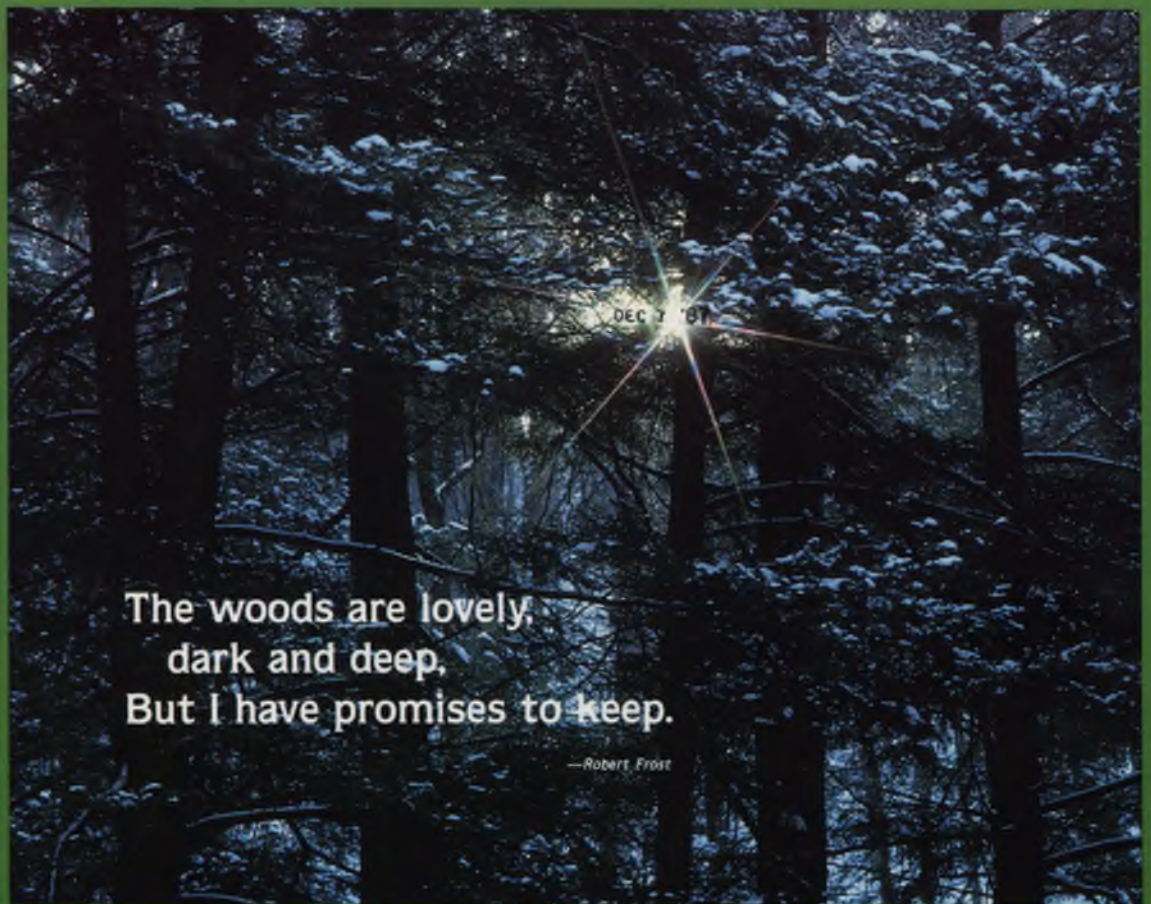


THE  
**PREACHER'S  
MAGAZINE**

DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY 1987-88



The woods are lovely,  
dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep.

—Robert Frost

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Away from Babylon;  
Come out, come out,  
Touch nothing unclean.  
Come out from Babylon,  
Keep yourselves pure,  
You who carry the vessels  
of the Lord.

Isa. 52:11, NEB



# THE ARK ROCKER

## BOOK REVIEW

Jon Johnston's book *Christian Excellence* bids fair to swell his tithe check markedly. It will sell well, especially since one of the holiness denominations is using it in a "Lay Training Study." (Is *training* a good word here?)

In fact, just the other evening, one banquet table of eight folks, mostly clerics and their spouses, made it the major topic of preprandial chitchat. Now, as it turned out, only two had actually read the thing, but the rest had "seen" it, and all warmly and vigorously endorsed the implications of the title. And all agreed with the publisher's blurbs that were recited to them as well. This latter consensus was underwritten by four who knew Jon as a "close friend" and two who had "met him." The four "close friends" spent the evening proving the proximity of their acquaintance by dropping personal tidbits and upstaging the personal tidbits of others. Just to give you a sample: one of our dining companions ventured a tale that included mention of the author's wife's first name only to be topped by another diner whose tale was told in such a way as to let us know that he knew her maiden name and had served as pastor on the same zone as that in which Mrs. Johnston had lived as a teenager. Another sample: another dinner companion reported that his cousin had been Jon's college roommate (or, it may have been that he was in the room next door) only to be outdone by yet another banqueter, listening at the next table, who volunteered the news that Jon's real roommate's mother was the eavesdropper's own favorite aunt. So, you can see, we were quite sufficiently qualified to talk about Jon, about his book, and about the topic of the book.

Reviews flowed freely—from those who had read the book and from those who had "seen" it. And each review came accompanied with deep expressions of concern for what all agreed had become a plague these days—rampant mediocrity. (Those who had "not read thoroughly but [had] seen" the book were most deeply concerned, of course.)

"Just what our people need," said Smerdley, whose

adventures in excellence have gained him notice in this column from time to time. Ditto, a much-traveled preacher of a much-preached basic dozen sermons, agreed. (Ditto, an authority, apparently, on lawns and lawn care, had not had time to read the book, but he had "taken a look" at it in an antique shop where it lay upon an old table as a decorative piece. He's also an authority on antiques.) Poohbah, Jr., spoke as a prophet: "It's high time we came to grips with our mediocrity." As one who hears him frequently, I edited in "their" for "our." And finally Simolians, the multimillionaire sod-webworm exterminator king, expressed the hope that "our people will take what Johnston says to heart." He had earlier been letting loose on a pastor because he didn't "dress right," didn't keep his car clean, and (worst of all) treats everyone alike.

The evening's speaker lauded the book at one point in the course of a speech in which a naughty friend of mine counted 15 nonsequiturs in the first 10 minutes. But the emcee dubbed the speech "most inspiring and compellingly delivered. An authentic masterpiece." And one felt quite uncomfortable with the many "Wasn't that speech great?"s from colleagues as we crowded the exits. In the name of excellence, one should have said, "In my opinion, no."

