and music are the acts of worship.

In graphic form the elements of worship might look like this:

2. Piety	5. Prayer
3. Time	1. People 6. Preaching
4. Place	7. Music ¹

1. "People," to quote James White, are "the primary liturgical document."²

Worship that does not connect culturally is like instruction in a foreign language. In any normal church setting there is a wide range of levels of moral and intellectual development represented. Age-groups see similar issues from different slants. Birthright Catholics see things differently than past Pentecostals or former Baptists. When there are a variety of cultures represented, a special challenge obtains.

Added to this are the changing attitudes of society at large, attitudes that are often all too quickly reflected in the church setting. Deliberate choices must be made by worship leaders about when to seek to be like other voices in current society (culturally correct?) and thus "connect" with people in tune with entertainment, pop psychology, and success-oriented thinking, *and* when to confront popular thinking, me-ism, and television influence with demands for clear separation of lifestyle. Currently we see some odd combinations of living in the name of Christlikeness.

Much is currently written about the influences of the baby boomer and



baby buster generations in American society. Depending on how recent trends are interpreted, the flower children and peaceniks of the late '60s and '70s gave way to narcissism and introversion of the '80s, with continued emphasis on physical appearance and youth.

Some of the changing dynamics reported in various denominations have included lack of loyalty to any tradition; supermarket mentality in consumerism; lack of interest in Sunday School or midweek services, and more recently in the necessity for two services on Sunday; relaxed dress codes reflecting sometimes relaxed behavior codes; swing away from classical modes in music, literature, worship styles; instant gratification; preaching that affirms instead of confronts sin or wrongdoing; increasing conflict between a movement's drive and a denomination's stability.³

2. Piety refers to the climate in which we relate to God and to each other.

Probably it has most to do with the deeply held concepts of God that we have formed.

People who think of God first as a God of vengeance, always looking for faults and sins, will worship differently than will people who conceive of God as keeping score, but willing to forgive, which is different from others who see God as predominately interested in sharing His life and joy.

Worship can cover a spectrum from totally evangelistic, with the assumption that everyone present needs to be severely chastised for falling short of God's glory, to almost totally praise and positive thinking, assuming that the assembled church is already "family."

For the purpose of categorizing only, think of three viable evangelistic modes or sets of worship as (1) evangelistic; (2) penitential (with confession/absolution as central focus); and (3) resurrection, or rejoicing and celebration. It is my contention that an ideal Evangelical church will have a blending of all three without getting stuck in any one category.

3. Time refers to the various chronological cycles in which a church worships.

These cycles can be thought of as

daily, weekly, yearly, and lifetime. Also under the general heading of time in worship, we consider punctuality or lack of it (often a cultural key) and the usual length of services, and that length in relationship to the overall time usage of the worshipers. Highly scheduled people will respond differently than will those who take more casual approaches to time management.

Why does there seem to be a conflict between some of the needs, interests, and purposes of various representative groups in our congregation?

In a *lifetime cycle* certain churches expect their members to do certain things at certain times of their lives in certain ways. Sacraments and sacramental-type events, baptism, joining the church, weddings, passages, and even funerals are observed in widely differing ways, even in the same denomination, in different areas of the country, and in different cultural pockets.

Each church has a *yearly cycle*, whether or not such has been officially recognized by pastor or people. The American versions of the free church often substituted their own local or national observances for the ancient church calendar abandoned in Europe by immediate forebears. Culturally based Evangelicals brought old-country celebrations or prohibition of celebrations with them to this country when they came. Evangelicals of many denominations in recent years have discovered the richness of the yearly cycles observed by Christians across the centuries, of days of

Advent, Lent, Pentecost, Trinity, and many others.

Also under yearly cycles come such events as revival meetings; district events such as assemblies; as well as unspoken or tacit attitudes at various times of the year, such as easing off in the summertime from choir and from strictness of form in worship to accommodate vacation habits of a large proportion of our people; the gathering of intensity as school starts in the fall; the unspoken and often unrecognized weariness and temptation to negativism in the spring, when fatigue sets in for many who have been flat-out for eight months or more.

Weekly cycles, too, should be examined. How often do we observe the Lord's Supper? Why? Why do we worship at 11 A.M. on Sunday? (Why *not*?) Why do we hark back to a midweek prayer service for as long as we can remember? What does a church encourage its members to do regularly in order to maintain vigorous spiritual health?

Daily schedules might refer to what is expected of each participant in a congregation; what sort of prayer/devotional schedule/time management is practiced as the norm (or *professed*).

4. Place of worship is the third circumstance of worship and is probably more important than usually thought.

There is a saying among those who make worship a study: "The building will always win." That statement is probably very nearly true. Many churches have been started in very unlikely places, and "Where Jesus Is, 'Tis Heaven There." But function is often shaped by form. Certain types of worship are almost dictated by certain arrangements of seating, furniture, and participants, as well as respect demanded by or given to the place of worship itself. Building materials of themselves are not sacred; but even as we love and cherish our houses until they reflect our personalities and become our *homes*, so the house of the Lord becomes more than the sum of its constituent parts.

The acts of worship:

5. Prayer is a universal in worship.

It is unthinkable that there should be worship without prayer. How do

the people speak to God? Literally, how do they call Him? "Thou" or "You"? (Is there something somehow holy about addressing God in Elizabethan language? Do we realize that even then the "Thou" was the more intimate and familiar address that one would use with close friends? But when one has grown up hearing only this form of address to God, it becomes a language of prayer and connotes respect; so often the "Thee" or the "You" simply denotes the generation of the pray-er.)

What form does the main prayer of the worship service(s) take? How about the use of printed prayers? Is it a no-no? How often is the Lord's Prayer used? Is that important? How are people taught to pray? What emphases on prayer are regularly reviewed?

6. Preaching is another basic act in the drama of worship.

It is central in most Evangelical services of worship. Exegetical, doctrinal, evangelistic, narrative, topical are all styles or types of sermonizing, plus there are always fads of various kinds (participatory, team preaching, drama) that come and go. Personally, I have an almost mystic faith that preaching connects when God is present, that the written Word becomes the Living Word for those who listen with the anointing of God as the preacher preaches with the same chrism.

Others have less lofty ideas of preaching, although it remains central in most Protestant worship orders. James White speaks of one task of preaching as "stressing the corporate memories."⁴

Preaching probably at once shapes and reflects, defines and describes, spurs and soothes, enlightens and condemns, influences and is influenced by the entire church and all of worship. It is not beyond the discussion of the governing board but is so arranged in my mind that I need a separate agenda for talking about it.

7. Music is the last act of worship that we discuss here.

Like preaching, music has life of its own in the church, and we can approach it from many different directions.

The songs and hymns a congregation often sings say a great deal about the communal mind-set. Spiritual

songs and hymns reflect all the tenses and moods of all of life. But in worship we tend to begin and end where our emphases are.

First-person songs tell about "I" and "We." They reflect experience, and they are important and useful. They can also begin and end with "me." God is important because of what He has *done for me!* Of course He *is* to be praised for what He does for us. To paraphrase another author, we sometimes get the idea that "Jesus, Lover of *My Soul*" would be turned around to "*My Soul*, Lover of Jesus"! We easily become self-centered, even in our so-called spirituality. We attract attention to ourselves in insisting that *we* will do it such and such a way, and so on.

*Is worship
a means to an
end, or an end
in and of itself?*

But, too, it is hard to improve on "The Lord Is *My Shepherd*"!

Third-person songs tend to be statements of fact. They can be exalted statements that lift and bless. But in them we stand back and make observation. "Isn't *He* wonderful?" (Of course He is!) "To God Be the Glory" lifts us as we sing—and all can freely enter in the praise. Many great doctrinal hymns of the Wesleys and others are in this mood.

But second-person songs and hymns address God in the "I-Thou" mode; they are actually prayers put to music. Whether they are older, accepted hymns ("O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder") or choruses ("Thou art worthy, Thou art worthy, O Lord"), they address God directly and put the assembled congregation into dialogue with Him in prayer even when it is not called prayer time. This second-person music must have a central part in any vital plan of worship.

Music is highly significant in the shaping of thought; it reflects our state of piety and belief. Nowhere in

the church have the emerging technological advances made more impact; not only do we have instant accompaniment by professional sound track musicians in the smallest churches, but also we have television-trained soloists to clone the stars that make the hits. In some cases, they are cloning the clones of secular singers. These technical facts are not in and of themselves bad or good. What we can lose sight of are the facts that (1) genuinely good music is highly subjectively judged; (2) such music is not necessarily correlative to genuinely *popular* church music; and (3) there are no spiritual shortcuts to becoming a means or channel of God's blessing, even though it is relatively easy to prepare a performance. To sing the words and sound the tones may evoke excitement and even applause. To convey the message God intends for the particular occasion still requires preparation for which there is no instant fabrication.

Addenda:

The public worship experience itself is dynamic. In my lifetime I have seen a shift from passive participation, if that is not an oxymoron, where just showing up for church was considered worship, to a demand for more active participation in worship, with an emphasis on saying and doing and responding to the Word.

Where we go from here is hard to predict. I have my own strong preferences, but my tastes are far from universal. Hopefully those who chart a course of worship in their local churches will remember not only that they must speak in a language their people can understand, but also that they do not necessarily need to always say—indeed, they dare not always say—what their people want to hear. As Wesley urged his preachers to preach Christ in all His offices—Prophet, Priest, and King—so we who seek to determine the direction of corporate worship must use all the elements of worship in sacramental intentionality solely for the glory of God. 

1. James F. White, *The Study of Protestant Worship* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1989).

2. *Ibid.*, 44.

3. See Paul B. Tinlin and Edith L. Blumhoffer, "Dilemmas of the Assemblies of God," *Christian Century*, July 10-17, 1991.

4. White, *Protestant Worship*, 112.

Preparing the Bride: The Necessity of Revival

by Thom Rainer and Michael Silva

*Adapted from Experiencing Revival:
A Guide to Personal Renewal and
Evangelistic Revival in Your Church*

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Imagine you just got your best haircut, and you've rented the finest clothes that money can rent. Butterflies abound in your stomach. Your palms are wet. The church is full of people. Countless hours of preparation have preceded this moment: invitations have been sent, the cake has been made, the punch is waiting in the bowl. The photographer is poised, and the crowd stands in unison. This is the moment you've waited for your entire life. It is now upon you—your wedding day.

Framed in the church's double doors stands your bride-to-be. Your eyes begin to water; your heart begins to pound. In fact, if you had a pacemaker, it would be going off right about now! *But wait*—her hair, her clothes—where's the wedding gown? There has got to be a mistake here. She's obviously not as prepared for this monumental day as you are. You begin to feel puzzled, confused. The words "run and hide" flash through your mind.

What groom would be satisfied with a bride who doesn't get ready for her wedding day? Jesus Christ is no different. When we live, pray, preach, and promote revival, we help to prepare the Bride for her Groom. Revival, beyond the shadow of a doubt, is God's purpose for His Church in our generation. It is God's purpose for you and your church. In Acts 13:36, the Bible says that when David had accomplished God's purpose in his generation, he fell asleep. Have you ever thought that God

awaits for you to experience renewal and revival so that you can lead the church in the same direction, so that you can accomplish His purpose in your generation?

It's amazing what a little obedience will do. Most of us will realize renewal when we take the step to apply what the Word of God and the Holy Spirit say to us. Spiritual freshness becomes a reality for us when we simply do what we know we need to do. A major difference exists between knowing what is right and doing what is right. We know what's right! The question arises, are we doing it? We so easily tell other people how they ought to live, yet we're not always that way ourselves. We perform in public, but in private we're often not living a life of personal renewal—and we know it.

The Bible tells us, "Take a new grip with your tired hands, stand firm on your shaky legs, and mark out a straight, smooth path for your feet so that those who follow you, though weak and lame, will not fall and hurt themselves, but become strong" (Heb. 12:12-13, TLB). If there is ever a time for Christians in our world to stand up, be strong, and lead the way, now is the time! One main reason the Church does not experience revival today is because its leaders are not experiencing revival. When pastors and Christian leaders are revived, then the Church will follow in obedience to God. The ball is served into your court. What are you going to do? 

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Homosexuality: The War for Your Soul¹

Once upon a time there was a saying: "All is fair in love and war." Nearly everyone knew this, and depending on the circumstances, it was used as a means to an end if not an end in itself.

As pastors, we love such simplicity in our lives, in solutions to our problems, and in our religion. We avoid pain at all costs. Very few of us will knowingly hurt someone else. For Jesus said, "The meek . . . shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5, kjv). As a result, we come very close to Kahlil Gibran's statement in *The Prophet*, "We choose our sorrows long before we experience them."

To our congregations, this gives the appearance that we are not willing to fight for what we believe deep down where we live. The gay community has said, "Stand and deliver!" and we have raced forward with the slogan, "Open and affirming, that's us!"

Perhaps this puts a new light on why many average, workaday American Christians are at a loss to comprehend their church's desire to become an advocate for, and carrier of, the gay, lesbian, and bisexual banner.

Could it be that we hold up our relationship with this subculture as some kind of window dressing to prove our Christian values?

Did we not do something similar, as a nation, following the American Civil Rights Act of 1964, when it became fashionable to hire minorities? The



by Lyman O. Baier

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frontline defense for status as an equal opportunity employer, more often than not, was a minority receptionist.

As the pastor of a small and growing village church by call of the congregation, I am constantly blitzed by articles that parade across my desk as articulated wisdom regarding the plight of the gay community.

A case in point is *The Challenge Before the Churches to Advocate Sexual Justice*, where the author attempts to create a broad class-action base from

survivors of sexual and domestic violence; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people; sexually active, divorced, and single people; the differently abled; older as well as younger people; people living with AIDS; and so many others [who] have stories of faith and struggle which correct and revitalize the churches inherited wisdom about sexuality.²

Marvin Ellison, the author, joins these dissimilar concerns in the hope that the use of the familiar will legitimize the issues of a few. By invoking the emotions wrapped around these social issues, he creates an in-your-face justification for gay behaviors.

Taking a wonderful phrase from *At Seventy* by May Sarton, "This is the best time of my life, I love being old,"³ Ellison paraphrases it to say: "This is the best time of my life. I love being a gay man." For May Sarton, I believe her statement meant being beyond sexuality, being in communion with the universe and God—a point Ellison



apparently missed or chose to ignore.

He continues, unrestrained, to state, "The crisis of sexuality is fundamentally a crisis **within heterosexuality.**" In doing so, he deftly transfers the crisis to someone else, kind of like saying, "Everybody is out of step but me." The moral agenda of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community, as Ellison states it, "is subversive and utterly serious about toppling the patriarchal family, the patriarchal church, the patriarchal school, and the patriarchal workplace."

Do you have any questions about this being a war for your soul?

Philip Yancey, in his article "The Folly of Good Intentions," puts his belief structure in a direct and simple way: "I have become stubbornly resistant to grand schemes for changing the world."⁴ He bases his position on *The Law of Unintended Consequences*, by Malcolm Muggeridge, which rather gloomily translates to: "Change will almost invariably in the end create the exact opposite of what was intended." Yancey provides a multitude of examples, such as the War on Poverty, which after billions of dollars spent left more people

who suggested every church post such a sign.⁵

If we have failed to see ourselves as our own worst enemy, the Islamic world has not. Islamic fundamentalists see the spread of Western secular values as an attempt to destroy traditional Islamic values. Muslims who do not accept the basic tenets of Islam are regarded as being "traitors,"⁶ a persona that could well be attached to the acquiescent and submissive nature of many Christian leaders!

We are all children of God, and we can trust Him for guidance. In doing so, there are seven questions we may ask ourselves whenever we face challenges to our religious beliefs, in this case regarding the acceptance of homosexual behavior.

1. Am I in a place of complete guideability?
2. Have I studied this issue from every possible angle?
3. Have I sought wise counsel?
4. Do the circumstances point in one particular direction?
5. Have I searched the Scripture to discover what God says about my decision?
6. Is there supernatural guidance I should consider?
7. Am I willing to do God's will without regard to the consequences?⁷

While each of these questions leads one on a path of searching for knowledge, two stand out for me as truly critical to a sound, Bible-based decision: numbers 5 and 7.

As we consider number 5, "Have I searched the Scripture to discover what God says about my decision?" we have an array of knowledge speaking to us. We must make sure we give God a chance to speak. Too often we consider the only important "airtime" is our own. We fail to wait for the Word, and the Word is very clear.

Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (*1 Cor. 6:9-10*).

This is but one quotation from Scripture. We can find additional words regarding homosexual behavior in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13; Judges 19:22-30;

Ezek. 16:49; again in Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Tim. 1:10, NASB; Jude 7; and in Gen. 19 in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. If the Bible does not teach that homosexuality is a sin, then it doesn't teach anything is a sin.⁸

Under number 7, "Am I willing to do God's will without regard to the consequences?" we must remember that the will of God has more to do with who you are than where you are. God's will is less a matter of geography and more a matter of the heart.

In all of God's creations, from the fish in the sea to the birds in the air, He made only two genders—one called male and the other called female. There were no gay, lesbian, or bisexual models. These models are man-made with the assistance of the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2, KJV).

Unfortunately, such models do not come in matching pairs. They seek their would-be lovers from the sons and daughters, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers of God's beloved creations.

The gay, lesbian, and bisexual community want the rest of the world to alter its course to a position that is demonic. Like Job, we ask, "Why are these things happening to us?" The answer is simple, for within our society we have inherited three weak links:

1. academic freedom
2. individual constitutional guarantees
3. the Christian ethic

Under *academic freedom*, all knowledge is considered to be good knowledge. All answers are "right answers." Our *constitution guarantees* that the right of the individual cannot be violated. And the *Christian ethic* leaves us vulnerable with a "turn the other cheek" philosophy.

The gay, lesbian, and bisexual minority have linked these weaknesses. Having moved into positions of influence, they are trying to bend society in their direction. They accomplish this in two ways: first, through a central government whose firm stand is that there is no place for the church in the life of the state; and second, through a strategy that is intended to convince us that they are victims.

In the book *After the Ball*, they explain their mission: "In any campaign

Have we allowed the battle plans of the secular world to infiltrate the world of the church?

poor than before; expanding public education, which served only to increase illiteracy; sexual freedom, which has led to erotomania on a scale hereto undreamed of.

Attempting to drive such a message home, H. D. Shiner of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, fashioned a cross for Lent on his church lawn from old auto parts with a sign reading, Christ Repairs Wrecks Here! His congregation and the public were somewhat taken aback and dismayed. Shiner had been inspired by the late Bishop Ensley,

to win over the public, gays must be portrayed as victims in need of protection so that the straights will not be inclined to refuse the role of protector."⁹

Have we allowed the battle plans of the secular world to infiltrate the world of the church? [Editor's note: Holiness denominations have taken a strong stand against the practice of homosexuality. Many mainline denominations have accepted the practice of homosexuality.]

Many leaders of most mainline denominations appear to believe that an "open and affirming" or "reconciling" church is an acceptable position. If this is true, then most will witness the Rapture, rather than enjoy the Rapture. They will be left behind. God will see no difference between those who practice in the gay community and those who condone it.

If politics without principle, wealth without work, commerce without morality, pleasure without conscience, education without character, science without humanity, and *worship without sacrifice* is an acceptable world, then by all means, let's become "open and affirming."

"Change will almost invariably in the end create the exact opposite of what was intended."

Yet deep down where I live, as well as a silent majority, something is wrong. The thread of the moral fabric of society is unraveling and coming apart. At stake is the issue of biblical authority.¹⁰ It is not possible to hold high biblical standards and, at the same time, legitimize the practices of the gay community. The differences are serious and irreconcilable.

We cannot continue down this path—a journey that is not necessary.

From Abram down through the kings of Israel and the prophets of the Old Testament, on through the life of Jesus Christ and the writers of the New Testament, *the Word of God and His gift of salvation and eternal life has always been open and affirming.* This is a gift offered to all, not to just a few at the exclusion of all others.

All is not fair in love and war, and we need to realize this if we are not to lose our souls to the forces of darkness. When Jesus declared, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5, KJV), He once again spoke in a parable, saying basically that if you are going to be meek about your beliefs, the earth is yours; forget about the kingdom of God.

Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian, is quoted as having said, "The wisdom of God is foolishness to man." Are we arranging life for the kingdom of God or for our short time here on earth? The more we allow ourselves to be drawn away from the true character and honest beliefs of the Church, the more we find ourselves dependent on inadequate and puny earthly wisdom.

Yancey is correct: the Law of Unintended Consequences works, for the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community have been ambushed by the spirituality of God. In choosing an alternative lifestyle, the gay community have become aware of their own mortality. Still, they want this "spirituality" on their own terms. They wish to keep a foot in each camp in the hope that they have covered all the bases. If this choice occurs at the expense of the rest of the Church, it is of little consequence. God has never taken kindly to followers who straddle the fence when His instructions are clear and precise.

Our congregations are disheartened by what they hear is being taught in mainline seminaries, by what they observe daily in their local schools, by what they read in their periodicals and newspapers, and by what they are forced to swallow as wisdom from their governing bodies, secular as well as church.

They may stand silent and bewildered, called Archie or Edith Bunker, Ed Norton, or even Joe and Jane Six-pack by Madison Avenue, but they are not religiously indifferent. They

long for the Word of God in the Old Testament, so long silent and so long overdue.

The war for your soul has been, and always will be, the major battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.

Like it or not, if gays "brush their teeth, take out the garbage, and do laundry just like the rest of the world,"¹¹ then they must accept God's spiritual character and wisdom in the same manner as all other children of God, not rewrite His rules and the rules of His Church because they believe His wisdom is foolishness.

The war for your soul *has been, and always will be*, the major battle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.

The love and joy of the promise of the new covenant of Jesus Christ *has been and always will be open and affirming; however, it must be on God's terms.*

1. Copyright 1997 L. O. Baier, Ph.D., Newfields, New Hampshire.

2. Marvin M. Ellison Jr., *Horizons*, Bangor (Maine) Theological Seminary, spring 1996, 30-40.

3. May Sarton, *At Seventy* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1984), 10.

4. Philip Yancey, "The Folly of Good Intentions," *Christianity Today*, Oct. 23, 1996, 96.

5. "Potluck," *Interpreter*, July-Aug. 1996, 8.

6. J. S. Visitor, "Forecasting the Future of Religion," *Humanist*, May-June 1996, 22.

7. R. Prichard, "Seven Crucial Questions," *Moody*, Mar.-Apr. 1996, 37.

8. D. James Kennedy, "Under Attack," *Moody*, Mar.-Apr. 1996, 38.

9. Ibid.

10. Riley P. Case, "Faith Forum," *United Methodist Review*, Feb. 1996, 9.

11. "Letters to the Editor," *People Magazine*, July 1, 1996, 1.

Survival Tactics

I like Stan Toler's title to his recent book, *God Has Never Failed Me, but He's Sure Scared Me to Death a Few Times* (Tulsa, Okla.: Honor Books, 1995). There is not a pastor living who cannot identify with this thought. Yes, ministry is a great calling, but it can also be scary.

It is easy to write about the good days of ministry, the great experiences, the rewarding moments, and the occasions of achievement and honor. But those are not the areas where we need help! True, we could all stand a lot more of the better things, but where we really need help is in the "scared to death" moments of ministry.

No one can give you a plan or a guarantee that such moments will not occur. There is no insulation against them, no strategy that is foolproof, and no book that solves all the problems. But, pastor, be encouraged! God has given to each of us some inner resources that, if used properly, will strengthen our scary moments and help us survive.

Let me share some survival tactics with you, some of which may not work for you, but a few may be enough to pull you through the "scared to death" experiences.

Pastor, be encouraged—God bears your prayers even when you are scared, frustrated, confused, angry, and ready to quit.

Because we live with a ministerial face most of the time, it is sometimes hard for us to picture God hearing our prayers when our face is showing pain and the hurt has erased our smile. I share two thoughts with you that should encourage prayer. Richard Foster wrote that "prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us" (*Celebration of Discipline* [Harper and Row, 1978], 30). Charles Spur-



by C. Neil Strait

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geon wrote that "a people who can pray can never be overcome, because their reserve forces can never be exhausted."

Pastor, be encouraged—by being positive. The hard, ugly moments of ministry can bring negative attitudes, deep hurts, and, if we are not careful, bitterness. All these are seeds of destruction. They raise their ugly heads at the vulnerable times of our ministry, inviting us to welcome their offerings. That pastor only complicates his or her situation by giving residence to such attitudes. The most helpful medicine for the scary times is to be positive. This line occurs in a Yale lecture series on preaching, "As soon as the preacher finds himself pitching all his sermons in a minor key, he ought to resign or be granted a vacation" (J. D. Jones, *The Hope of the Gospel* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1995], 18).

One of the privileges we have as humans is to choose our attitude. Viktor Frankl said that "the last of the human freedoms[is] to choose one's own attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (Donna Fisher, *People Power* [Austin, Tex.: Bard and Stephen Publishers, 1995], 207). Frankl should know, for he survived a Nazi concentration camp ordeal by choosing the

attitude of hope. Choose to be positive. Do not let negative thoughts and actions rule your life. Positive thoughts and responses may be the survival tactic you need.

Pastor, be encouraged—by encouraging others! It seems so hard to do, especially when experiences beat you down and criticisms seem so voluminous. But by encouraging someone, you build the bridge to a better day over which you can walk. One never encourages but what he or she is encouraged. One never lifts another but what the lifter is lifted. It is a law of life that in giving, we become benefactors. It is never more than in giving encouragement. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale advised a person who was depressed and frustrated with life and people to find someone who needed him and to pour his life into that person's need. All of us have seen the results of people getting interested in another person's predicament, only to have their own attitudes brighten. Encouragement may be the survival tactic you need.

I read the tragic story of a boy whose body had been found following a kidnapping. The family was deeply grieved, as were his schoolmates. At the funeral, a group of his school pals sang and, after their song, presented a banner to the parents. It read, "If his song is to continue, we must do the singing" (*Guideposts*, Sept. 1984, 3). There is a message for pastors here. If the ministry to which God has called us is to continue after a crisis, a bad experience, a scary moment, we must be the ones to make it continue. If the song is to continue, we must do the singing!

Pastor, be encouraged! God is for you in the worst moment of your life. He will walk with you out of the crisis, helping you put ministry and hope back together!

Who Is This Guy, Herod the Great?

Most Christians know of Herod the Great only from the biblical accounts of his behavior after the birth of Jesus. While not minimizing his well-known actions, his position in the history of the Jews should be better understood. Herod was the son of Antipater, a wealthy

Edomite who had married the daughter of a nobleman from Petra, the capital of neighboring Nabatea. Thus Herod came from Arab ancestry through both parents, although his family had converted to Judaism about 125 years earlier. After Pompey's invasion of Palestine in 63 B.C., the 10-year-



by Ralph Erickson

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old Herod was sent to his grandparents in Petra. Six years later he became a lifelong friend of Mark Antony. Julius Caesar appointed Antipater the administrator of Judea in 47 B.C., whereupon Herod became governor of Galilee in the same year, being then 25 years old. From all reports, Herod was an excellent administrator, especially effective against the robber bands of northern Palestine.