And the "excellence" of the speech was matched by the "excellence" of the music, the special number in song. The theology of the song was not simply atrocious, it was really quite heretical. And the tune, a blues job, was OK, but quite ordinary. More to the point, it hardly fit the words, which told of coming judgment. But there was our emcee, saying, "Let's give our singers a good round of applause for that marvelous expression of the gospel." In the name of excellence, we should have sat on our hands. In the name of the gospel, we should have prayed a prayer of confession.

I wonder if we know what we've let loose by setting out now to encourage "excellence"? Why, if there's a need for an Ark Rocker, someone else may have to write it!



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# THE PREACHER'S MAGAZINE

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# MONDAY MORNING DEVOTIONS FOR MINISTERS

Monday, December 7, 1987

## GOD'S GOOD WORK

*And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6, RSV).*


by Reuben Welch

Reuben Welch, professor of religion at Point Loma Nazarene College, is the author of *We Really Do Need Each Other*, *We Really Do Need to Listen*, *The Temptations of Jesus*, *Let's Listen to Jesus*, and other helpful books. We welcome Reuben as the author of the new series "Monday Morning Devotions."



It is good for us, especially in this Advent season, to recognize and affirm the divine initiative. Paul makes a clear and wonderful declaration: God is doing, and will complete, His good work in you. Can we believe it? It is a tired and disillusioned world, and our ceaseless efforts aren't changing it all that much. The Spirit would shift our center of gravity from ourselves to God. He is the actor, the doer, the initiator.

God has begun a good work in this world. It is a saving, reconciling, redeeming work. He took the initiative and entered into dialogue with His alienated creatures. He called His men and women and worked with their weakness and resistance to bring a people to himself. Through all the long years He loved and provided, judged and saved them. In good times and bad He never let them go—and finally sent His Son, our Savior. We didn't do any of this, God did. And the good work He has begun in this old world, He will bring to completion!


God has begun a good work in you and me. That is not a question, it is a declaration. We did not come to Him, He has come to us in Jesus. Our confidence is not in ourselves but in His pledge never to leave us nor forsake us. His grace and His love will sustain us to the end. 

Monday, December 14, 1987

### HELD AND HOLDING IN HEART

*And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel thus about you all, because I hold you in my heart (Phil. 1:6-7, RSV).*

God takes the initiative, breaks into our self-preoccupation, and confronts us in Jesus, beginning a good work we didn't even expect. Advent is a good time to think about that. We didn't have Jesus come; God did. We do not determine the ways and means of salvation; God does. And it is wonderful how gracious are His ways and means. He saves us by himself coming all the way into our human sinful situation, totally identifying himself with us in love, all the way to death. He saves us by initiating an inner heart relationship with us.

That's how He saved Paul, and that's how things got started in Philippi (the story begins in Acts 16:11). Paul knew he was held in the heart of God and was confident that the work would continue because he could say, "I hold you in my heart." God's love-bond to us in Jesus is the bond of our inner heart attachment to each other. God's good work in me isn't just between God and me; nor is His good work in you just between God and you—around us are persons who care, who pray, who love, who hold us in their hearts. There are those for whom we care and pray, those we hold in our hearts. We are "one in the bond of love" and hold each other in our hearts. We are not alone. In that loving fellowship is our confidence that God's good work will continue till the day of Christ. 


Monday, December 21, 1987

### PASTORAL LOVE

*It is right for me to feel thus about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:7-8, RSV).*

I am concerned about continuing joy and vitality in ministry. We perform our pastoral functions and work in the system. We give and receive the Christmas gifts and feel the Christmas spirit. But the years pass, and we know that one day we will pass the peak. Our services will be less desired and our future more uncertain. Our resignation to this process saps our energy and makes us dull.

Vitality and hope are restored as we experience for ourselves the kind of love-bond we see between Paul and the Philippians. He holds them in his heart with deliberate intent. *They* are his concern, not himself, even in prison. That is his pastoral posture. Yet, they are partakers *together* of grace. That mutual partnership sustained both pastor and people through good times and bad. There was difference of function, but no difference in place before God. This mutuality democratizes the gospel and opens up the possibility of genuine dialogue between us as brothers and sisters in the Lord. Joy and vitality are restored.

Pastoral love is not the result of a happy coincidence between pastor and people. It comes from the "affection of Christ Jesus." We lose our debilitating self-concern and find renewed joy and vitality in ministry when we love our people with the deep, deep Christmas love of Jesus. 


Monday, December 28, 1987

### A PRAYER FOR ALL SEASONS

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11, RSV).*

Where, on this busy day, is there time to pray a prayer like this, let alone reflect on it? I wish it were set to a beautiful melody so we could sing it through the day and let its message come through the way the truth comes through the carols.

It is a prayer for more love. Strange, isn't it, that the cultural and religious expressions of love at Christmastime make it almost impossible to either share or receive genuine love in authentic ways. The positive side is that no matter how jaded and commercialized, the story of love keeps being rehearsed and the truth of love keeps breaking through.

Paul would not be satisfied with such fragile and sporadic manifestations of love. He prays that our love may "abound more and more." It is plain that the heart of our whole Christian existence is love, the love of God incarnate in Christ, poured out on us and through us. The prayer is so familiar that its poignant urgency is lost. Are we so busy, so absorbed with ourselves, so locked into the system that we have forgotten who we are and what we are about? To believe the love God has for us and to love one another—is there really anything else that's worth the struggle? Lord, center us back in You and make our love abound. 


Monday, January 4, 1988

### PRAYER FOR A NEW YEAR

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11, RSV).*

There is no question that the heart of the Christian life is love. But what is love without knowledge? How can love have meaning without discernment? I believe that knowledge and discernment mean growing understanding of Christ and the gospel. They mean insight into the way the gospel is intended to affect ourselves and our world. Paul's prayer is for love that increasingly sees things from the Jesus point of view—love with insight to test the values of the world.

This prayer is for us at just such a time as this. What happens to all the sentiment and affection of Christmas? How is it to be lived out through this new year? We need understanding and discrimination to interpret and reinterpret the seasonal sentiments in terms of the love of God in Christ. We surely need to translate the warm feelings into a 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love that will make some difference in the long run.

This is a good day to release the old year's unknowings and undiscernings into the forgiving, healing love of God and open our hearts to the teaching Spirit of truth. He will make us wiser in our loving and more loving in our wisdom. 