By 40 B.C. he fled for his life from the fierce Parthians (Persians). Herod's father had been poisoned, and the high priest and Herod's brother were imprisoned. Once, the cart carrying his mother overturned. It seemed that she had been killed. Herod then tried to kill himself but was dissuaded when his mother was discovered to be only shaken up. Finally the refugees reached Masada, a great fortress in southern Palestine near the Dead Sea. Masada contained palaces, water reservoirs, granaries, barracks, and even a swimming pool.

Then Herod traveled on to his ancestral home in Nabatea. However, the rulers there saw no reason to support what seemed to be a losing cause, although they owed Herod both loyalty and money. They suggested he go to Cleopatra. After her dalliances with the now dead Caesar, Egypt's queen needed a strong per-

son to help her survive the political unrest in Rome. She offered Herod a high position in her armies. Given the personalities of the two, it is likely that each tried to seduce the other. Herod desired more than an alliance with a crumbling empire, so he broke away and set sail for Rome, leaving an embittered queen in Alexandria.

In Rome, Herod renewed his boyhood friendship with Antony and was introduced to Caesar's grandnephew, Octavius, later known as Caesar Augustus. Within a week the Roman Senate named Herod king of Judea (but not Galilee). This was not as presumptuous as it may appear, as Herod intended to take the granddaughter of a previous king as his second wife and so would have a legitimate claim upon the throne. Even with a Roman army from Syria in support, it still was five months before Herod entered Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement, the defenders being unwilling to fight on this holiest day. Later, Herod's territory was enlarged, and he was rewarded with half the revenue of the copper mines in Cyprus, a highly lucrative arrangement.

Although nominally a Jew, Herod never really understood the importance of religion in the life of his nation. He built fortresses, aqueducts, marketplaces, cities, and public roads, but still the people grumbled. In Jerusalem he erected the Fortress Antonia and rebuilt the Temple. On the shores of the Mediterranean, Herod constructed a magnificent amphitheater still in use. The Israeli Symphony Orchestra performed there two summers ago. Theaters were built just outside city walls to make them convenient for the Romans, but also to satisfy the Jews, who would not allow theaters within their cities.

Josephus stated that the young Herod was efficient, intelligent, ambitious, ruthless, and hardworking. As he grew older, he became paranoid, seeing plots against him everywhere. He accused his favorite wife, Mariamne, of treason and had her done away with, along with several of her family members. Altogether, the king had at least 10 wives and 14 children, several of whom he killed when it seemed to him they might become rivals.

When the magi appeared, seeking the "King of the Jews," Herod could

only understand this as a threat against his sovereignty. His unfamiliarity with the Scriptures was demonstrated when he called in the priests and scribes to explain where the Messiah would be born, according to the prophets. This was long after the night of Jesus' nativity. The Book of Matthew always refers to Christ as a "child" then, not as an "infant." The magi found Jesus in a house, not in a stable, inn, or cave. Apparently Joseph had moved his family by this time.

Why did not Herod send soldiers to seize the Christ child immediately after His birth, when He was circumcised on the 8th day, or when he was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem, approximately 40 days later? Obviously, for the simple reason that he did not know of the birth of the Messiah at those times. When the magi gave Herod their frightening news, he

could afford to wait until they had identified the Child and then throw out a wide net to trap all children two years old and under. From other sources it can be deduced that Jesus was probably born in September or October, 5 B.C. or 6 B.C. [Other sources place His birth at 4 B.C.]

No longer was Herod the talented, brilliant man of his youth. Innumerable ulcers and draining sores made him stink. He suffered from arteriosclerosis and possibly venereal diseases. Suspicious of his family, Herod changed his will several times and finally divided his kingdom among three sons. Herod died in Jericho in March or April, 4 B.C. At the end he ordered his sister and her husband to murder the leading citizens of Judea so that at his death there would be great mourning, even though not for him.



"... You want him to play Joseph in the Christmas pageant? ...
Fine, I'll have to grow a beard right away ..."

An Examination of the Heart

A Look at the Local Church

I think that the heartbeat of God can be discerned best in the local church. Since the local church is the primary agent for redemption as identified in the Scriptures, in one sense it is a little closer to the heart of God than connectional or parachurch ministries. Therefore, pastors are heart physicians.

Be affirmed, pastor! If you are privileged to lead a local church ministry, you are probably as close to the heart of God as you can get by virtue of an office or role. If you are where God wants you, you are where you ought to be. If you are where God wants you, then why do you worry so much about things like "Bigger must be better," or "Smaller must be easier." Or, "Kansas has to be better than New Jersey, which has to be better than Arkansas, which has to be better than Idaho, which has to be better than Oregon, which has to be better than Missouri, which has to be . . ." I have been in all those

places. I can testify that it doesn't make any difference. I have served in a church that ran near the 1,000 mark in morning worship. I left that "big" church to plant a church. There were 17 people present the first Sunday—4 of those were named McNaught. Size or location had very little to do with my satisfaction level or any progress on my fulfillment scale.

I have spent the last five years as director of church relations at Northwest Nazarene Church. In this role I have spent much of my time with pastors. I have observed that the heart of the Kingdom—the church—sometimes fal-



by Ernie McNaught

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ters because the leader is stressed or near burnout. I keep thinking, "What happened to the fun of ministry?" Men and women go into ministry to serve and often feel like anything but one of God's chosen servants. Their idealism is sometimes shattered all too quickly.

Why are ministers so stressed out? A reflection of my own ministry reminds me that I served as pastor with people who were responsible for much larger

operations than the organization I was trying to direct. I never had to deal with a profit and loss bottom line. I had to be concerned about meeting the budget, but it certainly was not the same as keeping a company profitable. Most of the executives in my church were under much more frequent pressure than me to make hard, critical decisions. Several of my people worked more hours than I did, had to take their work home with them every night, carried beepers and so were always on call, and always felt the pressure of being successful. I served people who counseled as many people as I, who helped as many with rent payments as I, who attended more meetings than I, who served on more boards than I, who volunteered more community hours than I.

So what's the big deal? *There is this important difference!* The minister is charged by God to be the primary guide for the spiritual health of a

group of people. That can't be compared with a profit or loss bottom line or making critical decisions about which chip to put in the next line of computers—or anything else. Pastor, if that is not the reason you are in ministry, then what is your reason? If it is your purpose to serve, don't be surprised if the load seems heavy at times.

I see ministry like an isometric exercise. If we are ministering correctly, there is always something to keep our spiritual muscles tense. The invisible is more than the visible. The pressure is always on. The battle is never won.

Almost every pastor I



know struggles for effective ways to release the pressure. Very few consider themselves successful enough.

I kept ministering because I enjoyed it. I said to myself on a Sunday night once in a while, "I think I will just go sell cars." However, it was seldom a serious statement. Sometimes I wonder if there was not a slight addiction to the need to be needed, so I devised ways to keep the resistance around.

Reviewing my own ministry and reflecting on many conversations with pastors, I have made some observations.

One of the most frequently neglected tools for handling the stress of professional ministry is an effective support group.

Without a good support group, real problems become remote. Attitudes develop, like the following: "It's someone else's problem." "There is a problem?" "If I wait long enough, it will go away." Because it seems remote, you face up to nothing. Peripheral problems begin to dominate, such as: "If there

was just more money." "If I just get more volunteers." "If I just had a song leader." Spiritually supportive brethren can really help prevent this flip-flopping of real and peripheral problems.

Another observation has to do with properly understanding what drains spiritual energy. The things that demand the most energy for me are most likely the things I can't do much about. That is not a very pleasant thought to most pastors. Most of us are doers and problem solvers. Action, impatience—"I want it to happen right now"; "What is the matter with you that you can't see things my way?"—those are more common than anything else.

A new pastor asked me, "What do I need to know more than anything else as I start serving as a pastor?"

My answer: "Pray for discernment to know the difference between those things that you can do some-

thing about and those things that only God can change."

The problem is that the things I should be doing something about and the things that God alone can handle look so much alike!

Here are some examples:

1. Is your music ministry a matter of finding a good pianist to help with your worship service or a matter of "ownership" by the pianist who has an unsundered need to control things, especially the "proper way to worship"?

2. Are your church's financial struggles a matter of good fiscal management or a matter of a treasurer who is spiritually insensitive and has

no faith?

3. Is your need for more classrooms a matter of reassignment or a matter that someone says you can't use certain rooms because "we have always had this room, and we are not going to change now"?

You can think of several examples. Remember that it is one thing to find the right person to play the piano, or

better manage the finances, or reassign rooms to accommodate growing classes if it is an organizational problem. You can work really hard at solving organizational issues and sleep well at night. Harder work and longer hours will probably not do very much, if anything, about a control issue or a faith issue or an ownership issue, except keep you awake at night wishing God had not called you into the ministry.

Work hard, very hard, on those things you can do something about. Pray hard, very hard, *and then relax*, over those things that are out of your control.

The local church is a great place to be. Listen daily for God's heartbeat as it resounds throughout your church. Don't let the wrong things demand your energy. Experiencing God's heartbeat restores joy and fun to the ministry.

My Pastor

by Gordon W. Foster

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Editorial note: This tribute was made to his pastor.

My pastor is a man of God.
I know because the love he shares.
He has a special way about him—
I think it's because of the Spirit within.

From week to week he's always there,
And if you're sick, he'll come to your care.
His wife is all a wife could be!
Sometimes I wonder if they're angels from Thee.

I don't tell him how much he means
To me, my wife, my whole family.
You may never know how very much
Your ministry has touched our lives.

Someday soon your reward will come
When with Him you will see the Son:
"Well done, My faithful servant;
enter in—
Now is when life really begins."

—G. W. Foster

The heart of
the Kingdom—
the church—
sometimes
falters because
the leader is
stressed or
near burnout.

Celebrating 100 Years of Nazarene Missions 1898—1998

December 11, 1997, marks the 100th anniversary of the Nazarene missions. On that date in 1897 five missionaries under the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America, headquartered in Brooklyn, sailed for India. They arrived in Bombay on January 14, 1898.

Thus began a missions enterprise that has sent thousands of missionaries logging tens of thousands of years of service to over 100 countries around the world. What began meagerly with these five has extended to hundreds of thousands of converts on mission fields who may not have been brought into the Kingdom any other way but through Nazarene missions.

A statement issued by the APCA in 1895, before the merger with the Central Evangelical Holiness Association of New England, read: "We will cheerfully contribute of our earthly means as God has prospered us, for the support of a faithful ministry



by Floyd T. Cunningham

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among us, for the relief of the poor, and for the spread of the gospel over the earth." The association was not large, only a loose band of 17 congregations centered around New York City and Boston. At its 1897 annual meeting the association reported 881 full and probationary members, though by the next year it had grown to 26 congregations and 1,213 members. The churches were small. Some

were missions. Yet their vision was as broad as the gospel itself.

The association's first missionary policy statement, of December 11, 1897, read: "It shall be considered the chief work of all our missionaries to use every endeavor to bring lost souls to Christ, and to labor to bring every believer into the experience of entire sanctification." This concept has been applied through the intervening decades not only to India but also to a variety of ethnic and national churches that the originators could scarcely have imagined.

Compassion impelled the association to reach across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to those who had not yet believed in Christ for salvation and to those believers who did not yet experience His sanctifying grace. It was their Christian duty to go, "telling it well" while at the same time "living it well." They deemed this a necessary part of their Christian responsibility.

The impulse for the missions fueled desires for greater union with other Holiness people. Many early leaders and laypersons had come out of denominations with sweeping missions programs. What the church was, and what it should be doing, was integral in their minds. Having foreign missions legitimized the ecclesiastical status of the new group even more than having a school that later began in 1900.

Missions also signified the service orientation of the Holiness people. They took up responsibilities and sacrificed to accomplish whatever God had for them to do. They felt led to establish urban rescue missions or overseas orphanages. What empowered such sacrifice? Hearts purified and perfected in love by the Holy Spirit.

One reason that enabled the associ-



ation to send missionaries quickly to India in particular was that M. D. Wood had joined them. He had been educated at a missionary training school in Nyack, New York; had served four years in India under the Christian and Missionary Alliance; and had toured briefly across India with the Salvation Army. He could speak Marathi, having worked chiefly in the area around Igatpuri, near Bombay. He had buried his first wife there. The Douglas Camp Meeting that he attended after returning from India in 1896 had drawn him further into the Holiness Movement. Now remarried to Anna Matlock, a nurse and a member of an association congregation in Pennsylvania, he was ready to go back to India. It all seemed providential to both the Missionary Committee and the laypersons. Congregations had already given \$700 for foreign missions. They were waiting for the right time to use it. Hiram F. Reynolds raised a few hundred more dollars, which afforded four to be sent.

Lillian Sprague, a graduate of a normal school and Methodist "seminary" in Vermont, embarked with the Woods. Carrie Taylor also went along; and, at the last minute, the association allowed Fred Wiley to go, since he agreed to support himself. The latter two married in India but suffered disagreement with Wood. They left the mission within two years, shortly after it had transferred from Igatpuri farther inland to Buldana. In all, the qualifications of the missionaries were outstanding. Wood, trained in missions, was an experienced missionary. Anna Wood was a nurse, and Sprague was educated as a teacher.

How were they to be supported, and to whom were they accountable? The offering for foreign missions had begun spontaneously, but leaders elected to the Missionary Committee, meeting in Brooklyn, knew it required consistent giving to maintain a missions program. H. F. Reynolds, secretary of the committee, served as fund-raiser. This led to his increasingly administrative role over the money raised. For the next decades, under the association and, later, the Church of the Nazarene, not only did he remain the chief booster of missions, but also he shaped mission policies and philosophies.

However, Reynolds and Wood had

differing ideas concerning denominational and mission structure. Reynolds was more pragmatist than theorist. He believed in order and accountability. At the time the first missionaries went out, the association was very congregationally oriented. However, crises at the Pentecostal Collegiate Institute as well as in India propelled the association toward greater degrees of superintendency as well as toward union with other Holiness groups.

Regarding philosophies, Wood felt impressed with the faith missions concept modeled by J. Hudson Taylor that involved praying in funds and developing local field sources of support. Likewise, to Wood, supervision should be from the field, not a remote office.

During this time in India came a devastating famine. Wood began to take in orphans, whom the missionaries set out to educate. This was a beginning of what became Nazarene compassionate and educational work on mission fields. Wood bought land and began a dairy farm to help support the orphans. He also solicited funds directly. All of this took place without prior notification to the Missionary Committee.

Reynolds did not oppose all of Wood's actions. He thought it the mission's duty to become involved in social projects. Yet he feared the independence that Wood's actions represented. He believed that adequate prior funding was imperative. Reynolds thought all funds should pass through the association's treasurer. He wanted the missionaries to receive approval from the committee before embarking on their own agendas in order to insure the backing of the church.

However, it would take months before action could take place, Wood complained, because of travel and slow communications. Wood feared it limited the spontaneous movement of the Spirit.

Reynolds spoke of a self-supporting Indian church and encouraged Wood to develop local sources of support as quickly as possible. If Reynolds ever had ideas of a church organization in India completely separate from the home church, he soon lost them, along with his faith in Wood. Their competing ideas of church and missions structure clashed. The division

led to Wood's abrupt departure from the mission soon after his return to India from a furlough in 1906. Anna Wood and Sprague departed as well, leaving an inexperienced group of missionaries, who had recently arrived in India, on the field alone. Among them, Reynolds's young protégé, Leighton Tracy, quickly emerged as a strong and thoughtful leader. He gladly put himself under the authority of the body of holy men and women.

The impact upon Nazarene missions and polity in general was tremendous. It meant that separate Nazarene national bodies would not exist, that supervision would be centralized, and that financial planning would precede expansion.

To put it more theologically than Reynolds did, the church believed that the Holy Spirit could lead through the church's committees and structures, not around or in spite of them. Faith in God for funds could never rest unaccompanied by works to get them in and ledgers to track their use. In good Methodist tradition, planning and organizing effectively were spiritual enterprises. Beyond this, the goal was for the church to be one, not divided by nationalities.

The Church of the Nazarene in India developed unevenly. Despite early setbacks, within 40 years they had 400 members; a newly elected Indian district superintendent, Samuel Bhujabal; Indians filling many levels of responsibilities; and the Hiram F. Reynolds Memorial Hospital, under Dr. Orpha Speicher. At the same time missionaries phased themselves out, decreasing as nationals increased. As they did so, the Church of the Nazarene in India grew in many ways, reaching more than 2,000 members by 1948.

Today the membership of the Church of the Nazarene in India is the largest of any country in any Eurasia region, with over 50,000 members in 10 districts spread throughout the country. About one-tenth of the Nazarenes outside of North America are Indians.

All who have received life through the Nazarene missions can, in some ways, trace their heritage to the small group of churches that pooled a few hundred dollars in order to fulfill their duty to God and His Church and sent five missionaries to India in 1897. 

The Least Likely Prospect

by Muriel Larson

Freelance writer, Greenville, South Carolina

We were newly arrived home missionaries in the western Colorado mining town. One day while we were "downtown," we stopped to chat with the head of the church board. A station wagon came speeding down the main street and squealed to a fast stop in front of the post office.

A tiny, attractive young woman jumped out with a package in her arms. As she ran toward the post office with it, she tripped and fell. A string of expletives that might shame a drunk from skid row exploded from the angry young woman.

"That's Marie, the girl who sings for the dances and other social events here," said Mr. Dale. "You might not believe it from what she just said, but she has a voice like an angel!"

We watched her make her way into the post office. "We'll have to visit her and invite her to come to church," my husband said.

Mr. Dale laughed. "Oh, I doubt if you can get that one to come to church. She just isn't the type!"

"Well, we'll try anyway," I said.

Not long after that, when my husband and I were doing visitation for the church, we stopped at Marie's home. She answered the door and invited us to come in. "We came to invite you to come to church," my husband said to Marie.

"Well, thank you," she said rather coldly. "Er, you'll have to excuse me right now though. I have a lot of things to do." Then Marie left the room.

Her sister talked with us for a little while. When we realized that Marie wasn't going to return, we decided to leave. I called to the other room, "We'll be looking for you in church, Marie!"

"Well, good-bye," she answered. "Thanks for stopping by."

As we walked up the street, my husband said, "Mr. Dale is probably right. I doubt if we'll see Marie in church."

I agreed with Al. That's why I was as surprised as he was when several Sundays later Marie came into the church and sat down in the back row with her four little children!

My husband's message that day was a combination of salvation and exhortation.

A number of people responded to the invitation—including Marie.

She was in church again the following Sunday. An appeal was made for toys and equipment for the nursery being started. The next day as Al and I were walking down the street where Marie lived, she came running up to us with her arms full. She piled a bundle of toys and blankets into my husband's arms. "Here," she cried, "this is a down payment for hitting me in the heart with your messages from God!"

Marie came four Sundays in a row. Then suddenly she stopped coming. After she had missed the second Sunday, Al suggested that I visit her.

When I knocked on her door, Marie answered. "Oh, I'm so glad to see you!" she exclaimed. "It's as if God sent you to me." She pulled me into her living room, and we sat down on her sofa.

"Something is terribly wrong," Marie said. "For one thing, I have been very ill for the last week. I've felt an awful depression hanging over me that I cannot shake. I feel a wall between me and the Lord . . . and I want desperately to break it down. I feel that somehow the fault lies within me."

"Have you truly received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?"

"Oh, yes," she exclaimed. "I believe He died for my sins. That's what makes me feel so terrible about my sinfulness!"

"You believe that He has also forgiven your sins, don't you?" I asked.

"I don't know," Marie admitted. "Yes, I think He has—but I have a feeling I haven't come as far as He wants me to come. For one thing, I have a deep conviction that there are certain things still in my life that Christ would have me let go of. . . ."

So together we knelt by Marie's sofa. With my heart deeply touched by Marie's problem, I prayed passionately that the Lord would help her come through to joy in Him and that the burden would be lifted from her heart.

Then Marie started to pray. "Help me to yield myself to You completely, Lord . . ." She halted. Then she suddenly threw back her head exultantly. "I'm free!" she cried. "I'm free!"

After that day Marie was a totally different person. She no longer drank, smoked, or swore. She began using her beautiful voice to sing praises to the Lord in our church. Everyone in town soon knew that something great had happened to Marie, not only from her changed life and vocabulary, but also because she went all over town telling her friends and acquaintances about the One who had made the difference.

As I listened to Marie sing "God Did a Wonderful Thing for Me" in church one Sunday, I thought of what she had said to me that morning. "You'll never know how thankful I am that you folks came to visit me that day. That was the first time anyone here invited me to come to church!"

The Preretirement Years: A Checklist for Success

by Michael L. Williams

Editor, Board of Pensions and Benefits USA, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, Missouri

At Any Age:

- ☐ 1. Develop a life strategy that includes your retirement years. Write it down, and share it with significant persons in your life. File it in a safe place, and review it occasionally. Revise it as your needs and situation change.
- ☐ 2. Contribute regularly to a personal retirement annuity. If you're not doing this yet, get started. Waiting is expensive.
- ☐ 3. Report all earnings to social security. Be accurate. Social security can't credit your account with what you don't report.
- ☐ 4. Conform with social security your record of contributions. Do this every two or three years.
- ☐ 5. Record, review, and analyze all necessary expenditures.

Five Years Before You Expect to Retire:

- ☐ 1. Get a thorough medical examination. Take care of any problems that exist or can be anticipated.
- ☐ 2. Begin preliminary research on anticipated retirement living costs. Think through different options (e.g., where you will live, taking early retirement, working part-time, etc.).
- ☐ 3. Secure a report listing the estimated retirement income you can expect from social security.
- ☐ 4. Confirm your standing in your pension plans, and estimate the amount of retirement income you can expect from those sources.
- ☐ 5. Confirm amounts in any other retirement annuities and personal investments, and estimate probable retirement income from these sources.
- ☐ 6. Review your life and health in-

surance needs. Make needed changes with the help of professional advice.

- ☐ 7. Estimate as closely as possible your probable necessary living expenses in retirement based upon the most likely options identified in step 2.
- ☐ 8. If your anticipated income doesn't equal or exceed your projected expenses, then develop a five-year strategy to bring these two into alignment.
- ☐ 9. Write down the results of steps 1-8, file them in your safe-deposit box, and review them every year.
- ☐ 10. On the same day each year, review your preretirement analysis, and make whatever changes are necessary to bring you to retirement in good order.

Final Year Before Retirement:

- ☐ 1. Contact the social security office. Find out how to claim Medicare

health insurance and monthly retirement income benefits.

- ☐ 2. Contact your denomination's pensions office. Ask for the forms and procedures you need to start your pension payments.
- ☐ 3. Notify your denomination's regional or district office of your intent to retire. Secure from them the necessary reports and procedures.
- ☐ 4. Notify your present employer concerning your approaching retirement date.
- ☐ 5. Confirm your retirement housing arrangements.
- ☐ 6. Make any changes in your life and health insurance plans that retirement necessitates.
- ☐ 7. Set daily, weekly, and monthly goals for retirement activity.
- ☐ 8. Look forward with anticipation to a new status in life for which you have properly and joyfully prepared. 🏆



The Minister Handling Personal Finances Wisely

Make ends meet? Why, I'd be satisfied to get them within hollerin' distance!" my dad used to say.

We've all felt that way at times, haven't we? No matter how large or how small our income, there never seems to be quite enough money to meet all our wants.

Many publications are available today that show us how to set up a budget and to use some degree of wisdom in stretching a dollar. Handling finances wisely involves more than simply facts, figures, and budget sheets. It involves attitude. For the minister, it also involves a unique set of problems.

Regardless of how large or how small the congregation you serve, a few individuals will feel they have a right not only to set the amount of your salary but also to know how you spend it. Some of them also would like to have some say in the matter!

Since you probably will not be able to change this situation and will encounter it wherever you go, hold on to this fact: the church budget is public information and of interest to everyone within the church, but your family budget is private.

Many years ago, family budget matters were rarely discussed with a wife and certainly never discussed with the children. More common today, however, is for both husband and wife to plan their expenditures together and even to sit down together to write the checks to pay those obligations.



by **Elizabeth Silance Ballard**

*Freelance writer,
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Couples who handle family finances together find that they experience fewer marital misunderstandings. Both parties know exactly how much money is available for their needs and decide together the best way to utilize those funds for the maximum family good.

Joint handling of the family budget allows both husband and wife to

know at all times where the family stands financially. Should death occur, or an accident incapacitate one spouse, the other will be knowledgeable and more capable of handling the family financial affairs.

Some parents do not share the financial planning with the children because they feel childhood and teenage years should be happy and free of financial worries. This reasoning is faulty.

Children, especially teenagers, should be allowed to know and understand the family finances as much as age and maturity allow. Their knowledge of the family financial situation will help them better understand why their requests must be denied at times. Sharing family financial matters with children lays the groundwork for their own ability in financial planning.

Even the youngest child in a family can understand the difference between needs and wants and, as he or she matures, can understand how the budget can help the family plan toward obtaining those needs and wants.

Sometimes those wants might raise a few eyebrows in the congregation. Yes, church members are often surprised that the minister's family enjoys such things as boating, nice clothes, and vacation trips.

Family members should not feel apologetic about the way their funds are used, even if they decide Mom deserves a new coat this year. The minister's income is not a



love gift, something given. It is a salary, something earned. Therefore, the minister and his family should not have to explain or apologize for the ways they choose to spend the minister's income, whether it is on boats, donations, or on investment programs.

However, don't lose sight of the fact that you must take full responsibility for your financial standing. Don't overextend and then take the overly pious attitude that "the Lord will provide."

Make no mistake about it. Poor financial planning and handling not only will jeopardize your family's present and future well-being but also can destroy your effective witness in the community. A person who does not pay a legally contracted financial obligation is stealing. Don't expect anyone in the marketplace to make allowances for you. They won't.

Of course, at one time or another, we all find ourselves with financial problems. We sometimes succumb to the pleadings or demands or both of spouse or children. Our own wants and desires sometimes overrule common sense.

What happens when you find yourself in the position of not being able to meet your financial obligations? Perhaps you have recently moved and had to pay part of your relocation expenses, which put you behind financially in other matters.

Perhaps you have had large, unexpected medical bills and haven't been reimbursed by the insurance company yet. Maybe you simply overextended and now find yourself in the embarrassing position of not being able to make the car payment. Now what?

Your first inclination may be to say, "Well, I'll catch up next month." Your second inclination may be to hide, to ignore the past-due notices, to avoid the calls from creditors.

One minister's wife who knew I had been in the financial services field for many years approached me one day with a question.

"How long does a company keep pursuing a customer to pay a bill?" she asked. "I mean, at what point do they just sort of forget it?"

First, I assured her that companies never "just sort of forget it." Then I tried to determine why she, a highly

educated and sensitive person who would never consider stealing, would even ask such a question.

A few questions uncovered the situation. The couple had incurred a debt at a previous location. Several circumstances within the family caused a drain on their income. They had simply ignored the statements, fully intending to pay the debt "someday."

Subsequently they accepted a call to another church and did not leave a forwarding address from their post office box. Now, several months later, the debt had been turned over to a collection agency, which had located the couple.

"I just ignore the letters," she said.

"But what about the phone calls?" I asked. "Doesn't anyone ever call?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, "but I just hang up."

This couple never did see the initial creditor to advise of their situation and to make arrangements. That organization would probably have been willing to work out some reasonable arrangement based on the couple's circumstances. But now that the matter had been turned over to a collection agency, which derives its income on the amount collected, this perhaps well-meaning but misguided couple was being threatened with legal action.

I suggested that they ought to drop everything and go to the collector in person and try to straighten the whole thing out before a lawsuit was filed.

"But that's so embarrassing!" she cried.

"More embarrassing than a lawsuit?" I asked. "More embarrassing than having the congregation know that your salary is being garnisheed?"

"Oh, it's only \$700. They won't go that far with it," she said.

I predicted that they would. They did.

Attitude means everything if sound financial standing is to be achieved or maintained or both. When you have a delinquent obligation, call or, better still, visit your creditors. A show of intent is of utmost importance. When you go into the creditor's office, be prepared to show income and expense information and to have some reasonable plan of your own for bringing your accounts up to date. If

your plan is unacceptable to the creditor, don't become defensive. You both want the problem solved. Show a willingness to work out something mutually acceptable.

Presenting yourself as being conscious of the fact that there is a problem and that you are working toward a solution is half the battle. Creditors usually are more than willing to work with you under these circumstances.

Just remember: the problem, the past-due payment, will not just disappear. Tossing letters in the wastebasket won't help. Ignoring phone calls won't help. If you neglect dealing with your creditor in his office, you may soon find yourself dealing with him in court. The fact that you're a minister will make no difference whatsoever.

Above all, don't look heavenward with an angelic expression on your face as you inform your creditor that the Lord will provide. Your creditor *and* you know that the Lord already provided and that *you*, not the Lord, blew it.

The way to avoid this type of problem is to have a responsible attitude, organize your financial affairs, and set up a workable and a working budget.

Even a well-planned and well-executed budget, however, cannot withstand that natural target: the minister's conscience. He may feel compelled to "lead the way" by making large donations too often.

Because of his position in the community, he often is approached by many outside agencies and charities and finds that saying no is difficult if not impossible. After all, how would it look? A minister who is not willing to help those in need? Shame!

Responding to any and all requests is not necessary. As in your budget, priorities also should be set up for your giving. Be discriminating.

Don't be embarrassed to make your financial plan a priority. Organize your finances, and free yourself from more financial worries than you thought possible. Make financial goals a family affair. Above all, keep it realistic, keep it consistent, and keep it private. 

Editor's note: And never neglect your tithe of 10 percent.

Putting Your Church's Money Where Its Mission Statement Is

by Ray Bowman

Larkspur, Colorado

with Eddy Hall

Goessel, Kansas

Both are church consultants

Of all the church mission statements I've read—and I've read a lot—I (Ray) have never read a bad one. I've never read a mission statement that says, "We want to be a self-serving church, focusing only on our own needs and ignoring the needs of those around us." Yet a church that would never dream of saying this in its mission statement often says something very close to it in the document that probably more than any other reveals its real priorities—its budget.

A Christian church in the Northwest adopted one of the strongest mission statements I have ever read. Among many other good things, it said, "We are committed to helping people discover, refine, and use their spiritual gifts." "To reach as many people as possible . . . we commit ourselves to a multiple offense in evangelism." "We believe people experience spiritual growth when they are entrusted with specific ministry tasks

and given the responsibility to accomplish them." "We are committed to a stewardship focus that emphasizes others, not selfish interests."

When I got to the church to begin my consulting work, I asked the pastor, "What are you doing to carry out these wonderful statements?"

The pastor could point to almost nothing the church as a whole was doing to carry out its good intentions. Though this church claimed to be committed to equipping people for evangelism, they offered no evangelism training. They said they wanted to help people develop and use their spiritual gifts, but they had no specific way to help people identify or test their gifts.

Among the most telling signs was their spending. While the church said they wanted their stewardship to emphasize others, not selfish interests, they were spending 87 percent of their budget on institutional maintenance (facilities, staff, and operations) and only 13 percent on ministry to

others. Only 2½ percent was going toward meeting the needs of people in the local community. This church was not putting its money where its mission statement was.

It Wasn't Always This Way

A few weeks ago in a group where we were studying the church of Acts, I (Eddy) listed six categories of church spending, then asked group members to rank them according to how much their local church spent on each category. I then asked them to rank these same spending priorities for the New Testament Church.

The spending priorities in the two lists were almost opposite. The contemporary church spent most of its money on buildings and professional staff. For the New Testament Church, "meeting the financial needs of people" topped the list, and "facilities" fell to the bottom; New Testament congregations neither owned nor rented buildings.

At the time of the Reformation, this priority on meeting the financial needs of people was still largely intact. John Calvin reflected the prevailing practice of the time by advocating that one-fourth of all church income go to the poor in the congregation and one-fourth to others in need outside the church. Fully one-half of the church's income was to go to those in financial need.¹

Most churches today spend less than 3 percent of their income on these two categories combined (the needy within the congregation and the needy in the surrounding community)—a far cry from the 50 percent advocated by Calvin and an even higher percentage practiced by the New Testament Church. Is it any wonder that so many non-Christians



view today's church as just one more self-serving institution, another special interest group, rather than a community of faith that actively demonstrates mind-boggling love?

Customers or Servants?

Many North American churchgoers see themselves as customers. In exchange for what they give to their churches, they receive certain services. The church's primary purpose, they feel, is to meet their needs. When most of the members of a church see themselves as customers, this cannot help but be reflected in the church's budget.

Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant . . . just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:26, 28, NRSV). We are not to come to the church as customers. Rather, we are to come together to encourage and equip and build one another up so that we can then go out, serving as the hands and feet of Jesus in a hurting world. When a church really believes that, it will show up not only in its mission statement but also in its actions—and in its spending.

If we want to break out of a customer mind-set and become a servant people, our first step should be to again adopt as the church's first financial priority the New Testament standard that we will never allow a financial need within the local body of believers to go unmet (Acts 4:34-35). We need to face up to the biblical truth that if we ignore financial needs within our own congregations, God's love is not in us (1 John 3:17). We must learn practical, sensitive ways to detect financial needs within the congregation, and compassionate ways to meet those needs that affirm dignity and build community.

Second, we can look beyond the boundaries of the congregation to those in need in the surrounding community. During the first three centuries of the church's history, poverty was often eradicated in the vicinity of the churches. Why? Because every Christian "was expected to seek out, street by street, the poorest dwellings of strangers, with the result that the Christians spent more money in the streets than the followers of other religions spent in their temples."² As government assistance for the poor is being cut, our church-

es have a great opportunity to reclaim this aspect of our calling.

Third, the church can encourage and equip its members to each discover

For the New Testament Church, "meeting the financial needs of people" topped their list of priorities.

what ministries God is calling them to do, then actively support them as they join existing ministries or launch new ones. Many of these ministries will go beyond traditional church programs. They will be shaped by the varied needs of the people in the communities where God has placed the members. And these ministries will take money.

The creative possibilities are endless. At a Baptist church in Brewster, New York, I (Ray) discovered guests in many homes: displaced persons, runaways, people in crisis. No one who came to the church needing food was turned away, and a house behind the church provided a night's lodging for those who had nowhere else to stay.

A man in Sturgis, South Dakota, had a burden for teens who were in

Most churches today spend less than 3 percent of their income on the needy.

trouble with the law. Through a ministry he started in the parsonage basement, he introduced them to Christ's love and forgiveness. The ministry

grew and eventually took over the whole parsonage. The pastor had to move to a new home.

A church in Hayward, California, bought used video games and filled a room in the church with them. After school the room would fill with kids of all colors, sizes, and ages. There was no charge except for refreshments.

As laughter and play filled the room, suddenly all the machines went off at once. Most of the crowd went into the fellowship hall, sat on the floor, and listened to a message told in their own language about a new life. Many spiritual needs were met. Parents came to find out what was going on, curious about reports of free fun and fellowship and the changed behavior they saw in their children.

Turning Church Spending Right Side Up

In a servant congregation, we will not spend most of our money on providing buildings and services for ourselves. Rather, we will use our buildings more intensively than ever before, going to two, three, or four worship services or more before we build a new auditorium. We will commit the church to getting out of debt and staying out of debt so we aren't wasting precious ministry money on interest payments. Instead, our goal will be to invest as much of our time, money, and energy as possible in ministry—reaching out to touch the lives of people with Christ's love.

If you and the other people of your church truly want to be servants, not customers, together you can turn your church's spending right side up again. You can, over a period of years, slash the percentage of your budget that you spend on institutional maintenance. You can multiply the dollars you invest in ministering directly to people's needs. You can become a church that puts your money where your mission statement is. ✠

Most of this article is adapted from *When Not to Build: An Architect's Unconventional Wisdom for the Growing Church* (Baker, 1992) and *When Not to Borrow: Unconventional Financial Wisdom to Set Your Church Free* (Baker, 1996), both by Ray Bowman with Eddy Hall.

1. Larry Woiwode, "A Conversation with Larry Woiwode," interview by Harold Fickett, *Image: A Journal of the Arts and Religion* 5 (spring 1994): 85.

2. Arnold Eberhard, *The Early Christians*, trans. and ed. Society of Brothers (1970, 1972; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 18-19.

Teacher Recruitment: Eight Simple Steps

by Victor M. Parachin

Ordained minister, counselor, Claremont, California

Thirty years ago First Christian Church was a thriving, growing congregation numbering nearly 1,000 in worship every Sunday. After a move from downtown into the suburbs, the church began to decline until the present, when the large facility draws approximately 140 for Sunday services. Because the congregation had become almost entirely elderly, there was no Sunday School program. However, when a young pastor was recently called, the church began to draw families with small children. Soon those families were requesting a Sunday School program for their children. Responding to the need, the pastor established a small Sunday School of three separate classes for preschoolers, kindergarten through third grade, and fourth through sixth grades. Adults who expressed some interest in teaching were quickly placed into classrooms. Unfortunately, none of the adults made a serious commitment to regular teaching, often leaving the students with a different teacher from week to week. Also lacking was a consistent curriculum. After less than six months, the Sunday School struggled in disarray and finally disbanded.

Although several reasons were cited for the collapse, the main difficulty was that recruitment of teachers was not done intentionally or systematically. The experience of First Christian Church is repeated in many congregations. These eight simple steps for teacher recruitment

can be utilized by churches, large and small, ensuring a stronger, more successful Christian education program.

1. Invite Rather than Recruit

Although the term "recruit" cannot be entirely avoided in developing a dynamic Sunday School, a more positive term for finding teachers is the word "invite." Rather than viewing the task as that of a corporate headhunter aggressively recruiting staff, begin with a soft approach of "inviting" selected individuals to become part of an exciting, significant ministry. Challenge potential teachers to see the task of teacher as vital for both the church and individual families.

2. Never Assume Someone Is Unwilling to Teach

"Fred taught fifth graders once and had a hard time. I'm sure he wouldn't be willing to teach again."

"Marcia is a schoolteacher. After teaching all week, she wouldn't want to teach again on Sunday."

"Dave travels a lot all week. Sunday is his only day to relax. We couldn't ask him to spend his little discretionary time preparing lessons."

Pastors and church leaders seeking to recruit teachers should never assume an individual will not want to teach. If it has been determined that a person has the gifts and skills necessary for teaching, then that individual should be approached and allowed to make the decision.

3. Promise to Provide Abundant Resources

Dr. Isa Aron, associate professor of Jewish education at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, conducted major research about teachers in Jewish religious schools. She was shocked to discover that nearly half of the teachers received no curriculum. Although she writes for Jewish readers, her comments apply to Christian educators as well when she says:

Even the most professional of teachers in a public school setting would be hard-pressed to teach well without a clearly articulated curriculum, and without the abundant learning materials available through commercial publishing houses. A decade ago the excuse might have been that few curricular re-



to teach if they know there is a set period of time. Some individuals can commit to a full one-year period, but others cannot. While 12 months is ideal for children because it provides them with continuity of leadership, other arrangements can work well also. For example, many churches succeed in recruiting teachers when they invite women and men to consider a 13-week assignment. These churches split the year into four quarters, each consisting of 13 weeks. Teachers agree to be present for each of the 13 weeks and conclude their commitment when the time is up. Of course, many teachers find they enjoy the experience and gladly renew the commitment for another quarter. The key is to provide people with the security of knowing that there is a definite limit to their time commitment.

7. Use the Personal Touch for Recruitment

8. Provide Ongoing Support

Every teacher should know that he or she can call the pastor or religious education leader for advice, information, and support. It should be made abundantly clear that if there is a discipline problem, a theological question, a need for additional resources, that the professional church staff is always available for consultation. Also, pastors and religious education professionals should be proactive in providing ongoing support. This can mean writing a brief note to a teacher, letting him or her know that one of the students was overheard saying how terrific the class has been. It can mean stopping by the class at the end of a session to find out how the class went and to share appreciation for the teacher's work. Or it can mean clipping or photocopying an article from a book, newspaper, or magazine that might help a teacher and sending it to him or her with a note of thanks for teaching.

By recruiting intentionally and carefully, church leaders ensure a successful Christian education program in which *students learn, a Christian community educates, and teachers experience the satisfaction of impacting searching minds.* 

Traditionally, women have dominated as teachers in Sunday School. However, men are increasingly willing to teach, even at the youngest levels. Don't hesitate to invite a man to teach preschoolers. With the increasing number of single-parent households, the majority headed by women, there is a great need for children to have positive male role models. Also, consider challenging more mature youths in the church to teach. Some young people in their midteens make highly effective and committed teachers, especially when offered some basic teacher training.

People are more likely



When Jesus Said Good-bye

by Frank G. Carver

(Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1996, 136 pp., paperback)
PA083-411-5700, \$16.99



As Frank G. Carver prepares to retire from Point Loma Nazarene College after almost an entire teaching and administrative career there, he has come out with what I view as his most significant single writing: *When Jesus Said Good-bye*. As T. Crichton Mitchell could not tell Charles Wesley's story in his 1994 book on Charles without telling John Wesley's story also, so Carver, in telling the story of the Holy Spirit, needs to tell us also the story of Jesus.

Carver shows that, then and now, good-byes often had significance attached to them. Jesus' good-bye of "peace" is similar to the Hebrew "Shalom," spoken both as a greeting and a goodwill departure word and wish. Jesus expressed it to His disciples because He would be leaving them—which they could not understand—but would send the Holy Spirit, who would dwell in them and cause them to do greater works, especially quantitatively, than He had done among them.

Carver's book is about John's Gospel witness to the Holy Spirit, and at the same time, it is about Jesus.

Carver elucidates, especially chapters 14–16, yet he works with the whole of the Gospel in doing so. Indeed he does so in relation to the entire biblical record, Old and New Testaments.

As a scholarly work, Carver makes use of his wide reading in the field; and his numerous references are helpfully at the bottoms of the pages. But while scholarly, it is not simply for scholars.



by J. Kenneth Grider

*Distinguished visiting professor of religion,
Olivet Nazarene University, and
professor of theology emeritus,
Nazarene Theological Seminary*

They will give it high marks; but laypersons will find it to be clear, interesting, and often devotionally rewarding.

Carver is completely Trinitarian in his treatment, not identifying Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He does not say that the Holy Spirit is Jesus' other self, as some scholars do although, in this most commendable treatment, from which I have learned much, these two Persons of the Godhead are closely associated. We do not have one without the other; but, as I read Carver, they are two of the three "Thous" of the Godhead.

Carver mainly uses the *New American Standard Bible*, since he devoted much of his career to that "evangelical" and dependable Bible version, serving as one of its major translators. Familiar with the Greek, Carver often gives the reader light such as *anōthen* (cf. John 3:3, 7) as meaning that Nicodemus was urged to be born "again," or more specifically, "from above" (p. 38).

Testimony of the author-scholar is

often found here, as when he discusses the various ways in which the Holy Spirit assists us as "Advocate" (NRSV), as "Helper" (NASB).

Carver, a local church Sunday School teacher as well as a college professor, often uses devotional poetry to elucidate his point. He says: "I need the Holy Spirit's help to see my lack of love for the other person as the sin it truly is and to confess it as such, that it may be forgiven and cleansed out of my life" (p. 60). He goes on to say, as all of us Wesleyans do who understand that we have received entire sanctification: "I am utterly dependent on the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to live in the acceptance of God's love and to reveal adequately that love to others through my loving" (ibid.).

In Kansas City several years ago, Carver's career was most commendably appraised by scholars as he attained his 60th year. An issue of Nazarene Theological Seminary's *Tower* carried extracts of those papers and pictures of the event. As he retires officially from Point Loma Nazarene College, a special event is being planned in which his almost complete career is celebrated.

Carver is going with his teacher wife, Betty, as volunteers to teach almost full-time, including a new area of systematic theology, at European Nazarene Bible College (ENBC). It is certain that the teaching and Christlikeness of this national past president of the 2,500-member Wesleyan Theological Society will be much esteemed at ENBC.

Marked with an X

It was late afternoon when I answered the doorbell and found a young family standing there. The woman, very pregnant, was holding a child I guessed to be about one year old.

"We need money," the husband said plainly. "Can you help?"

His wife looked at me through eyes barely visible beneath her unkempt hair. The little girl reached out thin arms, so I held her and listened as they unfolded their story.

"We're trying to get back on our feet. . . . I'm looking for work . . . want to stay in a motel tonight, but . . . just got out of prison and . . ." His voice faded as he hung his head and initial bravado fled.

What would you have done?

We, like many parsonage families living next to the church, have faced the needy many times and have tried to help. We've filled lunch sacks with tuna sandwiches and apples. We've taken families to the gas station and to the bus station. We have paid for a night's lodging at the nearest motel.

And sometimes I've wondered: "Am I making *any* difference? Am I solving their *real* problem?"

Ross Perot, while a U.S. presidential candidate, described for a television audience the impact his mother's benevolence made upon him as a young boy. He said the poor always seemed to find their back door and kept returning. Then one day a particularly nice man thought it his duty to tell Mrs. Perot the truth.

"Do you know why all the tramps come to your door, Mrs. Perot?" he asked. "It's because your curb has been marked with an X. All the men who ride the trains know about that X, and they've passed the word along. They know if they knock on your door, they'll receive food. Do you want me to wash that X off your curb?" the man asked.

"No," she answered. "And as long as I have food, I will share what I have with the poor."



by Jan McNaught

Pastor's wife,
Honolulu, Hawaii

Mrs. Perot knew her house was marked, yet she continued to feed the poor. Did she never sigh and quote the scripture "The poor you will always have with you" (Mark 14:7)?

A person
without things or
a person with
things can
choose to be
either poor in
spirit or proud
of their
self-sufficiency.

Jesus spoke those words to His disciples just before His crucifixion, but He wasn't "justifying a fatalism toward the poor," as David L. McKenna says many do. Neither was He excusing the disciples from making tuna sandwiches and paying for a night's lodging. Instead, Jesus desired that His followers examine their hearts, that they learn to be wise as well as benevolent.

The woman called Mary brought

what she had to the home in Bethany where Jesus was staying. Feeling that He was the most needy that day, she broke her alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume and poured its contents over His head, choosing to give a gift that would "sustain Him in His darkest moment of disgrace" (*Communicator's Commentary*, 2:282). Because Mary didn't give as the disciples said they would have, they criticized her. But Jesus knew that her accusers feigned a compassion and intention to give, when they really wished just to criticize one who had given in a way they never had or would have. Mary made a difference in Jesus' life; and because she gave from her heart, He memorialized her.

The Gospel of Matthew records another time when Jesus identified those called poor. He said those poor *in spirit* are blessed; the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Matt. 5:3). Jesus made a distinction between the poor in spirit and the poor who may come knocking at our door. We must be willing to help the one who lacks material things—the one who usually lives in unhealthy conditions without enough food to eat or clothes to wear. We must choose to let them come again and again—to mark an X on our curb. They have no influence or prestige; therefore they have no power. Soon they will be run over and oppressed simply because they are poor—unless someone chooses to help.

Barclay says Jesus congratulated the poor-in-spirit ones, not for something they would someday achieve, but that they were presently in a state of blessedness—permanent joy—because they were poor in spirit. These had let Christ change their hearts until they had become detached from things and attached to God. Combining the Aramaic and Greek languages, Jesus translated the following scripture for those on the mountain that day: "Blessed is the man who has realized his own utter helplessness, and

who has put his whole trust in God" (excerpts from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1:82-86).

Study did not reveal whether the poor-in-spirit ones were rich or poor in material goods. A person without things or a person with things can choose to be either poor in spirit or proud of their self-sufficiency. The person who makes a lasting difference in others, however, is the one who has first let Christ make a difference in his or her heart. Only He can meet the *real* need.

Though I wasn't surprised at the knock on my door that afternoon nor at the request of the poor, I was startled at the timing. I had recorded in

my journal that very morning my desire to obey the Lord quickly, to set aside my own feelings if necessary, and to be a channel through whom His love could freely flow. I also had read in Proverbs, "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed" (19:17, NASB).

I was still trying to solve the young couple's problem and mine when I smelled the roast I had put in the Crock-Pot that morning—not normal fare for a Tuesday.

"Why don't you come back about 6 P.M. and have dinner with us," I said. "My husband will be home, and we can talk more."

Closing the door, I leaned on it and sighed: "What have I done? I don't feel like having company tonight! And I have a meeting at 7:30."

I hadn't noticed the Lord slip in the door, but He had remembered my earlier requests and had come to meet the needs of *all* "the poor" that day: those broken and destitute because of sin, and one realizing her own utter helplessness without Him. His words to me were clear and unmistakable: "What you've done, Jan, is to obey My Word and to ignore your feelings, just as you desired. Now, go put extra potatoes in the pot, fix pudding for the child, and set the table. I'm coming to dinner tonight."



"Reverend Hartman won't be in this week!
He's getting a beatitude adjustment!"

Picture Windows for Preaching

Christmas

A British missionary [Geoffrey Bull] was captured by Chinese Communists for three years. He later wrote a book titled *When Iron Gates Yield* [Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.], which chronicles his abduction. One cold December 24 after a long, tiresome crossing through a mountain pass, his captors brought him to a small group of houses in late afternoon.

A Tibetan landlord had swept out an upstairs room for the missionary-prisoner, who thought to himself, how rare to find a clean place to lay one's head in a Central Asian country. After supper and nightfall he was ordered to go downstairs to feed the horses. He climbed down to the lower floor, where it was the custom to stable animals. It was absolutely black.

The missionary described his emotions:

My boots squelched in the manure and straw on the floor and the fetid smell of the animals was nauseating. I felt my way amongst the mules and horses, expecting to be kicked any moment. What a place, I thought. Then as I continued to grope my way in the darkness towards the grey it suddenly flashed into my mind. "What's today?" I thought for a moment. In traveling, the days had become a little muddled in my mind. Then it came to me. "It's Christmas Eve."

As he stood there amid the smell and manure, his mind began to comprehend that this place was like the place where the Savior was born. He wrote, "To think that He came all the way from heaven to some wretched eastern stable, and what is more, to think that He came for me."

The truth is that people "beautify the cross and the crib." All that does is "to hide the fact that at birth" Jesus



Compiled by Derl G. Keefer

Pastor,
Three Rivers, Michigan

resigned himself "to the stench of beasts and at death exposed [himself] to the shame" of thieves, self-righteous bigots, and "rogues." Mr. Bull concluded, "I returned to the warm clean room, which I enjoyed even as a prisoner, bowed to thankfulness and worship."

Leslie B. Flynn, *Come Alive with Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 124.

Christmas

Several years ago a Calcutta newspaper related a story that a young Brahmin came to the house of a missionary for an interview. As they talked together, the young Brahmin told the missionary, "Many things that Christianity contains I find in Hinduism; but there is one thing that Christianity has that Hinduism doesn't have."

"What is that?" asked the missionary.

His reply was blunt and pointed: "A Savior."

G. B. F. Hallock, *Best Modern Illustrations* (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1935), 68-69.

Christmas

God sent His greatest Christmas gift, Jesus, because of His great love for the world. Charles Schultz in his cartoon strip *Peanuts* summed it up well.

Charlie Brown is reading the Christmas story. "In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled." Charlie stops and turns to the ever present Peppermint Patty to clarify: "Caesar Augustus was the Emperor of Rome and the most powerful person on earth! One night in a little town of Bethlehem, a child was born, but no one paid any attention. After all, he was born in a common stable. Who would have thought that this child would be revered by millions while Caesar Augustus would be almost forgotten?"

Peppermint Patty interrupts Charlie Brown and says, "No one paid any attention when I was born either, but now everyone loves me, and I'm gonna get so many presents for Christmas, it'll make your head swim."

At that Charlie Brown closes his Bible and turns to leave, while Peppermint Patty asks: "Hey! Aren't you gonna finish the story?"

Charlie replies, "I think you finished it."

Peppermint Patty may have had no idea about the deeper implications of the Christmas story, but she knew she was loved. The Christmas story is just that, a story of love!

King Duncan, *Mule Eggs and Topknots* (Knoxville, Tenn.: Seven Worlds Press, 1991), 69-70.

Christmas

William P. Tuck tells about the manger scene in an individual's yard as he and his family passed on the way to and from church in the days before Christmas. On the Sunday following Christmas, the family drove by the same yard and noticed the manger scene had been taken down. Tuck's preschool son, Bill, offered the insightful comment: "They have put

the Lord Jesus away for another year."

Too often we do that. During the exciting Christmas season, we revel in the story of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth; but as we enter a new year, we often forget the meaning of the Incarnation in our daily lives.

Michael Duduit, ed., *Preaching*, November-December, 1988, 53.

Virginity

Charles Colson, in his book *A Dangerous Grace*, tells that *Glamour* magazine made a shocking discovery that many of its readers were virgins.

Colson said it started when the magazine asked its readers to respond to the question, "Are there any virgins left out there?" Two thousand women wrote in to tell the magazine that they were virgins—and proud of it. The magazine summarized the responses in a March 1992 article titled "2,000 Virgins: They're Not Who You Think." The article went on to say that the women who wrote were intelligent, "with it" young women who were articulate and knew what they wanted in life.

They had simply chosen not to have sex outside of marriage.

Their letters disclosed that it is not an easy choice to make in these days. These women told of being teased, humiliated, ridiculed—made to feel like freaks. Some of those ladies sent pictures to prove they're really normal human beings.

Colson said that the women wrote that they took their stands for a variety of reasons.

He states that all of them listed AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as good reasons to remain chaste. Others said that they didn't want to be pressured into sex by peers and media. Many said sex is too meaningful for a casual relationship. One woman wrote: "A lot of feeling, trust, and intimacy are put into a relationship once sex is involved." That was her reason to save herself for the right man. Other respondents warned that sex outside marriage loses its deep meaning. One woman wrote to

Glamour, "Sex is expressing love—and you can't possibly love a new person every few months."

These women did not express a low view of sex. On the contrary, they saw it as something with intense meaning and a committed relationship of marriage. One letter writer expressed it very well: "God doesn't forbid sex before marriage because He wants to put us in a box with a list of rules and no fun. No, it's because He wants the best for us."

She hit at the core of the issue. Colson writes: "God's laws are not capricious or arbitrary. They tell us who we are and what is truly best for us."