Monday, January 11, 1988

### LOOKING TOWARD THE DAY

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more . . . so that you may . . . be pure and blameless for the day of Christ (Phil. 1:9-10, RSV).*

Who can handle such words with a New Year in process and its resolves half forgotten? The love for which Paul prays affects not only our moral judgments and decisions but our inner motives as well. *Pure* probably means "without dark spots when tested by the light." *Blameless* may mean "not stumbling" or "not causing others to fall." But it is little help to define the terms. We read them and cry, "O Lord, who can stand?"

Indeed, no one! But the prayer is not for the achievement of some perfect state of pure motive and life. Such concern only centers us back upon ourselves. It is the forward vision of the day of Christ that pulls together our wayward thoughts and wavering motives and focuses them on His glory. A friend wrote, "I have decided to stop trying so hard to be spiritual and start loving people." That is the point of it all.

The Collect for the Episcopal Order for Holy Communion (used frequently by John Wesley) is our prayer, too, "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name; through Christ our Lord, Amen." The real question of motives is not our motives, it is His name, His glory, and His day. 


Monday, January 18, 1988

### FRUIT FOR HIS GLORY

*Filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:11, RSV).*

Whatever they are, I want to be filled with these fruits! Do they grow with growing love and discernment? Are they the products of cleansed motives and blameless lives? Our minds are inevitably drawn to the fruits of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23, RSV), which come from the presence of the Holy Spirit and not from our fleshly efforts or designs.

"Fruits of righteousness" are the fruits that Jesus in us produces. They are His fruits, not ours. We can no more produce them by our striving than a tree can bear fruit by its trying. Our efforts and concerns, then, do not point toward bearing righteous fruit but toward the Lordship of Jesus in our lives and our surrender to Him. We try too hard, we work too hard. We set goals and work to achieve them. We need to look good, to make this year count. Maybe a good move will come, and we are due a real advancement. We've got to be productive.

The Holy Spirit would still us, break the tyranny of goals and projects, and set us free to let Jesus produce His fruits. The Spirit would have us fulfill our real future and our real destiny: "to live for the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:12, RSV). 



Monday, January 25, 1988


### WHAT ABOUT THE GOSPEL?

*I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel (Phil. 1:12, RSV).*

What happened to Paul was that he had taken some bad advice from some good people and ended up in prison for no just cause (Acts 21:17 ff.). It is a long and discouraging story, yet he was able to say that what happened had "really served to advance the gospel."

Paul's attitude teaches us that what happens to the gospel is more important than what happens to us. Do we believe that? We are consumed with the events of our lives. We listen every day to people talk about the bad things that have come to them, the unfairness they have endured. We have our own stories to tell. Our feelings and responses to the events of our lives are real and have significance for us. We need not deny them; they are the stuff of our daily existence. Nor must we believe that everything that happens to us has some direct connection with the gospel. Lots of things come and go without any "gospel" significance.

But in and through all the providential circumstances of our lives, something matters very much: what is happening to the gospel? The question is not about our situation, however good or bad, it is about the gospel. Have we ever really asked it in relation to what is going on in our church or our family or our own inner lives?

"Father, bring us back to center. In all our circumstances, let Your gospel be advanced." 


Monday, February 1, 1988

### A MATTER OF MOTIVE

*What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice (Phil. 1:18, RSV).*

What about the motives of those who preach the gospel, particularly those who buy in to the promotional model and make the big time? The scandals revealing blatant materialism and greed of TV evangelists make us wonder what is happening. What are we to think? How are we to react? How shall we pray?

I find the word of Paul a hard and probing one. He makes no response in anger or defensiveness. His only concern is that Christ is proclaimed. It matters that the gospel is advanced, no matter what happens to us. It matters that Christ is preached, no matter what motives we observe. He will not limit the preaching of Christ to the limit of his perception of motives. He didn't even say that they were hurting the cause.

I think he could feel this way because his own ego was not on the line and his own motives were open to the judgment of God. The hard part of this is the realization that the hostility we feel toward mercenary ministers may say more about our own motives than we care to admit. We judge in others what we see and do not like in ourselves. "It's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer." Yet, the final concern is not motives—theirs or ours—it is that by all means Christ is preached. The concern about motives is overridden by an overriding concern for the proclamation of Christ. 

Monday, February 8, 1988


### CHRIST HONORED IN MY BODY

*As it is my eager expectation and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death (Phil. 1:20, RSV).*

What is to happen to this prisoner at the bar? He will live or he will die by the choice of another. What will he do? He will rejoice. He will eagerly look forward and not be ashamed. He cares for one thing: that Christ will be openly magnified, made great through Paul's word and his conduct.

I am judged and humbled by this witness. Paul is in prison and the issue is life or death. No, it is not. The issue is Christ honored in his bodily life—or Christ honored in bodily death. He is at the crossroads. No, he is at the cross, identified with the dying of his Lord, living with exuberance in the power of His resurrection.

With us, two basic things count, the cause of Christ and the cause of our lives, our profession of Christ and our professional advancement. For Paul, one thing mattered, he had a single cause, the cause of Christ. Christ Jesus was the sun of his whole sky; Paul lived in His shining and evaluated all things—his own life included—in the light.


Our joy is found in our achievements, and our self-worth is dependent on our productivity. So of course Christ can only be honored if we live. If we die, all is lost. Can we let the Spirit turn us around? Few things really matter, finally, only one: the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. 

Monday, February 15, 1988

### TO LIVE IS CHRIST

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. . . . My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account (Phil. 1:21-24, RSV).*

The trouble with this passage is that it is too spiritual. We cannot say no to it, but how can we say yes in any way that has practical meaning, especially on Monday? We know that Paul was not constantly living in ecstatic contemplation of Christ. He wanted Christ to be honored in his body, and if he lived, it would not mean holy quietness, but fruitful work! Maybe it isn't too spiritual after all.


How would you complete the sentence, "For to me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_"? I find that a very difficult and searching question. We all would of course finally write "Christ" in the blank, but would it be the truth? Would it have any controlling meaning for the way we conduct our lives? For Paul it meant that Christ was the cohesive force, the point of reference for all that he was and all that he did. All other concerns and interests were kept in their right orbit by the pull of that one center of gravity. But what about ourselves? What *is* the center of gravity for us? It is fortunate that there is not space enough for me to list for you the things that really matter, that really are the center of interest and action in your life. I can only open my own heart to the searching Spirit and surrender the competing goals and values of my life to His verdict. I am led again to the cross of Jesus and there confess, "King of my life, I crown Thee now." 