Charles Colson, *A Dangerous Grace* (Dallas: Word Book Publishing, 1994), 200-201.

Family Love

Neil Kurshan tells a heart-wrenching story about a medical student who went to a counselor about whether she should complete medical school or drop out to raise a family. The counselor suggested that she could do both with a little outside help. The student related that she had promised herself never to entrust her children to a housekeeper. Wondering why, the counselor probed the young woman for an explanation.

The young student replied,

Well, when I was a child, my parents would vacation in Europe each summer and leave me with a nanny. One spring when I was 11, our housekeeper up and quit suddenly. My parents were extremely upset that the vacation was jeopardized. Shortly before the departure date arrived, they found another woman to take my regular nanny's place. I noticed Mom was wrapping up all the family silverware and jewels. Since it had never been done before, I asked why. She explained to me that the new maid could not be trusted with the family valuables. I felt so hurt. Wasn't I a "family valuable" of more worth than knives and forks?! I never forgot the incident, and as I grew up, I promised myself that I would bring up my

own children without the help of any outsider.

Parents need to demonstrate to their children their love!

Dynamic Preaching Magazine (Knoxville, Tenn.: Seven Worlds Publishing), No. 1 (Jan. 1995): 6.

Church

A young boy playing near an old, ornate church one afternoon decided to go inside. As he entered, he saw candles lit all around the building. He thought that it must be a great birthday party for Jesus, so he began singing "Happy Birthday" and going around blowing out the candles.

As the pastor entered the sanctuary, he noticed the candles were out and then caught sight of the young boy leaving. The minister thought, "It's about time that young man learned to have respect for God." Knowing where the boy lived, the clergyman decided to pay a little visit to his home and talk with his mother.

Arriving at the home, the pastor informed the boy's mother that he had come to discuss a serious matter with her son. The mother went upstairs, brought the child down to the pastor, and then returned back upstairs. Left alone with the pastor, the boy looked at the minister.

The pastor asked, "Young man, where is God?" The question startled the boy. His eyes got big, but he said nothing. Again the pastor asked, "Where is God?" The question made the boy uneasy. His eyes got bigger, but still he said nothing. For the third time the minister asked, "Tell me, where is God?"

With a scream the boy ran upstairs to his mother. Breathlessly he cried out, "Mommy, Mommy, they lost God at that church, and they think I took Him!"

Have you ever lost God? It's easy to do in this busy world of ours. We get our eyes off Him. In our religious activity we become so preoccupied with everything else that we lose sight of Him. Don't take a step without the knowledge that He is there!

Greg Laurie, *Everyday with Jesus* (Eugene, Oreg.: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), 33-34.

Aren't We in this Together?

by Terry Carter

Associate pastor, Haltom City, Texas

Many senior pastors have narrow viewpoints about the staff ministers, frequently considered a *servant*, a dependent, a subordinate, a menial worker, or an underling, also known as the *assistant to the pastor*.

Other senior pastors see their staff ministers in a different way. They esteem him or her as a confederate, colleague, comrade, copartner, or teammate as part of a joint effort. This attitude renders mutual assistance as

coadministrator or the *associate pastor*.

Some clergy argue that both positions are the same, but pastors themselves separate the two functions by the treatment shown these coworkers. In this sense, people called associates are treated as assistants.

I know from 13 years in full-time ministry that most ministers don't like to talk about staff conflicts. Relationships in these areas, however, need open discussion.

I appreciate my years as an assistant, for they taught me about what deeply scars pastor-assistant relationships, lessons not taught in a classroom or from a book.

Most assistants stay on a church staff less than two years, often due to friction frequently blamed on the associate. Associates read magazines, attend seminars, and ask themselves the same questions. "What must I do to survive as an assistant? How can I overcome the reputation of second-class person, troublemaker, sower of discord, and a possible threat to the pastor?"

Sometimes an associate is *driven away* by his or her own senior pastor.

When this happens, the staff thinks, "Every time we get a good associate, the senior pastor makes that one leave!" For obvious reasons, staff members never openly express these concerns. Before the dust of departure settles, the senior pastor explains to his or her fellow clergy: "You know how it is. It's the same problem. . . ." And so, another associate bites the dust.

A former senior pastor of mine once said, "You have a problem!" As with other associates who served in the same church, the situation found discussion with the spouse. Advice from other sources was also sought. Everyone agreed that I wasn't a model personality. "Try harder," they said. "Ask God to change your heart."

After soul-searching and prayer, I developed a new respect for the senior pastor. Was it possible that when I joined the church staff, I looked at myself as his equal? Thoughts that perhaps I was disloyal troubled me. When I approached the senior pastor about it, I felt guilty about my poor attitude.

My responsibilities were met with great personal resolve. Schedules



changed at no small degree of inconvenience to follow the senior pastor's orders. When I made a mistake, I corrected it. This made me feel that the senior pastor and I understood each other.

Magazine articles about successful ministry teams covered the desk. There were seminars designed to change me into a more fruitful staff member. As far as I knew, I was on course. I soon discovered that magazines and seminars didn't supply all the needed answers.

One day came the staff "chew session." Meetings weren't usually held unless there was a problem attributed to one or all the church staff.

"Your problem is that you only do what you're told to do," he said. My pastor was right, but there was a reason for it. On the occasions when we did things on our own, the result was often a *second* staff meeting with an angry senior pastor who wondered why his staff failed! *Everyone makes mistakes.* The senior pastor never applied that truism to himself. Was he *infallible*?

One time, when the senior pastor was about to leave town, his secret vacation plans slipped out. That's when his eyes *flamed* as he angrily said, "Loose lips sink ships!" He became so disappointed that he canceled his vacation. How was I to know the vacation was a secret? Nobody told me! I learned to keep quiet about *anything* the pastor said.

Words, like arrows, can wound deeply. Constant criticism by the senior pastor leads along a path of discord both for him or her and the assistant, who soon becomes unable to tolerate the senior pastor. Bitterness breeds destructive condemnation. What was once loyalty flares up into disrespect for the senior pastor. Tears fill the eyes of many associates who don't understand what went wrong.

Eventually a time came when the senior pastor was dissatisfied. It was impossible to get to the church early enough or to stay late enough. A day off was rare. Vacations, visits with friends, trips with the family were all subject to change without notice. A request for time off was an open sin.

This incident was one among many that soon left me disappointed with the full-time ministry. I frequently

asked myself if conditions could get much worse. They got worse!

Some senior pastors expect loyalty *from* assistants that they sometimes fail to show *to* their assistants. Do senior pastors desert assistants to sink or swim by themselves when they too need support?

The stress climaxed on the night we held a "teacher and worker" banquet attended by workers and new prospects. An upset church member launched an energetic personal assault on my integrity while everyone listened in startled silence. Every bad experience of the past two years raced across my mind.

Most ministers don't like to talk about staff conflicts.

The senior pastor once approved the actions that now had upset this church member. Anger exploded inside me. Hot tears of frustration filled my eyes. A clenched fist thumped the top of the table as I listened to the venomous tirade. What could I do? It hurt!

"A soft answer turns away wrath" (Prov. 15:1, NKJV), so I said little in response. "Surely," I thought to myself, "the senior pastor will talk to this lady in his office." When the senior pastor *joined* the attack, I learned what it was like to be alone. The fact that he blamed me for what I did with his consent devastated me. This was the beginning of the end. My rapport with the senior pastor dissolved. What little held us together ripped away in the words of heated debate openly rehearsed before the church leadership.

A time comes when an associate respects an office without having respect for the person who holds it. Experience had taught me a new lesson: what *not* to do if I ever became a senior pastor myself.

An ultimatum issued a few months later left me only one road to peace. It was a choice between my sanity,

self-respect, and family or my staff position and the church. The church lost. I was ready to leave the staff and quit the church. What drove me to this drastic idea? The pastor I knew as a church member was radically different from the one I served as a staff member!

More conflict takes place between a pastor and associates than most church members realize. On the pastor's part there can be arrogance, jealousy, deceit, selfishness, and a lack of compassion. Yet, these are the very things for which senior pastors condemn their *associates*. Few ministry teams survive with these problems. Who is really to blame? Is it only the senior pastor? Is it only the associate pastor? More likely, both parties are responsible.

Church members sense the conflicts. "Is anything wrong?" they ask the senior pastor.

"Not a thing," comes the reply. The leader will finally convince both himself or herself and those around that all is well. Everyone will believe the response because it came from the senior pastor. This statement of spiritual health, however, could be faulty. Only those on the church staff know that things aren't as they seem, but they won't talk. Who can blame them?

Not all associates go through what I experienced. Vast numbers of them, however, do know the hurt that comes from a senior pastor who feels he or she does no wrong.

We all learn from our own experiences, good or bad. The lessons I learned in 2 years were mostly *what not to do*. It took more than 10 years as associate in another church to prove to my own satisfaction that problems weren't *always* my fault, contrary to what my old senior pastor wanted me to believe.

Was I on *your* church staff? Did you treat me as a man of God? Did you try to understand me? Maybe someone like me has an office in the church next to yours right now!

The ministry God has given belongs to Him, and it is also *our* ministry. Today both parties can ask for forgiveness, acknowledge human weaknesses, and let God mend the torn fabric of their relationships. Why can't we get along? Aren't we in this work *together*? 

WORSHIP

&

PREACHING

HELPS





Jonathan Salgado

December/January/February 1997-98

Prepared by Jonathan Salgado

INTRODUCTION

December, January, and February—exciting and challenging months for the preaching task! Advent, Christmas, the end of a year, and the beginning of a new one. All of these are wonderful opportunities to proclaim God's Word.

Advent, a season of four Sundays, opens the church year. The season begins on the Sunday closest to November 30. The word Advent comes from two Latin words that are comprised in *adventre*, "to come to." Advent's message announces that God in Christ is coming to the world. This coming may be:

1. A past experience (God did come in Christ at Christmas).
2. A present experience (God may come to you this Christmas).
3. A future experience (Jesus will come again).

These represent wonderful preaching possibilities, such as those I suggest in this section. Of all the seasons, Advent is the most difficult to observe because of the competition with the commercial world. The world "celebrates" Christmas during Advent. Increasingly the Church is beginning to observe Advent seriously as a vital, necessary time of preparation for a meaningful, spiritual Christmas. I hope that the resources presented in this section will help us to that end.

The end of a year and the beginning of a new one always presents a time of evaluation and reflection. During the weeks after Christmas, a preacher has much to preach about and many worthy reasons to preach. Some objectives during these weeks may be:

1. To help people to concentrate on the faithfulness of God in the past.
2. To motivate people to prepare spiritually for the future.
3. To stir up renewed interest, faith, and zeal for another year.
4. To call for a deeper, renewed commitment to Christ and the church.

The sermons and worship services suggested for the months of January and February take these objectives into consideration.

I pray that the Lord will bless our efforts as we proclaim His Word to His people.

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

Advent

by Jonathan Salgado

Gal. 4:4

TEXT: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son" (Gal. 4:4, kjv).

Throughout the Bible, God is understood as a Being who works out His purpose steadily across the years. "When the fulness of the time was come," a new prophet would appear with a new affirmation of God's truth; a new leader would arrive to set His people free. "When the fulness of the time was come," His purpose would be accomplished.

This thought, which is everywhere in the Bible, Paul expressed when he referred to the coming of Christ into the world: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." The Jewish religion had prepared the way. The time had been prepared also by a universal culture and language, which was Greek, and by the far-flung empire of Rome.

Moreover, the way had been prepared by failures of the human spirit. Athens with all its former glory was no longer famous for its wisdom. Rome with all its concentrated wealth and power was not famous for its virtue.

I. The World Found Itself in a Desperate State of Moral and Spiritual Need When Jesus Came

T. R. Glover, describing the ancient world, says: "Life grew more and more of a riddle, and solitary hearts lost faith and lost nerve, and begot no songs and few children—weary of old books and old culture, afraid of new gods, of Chance and Fate, of the stars above and the world beyond. A new impulse was needed—a new liberty in the universe—a Liberator."

The person of Jesus Christ answered the world's need. Remember how very wide and deep was the need of man and how full and satisfying was the answer to that need in Jesus Christ.

II. The Meaning of These Days Underscores the Truth That the Living Christ Returns to Us Again and Again, When in the Providence of God the Fullness of Time Has Come

The vitality of our faith stands, not by what has been, but by what is yet to be.

When one looks broadly and reflectively on the life of people and nations in our day, striking indications suggest we have been brought both by our achievements and our failures to the fullness of the times. Progress in science and technology has produced an interdependent world for the first time since history began. Nothing is entirely remote. Nothing is purely local in the sense in which these words were used in former times. A whisper can circle the globe in the twinkling of an eye. No field or forest or desert is too distant to supply industrial centers with raw materials. No market lies beyond the range of shipment of the finished product. Lines of communica-

tion, travel, and commerce have gathered the world together as though the hands of Providence were drawing together the ends of an all-compassing net. It is one world in the sense that it is technically and economically interdependent. This has been a marvelous achievement of the last two centuries, reaching its fulfillment in our generation.

In the midst of this fulfillment lies the obvious need of our world, which after two world conflicts is quite desperate. Interdependence of people, with the instruments and powers at present in human hands, means that the nations of the world may be involved in tragedy and ruin unless a spirit can be found to insure the foundation of worldwide security and peace.

I do not ask you if this civilization will be saved; I ask whether or not it needs to be saved by a new spirit. If so, where will you find that spirit? Where will you find a faith that has already commended its truth to people of every race and nation and already has faithful disciples in every land? Where will you find a faith that believes in the dignity of every human soul, that is an advocate of the rights of every person, and a tireless messenger of mercy to the needs of the lost and the least, the forlorn and the forgotten, as well as the wise and the mighty? Where will you find a faith that offers forgiveness and restoration to the penitent and offers power to the fainting heart, hope to the weary, and comfort to the sorrowful and distressed? Where will you find a faith that lifts up the poor man and crowns him with dignity and brings down the vain and the lofty to the simple wisdom of a humble mind? Where will you find a faith to declare that God wills for all people to be brothers and sisters and to dwell in peace and security throughout the land, where none shall make them afraid? You will find that in the Child of Bethlehem, in the angels singing in the heavens while shepherds watched their flocks by night, in the bells of Christmas that ring out their tidings of joy.

III. The Meaning of These Days Urges Us to Give Some New, Serious Thought to This Coming Christ So That His Spirit May Come into Our Hearts

The words that follow our text brim with inspiration and meaning: "God sent forth his Son . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. . . . God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" (Gal. 4:4-6, kjv).

Perhaps the times are full for us even today. Perhaps the human wisdom in which we once trusted points to a start that brings wise men even now to the manger Child. The progress that we once believed in is no longer certain. The science in which we once had confidence has brought us to our knees. The easy indulgence that we misnamed "freedom" has brought us near the end of our tether.

Once in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son. If for you the times are full, lift up your eyes, look and listen. You may hear on the starlit night the angel's song.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

- CALL TO WORSHIP Isa. 12:4-5
- INVOCATION
- HYMNS "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"
"Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus"
- ADVENT CANDLE CEREMONY
- PRAYER CHORUS
- PASTORAL PRAYER
- WELCOME AND GREETINGS
- TITHES AND OFFERINGS
- OFFERTORY
- SCRIPTURE READING Isa. 11:1-9
Gal. 4:1-7
- SPECIAL MUSIC
- SERMON "IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME"
- CLOSING SONG
- BENEDICTION

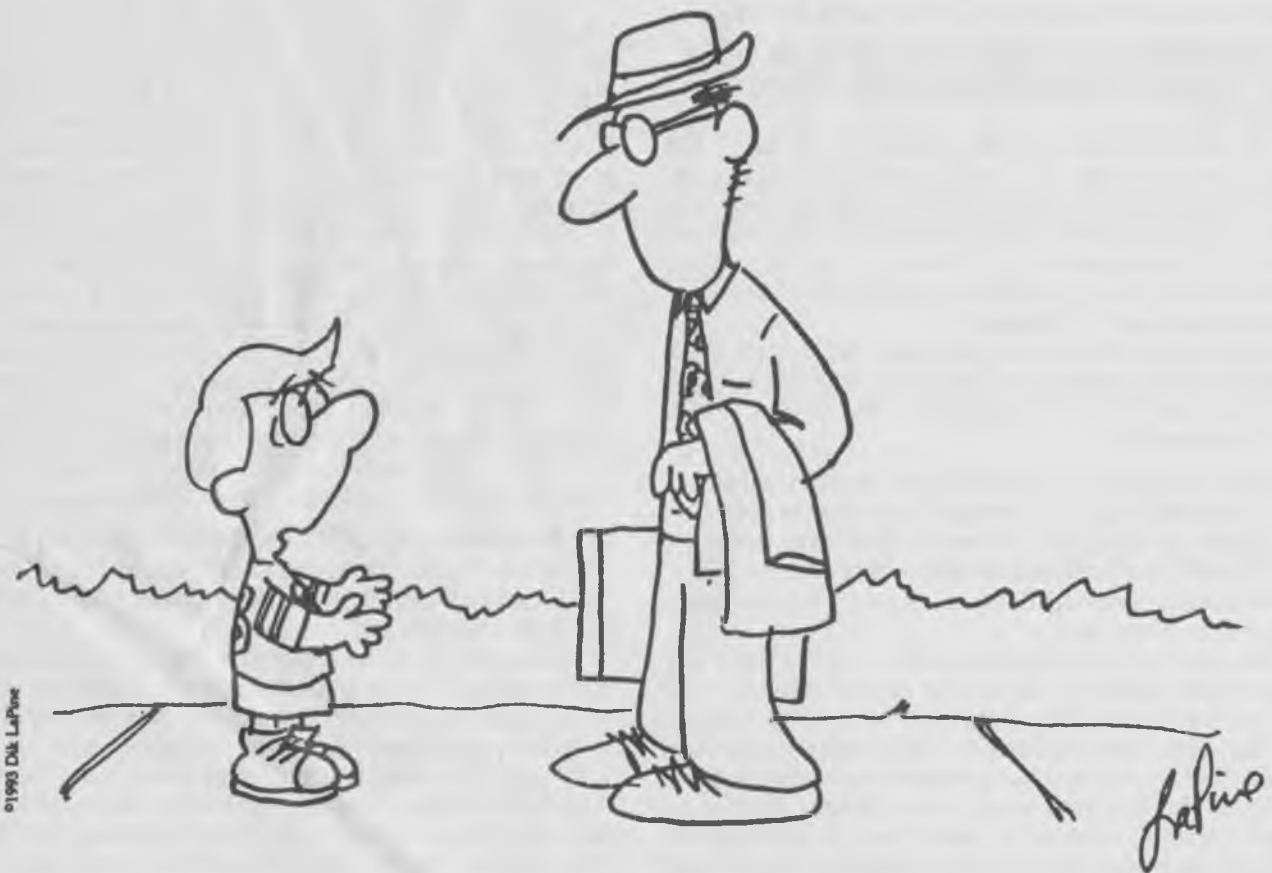
Creative Worship Ideas

Advent Candle Ceremony

If you are doing the Advent candle ceremony, invite different families to participate in the ceremony.

Scripture Reading

For the scripture readings today, invite a senior citizen to read the Old Testament and a teenager to read the New Testament.



"My mom says I'm not supposed to talk to strangers.
I think it's because she doesn't want me to grow up to be a visitation pastor."

THE WISE MEN BELIEVED IN A BABY

Advent

by Jonathan Salgado

Matt. 2:1-12

Did you ever see a camel caravan crossing the desert, silhouetted against the western sky? Three camels, the first with tinkling bell, the others head to tail, three camels seem to extend a quarter mile; six camels, a mile; more than six suggest infinity. There is something very deceiving about the length of a camel caravan.

There is mystery and fascination about such a caravan. Where does it come from? Where is it going? Who are these men on a journey? Why are they traveling? What is in the camel bags? Gold? Frankincense? Myrrh? What gifts does the East bring to the West?

Such a camel caravan resembles a line of poetry. This caravan of magi provokes poetry—wisdom poetry. Let us seek the wisdom of the traditional wise men following the star—the seven steps of wisdom.

I. The First Step of Wisdom Is Expectancy

Expectancy? “Except ye . . . become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3, kjv). What did the Babe of Bethlehem, grown to manhood, mean when He said that? I used to think it meant *humility*. But I now believe I was mistaken in part at least; humility is not the word. “Except ye . . . become as little children”—*teachable* as a child? No, teachable is not the precise word. “Except ye . . . become [trustful] as little children”? No, trustful is not the right word.

What is the word? It is *expectancy*. You must have expectancy as a child anticipates. The child lives on the tip-toe of expectancy. Christmas is coming! My birthday is coming! I’m growing up to be a big boy! A man!

Expectancy brings one into the Kingdom, for the Kingdom is like a field; the attitude of expectancy plants the seed.

The Kingdom is like the bread dough; expectancy puts in the leaven.

These wise men of old were full of expectancy. Back in the dreamy East, they never rested in their dreams; for them dreams inspired expectancy.

How did they know in their Eastern desert homes that a child destined to become King of the Jews was about to be born? They followed the star. But stars have been rising in the east and setting in the west for myriads of time. No one ever before followed a star to the birthplace of a king.

Expectancy discovers significance. The senses are tuned up. The mind is sharpened. The heart is responsive. Eyes dull to wonder never catch the difference that is the discovery of the new.

Learn from these wise men the wisdom of expectancy. It keeps the aged young. It lifts the middle-aged out of the dull mechanical grind. Life on tiptoe waits with wonder for something new to sound, a new song in the forest, a fresh bugle call in the hills.

Wake up! All you who are asleep, satisfied, looking backward, defeated, dead! Without expectancy you groan

in bondage. Accept the wisdom of the magi—expect great things. Expectancy gives you freedom to venture.

II. The Second Step of Wisdom Is Venture

It’s put into a proverb: “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” In the word of our Master, “Seek!” Venture is faith in action. Venture is expectancy hitching up the camels, fastening the camel bags, starting on a long journey, following a star. To sit back expecting something to happen is a caricature of expectancy; it is expectancy at its worst. The wise men embodied expectancy at its best.

They ventured. They caught a vision of a king, the King, the Baby. When you catch that vision, you become what Frank W. Boreham called a “stupendous principle”: “The vision of the King stands related to the vision continental. The revelation of the Lord leads to the revelation of the limitless landscape.”

What kind of horizon do we see? Narrow as the shell of our own ego? Wide only as the walls of our own house? Circumscribed by a color line or a nationality line? That is not wisdom. There is no venture in that. Catch even a faraway vision of the Baby, the King, and out you will go across the horizons of your own circumscribed self—even across deserts and rivers you will go.

III. The Third Step of Wisdom Is Discovery

It is written, “On coming to the house, they saw the child” (Matt. 2:11). They had ventured. Now they had arrived. They had pushed beyond their horizons and come to witness to the birth of our Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

These wise men were men of science and astronomy. These three steps of wisdom are scientific steps: expectancy, venture, discovery. Nature does not reveal her secrets except to people who wonder and dare. Scientists must trek across deserts before they can stand before new facts.

These men discovered a Baby in a stable. These wise men believed in a Baby. Harry Emerson Fosdick says, “That is one of the most significant insights in the Christian record.”

To discover that Baby, they passed up the Roman Empire. They might have discovered the bigness, the vastness, the magnificence, the power of the Roman rule. They entered into the palace of Herod, but they did not say, “We have arrived.” They said, “Where is the Baby?” It takes wisdom to do that. This kind of wisdom our modern world does not have. Its opposite surrounds us in nations seeking to rule the world, in business obsessed with size, in the popular attractiveness of the colossal.

These wise men of old passed up the empire for a Baby; they passed up bigness for vitality. As Fosdick puts it, “Vitality is mightier than size.” Every Christmas we celebrate this truth. The Roman Empire fell, the Caesars are dust, the spectacular affairs that then had bulk and mag-

nitude in the world's opinion have proved transient. However, that diminutive bit of vitality has proved more enduring than them all. It is wise to believe in that which is newborn and vital. So in our acceptance of Christ, not faith alone, certainly not credulity, but perceptive insight is called for.

IV. The Fourth Step of Wisdom Is Worship

These wise men bowed down and worshiped. No one should worship aught but the highest. No one should worship less than God, lest he or she be an idolater. Worship is the climax of wisdom. What is the ultimate expectancy that courses in a person's bloodstream, that rules one's nature, that is the divine urge in the soul, if it is not the worship of God?

These men found in the Christ child a revelation of God. They worshiped Deity in Him.

I plead for us to worship Christ. The whole story of that Baby Jesus calls for our utmost devotion.

We have followed the wise men in taking three steps of wisdom and the climactic step: Expectancy, Venture, Discovery, Worship.

The three steps that follow are not anticlimax. When a person reaches the summit of a mountain, that one does not jump over the precipice to return to the level of his or her daily walk. That would be an anticlimax. The climber returns by some path down the mountainside. The following three steps return us in wisdom from a mountain peak.

V. The Fifth Step of Wisdom Is Sacrifice

Each man gave his best gift to the Christ child—his utmost to the Highest.

Why don't we see the wisdom of giving? Look about you. Apply the test of happiness. Who are the happy people? Not those who are smug, or those who are self-satisfied, but those who overflow with true joy. Happy are those who give sacrificially to Jesus Christ.

VI. The Sixth Step of Wisdom Is Obedience

The magi were warned not to go back home by the way that they had come, by the way of Herod's palace. They received divine guidance. They obeyed.

After you make discovery of the Baby, after you worship Him, then your life in wisdom becomes a walk of

loving obedience. In obedience, life becomes full and rich and purposeful. Life becomes significant and useful.

VII. The Seventh Step of Wisdom Is Faithfulness

Each magus returned to his own country. Go back home! What is he to do back home?

After you have the Bethlehem experience, you must live it out in your own life. You must somehow prove faithful. You must keep faith with the Baby in your area of living. You must prove faithful in your own vocation, your own home, your own country. By faithfulness, you shall know that your discovery of the Christ child is the greatest event of your life.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

CALL TO WORSHIP	Ps. 134:1-2
INVOCATION	
HYMNS	"O Come, All Ye Faithful" "The First Noel"
ADVENT CANDLE CEREMONY	
PRAYER SONG	"If My People Will Pray"
PASTORAL PRAYER	
WELCOME AND GREETINGS	
TITHES AND OFFERINGS	
OFFERTORY	
SCRIPTURE READING	Isa. 61:1-3; 12:6 Matt. 2:1-12
SPECIAL MUSIC	
SERMON	"THE WISE MEN BELIEVED IN A BABY"
CLOSING SONG	"We Three Kings"
BENEDICTION	

Creative Worship Ideas

Advent Candle Ceremony

If you are doing the Advent candle ceremony, invite different families to participate in the ceremony. Include some of the newer families in your congregation.

Scripture Reading

For the scripture readings today, invite a young married couple. Ask the husband to read the Old Testament and the wife to read the New Testament.

AND NOW THE NEWS!

Christmas

by Jonathan Salgado

Luke 2:10

TEXT: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10, kjv).

"And now the news!" In one sense this expresses the hope we hold for this Christmas Sunday. There is news, and it is a wondrous word for all of us to hear! Unless we hear it, we resemble the commentator who never gets to the point, who never says, "And now the news!"