Monday, February 22, 1988

### FOR CHRIST AND OTHERS

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. . . . But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith (Phil. 1:21-22, 24-25, RSV).*

We ordinarily think that the phrase "to me to live is Christ" belongs to the realm of devotion, contemplation, and worship. But just before it Paul expresses his desire for Christ to be honored in his body. Just after it he says that continued life means fruitful labor. The phrase actually calls us into the secular world where life is lived in a body and where people need us. For Paul, Christ was the center; therefore pastoral care for persons was central. "To live is Christ . . . that means fruitful labor . . . on your account." Does "to me to live is Christ" actually mean "Because you need me, I will be there"?

This first week of Lent causes us to think again about the selfless, serving life of Jesus. He would say, "For to me to live is My Father," and then He would come to where we are to love us and identify with us at our worst and die for our sins. We say with Paul, "To me to live is Christ." For us, too, "that means fruitful labor"; it means that we will live for the "progress and joy in the faith" of those to whom we are called to minister. The probing question for Lent is, Are my labors bearing the fruit of growing faith and joy? 

Monday, February 29


### TO DIE IS GAIN

*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:21, RSV).*

Let's go back to our incomplete sentence, "For to me to live is . . ." There is another part of it: "to die is gain." It raises an inevitable question, What would it mean to die? It is good for us this Lenten season to contemplate our mortality. One day we, too, will die.

But the very meaning of our culture and its values is based on the denial of death—even in the omnipresence of death. Only with deliberate intent do we live otherwise. It is hard to hear for ourselves the truths of our own funeral sermons. We live from day to day making choices and judgments and evaluations as though there were no heaven and as though we would live forever. In our rejection of death we pull back and construct an interim world of transient values, goals, and gods, and we live by them as though they were real and permanent.

Would we sacrifice integrity for success? Would we forfeit a permanent marriage for an affair? Would we compromise our values for money or position? Of course not! Never on those terms. Only when death is denied and short-term values are imputed with permanent qualities can such destructive decisions be made.

Can we hear again that only Christ is ultimate? Only if He is life is death a true gain. In all else death is loss. The Spirit's word for us this Lenten day is to take to the Cross all that would be lost if we died; give it to Jesus there and let it all die with Him. That death with Him means life in Him—and sets us free. 

# CARVE EVERY WORD

by Anna Belle Laughbaum

*Professor of English, Emeritus  
Southern Nazarene University  
Bethany, Okla.*

**P**reacher, do you ever feel that your sermons fall on deaf ears? That half your congregation is sleeping while you preach and the other half wishes they were? That after three days most of your congregation would be able to recall little, if any, of your message?

Undoubtedly, you spend a great deal of time preparing your sermons. You deliver them with earnestness and fervor. You pray that your people will feel as you do about the tragic effects of sin, the redemptive work on the Cross, and the certainty of the Judgment. How discouraging it must be to pour out your soul to a seemingly deaf congregation!

Dare I say it? Perhaps, more often than you would like to think, *you* may be responsible for your congregations' naps! I have listened to sermons in churches and college chapels for many years. Those that kept me awake—and as I observed, did the same for others—possessed certain characteristics as far as substance was concerned.

Are you open to a few suggestions from the pew about one of these characteristics that will make for much easier listening and remembering on the part of your congregation and for more restful nights for you?

Clothe the bones of your sermon outline with lots of warm, living flesh rather than with cold generalities. Your discussions of sin and love and holiness will mean much more to your listeners if you put them in people and send them down the aisles and among the pews.

How does one, for instance, talk about intercessory prayer? Referring to Granny Crawford (as she liked to be called) would strike a responsive chord in a congregation. She prayed for and wrote to missionaries for nearly 60 years. When I was on specialized assignment in Korea, I received one of her encouraging letters. She

wrote that she was almost 85 years old, "but I get around the world in a week's time, bringing our missionaries to the Throne of Grace, and God hears." More than one missionary has told me that Granny Crawford's prayers saw them through many a difficult time.

You know or have read about many "Granny Crawfords." Telling about one when you talk about intercessory prayer will not only keep the attention of your congregation but also make a greater, longer-lasting impact than general comments on intercessory prayer, as good as they may be.

A sermon in living color of my life-style before I became a Christian reinforced my conviction that I had surely been following the wrong course before my conversion. It vividly portrayed the average person, without Christ, who thinks the good life consists mainly of enjoying oneself and "getting ahead." All seems to go along fine until he is confronted by death.

Mr. Average Person—in the sermon he was called "Everyman"—tries unsuccessfully to get someone to go with him on the dreaded journey to the other world. He calls on his constant companion, Fellowship, who has grown up with him. Fellowship, synonymous with Pleasure, declares that he will be happy to go as long as it will be a fun experience.

He bows out vehemently when he learns that it will be only a one-way trip. Keenly disappointed, Everyman calls on another friend of long standing, Goods. He is sure that since he has spent his life courting Goods' friendship, he will have a fellow traveler.

In his scornful refusal, Goods takes fiendish delight in revealing who he really is—a thief and a murderer. He is made of the stuff, he says, that steals men's souls and brings about their deaths. He taunts Everyman for being

so gullible in thinking that possessions are the ultimate in life and leaves with the words that he must now look for someone else to ensnare.

Before a church altar I saw and heard Death, Fellowship, and Goods talk to Everyman. It was an unforgettable sermon! Preachers, you probably won't deliver sermons in which love, for instance, appears in person. It just might be, however, that occasionally a "live" example *could* participate in your message. I well remember and others do, too, how a minister's sermon on keeping one's marriage vows intact touched a congregation. He used a young staff member and his wife to paint a picture of love. Spotlights as they walked toward each other from opposite ends of the platform, almost darkened for those few moments, they sang alternately of their mutual love. The time represented was their wedding day.

Sentimental? Yes. But there was something else besides sentimentality. There were reflective moments of remembered love that did not need editorial comments. Moments that perhaps led to a quiet renewal of vows for some and determination to keep that love growing, for others.

It seemed almost as though Love were personified as she sang of the harmony she brought to lives. Personification lends vibrancy and life and meaning to discussions on theology and ethics. Early English literature featured Virtue and Vice as adversaries vying for the souls of men. Scripture, of course, contains much personification. Solomon, for instance, has Wisdom preach an entire sermon about her worth and the rewards she brings to those who will seek her (Proverbs 8). The reader cannot help seeing and hearing her as she cries out her message from "the top of high places" (v. 2) and from the city gates, "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and my knowledge rather than choice gold" (v. 10).

Writers and ministers of an earlier era did something else that present-day preachers could well use as patterns for creating interest. They were masters at relating the familiar to the unfamiliar in order to give meaning to theological concepts and spiritual truths. Aware of the popularity of natural history stories of their day, they used these as important parts of their messages. They gave the stories simply and followed them with a spiritual or moral lesson, called "Signification," based on the story itself. For example:

The whale opens his mouth when he is hungry. His breath is sweet and warm, and it attracts small fish. They are glad to rest in his mouth for a while. After several enter, the whale locks his jaws and sucks in the fish. Whales usually stay on the bottom of the sea. But when storms stir up both the water and their resting place, they swim to the surface. Storm-weary sailors spot them and are glad, for they think they are islands where they can anchor for a while. They fasten their boats on them and go ashore. They make a fire, warm themselves, and eat and drink. The whale feels the fire and dives to the bottom of the sea. The sailors go down with him.

*Signification:* The devil is cunning. He draws men to him because of his warm, fragrant breath. He especially

draws the "small fish," those of little faith. The "bigger fish," those with more faith, usually can't be trapped this way. The devil catches *them* during the storms of life when they're weary with the struggle, and their vision isn't clear. He may even, at such times, seem like something or someone to fasten one's hopes on. But the devil takes them down to hell.

With a more dramatic approach and elaboration than the early clerics used, you preachers could keep the children in your congregations from fidgeting and the adults from looking at their watches. Moreover, undoubtedly, the children would be able to tell what the sermon "was about" three days later. So would the adults!

The world is filled with illustrations that give freshness and zest to what otherwise might seem like warmed-over hash. When I read Richard Parrott's *Double Vision*, I was intrigued with his account of a certain kind of African beetle. He tells about climbing with Harmon Schmelzenbach to the top of an enormous 1,000-foot sand dune in the Namib Desert in Southwest Africa and seeing beetles standing *on their heads*. How could any-

**Speak clearly, if you speak at all; carve every word before you let it fall.**

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

thing even exist in that desert, let alone take such strenuous exercises? Parrott wondered.

Schmelzenbach explained that the beetles find minerals and substance in the sand for food, that nightly, "numb with cold, they make their way up the steep slope where they perch near the summit to catch the densest, wettest fog. There they balance on their heads, upside down, backs toward the ocean.

"The blowing fog strikes the back of the beetle. Water condenses to form a small droplet that trickles down the abdomen and into an open and eager mouth."

What a wonderful sermon illustration this would make, I thought, to describe man's thirst for the Living Water and his all-out efforts to obtain it.

How welcome to your congregations, preachers, are true-to-life vignettes that speak to all of us! There are enough of them that the well-worn, "there we go again" stories can be put on the back burner—or burned. Take the topic of sin, for instance. One doesn't have to read far to find an abundance of people-illustrations. I was made more aware of this when a student commented good-naturedly that our literature course could well be called "A Study of Sin."

I hadn't thought about that. But the topic was such a part of the literature itself, which included a Shakespearean tragedy, that to point out important themes, one had to discuss sin.

Let me cite two of many studies of sin, that given in more detail, could give fresh insights as well as hold the

interest of your congregations. One of the main characters in *Giants in the Earth*, by the Christian writer Rolvaag, is an excellent psychological portrait of a person haunted by a sin committed years before the story opens.

Considered one of the most realistic and authentic books on pioneer America, *Giants in the Earth* is the story of a wife and mother, Beret, who becomes mentally unbalanced. Her insanity apparently results from a composite of an overly sensitive nature; the inability to cope with the cruel onslaughts of nature; the rigorous, uncertain life on the prairie; and the loneliness of isolation from family and friends.

What seems to compound Beret's difficulties in coping is a constantly gnawing sense of guilt, the result of premarital sex. The author makes much of her internalizing aspects of her environment and life that she thinks are directly related to her sin. The swish of the prairie grass, for example, whispers about her guilt. She is always aware that there is no place "to hide behind" in the wide, open prairie stretching from horizon to horizon.

Another work that focuses even more on sin is a classic portrayal of three people. Two have been involved in adultery and a third seeks revenge for the wrong they have done against him. There is nothing lurid or cheap about the book. What stands out is the effect confessed sin has on a young woman, unconfessed sin has on her partner, and unacknowledged sin has on the wronged man.

Confession brings Hester spiritual and physical wholeness. In spite of having been made a public spectacle (the story's setting is in colonial America), she outgrows her shame. She becomes a Florence Nightingale in her community, and the "A" she wears for "Adultery" now stands for "Angel" in the eyes of the people.

Refusal to confess his sin results in years of remorse and mental anguish for Arthur Dimmesdale. A prominent, well-liked leader in the community, he cannot bear the thought of losing his reputation. Rationalization sets in: he is a model for the townspeople; should he confess, their confidence in him would be destroyed. He must not hurt them. Years pass—his guilt does not. He dies prematurely, a broken man.

Roger Chillingworth, Hester's elderly husband, whom she thought dead because of his long absence, attempts to ferret out his hated rival. In his efforts, he is as relentless as a beast stalking his prey. His sole reason for living is to get even. Not once does he admit, even to himself, that his objective is wrong. After all, a grievous wrong has been perpetrated against him! Arthur's confession and death mark the end of Chillingworth's search and purpose for living. He becomes even more withered and shriveled.

One has the feeling that perhaps Hawthorne, in *The Scarlet Letter*, considered Chillingworth's sin almost worse than that of the other two.

Preachers, I probably haven't said anything new in my suggestions to you about making your sermons more interesting and alive. What I have tried to do is "to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." Many years in the classroom taught me that this "stirring-up business" is vital. As we in the pews listen to you preach, we want to be challenged, inspired, "indoctrinated"—and even reproved. But before this can happen, we must be kept awake and interested.

It used to be, in some churches, that a person was appointed to awaken any nappers in the congregation. How much better it would have been if the preacher had sent one of his sermon-people—Granny Crawford, Everyman, Beret, Chillingworth—even Whale and African Beetle down the aisles before heads began to nod! 🐛



"Can he call you back? He's listening to a tape of his Sunday sermon."



# WHAT COMES BEFORE THE SERMON?

## How a Seminary Professor Prepares Students Spiritually and Psychologically for Preaching

by Robert D. Dale

*Professor of Pastoral Leadership and Church Ministries  
Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary*

I read myself full. I pray myself hot. Then I let go!" That's the formula one preacher used for preparing sermons and himself.