One interesting aspect of any news is that each of us hears it according to his or her own experience. So it is with the greatest news of all. Christmas means different things to different people.

We see this reflected in the story of the birth of our Lord. On that night at the manger, the shepherds came and told all that had been announced unto them. The Bible says, "All who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them" (Luke 2:18, rsv). But one person perceived it at a deeper meaning: Mary. She "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (v. 19, rsv). So, this Christmas season many people will have a few days or a few moments of passing wonder, and it will be over for them. Some, like Mary, hearing these things, will ponder them, keeping them in their hearts. Life for them will be different because of it. Can it be so for all of us? What is there in the news of Christmas to be heard here today?

I. The Disheartened Will Find Hope

At the outset some of us disheartened ones will hear at Christmas the news of a new hope. It is God's greatness to us in Jesus Christ. As long as He walked upon the earth, moving everywhere among people, Christ gave hope to those in despair. And it is still true! In this Christmas faith of ours hope remains a central part of the good news.

What news it will be to some people! Without hope, life soon comes to a standstill. Hope is to the soul what oxygen is to the body. We must not be deprived of hope lest we come to death. Some people come to Christmas disheartened beyond words. They can be reminded that God has spoken in Christ and tells us never to yield to despair.

Hope that has come to us in Jesus Christ brings a word that God has not forgotten, that even in the darkest night someplace there is a manger where God has done His work. Somewhere we have cause for hope. Hope reminds us that our Father has not forgotten.

Do you doubt that we have news of great joy? What a great Christmas this can be for some who have waited for that word of hope and despaired about its coming. "And now the news!" Christmas always comes at night, and hope is restored.

II. The Heedless Will Find Reminder

Some of us who have grown heedless will hear in this Christmas a word of reminder. One of the clearest of words about the Christmas story is its simplicity. In a

world where we become so involved in more and more things, where men and women are so easily led into foolish belief that mere accumulation is the sign of success, the Christmas story comes with its word of reminder: don't forget the great simplicities. Into this scrambling, competitive, and often harried world in which we live, the scene of a manger and a Child reminds us that God's greatest gifts are often the simplicities.

This word of Christmas needs to be spoken particularly to families seeking to become established—as we put it, "to get ahead." That may be a part of life. Yet somewhere in it all a word of reminder needs to be spoken often. The great underlying simplicities that make life most real can be lost by neglect in the course of gaining other things.

Beyond dispute, when a family has faith, hope, and love, it already has everything. The rest is surplus. Unless you have these underlying gifts, nothing else can make up for them. When you need an ounce of love, two tons of things will not substitute. There's a difference of quality that no quantity will overcome. May this Christmas bring that news to some who need to be reminded. It isn't enough to look at Christmas and wonder. It is important, like Mary, to take time to ponder.

"And now the news!" It is a reminder at the Christmas season that life is most real in its great simplicities. To a generation caught in the scrambling for success, this word of reminder needs to be shared.

III. The Weary Will Discover Renewal

Some whose faith has grown weary will hear in Christmas the words of renewal. This may seem to some a strange note to sound at Christmastime. Yet this is one of our most urgent needs. It is possible to have faith that you have inherited but never really possessed. Someone said of a great religious teacher that he did not give a new Bible, but he made the Bible new. That is a need that many of us have in the matter of our religious faith.

How common is the scene of Christmas! A manger, a barn, a few cattle, shepherds, a man named Joseph, and his wife, Mary. Common folk in a common setting—and suddenly there was with them the glory of God himself!

That can happen over and over. How long has it been since you really prayed? Wouldn't it be something of wonder if at this Christmastime, your prayer could be made real, touched by the glory of God, and made something resplendent?

What does it mean to you to find a place of worship like this on Sunday morning? Is it a habit that you follow almost blindly now? For years it has been so. Wouldn't it be a matter of wonder if on this Christmas Sunday you were endowed with a sense of the glory of God? Worship that is heedless and habitual can suddenly take on new life as the common manger scene becomes the symbol of the presence of God.

Or there is the service that we have rendered. Even the highest can seem to become routine. But suppose at this Christmastime God touched that service we are rendering with a new freshness and meaning! Just as suddenly as the angels came to the shepherds going about their accustomed tasks, so the grace of God can help us see the service we have been rendering, not in terms of a chore or a duty, but of a divine enterprise helping to minister to God's children. What a wondrous thing this would be if every service grown so commonplace could be seen with freshness of vision! "And now the news!" A renewal of faith comes as the gift of God.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son,

Congregation: And they will call him Immanuel—which means, "God with us."

Pastor: You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain.

Congregation: You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout,

Pastor: Lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah,

Together: "Here is your God!"

INVOCATION

HYMNS

"It Came upon the Midnight Clear"

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

ADVENT CANDLE CEREMONY

PRAYER SONG "Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus"

PASTORAL PRAYER

SPECIAL MUSIC

WELCOME AND GREETINGS

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

SCRIPTURE READING

Isa. 9:2, 6-7

Luke 2:1-20

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON

"AND NOW THE NEWS!"

CLOSING SONG

"Joy to the World"

BENEDICTION

Creative Worship Ideas

Advent Candle Ceremony

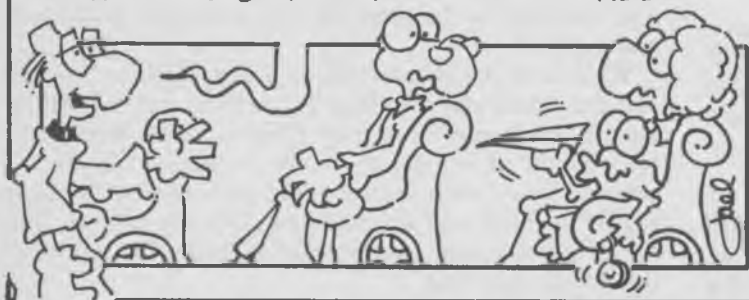
If you are doing the Advent candle ceremony, today you can invite a couple with a newborn baby to light the Christmas candle.

Scripture Reading

Invite two children of your congregation to participate with the Old Testament and the New Testament readings.

Pontius' Puddle

CHURCHGOERS ARE A STRANGE BREED.
YOU SPEND THE FIRST 18 YEARS
TRYING TO GET THEM TO HOLD STILL...



...AND THE REST OF THEIR
LIVES TRYING TO GET
THEM TO MOVE!



ACROSS THE DATE LINE

The Courier

by Jonathan Salgado

Exod. 1:5

TEXT: "Joseph was already in Egypt" (Exod. 1:5).

The last 26 chapters of Genesis would surely be a best-seller if they were published for the first time as a modern novel.

We can give the story only in its barest outline.

Jacob, an oriental patriarch, had 12 sons by two wives and two concubines. He loved Rachel most dearly; and by her two sons were born, Joseph and Benjamin. Jacob was unwise to show preference for any of his children, but the story reads, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children . . . and he made him a coat of many colours" (Gen. 37:3, KJV).

One day his brothers found opportunity to vent their hatred of Joseph. They camped at some distance from the tents of Jacob, grazing his sheep. They decided to get rid of the lad; just then a band of Ishmaelites passed on their way to Egypt. The brothers sold him into slavery instead. The caravaners carried Joseph away. The coat of many colors dipped in the blood of a kid convinced the heart-broken father that his son was killed by a wild beast.

The story develops. Joseph became the prime minister of Egypt. In a period of famine, Jacob was forced to send his sons to buy grain in the land of Egypt. They bought from the prime minister but did not recognize him. On another occasion Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. He sent for his father and the family to come down into Egypt. The story ends with the children of Jacob living in that land.

A second story begins with Exod. 1. The writer refers back to the Genesis story in five words: "Joseph was already in Egypt" (v. 5).

The old man Jacob had anguish of heart in Canaan, *but Joseph was in Egypt*. The aged man with much experience had arrived at a strong faith in God. Joseph in Egypt vindicated his faith. "Joseph was already in Egypt."

We view this story as an allegory for the last Sunday of the old year. Let this year of 1997 be our Canaan; let next year, 1998, all unknown, become our Egypt. Like Jacob, we must journey from Canaan to Egypt. The story moves on. Life unfolds. Life must be lived. A destiny belongs to each of us. But here is the denouement of the story—Joseph is already in Egypt.

I. At the End of the Year We May Have Some Sorrows

What did Jacob take with him into the land of Egypt? He carried sorrow of heart—sorrow for Rachel, his beloved; and sorrow for a lost child. What did he find in Egypt? *Comfort for his sorrow*. He found this comfort because Joseph was already in Egypt.

At the dividing line between 1997 and 1998 there is no magic by which anyone's sorrow will disappear. At midnight, no wand will wave above you, restless in your sleep, lifting unhappy memories from your mind and sorrow from your heart. Life is not like that. But Jesus is on

the other side of the date line. The Christ who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8, TLB) walks in the year 1998. The eternal Christ knows no limitations or boundaries of time.

So at the portal of the year let me urge all sorrowing folk, and they are many, to cross the line with no hesitation. Cross over with expectation that the compassionate and comforting Christ is in the unknown land of Egypt already.

II. At the End of the Year We May Have Some Uncertainties

Surely Jacob did not leave the borders of Canaan without interrogations, misgivings, fears, and doubts.

Life is always a venture. To live is venturesome. The call to move along comes, and it must be obeyed. A light directs, but beyond its feeble flickering all seems dark. A star shines in the sky, but the clouds drift over it.

This familiar place must be abandoned. I expected that this and this would happen, but it didn't. I had planned my security, but a seven-year famine came upon the land; I had not counted on that.

When Jacob's sons came and told him that Joseph was in Egypt, the story says that "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." Finally he said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him" (Gen. 45:26, 28, KJV).

These are not easy days. Across the boundary of 1998 not one of us can promise either weal or woe; only this, that Joseph will be there; the Christ will be there. A person can say, "I will go and see Him."

III. At the End of the Year We Can Carry Across Our Certainties

A person carries his or her certainties, as well as sorrows and interrogations, across the date line.

This fellow Jacob carried his certainties down to Egypt. He was not a very exemplary character in some respects. In his past he had been crooked. You had to watch him, or he would put one over on you. He was shrewd at striking a bargain. But he fought through his inner battles.

Jacob believed in God. After arriving in Egypt, he said, "God Almighty appeared to me . . . in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me" (Gen. 48:3). He carried his faith in God from Canaan into Egypt.

The multitude of years had brought him wisdom; that wisdom he carried across the border. He did not discount experience. Experience of God was not to Jacob the stern light of a ship illuminating only the track it has passed; experience of God was making clear the horizon ahead.

His certainty of God was vindicated. When he met Joseph in the land of Egypt, he knew that God was watching over all, making it the occasion to bring about His good.

The Mission Field Demanding the Pastor's Top Priority

by Janetta Drake

Pastor's wife, Eldon, Missouri

Pastor, be warned of one situation that is potentially sinful and sometimes fatal to your ministry. Immediately your mind travels over every earthly sin, looking for ways to avoid pitfalls. Though you may not realize it, you play into Satan's hands when your ministry becomes more important than your family.

Instantly you react, "I don't put my family last!" In your mind, you probably put your family first. However, do your actions reflect your family's position of priority? Relive today's activities. Did you tell your child to go away and not bother you while you talked to that dear old saint who is experiencing another trial? Did you cancel lunch with your wife because a church board member called and asked you to go to lunch? If you think for a few minutes, you may recall numerous episodes where your spouse and children took second place to your church.

Paul warned fathers regarding the care of their children: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the . . .

admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4, kjv). How often do you provoke your child's wrath by you canceling precious time with them? How many ball games, choir concerts, teachers' meetings, family suppers, and so on, have you missed because of your church?

The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6, kjv). Ponder the word "train." When an Olympic hopeful begins training, he or she enters a daily process. The athlete puts everything aside for his or her training process. Jesus put to use the athlete's idea for training regularly. For three years, He spent almost every day with His disciples. They walked with Jesus, ate with Him, slept where He slept. Almost every moment of every day they spent with their Teacher. They not only learned Jesus' words but also watched His reactions to situations. The disciples, mostly adults, required daily learning, receiving instructions from their Savior.

Why do we think, then, that our children require less instruction than

Jesus' disciples? As He spent time with His disciples, so must we spend time with our children and spouse. Train your children by allowing them to see how you react to situations. Visual instructions make a greater impression on children than verbal instructions.

Perhaps you, pastor, say, "If I'm not available to my congregation, then the church will suffer, and people will be angry with me." Let me ask one simple question: "Who would you rather see in heaven, your child or your congregation?" That is a very difficult question. Regardless of how much you love your church, seeing one of your own children perish spiritually is unthinkable.

As you correctly set your priorities—God first, spouse and family second, ministry third—He will reward your faithfulness to your family and bless your ministry. When your goals fit His goals, your ministry will not suffer. God has called you to life's greatest mission field—your family. Answer His call to ministry: love and train your family. 

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

CALL TO WORSHIP	Ps. 96:1-2, 4
INVOCATION	
HYMNS	"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"
	"O Jesus, I Have Promised"
THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH	The Apostles' Creed
PRAYER SONG	"Gentle Shepherd"
PASTORAL PRAYER	
SPECIAL MUSIC	
WELCOME AND GREETINGS	
OFFERTORY	
TITHES AND OFFERINGS	
SCRIPTURE READING	Gen. 37

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON	"ACROSS THE DATE LINE"
CLOSING SONG	"Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us"
PRAYER AROUND THE ALTAR	
BENEDICTION	Jude 24-25

Creative Worship Ideas

New Year's Service

Remove all the Christmas decorations from the sanctuary before this day. For this and the following Sunday decorate with banners emphasizing "hope" and "faith."

BUT THAT WAS YESTERDAY

by Jonathan Salgado

Phil. 3:13

TEXT: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13, KJV).

A minister seated next to an Eskimo woman at a luncheon was much intrigued by what she told him about the custom of the Eskimos: never to carry the day's evil experiences, troubles, and quarrels over into the next day. She said that two Eskimo hunters might become engaged in a violent dispute over the division of the game that they had taken. Heated words might even bring them to blows; but the night would erase the quarrel, and the next day they would greet each other as brothers.

If someone were to exclaim, "I thought you were enemies—you were fighting yesterday," the answer would come, "But that was yesterday."

That is a great way to live, to be able to say, "That is past, that is forgotten, that belonged to yesterday," instead of holding on to old regrets and old grievances.

It is so difficult to say, "But that was yesterday." In this New Year remember Paul's assertion in his letter to the Philippians. It is one of those verses that you do not need to know the context in order to feel its significance. But it does explain much of Paul's power. Listen to him: "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (vv. 13-14, KJV). "Forgetting those things which are behind"—that was yesterday!

I. Some Things We Ought to Remember

Some things from the past year we would like to forget over a cup of tea, but they should not be forgotten.

The suffering we have seen in society, the suffering that comes with hunger and sickness, the suffering that centers in the dark spots of the world, whether in Africa or in our own city. These things must not be forgotten.

It is good to remember some of the hard experiences. One scholar has said, "Memory is life's battle abbey on whose walls are hung the flags that tell the struggles through which we have marched."

In Lamentations we read, "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (3:22, KJV). The writer discovered that even when one loses faith in himself or herself, God does not lose faith in the person. The more that one needs God, the closer God draws to him or her. That is a great memory to take with us into the troubles of the present and the future. We had a sorrow, we had a heartbreak, and we were sure that for us all the glow had gone out of living. Yet we remember now that in the midst of it we were conscious of God drawing very close to us. Through Him our despair was overcome. Now we live in the faith that what He did for us once He can and will do for us again.

Some things we should remember have nothing to do with trouble or the endurance of it. They are blessings.

I recall reading about an old man who climbed one of the most famous heights of Switzerland. As he stood looking first in one direction and then the other, he took in the view of the sea, the surrounding hills, and the sky's glorious red of sunset. He murmured, "There is enough material here to gather memories to support our souls forever."

If we only recall them to mind, have not all of us had experiences like that?

II. Many Things We Must Learn to Forget

A. Don't we need to forget what might have been?

How simple it is to torture our imaginations with visions of what might have been if such and such had only happened. Some people have so hidden behind what might have been that they never get to what might still be. They have never learned to say: "But that was yesterday. Thank God, I still have today and tomorrow."

B. Don't we need to forget hurt feelings?

Bitterness tries so hard to be carried over from one year to the other. Leave it with yesterday. Jesus said, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). This is true, not only if one's brother or sister has something against the person, but also if one has something against the brother or sister. Don't waste yourself on bitterness, for it will beat you to shreds.

C. Sins may be heavy on your spirits before God. Leave them behind by asking His forgiveness and by believing that He forgives. "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:11-12). Ask God to do it, and believe. Forget them once and for all.

We often go prowling around behind God's back, uncovering the torment of our souls, these sins that God has buried, or holding on in retrospect to the troubles we had gone through the motions of surrendering. Difficult as it is, learn to turn your thoughts in other directions. Remember that in forgetting, "Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength" (Isa. 40:31); "Be strong and courageous. . . for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9).

III. Forget Those Things That Are Behind

You must lay aside the past to learn what it means to

reach forth. Life is a reaching forth. Someone has said, "Life has a forward intention."

Great rewards come to those who forget that which ought to be forgotten and press on. Great rewards come to those determined to take what is at hand and fashion something good from it. Great rewards come to those who live in service unafraid. Great rewards come to those who, instead of remembering those who hurt them, will think of those who are always waiting at the ferries of difficult streams to help them over. Paramount among them is God in Christ. This can be a great year for you, you will take your hard experiences of 1997 and say, "Ah, but that was yesterday." Reach forth to "those things which are before," pressing toward "the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP	Choir
OPENING SENTENCE AND INVOCATION	Pastor
HYMNS	"Living by Faith" "Constantly Abiding"
THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH	The Apostles' Creed "Gentle Shepherd"
PRAYER SONG	
PASTORAL PRAYER	
SPECIAL MUSIC	
WELCOME AND GREETINGS	Song: "The Family of God"
OFFERTORY	
TITHES AND OFFERINGS	
SCRIPTURE READING	Phil. 3:7-16
SPECIAL MUSIC	
SERMON	"BUT THAT WAS YESTERDAY"
CLOSING SONG	"Jesus Will Walk with Me"
BENEDICTION	Jude 24-25

Creative Worship Ideas

Pastoral Prayer

During the pastoral prayer invite families to come to the altar together for prayer.

Welcome and Greetings

At the moment of welcoming people, encourage church members to move out of their seats and greet one another, especially the visitors, while singing "The Family of God."

BEYOND BELIEF



1-16

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A GREAT IDEA ABOUT GOD

by Jonathan Salgado
John 4:3-42

TEXT: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24, KJV).

If only we had a moving picture and a tape recording of the scene at Jacob's well when Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman! It might tell us whether the woman was trying to change the subject when she asked the old question, "Which is the right place to worship—on Mount Zion at Jerusalem, or," as her fathers had told her, "on Mount Gerizim?" To avoid something that goes to the heart of your own situation and that is difficult for you to face, go skirting off in another direction. Bring up a religious controversy to which there seems to be no answer.

I. God Is Worthy of Worship

The answer Jesus gave the woman sounds familiar to many of us. "A time is coming," Jesus said, "when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. . . . A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 23-24).

Jesus was saying to the woman: It doesn't really make any difference *where* you worship God. That isn't the real thing in true worship. Come out of these shallow pools of religious controversy about secondary things and begin to deal with the primary things of faith.

Set against the background of religious prejudice, these words spring to life.

Jesus suggests that the real question is not where a person worships but *whom* he or she worships. He emphasized to the woman: It doesn't make any real difference whether you worship God on one mountain or on another, for God is everywhere. The important thing is that you worship the Father, the God who is Spirit, the God who is present on both mountains, who is in all places, animating us—not only Jews and Samaritans, but Greeks and Romans and people in all parts of the earth. If a person worships a small local god, his or her worship will be small, shrinking the life to fit the person's conception of that god. If you worship the American god, or the Western god, or the Russian god, or the Eastern god, your religion will breed hatred and misunderstanding, as it did in those days when Jesus lived in Galilee.

If you worship the Father as Spirit, your faith will undercut the barriers and will help you pass over into the lives of other people. Instead of your religious life separating you from other people, it will draw you close to them. One mountain or another will make no difference. This Jesus is saying to us: Detach yourself from the little local pattern of worship and reach for the great Object of worship, the Spirit of the living God who is Father of all.

II. God Is Spirit

The words of the text have an air of greatness—just as

they stand, without explanation or any word of interpretation. Even though you did not know who said them, or under what circumstances, or exactly what they meant, you would know instinctively that they were important, that they say something significant. These simple words, none with more than two syllables, yet neither trivial nor trite. As you hear them, you can feel the pulsation of a great truth in them!

"God is Spirit" (NKJV, PHILLIPS, TLB). No article, not "a" Spirit. God is Spirit. Spirit is, most elementally, breath, the breath of life. Think what that truth means.

A gifted actor or director takes a play that has been neglected for many years and lain dormant on the shelf. He sees hidden possibilities in it; he brings it out, produces it, breathes into it the breath of life, his own spirit. He revives the play. A team in an athletic contest rises to unsuspected heights when their schoolmates in the stands cheer and breathe into the team the spirit of the school.

God, the ultimate Mystery, the indefinable One, the Ground of our very being and existence, about whom so many speculations have been made, wisely and unwisely! God, to whom we instinctively reach out, and apart from whom we can find no rest! Our God is the Breath of life! God makes everything else live. God is not a material substance like a tree, a river, the sun, or even a person. He is greater than that. He is Spirit. God is the Breath of life, the energy without which there would be no tree, no river, no sun, and no person.

In this very elementary sense, God is that which *animates*. God is who animates you, who is the Breath of life in you, without whom you would be nothing but a limp, inactive, unthinking, unimagining lump of clay. God is Spirit.

III. God Is Worshipped in Spirit and in Truth

"His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). People who worship God respond to Him. They turn instinctively and impulsively toward Him as a plant turns toward the sun. They find in God the very center of their existence, even though they don't know quite how or why. People who worship God bow down to Him in recognition of their complete dependence upon Him, remembering who He is. God is Spirit; He is in no particular place; He is invisible and intangible; He transcends the ups and downs of historic existence. God is everywhere. He is in everything that exists. They who worship Him must approach Him *in spirit* and *in truth*. Some translators have told us that the word *truth* means *reality* (PHILLIPS).

If we were to translate this, we might say that real worship is and always must be deep calling unto deep, the deepest thing in you calling unto the deepest thing in the nature of the universe. God's reality is not simply that which is on the surface of your mind, not simply your bodily movements in an act that you can perform almost automatically, but that which is deepest and most real in

you. Your worship reaches out to that which is highest and most real in the universe.

A. Real worship is standing before God in the spirit of real gratitude. We thank Him for the very wonder of existence, with its difficulties, hazards, and dangers. We must thank Him for the opportunity of life, for the beauty and wonder of our world—in spite of its ugliness and in spite of the things that sometimes make it almost unbearable.

B. Real worship is standing before God in the spirit of real penitence. We know deep in ourselves that we fall far short of that which we might have been and God hopes for us to be. We stand before God in the spirit of real trust and confidence, willing to go forward into the future, no matter how dark and forbidding it may be at the time. We believe that the strength we need to meet any situation will be given to us by God, the Source of all strength.

Worship like this is not something we can perform automatically, going through the motions. True worship represents offering of all our lives to God. God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP	The Choir
OPENING SENTENCE AND INVOCATION	Pastor
HYMNS	"Holy, Holy, Holy"
	"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"
THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH	The Apostles' Creed
PRAYER SONG	"Near to the Heart of God"
PASTORAL PRAYER	
WELCOME AND GREETINGS	Song: "The Family of God"
OFFERTORY	
TITHES AND OFFERINGS	
SONGS OF PRAISE	"I Will Call upon the Lord"
	"How Majestic Is Your Name"
	"Thou Art Worthy"
SCRIPTURE READING	John 4:7-26
SPECIAL MUSIC	
SERMON	"A GREAT IDEA ABOUT GOD"
CLOSING SONG	"I Exalt Thee"
BENEDICTION	Jude 24-25

Creative Worship Ideas

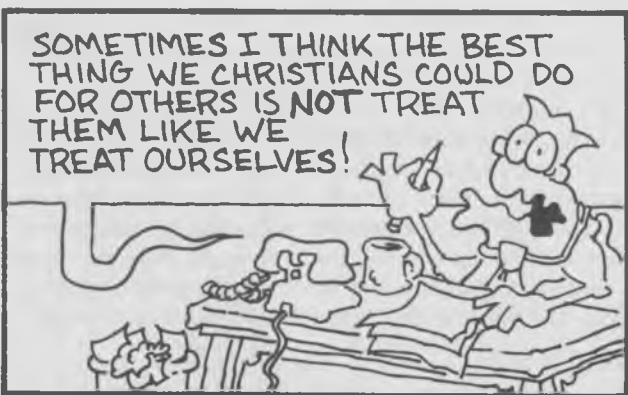
Welcome and Greetings

At the moment of welcoming the people, encourage church members to move out of their seats and greet one another, especially the visitors, while singing "The Family of God."

New Year's Service

If possible for this and next Sunday, have banners with the themes of "praise" and "worship."

 Pontius' Puddle



ANOTHER SIDE OF GOD

by Jonathan Salgado

John 3:16

The words of John 3:16 have been the breath of life to men and women for nearly 2,000 years. In these words people have caught something they felt to be true. If God is God, then He cared for His world and people in it. If God cared and loved, love must always love concretely and specifically, not in the general and abstract. Therefore God must do something. So He acted when Jesus Christ died the way He died and rose to life the way He arose.

No one has ever completely expressed the meaning of these words. I would like to set these words beside the words we studied last Sunday and let them speak to you about the other side of God.

Last Sunday we thought about the words "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24, KJV). Those words declare that God *is* something. He is spirit—intangible, invisible. He is everywhere. He cannot be caught and held in a local place, for He breathes into everything that exists the breath of life. Those words make plain that God *is* something. These words today declare that He *did* something. God who is spirit revealed himself at a particular time and in a particular Person. He revealed the depth of His divine love in the love of Jesus.

These two aspects are not mutually exclusive. The universal always expresses itself in the particular. Universal beauty always yearns to express itself in a beautiful building, and so on. Universal truth always strives to express itself in a true proposition. On the other hand, the particular always reveals the heights and depths of the universal, as a particular person can reveal the nature of mankind in a way that is completely surprising and disarming. Likewise, God, the universal Spirit, expressed himself in a particular Person, and that particular Person revealed the wonders of God's nature.

I. God Is

The idea that "God is Spirit" showed us the side of God needed to be seen by a woman puttering around in the secondary things of religion. We too need to see that side as we immerse ourselves in the relatively unimportant things of religion. John 3:16 shows us a different side, the side that was needed to be seen by a man fumbling after life, trying to find life in the intricacies of the religious law. Jesus said to Nicodemus: Earning life is impossible. Life abounds only when exposed to love. God so loved life that He brought it into full blossom.

II. God Loves

There's another contrast. Those words, "God is Spirit," led us outward to the things we have in common with everyone. They influence us to move outward in our understanding of people who worship differently from the way that we worship. We realize that they were reaching

after the same God, that the same spirit of life animates them. That was one side of God.