Preparing sermons is homiletics. Preparing yourself for preaching points to your devotional practices. Both are essential to good preaching. And neither is an easy task.

But I'm concerned about a level of preparation even more basic than writing sermons and maintaining spiri-

tual strength. I'm talking about the personal foundations for your ministry: faith and vision, gifts and stewardships, leadership and modeling, opportunity and demand, and attitude and readiness. Each of these issues needs clarifying before a preacher steps behind a pulpit. When the "why" of your ministry is clear, the "how" of preaching becomes much easier.

### DEFINING YOUR DREAM

As a young minister, I didn't have a well-defined dream of what I wanted to do for God. The lyrics of "To Dream the Impossible Dream" drove me to the Bible to sharpen my vision of ministry.

The answer was so obvious I wondered why I hadn't seen it before. Jesus had a dream! Over 80 times in the Gospels, Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God. He dreamed of a kingdom in which God ruled redemptively in persons and over their institutions. This "Kingdom Dream" explained the words and works of Jesus.

Suddenly every time I read the Gospels, the Kingdom Dream leaped off the pages to stir and dare me. For example, the parables took on a new dimension for me. They became more than "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning." Now they became Kingdom Stories; they defined the salvation vision of Jesus. The parables illustrated Jesus' vision concretely for me. Jesus told 50 or 60 Kingdom Stories. Many of His parables begin, "The kingdom of God is like . . ." Jesus' parables add up to over one-third of His recorded teachings. As a pastor, I began to study, preach, and teach Jesus' parables. I wanted to steep myself in His vision. And I wanted my congregation to be grasped by the power and motivation of His Kingdom Dream.

For me, the Kingdom Dream is a launchpad for preaching. It gives me a theological base for talking about the King. Seminarians (and other preachers too) need a touchstone to keep their preaching on course.

There's confidence and power in a solid doctrinal foundation. As one young pastor reported to me, "The Kingdom Dream is the most important idea I learned in seminary." His vision of God alive in our world provides a daily anchor for his preaching and ministry.

### DISCOVERING YOUR BEST GIFTS

In the classroom I try to confirm and affirm spiritual gifts. That's not because I see our world through rose-colored glasses. I don't. But I believe God creates no inferior products.

The tone of your preaching is flavored by your view of God's gifting of His people. For example, upon retirement a famous preacher was asked what he'd do differently if he had his ministry to do over. Without hesitation, he replied, "I'd preach more encouragement to my congregation." Gifted people serve better when they're encouraged regularly.

Every Christian has gifts to use in ministry. Some of us are ten-talent people, others one-talent persons. But no Christian is left without the ability to serve others in Christ's name. Do you know your gifts? Do you use all of them?

More than 30 God-given, spiritual gifts are listed by the apostle Paul in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and

Ephesians 4. These diverse ministry gifts are made available to build up the Body of Christ. Nowhere are these illustrative lists subdivided into a clergy list and a layperson's list. Neither are the gifts prioritized. Wisely, my late colleague, Ray Brown, asserted: "There is no hierarchy in the gifts of God. No gift that serves others is little. God used both stars and candles to light His world."

We evangelicals generally affirm public, verbal gifts more than the others. Preaching, evangelizing, and teaching are spotlighted in our ministries. Our denominational superstars usually display these gifts. If we value spiritual gifts unequally, we may lose some of God's resources and fail to develop some special people for Christian ministry. The Body of Christ is strengthened and balanced by every gift we discover and dedicate to ministry.

Preaching is a gift. It's also a skill to be developed. If you haven't been given the tongues of angels, by careful preparation you can learn not to be sounding brass.

### **MATCHING PREACHING WITH PRACTICE**

Practice what you preach. Every preacher has heard that motto.

Matching what we say publicly and what we do privately is a special challenge to leaders. Early in our ministries we develop a pattern of working with people. That pattern is our leadership style. An effective preacher meshes his pulpit pronouncements and his leadership approach.

Speaking and acting congruently is crucial for the preacher-leader, whether he's a coach, dictator, joker, or hermit. What's your leadership style? How does it relate to your preaching?

#### *Coach: The Active Positive Style*

One of the ministers I admire most is Bill, a coach/leader. He's a people-grower, and, therefore, a congregation-builder. Bill relates well to his people and his community. People grow spiritually and in Christian service under his player-coach ministry. His congregations always increase numerically, and in influence too. But the real proof of Bill's effectiveness shows up after he leaves. (That's right. His effective leadership is demonstrated after he moves to a new church.) His churches stay built! Bill grows people; they reach others; together they mature and the Body of Christ becomes permanently strong.

The coach/leader involves people in ministry. The coach is results-oriented, choosing to get good results by working with and through people. The coach believes in his team and equips the team's leaders (Eph. 4:11-13).

The coach style is a long-range style. That's what makes it effective. The coach develops people.

The coach likes people and has a positive ministry as his goal. Actively approaching people makes preaching comfortable for the coach. Positive ministry directions lend themselves to selecting sermon topics that are more apt to be positive too.

#### *Dictator: The Active Negative Style*

The dictator controls people. Dictators can range from benevolent to tyrannical. Customarily, the dictator sees his congregation as somewhat lazy and uncreative

and sees himself as prophetic. He fears sin is more powerful than salvation. His leader style implies God speaks more to him than to other lay or staff ministers.

In spite of his assumptions about people, the dictator can be the most efficient communicator of all. He clearly spells out what his church members will do and how they will do it. There are no questions about his orders. People either respond positively or leave. Because the dictator closely controls the congregation's goals, he keeps the group's ministry directions clearly focused. Good or bad, that's efficiency.

Communication is the dictator's strength; unrelenting pressure is his nemesis. Let me give an example. After a church business conference a young married couple, new members of our congregation, approached me. "What happened in that meeting?" they demanded. I reviewed the conference mentally and concluded it was pretty typical.

"What seemed unusual?" I asked them.

"Motions were made by several different persons. Various viewpoints about the motions were expressed. There were even a few negative votes. Then we sang and prayed together, and everybody left happy. We've never seen that before. What happened?" they asked again.

I was still puzzled. "What are you used to?"

Their answer helped me understand their background. "Our pastor of 18 years moderated church meetings and made all of the motions himself. Only deacons spoke up, and they only seconded motions as previously arranged and agreed. There were no debates and no negative votes." I realized for the first time they had grown up in church with a dictator-styled leader. But one point surprised me.

"No negative votes?"

"No."

"Never?"

"Never."

Then, after a long pause and a look at each other, the young man admitted: "Well, there were some negative votes once."

"When?" I inquired.

"The night the church split. The night the pastor resigned and moved to Denver to start a new church!"

This dictator-style pastor kept the pressure on his congregation for 18 years. While his church grew, little conflicts accumulated and simmered under the surface. Finally, the explosion divided his church and cost him his ministry there. The price of his efficiency was high.

The dictator's preaching approach is direct and outspoken. He enjoys the control he feels on the platform. His preaching themes may tell his listeners what he's against more than what he favors.

#### *Joker: The Passive Positive Style*

The joker entertains and builds fellowship. He generally hones his platform skills and preaches well. Denominational conferences and conventions often spotlight the joker leader. One prominent pastor habitually stuck his head into staff meetings and said, "You're doing great. Let me pray with you before I go to the airport." Then, he'd bless them and fly off to another denominational meeting.

Permissiveness is the joker's hallmark. He plays too

much to get goals set and quality organizational work done. Judging others' work is not in the joker's personality makeup. He's too busy being nice and spinning yarns.

Jokers are needed when an emotional change-of-pace is necessary. I remember a deacon who relaxed the tense atmosphere of a church business meeting debate by stuttering, "I-I-I'm confused." I don't know whether he deliberately planned his humor or not. But he effectively helped the group laugh, relax, and move on to do its work.

From a congregational health standpoint, the joker leader excels at enriching fellowship. He's a healer. His sensitivity to people's interests and reactions lends itself well to smoothing troubled waters and helping persons and groups feel better toward each other.

As a preacher, the joker shines. He tries, in fact, to make the pulpit his primary platform for leadership too. He preaches positively but doesn't follow through on his ideas organizationally.

#### *Hermit: The Passive Negative Style*

A hermit minister told me, "A pastor is ideally a resident philosopher. He reads big books. He preaches fine sermons." Like the studious minister who was invisible Monday through Saturday and incomprehensible on Sunday, the hermit is seldom effective. The ministry is people-to-people and heart-to-heart work. Hermits often aren't comfortable enough with folks to enjoy the people work of ministry.

The hermit stays in retreat. He withdraws from leader situations, closes his door, and asks not to be disturbed. Even when he's in a committee or staff meeting, he runs away emotionally. Hermits rarely do today what they can put off until tomorrow. The hermit's passivity avoids responsibility and creates a leadership vacuum. Unless lay leaders exert some effort and imagination, the hermit's church soon becomes inert.

Some hermits are born; others are created. Natural-born hermits are shy and self-effacing around people. Time, maturity, and a sense of God's direction can help the shy hermit confront his style.

The hermit style can also be a product of being crushed by a congregation. Let me illustrate.

In the days of the sailing ships some vessels seemed jinxed. Accidents and fatalities were strangely commonplace. When these "widow makers," as they were called, paid for themselves, they were deliberately scuttled. Some congregations gain reputations as widow makers too. When a pastor has been abused by such a group, he needs a caring congregation where he can rebuild his trust in God's people.

The hermit suffers both as a preacher and a leader. Unable to approach people, he's also unsure of his ideas. Tragically, the hermit's uncertainty communicates in both public and small-group settings.

#### **DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN ROLE AND RENT**

He stood before his seminary classmates and pled, "What do I do?" His face reflected painful concern.

His story is familiar to us who have been asked to provide ministry across the full range of possibilities from the sublime to the ridiculous.

"Last night about midnight," he said, "an elderly mem-

ber of my church called me. She said her husband had taken his supper to work with him but had forgotten his false teeth."

The lady's final statement created a bind for the young minister. "Pastor," she demanded, "if you don't take George's teeth to him, he won't be able to eat his supper."

The student pastor paused, drew a deep breath, and summed up his discomfort. "I know I'm called to feed the flock of God," he affirmed. "But I didn't know I was expected to take their teeth to them!"

The care and feeding of church members is at the heart of any minister's role. It's automatic. It goes with the territory. But, occasionally, the minister is confronted with a demand that's either trivial or superhuman. That is, the man of God is expected either to run errands or to perform miracles.

James Glasse describes unrealistic expectations for ministry as rent to be paid. Ministers must distinguish between the natural aspects of their role and unrealistic rent. When you're unsure whether a demand on you is role or rent, ask this pivotal question, "If I meet this expectation, will God's kingdom be strengthened or extended?"

#### **GETTING READY, GETTING SET**

Do you use a readiness for preaching checklist? Here are a few questions to ask yourself to test your life attitude before you preach.

- Am I telling His story while I tell my story? To some extent, all preaching is autobiographical. My retired preacher friend, R. C. Danley, told me: "I've spent a lifetime talking to myself in the pulpit and letting congregations listen in." The real question is whether we're being faithful proclaimers of the gospel while we tell about our own experiences with Christ.

- Am I a pilgrim or a garbage man? Our emotions overflow when we preach. If our hearers can identify with us as fellow travelers of the Christian way, that's healthy. But if we dump our emotional garbage—fears, prejudices, hostilities—on our congregation, we may be garbage men more than pilgrims.

I once heard a fiery sermon from the Old Testament Book of Joel. The preacher was stern and emphatic. Several times during his message he paused to assure us with, "This is a great church, and I love all of you." Somehow I felt mixed up by the sermon.

After the service an eight-year-old's candor helped my confusion. He asked, "What was the preacher so mad about today?" The child was right. The preacher's anger at us and his denials of his feelings trashed up his legitimate message.

- Am I a learner or an expert? Jesus called us to be disciples, which means learners. Yet we are often cast in the role of "the person with all the answers." The expert role is seductive. We may tell more than we know. My father gave me a timely warning about playing the expert. "Son," he said, "an expert is just a fool more than 50 miles away from home!"

- Am I a carrier of grace or guilt? C. S. Lewis called the contagion of faith "good infection." Salvation is a positive story. Still some Christians prefer guilt to grace and negatives to positives. As a friend complained to me, "I don't like our new preacher. When I hear a sermon, I

*Continued on page 43*

## A Christmas Sermon

# MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

by Wesley Tracy

Text: Luke 1:26-56

It happened on a Wednesday. In Galilee a very long time ago on some ordinary and unknown Wednesday, Joseph and his family representatives met with the family representatives of a young girl (13 or 14) named Merium—Mary to us. At that meeting a betrothal contract was signed. Such contracts for maidens, virgins if you please, were always drawn up on Wednesdays. Betrothal contracts for widows became business for Thursdays. For young Mary now everything seemed so set, so final, so right, now that the contract was signed.