These words of today's text lead us inward to the things that make us different. What God did indeed made a difference. That difference makes an inevitable division, a line in life, from which you cannot get away. On one side reside people who accept what God did. On the other side reside people who reject it. This is one of the points on which a great many modern Christians approach the dividing line with difficulty. The universal side of God appeals to them; the particular side of God puzzles them.

When Galileo revealed the sun as the center of the solar system, it made a difference. People could accept it or reject it. If they accepted it, they had a freedom to move about, not only in the realms of the earth but also in outer space, that those who rejected it did not have and can never have. A man may choose to reject it, but he cannot say that the revelation did not make a difference.

When God in Christ revealed His love as the center of the spiritual universe, it made a difference. You and I can accept it or reject it, either way; but you cannot be indifferent to it, and you cannot say that it doesn't make any difference to the rest of the world. And you cannot say that all the religions of the world are essentially alike, because here is something that came right into the heart of the world, something that God did, and in a way divided people, as the sun divides the night from the day. If you accept what He did, you can have a life that is free from many of the things that otherwise restrict and inhibit. But if you reject what He did, you go in darkness that you might otherwise avoid.

III. God Confronts

This comes right down into our midst, you see. This is why Christians who have really been confronted with this and who feel that in this event that took place in Jerusalem so many years ago something decisive happened, feel that they must tell the world about it, talk about it, not to impose it upon other people, but to show it to them and give them a chance to accept it or reject it.

What God did in Christ, the love that was expressed in that one sublime, yet elemental, simple act, must be offered to all, though all will not accept it. Some will draw back, close their minds, shut their hearts to it; some will not want to give what they need to give in response to it; but it must be offered to all. This is our task; this is our ministry in the world.

Take, then, these two great lines from John's Gospel and hold them right together as expressions of one great idea about God. God is Spirit. God so loved *you* (for that is what it means) that He gave himself in His Son for you, that you might not be lost, but have life.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP   The Choir
OPENING SENTENCE AND INVOCATION   Pss. 107:8-9; 105:2
HYMNS   "Look and Live"
                    "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story"
THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH   The Apostles' Creed
PRAYER SONG   "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"
PASTORAL PRAYER
WELCOME AND GREETINGS   Song: "The Family of God"
OFFERTORY
TITHES AND OFFERINGS
SONGS OF PRAISE   "We Bring the Sacrifice"
                    "He Has Made Me Glad"
                    "Bless His Holy Name"

SCRIPTURE READING
SPECIAL MUSIC
SERMON
HYMN OF INVITATION
BENEDICTION

John 3:1-17
The Choir
"ANOTHER SIDE OF GOD"
"The Savior Is Waiting"

Creative Worship Ideas

Welcome and Greetings

Again, this Sunday, at the moment of welcoming the people, encourage church members to move out of their seats and greet one another, especially the visitors, while singing "The Family of God."

Theme

The theme of the day is evangelistic. Be ready to present an invitation at the end of the service.

An Altar Worker's Guide

by M. Lee Neal

The Scriptures admonish us to "bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens and trouble-some moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ, the Messiah, and complete what is lacking [in your obedience to it]" (Gal. 6:2, AMP.).

Seven Counselor Principles

1. Have an accurate understanding of one's personal standing in the faith of Jesus Christ. "But let every person carefully scrutinize and examine and test his own conduct and his own work" (v. 4a, AMP.).
2. Have an accurate realization of one's personal standing in the Christian faith as it identifies with other persons in the faith or non-Christians. "For if any person thinks himself to

be somebody [too important to condescend to shoulder another's load], when he is nobody [of superiority except in his own estimation], he deceives and deludes and cheats himself" (v. 3, AMP.).

3. Have an accurate understanding of the joy and personal satisfaction one receives from assisting someone in time of struggles at an altar of prayer. "He can then have the personal satisfaction and joy of doing something commendable [in itself alone] without [resorting to] boastful comparison with his neighbor" (v. 4b, AMP.).

4. Learners should be eager to share what they have learned from the Master Teacher. They should be avid students of God's Word. "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches" (v. 6, NKJV).

5. Caregivers in altar work are carrying two loads: for oneself and for the person receiving assistance during prayer. "For every person will have to bear [be equal to understanding and calmly receive] his own (little) load [of oppressive faults]" (v. 5, AMP.).

6. Persons giving assistance to others at an altar of prayer must possess and maintain spiritual awareness and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit in all things pertaining to life and godliness. "You . . . who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit" (v. 1b, AMP.).

7. A person doing Christian counseling at an altar should be dressed in modest apparel, maintain physical hygiene, and exercise proper etiquette. 

Texts taken from Amplified New Testament and the New King James Version.

THE GREAT INVITATION

by Jonathan Salgado

Matt. 11:28-30, KJV

TEXT: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30, KJV).

These words have a strange magic. They cast a spell upon you. Before you know who said them or understand exactly what they mean, they have an effect on you. You listen to them. You rise to them.

These words of Jesus address the weary, the tired, and the worn, tired not so much by the toils of life as by the tensions.

The intrigue of these words begins with an invitation. The invitation assures that we are wanted, not only simply needed. We like to be needed, but even more we like to know that somebody wants us. An invitation signals that someone wishes to fellowship with us.

I. Jesus' Words Invite Us

The invitation comes from Jesus with all the warmth of His sincere compassion. The invitation by Jesus has the authority of His radiant confidence.

Coming from Jesus, His invitation calls to us beyond our comprehension that He is the love of God personified. Therefore the invitation not only comes across the years from a young Jew in Nazareth but comes from the very depths of Reality itself. This invitation comes now and comes from God.

II. Jesus' Words Help Us

In our predicament, we need more than a comforting word. In these words of Jesus we find at least two suggestions that offer specific help to us.

A. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you." Oxen wear yokes when linked together for hard labor. A yoke suggests labor, obligation, responsibility. Jesus proposes an exchange of yokes: "Take *My* yoke in place of yours." I suspect we would really like to be rid of all yokes. At times, we would like to shake off all yokes and be free of them! They chafe; they irritate. We would like someone to promise that, if we came to Him, He would help us get rid of all nagging responsibilities that we begrudgingly carry.

Jesus understands that this is impossible. A person trying to free himself or herself from all obligations drifts through life without any real accomplishment.

What was the difference between the yoke of those to whom Jesus was speaking and His yoke? They lived under the requirements of the law. The law held up a high standard of performance, seeking to please God by earning His favor. They promised to obey it. They lived under stringent requirements. Jesus lived by responding to the highest that He knew—the love of

God. His yoke was indeed the yoke of love.

When you do something for the love of it, you cut the strain at least in half or more.

Attempting goodness out of love instead of fear of being bad, your effort probably goes twice as far. Perhaps this is what Jesus means when He says His yoke is *easy*.

B. Jesus says, "Learn of me." There are some things in life we have to do that we will always have to do, and doubtless we will never enjoy doing them. This is where Jesus' words speak so clearly to us: "Take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me*" (*italics added*). He may be suggesting: I cannot take your burdens away from you. Life without burdens at all would not be life. I cannot carry them for you, but I can show you how to carry them. I can tell you the secret of burden bearing. If you watch Me, I will show you how to make your burden lighter.

Don't try to carry your burden alone.

Remember that the energies of God lift underneath you. He supports you the way the waters support the ship traveling across the sea.

Jesus may say to us, Don't carry more than necessary. For example, if you are carrying the burden of regret about something that you did years ago, or even recently, drop it.

If you are carrying the burden of trying to be someone you are not, as though you had talents you do not possess, thus needling yourself because you do not have them, drop it.

If you are carrying the burden of living up to other people's expectations, drop it.

Jesus carried His own burden superbly, but He did not try to carry the burdens of government. He did not carry the burden of God the Father in heaven, who was swinging the stars in their courses. He left that to God.

Whatever burden you must carry, carry it gladly. You say, "How can I?" I know some of the burdens some of you carry. Some burdens are physical handicaps I know would be tough to carry gladly, at least for now. Some burdens are anxieties about your family and people you love. It is almost inconceivable that they be carried gladly. The only way you can carry anything gladly is to carry it for someone you love. If your burden is something you cannot carry for anybody you love, then drop it.

Thomas à Kempis put in words the unforgettable grand idea, "If thou bear the cross cheerfully, it will bear thee." Remember that when your burdens get too heavy.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP

The Choir or Worship Team
"Open Our Eyes"

OPENING SENTENCE AND INVOCATION Ps. 118:8-9

SONGS OF PRAISE "This Is the Day"

"He Has Made Me Glad"

"Bless His Holy Name"

HYMN "Blessed Assurance"

THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH The Apostles' Creed

PRAAYER SONG "There's Something About That Name"

PASTORAL PRAYER

WELCOME AND GREETINGS

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (first stanza)

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

OFFERTORY

"The Doxology: Praise God, from
Whom All Blessings Flow"

SCRIPTURE READING

Isa. 40:28-31

Matt. 11:28-30

SPECIAL MUSIC

The Choir or Soloist

"Thou Wilt Keep Him in Perfect Peace"

SERMON

"THE GREAT INVITATION"

CLOSING HYMN

"Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary"

BENEDICTION

Num. 6:24-26

Creative Worship Ideas

Offertory Sentence

The offertory sentence should be an opportunity to remind the congregation that bringing our gifts is a very important part of worship. Encourage people to participate with reverence. Sing the Doxology while ushers bring the offering to the front of the sanctuary.

Upon Your Neck, Receive His Yoke

by Joe Seaborn

Chair, Center for Christian Studies, Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, Indiana

They make them from a slab of wood about the size of a crosspiece. Not the size of the whole cross—only one Person could bear one that big. Just a plain brown wedge of wood with a couple of notches chiseled out about the width of a neck. And every person who serves the Savior gets to wear one.

A yoke is not a glamour item, hardly an accessory to improve your image in the corporate world. But when you drape one of these callings about your neck, it's not the looks you're after anyway. Or it better not be. It's a symbol of sacrifice, eternal service, sacrifice befitting a King. In a day when it's popular to parade our rights, you will wear this symbol to parade your responsibility.

There, in plain view for all the world to see, will be a grand symbol that constantly pulls at your shoulders and weighs on your spirit, reminding you that you are a person with a mission.

There will be days—many days—when you will wish you could yank free! Jerk that collar off! Strike out on your own!

There will be other days when someone will tell you that you are in the wrong furrow or even in the wrong field. Others will chide you for pulling too slowly and others for plowing too fast. But never forget. It's not their yoke you are pulling. It's yours—and His; you have only one Master. So around your neck, receive His yoke.

If you wear the yoke properly, you will never be able to look back. Not just those who put their hand to the plow, but those who put their neck to the yoke, and look back are unfit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). Let it be enough to sense the pressure of the plow on your shoulders and to know that your very life is being plowed into the four soils of the Kingdom's mission field.

On days when you feel that you are pulling the plow all by yourself, glance over. It is a double yoke. To adapt the words of the song, "You never pull alone; Christ pulls beside you." There in the traces beside you will be the One who used to carve these neck loops in a woodshop up north.

Then someday the last field will be plowed and the last furrow turned. And you will ascend the hill of God. Perhaps, just perhaps, the Carpenter who carved here below will carve once again. From that yoke that you so willingly wore below, He may well carve a crown. Not of gold, but from that same rich grain that hung around your neck, refinished now. The mud and blood and stain of the soil then washed away in the crystal stream.

The yoke, once stained with the toil of the soil, is now wreathed in the praise of heaven. A yoke below becomes now your crown above. 

THE MIRACLE AT THE TABLE

Communion Sunday

by Jonathan Salgado

cf. Luke 24:1-35

In our practical world we are so down-to-earth. So who can expect to see a miracle?

I did! It took place one day right here at the Lord's table.

It seemed like an average Communion Sunday when it happened. The invitation had been extended. We had taken our places to receive the bread and the cup.

The familiar words had been spoken: "Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples" (Matt. 26:26). The deacons had received the plates, and the bread was being passed throughout the congregation.

I. When Did the Miracle Begin?

Looking back, I know when that miracle began.

The Communion plate of bread was in the hand of a woman who was walking with sorrow.

The plate passed on. A young man reached out and took a bit of bread broken for himself. He was known to all as a careless young man, somehow never finding time to face the real questions of life: "Where am I going?" "What am I about?" "What is my life meant to be?"

The plate stopped in the hands of a younger mother who was worried about her home.

"This is my body, which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24, kjv). The next outstretched hand was that of a businessman. As he took the bread, there was strain in his face, the mark of the week's work still upon him.

The plate was passed to a young man strangely disturbed. The previous weeks had been difficult. Indeed, it seemed as though the years had stored up for him a delayed rendezvous with himself. He needed to come to terms with some things in his life.

A young woman took the plate too. As she reached out to take her portion of bread, I knew that she had been passing through a time of temptation. She had asked herself, "Haven't I a right to live my own life?"

II. What Did the Miracle Do?

So the bread was shared. Then the miracle came. No trumpets sounded. No angels sang. Still, there was a miracle! Very quietly, like the rising of the morning sun, a Presence came among us. Suddenly, everything was different. Could the bread and the cup really do this?

I looked again. For a moment the face of the sorrowing woman showed that her sorrow was tempered into serenity.

The young man, usually so careless, was held in a strange and penetrating thoughtfulness. For a moment, at least, he had faced the question about where his life was going.

The worried young mother showed hope, blessed hope that she had not felt for a long time. A new relaxation flowed in her face.

The lines in the face of the businessman had softened.

It was as though he had remembered some other things in his life—the home from which he had come, his family, those who had known him and loved him, those who had taught and helped his growing years. Somehow for a moment his life seemed like a revolving wheel brought back on center and steady again.

The disturbed young man rested back as though he had felt, at last, the everlasting arms beneath.

The young woman had made her decision. The light of integrity glowed in her face. Her answer rang true.

III. Is This a New Miracle?

Such a miracle happened long ago. Should we be surprised at such a miracle?

One day two men walked along the road to the village of Emmaus. Discouraged, the men had given in to despair. Jesus was dead. So, back to their village they trudged.

Yet, as they walked, Another joined with them, a Stranger along the road. They spoke to Him of their sorrow. He responded by showing how a Savior would die and enter into the fuller life so that others may have eternal life. At last they arrived at their home, weary from their journey. The two invited the Third to stay in their home and to sit down at table with them. The meal was simple, mostly bread and a cup of hospitality. As the Stranger broke the bread, the two were amazed, for the Third had revealed himself as Christ. That was a miracle at the table too.

If it happened then, why can't it happen today? We have Jesus' word for it: "Surely I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20). If you remember Him, Jesus will come. That's the wonder of God's grace. Grace does not exist in a vacuum. Grace comes to you in ways you need it most. Come, let us remember Jesus together. If we will, His promise is clear. Remembering Him, we shall find the miracle at His table, as old as Emmaus, as new as our need today. Remember Him and see for yourself.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

(Communion Sunday)

OPENING SENTENCE AND INVOCATION	Ps. 90:1-2
SONGS OF PRAISE	"Father, I Adore You"
	"I Will Sing of the Mercies"
	"We Bring the Sacrifice"
HYMN	"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"
THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH	The Apostles' Creed
PRAYER SONG	"God Is So Good"
PASTORAL PRAYER	
WELCOME AND GREETINGS	
	"Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (first stanza)
OFFERTORY SENTENCE	
TITHES AND OFFERINGS	

OFFERTORY "The Doxology: Praise God,
from Whom All Blessings Flow"

SCRIPTURE READING 1 Cor. 10:1-4, 16; 11:23-26
Luke 22:15-16

SPECIAL MUSIC The Choir or Soloist

SERMON "THE MIRACLE AT THE TABLE"

HYMN OF PREPARATION "Let Us Break Bread
Together"

MOMENTS OF SILENT PRAYER AND MEDITATION

THE SACRAMENT Holy Communion

CLOSING HYMN "Now Let Us from This Table Rise"

BENEDICTION Heb. 13:20-21

Creative Worship Ideas

Silent Prayer and Meditation

Encourage people to participate with reverence in the moments of silent prayer and meditation. As background music, have your musicians play "O How He Loves You and Me."



RICH IN THE TRUE WISDOM

by Jonathan Salgado

Col. 3:12-17

TEXT: "Let the full richness of Christ's teaching find its home among you. Teach and advise one another wisely" (Col. 3:16, PHILLIPS; cf. vv. 12-17, PHILLIPS).

Many things suggested by the background passage enrich the lives of people who treasure Christ's teaching in their hearts. Let the full richness of Jesus' teaching find its home in your hearts; it will make you rich in the spirit of forgiveness. Love will dwell in your hearts. Peace will abide in your hearts. Joy will rise in your hearts and find outlet in expressions of praise. A spirit of thanksgiving will marvelously enrich the life.

The idea of sharing wisdom stands out for our attention. The growth of wisdom is only one effect of Jesus' teaching when we let it live among us.

I. Let Christ's Teaching Find Its Home Among You

The gospel truth helps you build on strong foundations. That surely is wisdom, to build upon foundations that cannot be shaken. Jesus emphasized this point. He said that the person who hears His words and does them is like a wise man building his house upon a rock (Matt. 7:24).

A wise builder makes sure of his foundation. The same is true with living. We need human wisdom, the wisdom of the good businessman or the good craftsman. Jesus did not despise common sense. Life can fail through mere carelessness or lack of skill or knowledge.

However, there is another kind of wisdom—the insight that sees what is right and true, the spiritual mind that discerns the will of God and that discovers the meaning of life. This divine wisdom grows and develops in all sorts of ways when the teachings of Jesus are rooted in our minds and hearts. His truth is imperative in the right handling of life.

We need His wisdom in the problems of our own interior life. Read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and then ask yourself again what would happen if you permitted this teaching to live in your hearts. His teachings would enrich you with true wisdom. Many of our inner problems would be solved if we drew upon the wisdom of Jesus.

II. Let Christ's Teaching Keep You on the Right Road

By Jesus' teaching we have a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Ps. 119:105).

One man wrote these simple words: "One night, when driving, I turned left instead of right. The road took me farther and farther from my destination. I had a hard time getting back on the right road."

That simple experience serves as a parable of life. If the Lord's teachings give us wisdom to discern the right road, how important that we should let His words find their home among us!

Often our problems come from our relationships with

one another. For these we need the wisdom of Christ. By Jesus' wisdom we desire to take the road of love. However, no one takes this road of love until Jesus Christ has opened his eyes to see all children of God as brothers and sisters.

III. Let Christ's Teaching Enable You to Handle Spiritual Power

Modern knowledge has deepened our need for the wisdom of Christ. We need His wisdom to handle the power that science has placed into our hands. In Tennyson's words, "Knowledge grows, but wisdom lingers."

Our spiritual insight has not kept up with our modern scientific discoveries. This contradiction causes many of our troubles and fears. There is only one way through: "Let the full richness of Christ's teaching find its home among you. Teach and advise one another wisely."

This occurs as we expose our minds and hearts to the Lord without reserve. We must erect no defense against God's light, no armor or pride or fear against the penetration of His truth, and no mistrust of His guidance and grace.

IV. Let Christ's Teaching of the Truth Make You Free

"If ye continue in my word . . .," said Jesus, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32, KJV).

We often live in the grip of false ideas, cheap views of life, wrong attitudes toward one another and toward God. People often have habits that keep them in bondage to their past. We do the same things, think the same thoughts, maintain the same attitudes toward people, maintain the same resentments and prejudices year after year. Only spiritual truth as revealed by Jesus can open our eyes, loose our chains, and set us free. When Christ's truth lives in our hearts, we possess the priceless possession of spiritual freedom.

Let Jesus' teaching find its home among us to help us build strong foundations, to keep us on the right road, to enable us to handle spiritual power, and to set us free for Christian living. How can we bring it to pass so that His teaching indeed lives in our hearts? First, we should recognize that the Lord's teaching is dynamic. It is the seed that Jesus speaks about in His parable of the sower and the soils. There was no question about the vitality of the seed that fell upon the various kinds of soil. Jesus' teachings are vitally alive. His truth will grow in our hearts and minds.

The Bible contains the teaching of Jesus. The Bible is the *Word of God*. This is God's Book of Wisdom. How can it live in us if we do not read it? How can the Word of God live in us if the soil of our hearts is not receptive?

Accept the Word of God in your hearts. His seed will sink into the secret places of your soul and begin to grow and multiply!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP Choir or Worship Team
 OPENING SENTENCE AND INVOCATION Ps. 119:1-5
 WORSHIP HYMN "To God Be the Glory"
 PRAISE SONGS "Sweet, Sweet Spirit"
 "Holy Ground"
 THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH The Apostles' Creed
 PRAYER SONG "I Need Thee Every Hour"
 (Refrain only)
 PASTORAL PRAYER
 WELCOME AND GREETINGS "In Christ There Is No
 East or West" (first stanza)
 TITHES AND OFFERINGS
 OFFERTORY "The Doxology: Praise God,
 from Whom All Blessings Flow"

SCRIPTURE READING

Col. 3:12-17
 2 Tim. 3:16-17

SPECIAL MUSIC

The Choir
 "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place"

SERMON

"RICH IN THE TRUE WISDOM"

CLOSING HYMN

"Wonderful Words of Life"

BENEDICTION

Jude 24-25

Creative Worship Ideas

Involve the Young People

Try to involve the young people of your church in the worship service. Ask some of them to serve as ushers. Have one of the leaders of the youth group lead in the reading of the Apostles' Creed. Have another one present greetings to the visitors. Two can read the assigned portions of Scripture.



GLASBERGEN

"My parents are undecided on the issue of Evolution Vs. Creation . . .
 so they told me I came from Sears."

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

by Jonathan Salgado

Phil. 3:9-16

TEXT: "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14, RSV).

Growth seems a proper objective for sensible Christians. We should all be eager to be growing—and some of us think we are in the process of spiritual growth. Are you really in the process of genuine growth? Or are you quietly vegetating and living on old concepts and past experiences? You do not grow unless you are continually dissatisfied with your present progress.

We can increase the constancy and pace of our spiritual growth in the things of the Spirit.

I. We Discover Hindrances to Growth

What keeps us from spiritual growth?

A. Pride hinders spiritual growth.

B. Sentimentality hinders spiritual growth. Avoid always looking back to the dear old days.

C. Activity hinders spiritual growth. Some people keep so busy they do not take time to assess their lives and run their roots down deeper. Ceaseless bustling about even in religious activity may be a substitute for spiritual growth.

Growth is necessary. It is very easy to think we have gone far enough inside. Growth in Christian faith and experience develops through the richness of God's whole field of Christian truth and experience.

II. We Discover Helps to Growth

Paul gives some wonderful helps to spiritual growth in Phil. 3.

A. There is the framework of growth.

First, Paul sets before us the framework of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Great Christians always live within a great framework. Their smallest actions derive a kind of majesty from this original motivation. He tells us that he is not looking for "a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ" (v. 9, RSV).

B. There is humility and growth.

Second, we see Paul's growth by his humility. "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect," he says. "I do not consider that I have made it my own" (vv. 12, 13, RSV). Some of us have been taught that self-assertion is unpleasant and that people will like us better if we do not crow too much about our own virtues and accomplishments. This makes for a kind of social acceptability, but it isn't the same thing as Christian humility.

Christian humility exists by the greatness and holiness of God. Pride seems inevitable for people who have no God. However, humility is the natural outlook for people who believe in God and know His greatness; and who, above all, feel thankful to God for sending Jesus Christ into the world. It's tough to try to cul-

tivate humility. If successful, you add a worse pride to your problem of pride. Cultivate gratitude, and humility will take care of itself.

C. There is determination and growth.

Along with Paul's humility also went a great determination: "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. . . . One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on" (vv. 12-14, RSV).

"I keep going on" is the way Phillips translates verse 12.

What keeps a person "going on" like that, through endless hardship, persecution, and imprisonment? Paul says that he is "trying to grasp that purpose for which Christ Jesus grasped me" (ibid.). We think we are "holding on" by human willpower, only to find out we are being held steady by divine power. When you know that "Christ Jesus has . . . laid hold of" you (NKJV) with His own firm grasp, you almost understand your security in His grasp.

Our own virtue or strength doesn't make an eternal difference, but our simple trust in a great God. As we grow in grace, repeated times will come when we make new decisions that reaffirm our original decision of trust in the Lord. I cannot imagine any serious spiritual growth that is a series of easy steps.

III. There Is Maturity

Paul gives us one step beyond growth—maturity. Phillips translates it, "All of us who are spiritually adult should think like this, and if at present you think otherwise, yet you will find that God will make even this clear to you" (v. 15).

A final piece of advice encourages us to stand by what we know. Paul says, "It is important that we go forward in the light of such truth as we have already learned" (v. 16, PHILLIPS). We find in Christ sustaining power that brings us an increasing maturity in spiritual graces. None of us has completed our spiritual progress. The Lord is still teaching us. We shouldn't grow proud of our own spiritual growth and maturity, nor should we deny it either. What Jesus has taught us in the past will guide us in the future.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP	Choir "How Majestic Is Your Name"
OPENING SENTENCE	Ps. 8:1-5
INVOCATION	
WORSHIP HYMN	"Great Is the Lord"
PRAISE SONGS	"I Exalt Thee" "Thou Art Worthy"

THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH The Apostles' Creed
PRAYER SONG "No One Understands like Jesus"
(First stanza and refrain only)

WELCOME AND GREETINGS

TITHES AND OFFERINGS "The Doxology: Praise God,
from Whom All Blessings Flow"

CHORAL MUSIC "More Love to Thee"

SCRIPTURE READING Phil. 3:1-14

HYMN OF PREPARATION "More About Jesus"

SERMON "CHRISTIAN GROWTH"

CLOSING HYMN
BENEDICTION

"I Have Settled the Question"

Creative Worship Ideas

Welcome and Greetings

Remind your congregation to actively participate in the welcoming of visitors. Today, ask them again to get out of their seats to greet each other as they sing "In Christ There Is No East or West."



"... We have a lot to be thankful for ...
to begin with, your parking is free ..."

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

by Jonathan Salgado

Eph. 2:14

TEXT: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14, KJV).

At Ephesus, Jew and Gentile, master and slave, man and woman sat around the Lord's table in complete equality. As Paul says, "The middle wall of partition" was "broken down"; it had ceased to exist.

Paul thought about the partitioning walls of the Temple. The Gentile could go into the outer court, but there he found a barrier forbidding him to go further on pain of death. Then other barriers separated the women from the men and the men from the priests who alone entered the holy place. "Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13) says Paul. When Jesus died, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain" (Mark 15:38, KJV). Barriers between God and people were broken down. Every individual could have free and open access to God through Jesus Christ. Moreover, all the barriers between people and nations were gone. All were now one in Christ Jesus and of equal status before God.

This is the miracle God worked with human nature when He founded His Church, bringing together people who had hitherto been conscious only of the barriers that divided them. These man-made barriers were now broken down, giving the possibility of a new fellowship in Christ.

We know how difficult it is to break down the barriers kept up by pride and fear. How did Jesus achieve this amazing result?

I. Our Sinful Nature Was Changed

Jesus changed our natures. He did not change the Jew into a Gentile, nor the Gentile into a Jew. The apostle says, "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace" (Eph. 2:15). He made of each one who came to Him a new kind of person—a new creation of God, born from above. Redeemed people can agree in love because they have the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. They find that the dividing barriers are gone!

When Paul, the proud Jewish aristocrat, became a new man through Christ, he counted as loss those things that he previously considered gain (Phil. 3:7, KJV).

Peter, exclusive in the first days of his Christian life, came to see that he must not call a brother whom God had created common or unclean (Acts 10:28, KJV). The new Peter sat down in fellowship with Gentiles because they also were new people in Christ. Thus, the barriers were broken down because God's new men and women put their Christian faith ahead of all else. They were motivated by love and goodwill to all.

II. We Are Reconciled to One God

Jesus achieved the result of a new, united human soci-

ety by reconciling both Jew and Gentile to the same God and Father:

"And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (Eph. 2:16). The Jews misunderstood the character of God. To them He was an exclusive God, keeping His favors primarily for His own Jewish people. The Jew thought he had a right to expect God's guidance and protection, but not so the Gentiles. So long as the Jews believed this, they remained an exclusive people. The barriers stood up against all strangers and aliens.

In Christ, however, the people of faith were reconciled to a God who was international in His outlook, who valued all people equally because He was the Creator and Father of all. God loves all people alike. He has a place for all in His kingdom. He sent His Son Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Reconciled to such a God of grace, the Jew would not call anyone a stranger or an alien.

People of different color, class, or country can be united if they can be brought into the worship and service of the same God who joins them in His love and gives to them a common objective in His kingdom.

III. We Find Barriers in the Modern World

The barriers that so distress our world today can be broken down only by new people of faith, re-created in Christ, and reconciled by Him to the God who controls the world that He created.

There is, however, a place for every human attempt to build bridges of human understanding and common interest. But only Jesus Christ can break through the resistance of pride and fear that keeps people and nations suspicious. Jesus establishes peace only through His new people released from pride and fear and possessed by His spirit of love and devotion to the will of God.

Many attempts have been made to unify and control the world. Mighty military leaders have attempted it but have been destroyed. Others have placed their confidence in political diplomacy. Some groups in more modern times have talked about the unifying influence of trade and commerce, but usually it intensifies rivalry. Some people put their trust in sharing of culture through art, music, ballet, sports, and tourism. Though all that has much value, it does not create the new kind of people needed for abolition of barriers.

There is a preeminent place in our world for the Christian mission.

The paramount need in all our nations is for reborn men and women, dedicated to the cause of God and His kingdom. For God's new people, barriers do not exist. Are we showing openness or reconciliation in our own relationships in the home, in the Church, and in the national life for which we have responsibility? Can God's Church rise to her mission as a world-reconciling force by breaking down those barriers that Jesus Christ himself has long ago abolished?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

MUSICAL CALL TO WORSHIP	The Choir or Worship Team
	"How Majestic Is Your Name"
	Ps. 33:1-5
OPENING SENTENCE	
INVOCATION	
HYMN	"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"
PRAISE SONGS	"The Family of God"
	"The Bond of Love"
THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH	The Apostles' Creed
PRAYER SONG	"Gentle Shepherd"
PASTORAL PRAYER	
WELCOME AND GREETINGS	"In Christ There Is No East or West" (first stanza)
TITHES AND OFFERINGS	
OFFERTORY	"The Doxology: Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow"

SPECIAL MUSIC

SCRIPTURE READING

HYMN OF PREPARATION

The Choir

1 John 4:7-21

"We Are Called to Be

God's People"

SERMON

"BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS"

CLOSING HYMN

"We All Are One in Mission"

BENEDICTION

Creative Worship Ideas

Sermon Theme

Persons of different nationalities or representatives of different ethnic groups who attend the church should participate in the service today.

Have the Scripture Reading in different languages (if there are persons who can do it in your congregation).



"Five A.M. surgery? No pastor,
they cancelled that two days ago."



Highpoint

WELCOME TO *HIGHPOINT*

Radio stations continue to survive in an age of dazzling communication technologies. Offices are linked with miniature cameras attached to desktop monitors, permitting instant visual conferencing almost anywhere. The local area network (LAN) makes E-mail the communication service of choice for millions of people. Keeping in touch with friends and associates is instantaneous and possible from almost any location. So why do radio stations continue to survive, even thrive, operating as they do from an aging paradigm? Put simply, radio stations use pencils, not pens.

Every station in my area frequently reviews its demographics (market share). They individually base their offerings on the format they think will most successfully attract their listener base. While frequencies remain, call letters change. What is hard rock today may be talk radio tomorrow. What is country today may become urban jazz tomorrow. The medium is the message (to coin a phrase).

In the 1970s, Evangelical churches responded to the opportunities of their demographics (market share) in a kaleidoscope of variety. Shiny buses and vans brought in the children and those without wheels. Bus ministries involved people. Contests, lucky seats on the bus, and many other gimmicks were used to build bus-route attendance. (My three buses were always painted Corvette yellow!) While the bus parking lots of most churches reveal the weeds of disuse, churches still look for kids and families to attend their Sunday Schools and church services.

One icon of the '70s for fast-growing churches, or

those churches that simply wanted to grow, was Don Wellman. More than a guru, Don understood the nuts and bolts of growth. Denver First Church (DFC) was Wellman's base of operation. Guiding it through rapid growth from 250 to over 2,000, Don became the first megachurch pastor in the Church of the Nazarene. Of course, college campus churches often rivaled his numbers, but Don Wellman took the principles of discipleship, gave them the language and form of our times, and built a great church. No wonder thousands of people enrolled in his Conference on Discipling, anxious to learn his "secret." Don tried to tell them, "There is no secret . . . it's all here, in God's Word, in your hearts and minds."

The '80s and '90s have come. Thanks to Don's vision, others saw potential and possibility. The fruits of disciple-making efforts, linked with expanding knowledge base development by seminal leaders like Bill Sullivan, Win Arn, and others, produced numerous churches of more than 1,000 members and attendance. So, what's *Highpoint* doing offering outlines based on Don Wellman's reedited and retitled text, *Today's Disciple*? A no-brainer for sure: discipline and disciple making are still the twin principles of Kingdom expansion and church growth. Discipleship and disciple making, like radio, still work! And this is why these outlines are here for your use on Sunday night. What better way to use Sunday nights than to challenge your people to learn discipleship and disciple-making skills? Enjoy!

David J. Felter, editor, *Highpoint*

W. DONALD WELLMAN

Dr. W. Donald Wellman has pastored for 39 years in the Church of the Nazarene. He and his wife, Pat, have two children and five grandchildren.

After graduation from seminary in 1955, Dr. Wellman pastored the Church of the Nazarene in Hamlin, Texas; Oklahoma City Trinity Church of the Nazarene; First Church of the Nazarene in Eugene, Oregon; Denver First Church of the Nazarene; and the Highland Park Church of the Nazarene in Lakeland, Florida. In June 1996, Dr. Wellman assumed the pastorate of the Orangewood Church of the Nazarene in Phoenix on an interim basis until July 1997.

While pastoring the Denver First Church of the Nazarene from 1968 to 1989, Dr. Wellman created the Dynamics of Discipling program that has now been translated into seven languages and is being taught in both North and South America, Africa, Australia, and at European Nazarene Bible College. *Today's Disciple* (PA083-411-6537, \$14.99), edited by Dr. Wellman and a committee of curriculum scholars in conjunction with the Department of Evangelism, has been published by the Nazarene Publishing House in 1996 and may be ordered through the Publishing House.

Under his leadership, Denver First Church of the Nazarene experienced a growth in average attendance from 250 to over 2,100.

He is the creator of *A Reason to Sing*, the television ministry of Denver First Church of the Nazarene, which was a nationally televised program on Liberty Broadcasting and Trinity Broadcasting, covering the United States and selected foreign countries.

The well-known concert series "Saturday Nights in Denver" was begun in 1974 by Dr. Wellman and has been a consistent part of the outreach ministry of Denver First Church ever since.

He completed his undergraduate work at Olivet Nazarene University and received an honorary doctorate from that institution in 1978. He is a graduate of Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City and also did graduate work at Ohio State University and Omaha University.

Dr. Wellman served on the District Advisory Boards of both the Colorado District for 20 years and the Central Florida District for 5 years and on the General Board of the Church of the Nazarene and Board of Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Dr. Wellman conducts Leadership Conferences, Discipling Conferences, District Pastors' and Wives' Retreats, District Laymen's Conferences, as well as consulting with the Department of Church Growth for the Church of the Nazarene International.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject: Introduction to Discipling—Mandate of the Master, Part 1

INTRODUCTION. Over the next few months we will be featuring Dr. Don Wellman's book, *Today's Disciple*, as the foundational basis of our Sunday evening presentations for the *Highpoint* series. These presentations will be designed as outlines for preaching or presentation, following the textbook. It is essential that you purchase *Today's Disciple* in order to give substance to the outlines for your presentation. *Highpoint* outlines basically reflect a presentational style. The actual content and subject matter that illustrate the outlines, giving them life and energy, will be taken from *Today's Disciple*. It is expected that you will read the text and refer to it as you present the material.

To begin this study, think in terms of discipling and discipleship revolving around the following elements: (a) the concept; (b) the cause; (c) the command. In revisiting these broad outlines, in the concept arena, we think of mentoring, training, and equipping. The cause that lies behind the call to discipleship and discipling ministry really involves personal Christian growth, Kingdom expansion, and holiness living. Finally, the command both to be a disciple and to make disciples is rooted in Christ's example and His model.

These elements are discussed in chapter 1. Please read through chapter 1 before presenting this material. Sessions 1 and 2 will cover chapter 1 of your text. Chapter 2 will be covered in sessions 3 and 4. In presenting this material, you may want to review the three elements that form the foundation of discipling and disciple making. For example, reviewing the understandings surrounding mentoring, training, and equipping may help your congregation to understand more clearly the foundational role discipling and discipleship has in the life of the church. Coaching, mentoring, peer groups—all of these are techniques used successfully by business and private industry. There is no reason to think that the Church of Jesus Christ cannot borrow some of these highly

Highpoint

acclaimed strategies as well. Indeed, Jesus was a Mentor, a Trainer, as well as an Equipper. Studying the life of Christ and His role as the Chief Shepherd discipling a group of followers reveals these elements in detail being lived out with an animated dynamism that comes from the energizing presence of the Holy Spirit. This enabled Him to contribute to the personal growth of each disciple. Indeed, the Kingdom was expanded, the concept of living holy lives was proclaimed at the very heart of Jesus' message as He ministered to the Twelve.

Our call is rooted in the fact that Christ has left us an example to follow. His model of redemptive mentoring, training, evangelizing, and equipping is still the methodology of the church today.

I. REVIEW THE GENERAL PURPOSE STATED IN *Today's Disciple*.

Note that there is a clear description of the four groups of individuals that comprise the components of this ministry. According to Dr. Wellman, every person is located on a spectrum. At one end is the non-Christian. Next we move toward the uninvolved Christian. At the center is the involved Christian. At the other end is the Christian discipler. The purpose of this study is twofold:

- A. The deepening of the individual believer's Christian life.
- B. The response of the believer to the call of God to become a discipler and to live a lifestyle of obedience to that call.

II. DEFINITIONS ESSENTIAL TO THIS STUDY

- A. What is a Christian disciple? Dr. Wellman describes a Christian disciple as one who is a follower of Christ. Note the biblical influence surrounding the concept of personal discipleship—total commitment to Christ, study of God's Word, developing through devotional living, loyalty and love demonstrated by a servant heart, and a characteristic desire to make Christ known to others.
- B. A discipler. At the heart of this role is a desire for Christ to reproduce His life through the individual. Several biblical texts are cited with regard to the description of the discipler: (1) 2 Pet. 3:18; (2) Acts 8:29-31 and 37-38 (KJV); (3) 1

Thess. 2:11-13; (4) Col. 1:28-29.

- C. Christian discipling. Note the definition given in the text with regard to the nature and activity of discipling.

III. THE CHALLENGE OF THIS STUDY

- A. It is important that we see the Church of Jesus Christ mobilized in the twin tasks of both increasing individual personal discipleship and making disciples.
- B. Without such mobilization, the church faces an uncertain future, particularly in those settings where there has been either no growth or plateaued growth.

IV. THE TOOLS OF THIS STUDY

Encourage each person to bring their Bibles, a colored marker, and a journal.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 1

The success of this series depends upon the launch. It is essential to have a good launch. One of the ways to do that is to poll the participants with regard to their expectations. On page 18 of the text, note the 10 specific objectives spelled out by Dr. Wellman. Read these through. Compile your own personal set of objectives. Next, ask participants to submit their personal goals and objectives for such a study.

From time to time, you may want to use the opening moments of these sessions for focused worship. Let the subject matter that will be covered in each session guide your worship planning. Don't forget to involve intergenerational representatives in music, fellowship, worship, etc.

Finally, each session should develop a sense of closure. There should be some main point that will be identified by the participants as an application point that can be taken home and built into their ongoing walk with the Lord.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject: Introduction to Discipleship and
Discipline—Mandate of the Master, Part 2

INTRODUCTION. Review once again the three elements: the concept, the cause, the command. Read the scripture Matt. 4:19 and 28:19.

In this session, the presentation focus is on helping participants disciple specific objectives for their study, particularly those noted on pages 18 and 19 of the textbook. It should be assumed that all participants will have a copy of the textbook and will have read this material. If they have not, encourage them to do so.

Use the time in this session to make sure that each individual understands the important aspect of these elements. It is important that we encourage both discipleship and lifestyles of discipleship. The following is a three-point outline that you may use in this session to reinforce these 10 specific objectives: (1) know; (2) be; (3) do. Under these points, let's explore possible presentation methodology for this session.

I. KNOW

What are the things that we must know in order to be effective disciples and potentially effective disciplers?

- A. We must learn to receive fresh instruction from the Spirit of God through His Word. This certainly implies Bible study as well as a readiness to learn from the Text of God.
- B. We must know how to disciple others and become continually involved in discipling others. In other words, there is an area of knowledge that we must explore and put into practical application.
- C. We must recognize that quality is the key to the multiplying process in training the disciple.

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- A. We must believe that the Great Commission is for all believers.
- B. We must discover that vitality for Christian living flows through a fourfold lifeline: (1) learning fresh spiritual insights and instruction; (2) worshiping; (3) fellowship; (4) ministry or service. (Make sure to consult pages 18 and 19 of your text as you develop this section.)
- C. We must understand that discipling others cannot be done solely through a classroom. It must also include on-the-job training, which represents the investment of one life into another.
- D. We must recognize that a disciple must know Bible doctrine, keep in daily touch with God, and have a strategic, effective plan for making converts, knowing how to use a variety of tools and methods in helping people grow spiritually. (Refer to your notes in the text.)
- E. Develop an awareness level of, and an active concern for, the spiritual growth and maturity of others.

III. BE

- A. We must first be a New Testament disciple of Jesus Christ, one who is at the Master's disposal.
- B. We must be able to evaluate personal spiritual growth and maturity.

CONCLUSION: Review the summary section on page 19 of your textbook. Use this time to reinforce these three characteristics as underlying the nature of discipleship training. Emphasize that these sessions will stress knowledge content, action, and activity, as well as personal being and responsibility.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 2

Identify special music that will be used during this session. It is always good to open and to close with music, for we have grown accustomed to introducing the element of praise and worship into almost every activity of the local church. These sessions are no exception.

This would be a good time also to inaugurate some fellowship activities. During the next quarter, identify specific groups targeted for fellowship times of sharing and interaction following the sessions. Plan far enough in advance to be able to calendar these events so that each group will know when it will have its featured activity.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—The Word of God in the Life of a Disciple, Part 1

INTRODUCTION. In this session we are going to study the Bible: how to hear the Word of God through the words of the Scriptures; how to read and mark the Bible so that one not only has a consistent reading plan but also is able to track insights and ideas as they emerge from study; then how to study the Word of God, what tools to use in the study, and the application of truth from Scripture; finally, how to memorize the Word of God and to meditate upon the Word so that it takes root in the deepest core regions of one's heart and life.

In this session, we will look at some of the introductory material that is found in your text, beginning on page 23, and will focus on hearing the Word, reading the Word, and studying the Word.

In the next session we will talk about memorizing the Word of God and meditating on the Word. In introducing this subject to our participants, we want to emphasize the following: First of all, we have a faith relationship with Christ and as a result of this have become children of God, that is, members of His family, and are in a unique personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our knowledge of the Creator God, discovering His mind, and trusting our needs to His care has developed into a relationship in which we are fully dependent upon Him. He supplies our needs and provides us with all that we could ever want or dream.

This relationship, however, is one that encompasses much personal growth. Given to us are two sources of strength. One is the Word of God, and the other is the indwelling Holy Spirit. Through the study, practice, and teaching of God's Word, we are able to internalize the truth about God and the truth of God that impacts our life and world. As we approach the Word, we do so with a profound seriousness and thankfulness as well as deep gratitude of heart and soul.

While there are many understandings regarding the

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Word of God, we as Wesleyan-Holiness people believe that the Word of God is both living and written. Jesus Christ is the living Word of God, and the Scriptures are the written Word of God, given to us to express the message of the living Christ.

In the textbook on page 24, note the chart having to do with the Word of God. A comparison is given regarding prophecies, descriptions, as well as texts from the Scriptures.

I. SATURATING MY LIFE WITH GOD'S WORD

Refer to the notes on page 25 of your textbook, especially the diagrams that are there to help you explain this section of the text.

- A. God's Word in the written or spoken form can be taken in through your soul and spirit functions, that is, mind, will, and emotions by hearing, reading, studying, or memorizing God's Word.
- B. When the Word of God, written or spoken, is accepted, it not only affects the spirit but also helps to bring the soul functions into meaning and balance.
- C. Even if the Word of God, written or spoken, is rejected, it still has an effect on the soul and spirit.

II. A THREE-POINT OUTLINE OF THE BIBLE

Refer to page 26 of the textbook for this outline. Note that:

- A. God's intention is developed in the Scripture passage, Gen. 1—2.
- B. Sin's beginnings are noted in Gen. 3:1-13, and the rest of the Bible from verse 14 involves the detailed story of God's intervention. Although this outline is correct, beyond the first three chapters of Genesis, it provides the reader with additional insight.

CONCLUSION: The text suggests five means for saturating one's life with the Word of God. These will be considered as this study continues: (a) hearing the Word of God. What does it mean to hear the Word of God? What are opportunities for the individual believer to hear the Word of God? (b) reading the Word of God. (c) studying the Word of God. What is the difference between reading and studying the Word of God? What techniques need to be characteristic of studying that are not present in just reading the Word of God? (d) memorizing the Word of God. What are some ways in which we can memorize the Word? Why is memorization of Scripture important? (e) meditating on the Word of God.

Refer to pages 28-30 in this session. Note the six practical methods that are stated on page 28 for effective hearing of God's Word. You may want to consider one of the assignment ideas listed on page 28 as well.

Underscore the importance illustrated by the chart on page 29, showing a comparison between ineffective and effective communication. Encourage those who are reading God's Word to develop a system of marking Scripture.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 3

Encourage an ongoing prayer chain for the discipleship training. Being a disciple requires close proximity with the Holy Spirit. Encourage those who are prayer warriors in the church to hold up these sessions in prayer. This will bathe it with that special anointing that God gives to all such endeavors.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—The Word of God in the Life of a Disciple, Part 2

INTRODUCTION. What place does the Word of God have in your life? Our attitudes toward the Bible are clear indicators with regard to the relevance of our walk with God and its development along the lines delineated by scriptural principle. If Scripture reading and meditation are neglected, there is a strong likelihood that one's profession of faith will be seriously weakened. The goal of discipleship and disciple making is to instill a love and interest in God's Word and to encourage its internalization in one's life and being.

How does one effectively study the Word of God? This chapter and this session will emphasize an approach to studying, memorizing, and meditating upon the Word of God with the goal of making the Word effective in one's life.

I. STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD

- A. Read Acts 17:11.
- B. Review the three-point verse analysis box or graphic listed on page 30 of your text. What are some of the benefits of studying the Word of God? What discoveries are made when one studies Scripture? How does the study of Scripture enhance biblical applications in one's life? In reviewing the three-point verse analysis, show examples of how this technique or method may be applied to a familiar Scripture passage. Note the assignment that is made on page 31.

II. MEMORIZING THE WORD OF GOD

Read Prov. 3:3. The passage in Ps. 119:9-11 is very familiar to most believers. Emphasize the latter portions of this section, and show their relevance to the assignments in this session. How did Jesus use the Scriptures? Reread Matt. 4:4, 7, 10. Show how 1 Pet. 3:15 can be fulfilled when one attempts to internalize Scripture through memorization and familiarization. Note on page 31 memorization techniques. These techniques are designed to help an individual grasp the significance of the text and then internalize the Word for application and easy retrieval.

III. MEDITATING ON THE WORD OF GOD

- A. God expects His people to spend time meditating upon His Word. Read Josh. 1:8 and Ps. 1:1 and 2.
- B. What are the results of meditation? What should one expect or anticipate as an outcome of religious meditation or meditation on the Scriptures?
- C. Practical application of meditation on Scripture. Read James 1:22 and 25. Note the "How to make a personal application from God's Word" section in your notes on page 33.

CONCLUSION: Read the summary section on page 34, and consider using the assignment notes for practical application.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 4

1. Writing assignment. Encourage each person to write out a personal definition of Christian discipleship. Have the participants refrain from using the text as a guide, but then compare what they have written with the material on page 14 of the text.
2. Consider making a chart similar to the one on page 16 to show the accumulative effect of increasing discipleship training.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—The Human Experience, Part 1

INTRODUCTION. In the next sessions we are going to explore some principles and practices regarding the human experience. We will cover some basic principles and a practical area regarding the body and soul-function characteristics. In addition we will deal with the spirit or heart function and its characteristics along with some practical examples.

I. IMPORTANT TERMS RELATED TO THIS SESSION

In your text on page 39, make a note of the various terms that are listed. For example, moral, amoral, perfectible, imperfectible, etc.

II. PRINCIPLES TO BE UNDERSTOOD

It should be understood that we will take some time to go through this material, as this chapter is crucial to an understanding of the principles undergirding this text. Be prepared to entertain numerous questions and responses to the terms that are here.

A. The historical background. Review the three terms: body, soul, and spirit. Make sure that there is clarification of these, and introduce the dichotomy and trichotomy theories.

1. The theory of dichotomy. In this area, discuss both the pros and cons of the theory, and make sure that there is a clarification, both of its strengths and weaknesses.
2. The theory of trichotomy. Do the same in terms of what you did with the theory of dichotomy. If possible, refer to the graphs or reproduce the various graphics that are interspersed throughout your text. For

example, on pages 41 and 42, there are several excellent graphics that aid instruction. Visual arts of this kind assist the learner in grasping the content being presented.

- B. The modern rediscovery of biblical and psychological truth about ourselves. This is a detailed section of the text. Make sure that you spend some time reading it carefully.

Point out that Dr. Wellman suggests, on page 45, that as individuals born of the Spirit and later filled with the Spirit, it is important for us to understand our human nature and what happens to that nature under the influence and transformation of the Spirit's working in our lives. Read Rom. 12:1-2.

- C. A threefold function view of human personality. Here again you will have opportunity to discuss the concepts body, soul, and spirit, and relate these to an essentially biblical view augmented by scientific research. It is vitally important to emphasize the statements taken from page 46 of your text.

III. PRACTICES TO BE APPLIED

- A. The body function and characteristics. Note the graphic on page 47 of your text. There are also three statements that are given under this heading that need to be emphasized:

1. The body is amoral.
2. The body is imperfectible.
3. The body is mortal. Make sure that each of these statements is clarified.

- B. The soul function and characteristics. Note again the graphic that is listed on page 48 and the three terms: mind, emotions, and will. Explore these and demonstrate the conceptual truth outlined by illustrating your key points, based on the support of the material in the text.

1. The soul functions are amoral. Note that this

term refers to the mind, emotions, and will and that these can be disordered.

2. The soul functions are imperfectible. Make sure that you read the two illustrations that are listed here on page 49.
3. The soul functions are mortal. Note the relationship of brain to mind.
- C. The spirit or heart function characteristics. Note the graphic on page 50. There are a number of scriptural references that need to be referred to in this section. Also you will note:

1. The heart function is moral. A series of Scripture verses that deal with the heart is provided.
2. The heart function is perfectible. Read 1 John 4:8, 12-14, 16-17.
3. The heart function is immortal. Dr. Wellman makes it clear: "This is the part of your nature that will last eternally."

Variety Ideas for Sermon 5

Some practical examples. Please note the graphics on page 53 of your text, and use these to do a quick review of the material. For a learning activity, follow some of the suggestions on page 55 as you engage the group in dialogue with regard to the needs of an individual and whether or not those needs have moral or ethical significance and, if so, what the ethical and moral significance would be.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Born-again Life

INTRODUCTION. In this chapter, we will deal specifically with basic biblical teachings about the born-again life. Please read the quotation from John Wesley on page 64 of the text. It is also important to begin by reviewing the ways human beings function, and it might be well for you to encourage participants to verbalize their understandings of the material presented in previous sessions. This helps participants assimilate these concepts.

We will also review our understanding of sin: sin as a problem, sin as a nature, sinful acts. And, of course, the solution of salvation, which is twofold. There are three divisions in this chapter, and these will form the anchor points of our presentation: (1) the crisis of being born again, (2) the continuation of the born-again life, and (3) the inner conflict in the born-again life.

I. THE CRISIS OF BEING BORN AGAIN

A. What is a crisis? A crisis commences or begins with response. In this section we will look at four steps that describe the process.

- Divine initiative
- Awareness of need
- Awareness of a choice
- Your response

1. Divine initiative. This is God reaching out to you. Read 1 John 4:8-10 and John 3:16. Show how God has initiated the plan of salvation. Refer to the scriptures Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:19.

2. Awareness of need. Recognition of sinful condition precedes divine forgiveness. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to help us. Read John 16:8. How does the Bible, the written Word, help us understand our needs? How

does the declared Word help us to arrive at awareness of need? How does the living Christ within us, the living Word, make us aware of our needs? Review the term “conviction.” Make sure that everyone understands this term and how it is used.

3. Awareness of choice. Realizing your spiritual and moral responsibility.
4. Your response. Read Matt. 3:2; Luke 13:3; and Ps. 51:17. Make sure that everyone understands and is able to define repentance. Read 1 John 1:9 and John 5:24. Repentance should be characterized by the idea of turning from outward acts of sin and trusting Christ alone for salvation. There is a student response section on page 70. Please refer to this in your presentation, and find a way to incorporate it.

B. Crisis culminates in a born-again experience. What do the terms “saved” and “converted” mean? Be sure that you go through the four conditions or responses that occur in the act of salvation. The discussion that follows of these four (i.e., forgiveness, justification, regeneration/initial sanctification, and adoption) will require some time. Be prepared to read the scriptures that are represented for each particular topic, as listed in your text on page 71. On page 75 there is another student response. Have the participants review the material and respond.

II. THE CONTINUATION OF THE BORN-AGAIN LIFE

Ask the question posed in the text, “What happens in the interim between the crisis of the new birth and the Spirit-filled life?” Review the theological distinctions between the words “confrontation” and “conflict,” making sure that every Christian understands the implications of these terms.

A. Internal adjustments necessary to this continuation. Review the nine elements listed: (1) steadfastness, Col. 1:21-23; (2) thankfulness, Col. 2:6-7; (3) reverence and godly fear, Col.

2:13-14; (4) learner’s heart, Col. 3:1-2; (5) self-discipline, Col. 3:5-10; (6) forgiveness, Col. 3:12-14; (7) witness, Col. 3:16; (8) optimism, Col. 3:23-24; and (9) faithfulness, James 5:13-16.

B. External adjustments necessary to this continuation. Note the eight areas of discussion. These areas should be reviewed very carefully and then, beginning at the bottom of page 78 and continuing on page 79, there is a student response. Please have participants review these sections and respond accordingly. Make sure that you read the scriptures that are listed at the bottom of page 79.

III. THE INNER CONFLICT IN THE BORN-AGAIN LIFE

There’s an excellent graphic that bears reproduction on page 80. If you cannot reproduce this, make sure that all participants have the graphic in front of them by referring to their textbooks. Note the continuum.

A. Original sin is the basis for inner conflict. How does John Wesley describe original sin, and what is the scriptural basis for that description?

Variety Ideas for Sermon 6

Review the summary on page 83. Work your way through the summary, making sure that you have dealt with the highlights of this section.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—The Spirit-filled Life

INTRODUCTION. On the chalkboard, write the various terms that are listed to describe the experience of entire sanctification or the Spirit-filled life. Following this, Dr. Wellman gives a series of paragraphs defining the experience of the Spirit-filled life. Refer to Acts 1:5; 2:4; and Eph. 5:18. Make sure that you read each of these three paragraphs. Refer to the diagram on page 88, which is a theological diagram illustrating the twofold aspect of salvation. Note that this diagram refers to both the problem of sin and the solution of salvation and illustrates the multidimensional characteristic of both.

I. THE CRISIS OF THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

Note that Dr. Wellman uses again the four areas of response: divine initiative, awareness of need, awareness of moral choice, and your response. Following this outline, Dr. Wellman makes the case for the responses necessary to enjoy a life filled with God's Holy Spirit. Work through each of these areas, making sure to read the scriptural references as well as the content in the text. On page 91, there are student responses called for. Encourage students to participate in this by spending a few moments to go through these areas and to provide the requested information.

The Spirit-filled crisis culminates in a sanctified experience. Again Dr. Wellman shows how the Spirit-filled crisis involves two responses: God to us, and us to God. Review these in relationship to the framework of the four elements of response indicated earlier. Follow up by reviewing the things that God performs within the heart, for example, heart purity, perfection, the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. These four areas are outlined in your text beginning on page 93. Go through each one of these, following the scripture chain. As you use the terms, clearly identify

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them so that individuals in the group will be able to comprehend all that is intended in this session. Refer to page 96 for a helpful chart outlining the theological dimensions of the problem of sin and the solution of salvation. These serve as anchor points to help us grasp the significance of this message.

On page 97 you will see a comparison between the born-again and the Spirit-filled life. This diagram should be in the hands of each individual. Once again, follow the scriptural chain in this section.

II. THE CONTINUATION OF THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

How do we grow in grace as we live the Spirit-filled life?

A. Growth, the way that the fruit of the Spirit is developed, is through development in the following areas.

1. An intense love for God's Word

2. An intense love for others

3. An eager adjustment to new light revealed

On page 99 there is a graphic of the Christian experience. Make sure that this is in the hands of every person, and, if possible, reproduce it into an overhead transparency for augmentation of your discussion at this point.

B. Confrontation and temptation but no conflict.

Dr. Wellman points out that the Spirit-filled Christian *can* yield to temptation and sin but does *not* yield to such temptation and sin. Freedom from indwelling sin strengthens Christians in the hour of temptation. Review this material, and particularly follow the scriptural chain as well to make sure people understand the heart and soul of this glorious message.

III. THE CONCERNS REGARDING THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

Note the following questions, carefully chosen to help participants grasp the significance and details

of this message. Pose these questions, and then explore them. Follow the outlines, beginning with A and continuing on to the end of this section. Make sure that you refer to the diagram on page 103. Be prepared to spend some time reviewing some of the conflicting theories that are often held throughout the Evangelical church. While it is always important that we keep the atmosphere collegial and cordial, we must be clear in pointing out the differences between the position of the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement and the positions as held by other traditions. The diagrams that are listed in the pages following certainly help to illustrate the difference between these theories. Anticipate any questions from your group. The material that we're looking at here represents excellent research into the major fundamental questions often raised to clarify differences of opinion regarding this doctrine.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 7

There is a good review exercise listed on page 110 of your book. Follow this material, and develop it into areas of discussion, small-group discourse, perhaps even individual projects as well. There's an excellent summary section on page 111. Review this and make sure that your presentation's conclusion is based on the solid tenets of this summary section. Engage the participants in the fill in the blanks on page 112.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Faith

INTRODUCTION. To introduce this material, read from Heb. 11. Dr. Wellman cites several verses from Heb. 11, James 2, and Rom. 14. You may want to include those as background for launching this session. Note that in the introduction material on page 115 of your text, Dr. Wellman talks about making radical discoveries about faith in order to tap the potential God has for us that enables us to live lives acceptable to Him. In this section, we will investigate what faith is and how we can please God by using faith properly.

I. FAITH EXPLAINED

What is your favorite faith story? What illustrations come to mind when you think about defining or describing faith? What personal experiences have you tapped on previous occasions that were useful in helping explain your understanding of biblical faith? Dr. Wellman states, "Faith is the gift of God, resulting in the capacity to believe that which we cannot see and to act upon that belief."

- A. The definition of faith. Faith is the capacity to believe. It is a gift of God, and it is a uniquely human function. Even though it is a uniquely human function, nevertheless it is the gift of God. Note the diagram on page 116 of your text. A number of illustrations are provided on page 116 to help you guide your participants in a deeper exploration of the concept of faith.
- B. Faith's involvement in terms of the mind, emotions, and will.
- C. The confusion surrounding faith. In your textbook, Dr. Wellman suggests five ideas regarding faith and

some of the prevalent marks of confusion that persist. Read these and the associated Scripture passages that address this confusion. Dr. Wellman makes the comment, "Faith is the capacity to believe that which we cannot see." Use this as the linchpin or pivot point for your discussions. On page 118 there is a participants' response area. Use the items regarding strategies for increasing faith's operational potential as background for participant response.

II. FAITH IS A GIFT OF GRACE

What are the current misconceptions regarding faith? Dr. Wellman pinpoints four. Use these to launch this section.

Following the bulleted lists that are presented on page 119, move into a discussion of faith as a gift of grace, and refer to the two diagrams on page 120 as ways to illustrate this understanding of faith.

III. FAITH AS THE WAY TO LIFE

Think of faith as both an entry point and a roadway. Faith is essential to our entering this new life, and it is essential to our continued development in our new life in Christ. What does life in Christ mean?

- A. Note the scriptures from John 3; Rom. 3; Eph. 2; and Rom. 10. Refer back to these in order to build a descriptive base for helping participants understand new life in Christ. While faith is the key for entering new life with Christ, it is also the basis by which our life is developed in Christ. On page 122, Dr. Wellman lists a number of preconceived notions that inhibit faith. There is also a student response section on page 122 that will help participants discuss their faith and set it in the context of these discussions.
- B. Living the life of faith. There's a lengthy passage of scripture from Col. 2:6-23. This would be worth reading in your session. Note the bulleted paragraphs that Dr. Wellman gives as examples of misdirected faith. It is important to establish clearly that faith not only is the entry point but

also is the basis by which our life in Christ is lived.

IV. FAITH ON THREE LEVELS

Dr. Wellman has an interesting model that describes faith at its functional level. These are *little faith*, *great faith*, and *perfect faith*. In a subsequent discussion, these descriptive terms will be explored.

- A. Little faith. Read Matt. 8:23-34, and notice the two items that are listed there in your text on page 124. Follow this by reading Matt. 14:22-33, and note the same observations.
- B. Great faith. Read the series of passages from Matt. 8:5-13 and 15:21-28. Be sure to engage participants in discussion regarding these passages of Scripture in this context.
- C. Perfect faith. Follow the scriptural references here, and engage participants in the five steps in Abraham's faith and the three signs of God's response. These are part of the students' response section on page 127 of the text.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 8

Finally, there is a summary on page 128. Use this summary to form the conclusion of your discussions at this point.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Prayer

INTRODUCTION. Martin Luther's quote on the inside of page 130 is an excellent way to begin this session. "If I should neglect prayer but for a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith." Your text begins with a lengthy reading of Scripture from Luke 24:36-44. Read these verses, and note the basic questions that are listed there on page 131 in the bulleted list. Use these as discussion starters for launching this session. There are also some excellent illustrative materials from Oswald Chambers and E. Stanley Jones on page 132. You will also note that the outline for this session is based on these following points: (1) the fraternity of prayer, (2) the framework of prayer, and (3) the forms of prayer.

I. THE FRATERNITY OF PRAYER

It is essential to establish early on regarding the point that prayer is a relationship. The relational understanding of prayer is essential to understanding prayer as fraternity. Dr. Wellman lists three fundamental elements essential to this understanding.

- A. Clear conscience. In the paragraphs under that heading, Dr. Wellman discusses the value and importance of having a clear conscience in order to experience prayer as a reality in one's life.
- B. Ask boldly. He recites Heb. 4:14-16. Read this portion of Scripture to emphasize and illustrate this point.
- C. Pray expecting. Again, there are passages noted on page 133 to help you illustrate these points. He concludes this section by saying, "Fraternity of prayer is step one. Until this relationship is,

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established, prayer will be uncomfortable, unproductive, and even a condemnation."

II. THE FRAMEWORK OF PRAYER

Many people think of prayer as a one-way conversation. Rarely do we think of prayer in terms of its structural framework. Indeed, there is a framework that needs to be observed if prayer is to be effective in the life of the disciple and the one in disciple-making ministry.

- A. The human framework. Several passages of Scripture are listed and four points are outlined here to help you. On pages 134 and 135 develop the notion of the human framework involved in prayer. Dr. Wellman says, "The human framework of prayer may not be intentionally wrong or contrary to God's will, but whatever the motives, it could be incorrect." So it is essential, then, to make sure that the human framework undergirding the effort of prayer fits with the scriptural directives of God's will.
- B. God's framework. Begin by reading Luke 22:39-44. Follow this by reading Rom. 8:26-28. Here Paul deals with the problem of not always understanding the correct subject matter of prayer. It is clear that our prayers must be constructed within the framework of God's will. These two passages of Scripture clearly indicate the willingness of Christ to form His prayers around the will of God, and the great apostle Paul followed that model as well.

III. THE FORMS OF PRAYER

In this section we will discuss some of the essential forms of prayer, and you will note four key forms outlined by Dr. Wellman.

- A. Praise. In Phil. 4:8 praise is recommended to the Body of Christ as essential to communication with God and holy living in the community of faith. Meditation is extolled as one of the ways to experience praise and to offer praise to God.

B. Thanksgiving. In Col. 2:6-7 we are taught to reflect back to God a spirit of thankfulness. In Luke 17:11-19 is the classical biblical example of praise being recommended in a spirit of thanksgiving. Read this story and discuss it. Follow this by referring to the student response section on page 138 of your text. There is an opportunity for students to reflect on three things for which they are thankful.

C. Petition. There is a discussion of petition as a form of prayer. Perhaps no other element of prayer is more frequently engaged than that of petition. While we are all familiar with it, there are some scriptural references that will help us, and these are listed for you in the text.

D. Intercession. Dr. Wellman says, "Intercessory prayer is the most mature form of prayer. It is the acting or pleading in behalf of someone else." Note the diagram on page 138. This will help you as you think about intercession and intercessory prayer.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 9

Follow the bulleted list on page 139 to pose questions for discussion of this session. There is an excellent summary section here on pages 139 and 140 that will help you as you think about prayer in this context.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Knowing God's Will

INTRODUCTION. In this section of the text, Dr. Wellman makes a wonderful connection between the will of God and faith. Every believer would like to know the will of God for his or her life. Dr. Wellman says, "From the earliest moments of your Christian life to the most advanced stages of Christian maturity, you will find God's will to be at the crux of every situation." In this session we will look at this topic from an organizational framework that involves: (1) the plan, (2) the problem, (3) the procedure.

I. THE PLAN

Once you come to know Christ in the new birth and the Spirit-filled life, you'll begin to discover God's unfolding plan for your life. One of the objectives of this session is to help familiarize participants with the tools that are available to help them grasp the understanding of God's will as a means of determining their course of action. In addition we will survey the availability of those tools with regard to learning how to identify and apply God's will in specific life situations.

- A. Creation attests to God's plan. You can reflect on the fact that everywhere we turn in creation there is evidence of God's will and plan being carried out. Clearly if God has a plan for the inanimate objects of creation, He must have a plan for those who live and exist in His image.
- B. The Word of God attests to His plan. Note the student response section. Take time to have each of the participants fill in the blanks of this area in his or her own textbook. There are a number of scriptural references that can be read that will illustrate the fact that God's Word does indeed

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attest to His plan. Pursue these, and note the bulleted list on page 145.

II. THE PROBLEM

Is it possible to miss God's plan, either through rejection of His will or procrastination? Dr. Wellman clearly thinks that is true. As you follow the outline in this section, you will lead the participants in a guided tour of those who have, by either rejection or procrastination, missed the will of God. Pay attention to the scriptural references and pursue them.

III. THE PROCEDURE

There has to be a process or a means whereby the believer can determine God's will for his or her life. In this section of the material, we are going to look at how God revealed His will to others. In Acts 10:34, we are reminded that God does not hold individuals in particular respect but respects them all equally.

- A. Four principles. One way of knowing God's will for your life is to consider it in the light of these four principles. Dr. Wellman has listed these four principles numerically on page 147. Follow these, and note the scriptural references as well. Make sure that each individual or each participant understands the strategic plan presented in this section for identifying and discovering the will of God for the individual's life. Emphasize the use of the Scriptures; how God's Word is certainly central to the discovery and application of His will. At the bottom of page 147 there is a student participation section. This offers you an opportunity to gather feedback from participants so that you can determine whether or not they are grasping the content.
- B. Another method. Note the text box on page 148. Dr. Wellman states the threefold method for determining God's will.

1. There must be absolute honesty in wanting God's will.
2. We must choose what seems right and most fulfilling.
3. We must depend upon the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Once again note the subpoints outlined for you on pages 148 and 149. Enabling participants to grasp this material is always facilitated through their participation, and the student response on page 149 is an excellent method for doing that.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 10

There's a summary section for this session on page 149. Note that the three-point method for determining God's will is reiterated on page 150. Close the session with an emphasis on the participants using these strategies and tools in their own personal discovery of God's will.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Commitment

INTRODUCTION. As you open this session, refer to the statement on page 152, "Commitment of the total self to God is more than discipline—it is a matter of worship." To launch this session, spend some time discussing the term "commitment." Dr. Wellman points out that it is misused and overused. What are some examples of how this term has been misused or overused? Why is commitment so important to the biblical process of discipleship, development, and disciple making? In chapter 1 it was learned that a disciple is a person who is committed to Christ in obedience and service. The study in this session will focus on two questions. What did God commit to humankind, and what should you commit to God?

I. WHAT DID GOD COMMIT TO HUMANKIND?

In the beginning of this session, refer to Gen. 1:26—2:3. The textual content is printed for you in the book.

- A. Personhood—like himself. What is the nature of personhood? Note that the text identifies three areas: physical life, psychical life, and spiritual life. Make sure that the participants have ample opportunity to explore these three dimensions in this section by referring to the statement, "The personhood that God committed to us is in the likeness of a personal, intelligent, and holy God."
- B. The rulership of His creation. Again refer back to Gen. 1:26-31. This gives you a scriptural view of the extent of humankind's authority and rulership over the creation of God. God has indeed provided us with everything we need to make us happy.

Highpoint

- C. Capacity to worship God. Read Exod. 20:1-6. Note that being created in God's image gives us the capacity to worship God with understanding, feeling, and free choice. Emphasize that none other of God's creation has this capacity.

II. WHAT SHOULD YOU COMMIT TO GOD?

There are two important points bulleted on page 155 that will help you discuss this section, the perception of the self as owner or steward, and the attitude of the self as one of gratitude or self-expectation.

- A. Commit your personhood. In 1 Thess. 5:23, the Scripture gives us the extent or describes and defines to us the extent to which our commitment should be made. Rom. 12:1-2 describes our commitment in a parallel manner. Read these sections of Scripture. Note that there are three areas of interest that can be discussed in the session itself: (1) the care of the body, 1 Cor. 3:16; (2) the care of the soul, Phil. 4:8-9; and (3) the care of the spirit, Prov. 3 and 5. As you continue on, you will note that Dr. Wellman is continually framing these discussions about discipleship and disciple making in the context of the threefold function view of humankind. It is important that we not isolate body, soul, and spirit as individual separate units, existing independently of each other, but rather see them as descriptive terms that provide for us a way of analyzing functional components of human life and experience.
- B. We are to commit our possessions. Again our possessions are described for us under the three headings of time, talent, and treasure. Note on page 157 the student participation, and encourage participants to complete this. On page 158 there are two additional student participation sections, and these should be followed as well. Numerous Scripture references are provided in this section. Do not neglect these, for these root this section in the character and revelation of God's Word.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 11

To summarize this session, make sure participants are given ample opportunity to complete the student response section on page 160. This will rivet home to them the central truths of our understanding of commitment.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Obedience

INTRODUCTION. There is a definition of obedience found on page 162. “Obey: to be obedient to—execute the commands of; to be ruled or controlled by; to follow, control, or command” (Webster). While this definition is taken, obviously, from the dictionary, it gets at the heart of the matter of obedience. Indeed, Dr. Wellman states, “The matter of obedience involves all of us in every aspect of our lives. From Genesis to Revelation, God addresses this subject in all kinds of situations.” This chapter will help us discover what is at the heart of obedience, how to obey, some of the problems that we encounter, and the principles that are at the heart of obedience and obedient living.

I. PORTRAITS OF OBEDIENCE

What follows are a series of biblical portraits that enable us to see how the people that are after God’s heart have practiced obedience. Obedience must be internalized in our daily lives if we are to be the kinds of disciples that Jesus wants us to be. Read the scriptural stories for Noah, Abraham, Hannah, and of course, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Point out the level of their obedience. Some of the unique kinds of things that are described for you regarding their obedience can be found on pages 163-66. Each of these offer depth and variety for exploring the concept of biblical obedience. Encourage people to refer to these stories in the context of their own human story, looking for parallels, principles, insights, or examples.

II. PROBLEMS WITH OBEDIENCE

What follows are a series of hypothetical questions or statements having to do with the challenge of spiritual obedience. Review the four identified

challenges, and ask the participants to reflect on them, providing their own personal responses. You may also treat them as case studies and have members of the participating group review them, offering their suggestions and alternatives.

III. PRINCIPLES OF OBEDIENCE

You could begin this section by looking at page 168, where there is an excellent graphic diagram to reveal the range of human hearts caught in the context of human action. The natural/sinful motive, the mixed motive, and the pure motive illustrations exemplify what lies at the very heart of spiritual conflict, particularly as it focuses and centers on the nature of obedience.

- A. The love principle. Read the Gospel account from John 14:21. Reiterate the principle that Jesus gives: “If you love Me, you will obey Me; and if you obey Me, I will reveal myself to you.”
- B. The confidence principle. There’s an excellent statement at the top of page 169: “This comes when you are so convinced of God’s person and purpose that you waive all of your own personal rights in favor of His will for you.” This should provide you an ample launching pad to discuss the level of confidence that we have as individuals in God’s will for our own lives and what it means to act upon that confidence.
- C. The insight, opportunity, and response principle. There is a diagram listed on page 169 that bears reproduction. Here is a cognitive map showing insights, obedience, and opportunity and how they intersect, and the option of either affirmation or a negative response, resulting in disobedience. There are four principles that are dynamically portrayed in this graphic, and you will want to refer to these principles on page 170. Look again at the diagram of the mind, emotions, will, and the body, soul, and spirit.
- D. The lag-time principle. Refer to the graphic at the bottom of page 170, and note the quote by

Dr. Russell V. DeLong. This is listed for you on page 171. There are four elements used to discuss the principle of lag-time, and this should be thoroughly investigated. While the name sounds negative, indeed there are obvious benefits from knowing God’s timing. Some length of time may be required in order to study and interpret events from God’s perspective, not just the perspective of human experience, human desire, and human wish.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 12

Close this session by referring to the summary section on page 172.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Priorities of the Christian Life

INTRODUCTION. Begin by referring to Matt. 6:33. Look at the definition of priority as given by Webster: "The state of being prior to something else; precedence in timing." What is a priority? What are the values of prioritization? Dr. Wellman states, "There is no way a non-Christian can fully understand the significance of Christian priorities. The non-Christian value system is different from that of the Christian's; therefore, what is important to the Christian could be, and often is, unimportant to the non-Christian." In this section we're going to look at how to establish priorities and some of the challenges to prioritization in the life of the believer. Emphasize the statement Dr. Wellman makes: "For the Christian, the matter of priorities is an arrangement of the legitimate."

I. YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S PERSON

Once again Dr. Wellman refers to the threefold functional view of the human experience as the framework with which to discuss the nature of priority and priority setting. Referring to our relationship to God, he poses the question from the focus of physical life, spiritual life, and emotional or mental life. Items A, B, and C refer to these on page 177 in your text. Along with each of these is a scriptural passage that will help you anchor this discussion in God's Word. Refer to these sections and work through them, showing that the relationship involves the total person. Indeed, refer again to 1 Thess. 5:23, where Paul uses the functional language in a metaphorical way to describe the relationship of the total person to God when he says, "May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S PURPOSE

"There are five basic areas in your life: family, church, world, job, and recreation (leisure time). One of the greatest problems is how to prioritize these basic areas." Note the graphic that is listed on page 178. Use this as a teaching tool to show how God's purpose must enfold the totality of human existence. Point out that the relationship of the individual items is in perfect balance and harmony. This is an example of good priority setting. Remember that Dr. Wellman is not urging or advocating a static listing of priorities but rather a fluid, dynamic model. Discuss the dynamic principle of prioritization as a way of establishing the legitimacy of individual claims upon our time, talent, and treasure. Use the illustrations that Dr. Wellman uses in pages 179 and 180. Demonstrate the imbalance that is often caused by allowing lack of harmony to prevail in this dynamic method of establishing priorities by referring to the diagram on page 181.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 13

To close the session, refer to the summary statements that are listed on page 182. True harmony in the life of today's disciple comes only when one's relationship to God's person is right and when the five areas—family, church, world, job, recreation—are prioritized in accord with scriptural criteria.

TODAY'S DISCIPLE

Subject—Temptation

INTRODUCTION. No one likes to think of temptation, for it always is associated with the negative. In this session Dr. Wellman will point out that temptation is natural, neutral, and necessary. While at first this may seem contradictory, as we explore the materials in this session, we will discover that the rationale established in this outline will go far in helping today's disciple deal with this ever-present reality. Dr. Wellman states, "True Christian character is partially established by making right choices. Your response to temptation will reveal the true object of your faith." We have defined temptation in this study as "an endeavor to persuade a person to select a specific alternative by means of argument and influence. This usually, but not always, carries with it the idea of being tempted to do evil." Integral to our understanding of temptation are two terms that you will want to emphasize in this session. The first term is "confrontation," which means simply being presented with at least two alternatives. The second term is "conflict." This is the battle for moral mastery of the heart.

I. TEMPTATION IS NATURAL

Read 1 Cor. 10:13. Is there confusion among Christians with regard to temptation? Dr. Wellman says, "Indeed there is." There are two prominent areas of confusion. Look at these under the bulleted list on page 186. Then, to help participants identify their own particular vulnerabilities, there is a response section at the bottom of the page. Spend some time filling out that section.

II. TEMPTATION IS NEUTRAL

Read Heb. 4:15. When does temptation become sin? Spend some time discussing this, and then refer to

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James 1:14-15. Clearly from this reading of the Scripture, there are pointers that enable us to see that particular place or time when the temptation produces sin. On the bulleted list on page 187, Dr. Wellman has illustrated the fundamental principles that enable us to see temptation as neutral but having the potential to become negative in our lives. There is a student response section that needs to be completed on the bottom of page 187.

III. TEMPTATION IS NECESSARY

Refer again to James 1:2-4. Dr. Wellman declares that temptation is necessary "in this probation period of life to develop character." Read the passage of Scripture from Matt. 4:1-11 to look at the three areas in which temptation was experienced in the life of Jesus. Reflect on these temptations from the point of view enumerated in this section of the material.

- A. Physically. Matt. 4:1-4 records Jesus fasting for 40 days and nights. What are some of the areas that Satan commonly uses to solicit the physical desires of the Christian? What bait does he use in hurling temptation toward us?
- B. Psychically. Read Matt. 4:5-7. What are the subtle ways in which Satan appealed to Jesus' psychical needs?
- C. Spiritually. Read Matt. 4:8-11. Dr. Wellman says, "This is the control center; this is the most critical function in life. This is where the decision is made to become a slave either to the spirit of Satan or to the Spirit of God." Refer to the diagrams that are listed on pages 190 and 191. At this point there is a student response section on page 191.

Variety Ideas for Sermon 14

To summarize, temptation is natural in that it comes through our natural desires and functions. Temptation is neutral in that it is neither righteous nor evil. Temptation is necessary in this probation period of life. It is the means by which character is developed within us. Refer to the area under the heading "Summary" on page 192 to close this session.

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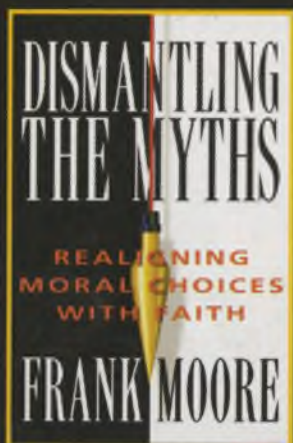
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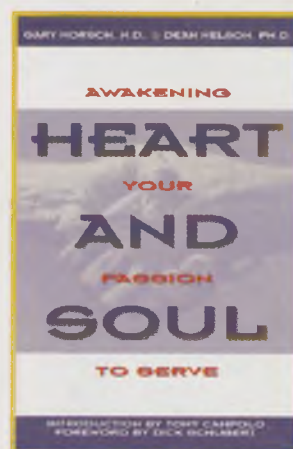
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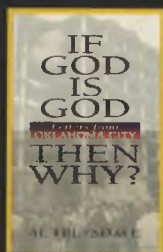
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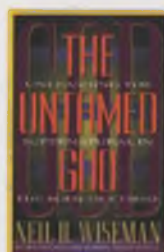
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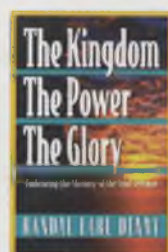
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