Mary and Joseph—very common names, particularly Mary. Every family it seems had a Merium named after Moses' sister. Girls were not named after their fathers and grandfathers; that honor was reserved for sons. In fact, many girls were not named at all until they were several years old. Indeed it was common for a family to have more than one girl named Mary. Mary the elder and Mary the younger they were usually called. And so it was that on an ordinary Wednesday long, long ago an utterly ordinary Mary was betrothed to an ordinary Joseph.

Joseph himself was no scholar. He was not a rabbi. He had no college degree, no B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. in clinical psychology or philosophy. No, Joseph was the industrial arts type—a carpenter. He and utterly ordinary Mary who looked like a hundred other nearly nameless, dark-eyed, olive-complexioned Marys were be-

trothed in a little backwoods town called Nazareth.

Perhaps Mary would have been perfectly happy to have been an ordinary Jewish wife and mother. But God interrupted this idyllic scene. He sent His angel Gabriel with

### AN AMAZING ANNOUNCEMENT

The angel said to Mary:

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?"

And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. . . . For with God nothing will be impossible" (*Luke 1:31-35, 37, RSV*).

This message is amazing because of the *nature* of it. Just when we begin to learn enough about God's system of nature to understand its reliability, God, in the central event of all history, decides to supersede it. He

proclaims an amazing announcement that  
no law of physics can explain, that  
no scientist can hypothesize, that  
no computer can predict . . .

Quite beyond the boundaries of biology God announces that the Son of the Most High will be born of a virgin!

It is an announcement so amazing, so supranatural and suprarational that ever since people, especially theologians, have been scurrying about trying to ferret out a natural explanation for it all. For we, especially the theologians, can no more tolerate something suprarational than we can tolerate a roach in our soup.

It was an amazing announcement, but it was also

### AN AMAZING ASSIGNMENT

How amazing that God chose utterly ordinary Mary. But it is not just her ordinariness that makes her a risky choice. Consider, for example, Mary's age—she is a 14-year-old kid. How in the world can God trust such an important role in cosmic redemption to a 14-year-old kid. You know what 14-year-old girls are like—they are giggly junior highers, they freak out over rock and roll singers, they are boy-crazy, they wear T-shirts with absurd sayings on them. Immaturity of the rankest sort! It looks like God could have found a devout, virginal type of woman of 35 or so. Sarah was nearly a hundred when she gave birth, wasn't she? Mary was a high risk and an amazing choice. How could she have even worked out her teenage identity crisis—probably didn't even know who she was yet.

If you don't believe me, ask the developmentalists. Ask Piaget, Kohlberg, Erickson. Ask James Fowler and George (prove anything) Gallup. Have they not proven that Mary at age 14 with her impoverished environment could only have a "stage 2" faith when a "stage 5" would be needed for such an assignment as this? Why, Mary could only have the faith of a child. Maybe that's why when Mary's son grew up and became a Rabbi He kept saying over and over that only those with childlike faith would ever see the kingdom of God.

It was indeed an amazing announcement, and an amazing assignment, but I am even more astonished at

### MARY'S AMAZING ACCEPTANCE

At first Mary was "greatly troubled at the saying" and "considered in her mind" what all this meant (v. 29, RSV). Wouldn't you be "greatly troubled" and do some considering as well?

Mary was greatly troubled, but considering it seriously she responded with these amazing words: "Let it be to me according to your word" (v. 38, RSV).

What was she agreeing to? At what cost would she say, "Let it be to me according to your word"? Just what did Mary put to risk in order to obey God?

First, she certainly risked *family rejection and disapproval*. She would have to bear the burden of bringing disgrace to the family. What would her brothers and sisters say? What would her parents think? Oh, you say, surely her parents would understand—they would be-

lieve her story. Perhaps, but they would believe her to about the same degree that you would believe your 14-year-old who turned up pregnant and said, "God did it."

Further, Mary risked *public disapproval*; in saying, "Let it be to me according to your word" she was accepting the assignment to be gossip bait in a small town. Notice the wording of Matt. 1:18, "she was found to be with child" (RSV). She agreed to the risks of being pregnant out of wedlock when that brought the bitterest sort of despising.

Scholem Asch, in his historical novel *Mary* says that the traditional wedding ceremony included the requirement for the bride to sit in front of her father's house for parts of three days. She was to have her hair loosed, and she was to be dressed in white to signify her virginity. There she sat to receive greetings and good wishes from one and all. But Mary was found to be with child, or, as they would have said in those days, she already had a baby beneath her heart. Do you suppose Mary went through with this? What kinds of greetings from passersby would a pregnant girl dressed in bridal white receive? If you were the parents, would you allow your pregnant teenager to sit as a spectacle before all, and pregnant, protest that she was pure? But that was the kind of risk that the troubled young Mary agreed to when she said, "Let it be according to your word." What an amazing acceptance.

But there was more risk. Surely as far as she knew when Mary accepted this amazing assignment she was saying a *final good-bye to her fiancé*. There goes her chance for love and marriage and family. Surely the just





man Joseph would have nothing to do with her now. He could never understand. Would he not now cast her out like a loathsome leper?

There was this too—if her faith turned out to be fevered fantasy, with Joseph went her means of economic support. Wife and mother was about the only vocation offered in those days to utterly ordinary Marys. Who would want her and her illegitimate child now?

But Mary's amazing acceptance meant a still greater risk than all this. Jewish law provided that a betrothed maiden being discovered to be with child by a third person was to be stoned to death. If she was a priest's daughter, she was to be burned to death. However, in later times this had been mitigated to mere death by strangulation. But being willing to risk her very life to serve God Mary answered, "Let it be to me according to your word."

In short Mary jeopardized everything that really matters—family, reputation, love and marriage, financial security, and her own mortal life—in order to serve God.

I call that an amazing acceptance—I can think of no better example of complete consecration to God. Mary heard the amazing announcement, the amazing assignment, and in great faith made an amazing acceptance and because of this she was able to participate in an

### AMAZING ADORATION

Some Christians truly adore Mary. Most Protestants don't. Some do not even know how it came to be that her name is associated with a desperate fling of the pigskin in the waning seconds of the football game. Some do not even know why the "immaculate reception" is a clever, though nearly sacrilegious, football phrase.

But in this part of the sermon I am not primarily concerned about the adoration that Mary received, but rather the amazing adoration of the Babe that Mary witnessed and pondered in her heart.

We observe who came to adore the Babe. The shepherds, some Gentile foreigners (the wise men we call them), and two senior citizens at church, Simeon and Anna. And as we join Mary in pondering this in our hearts we learn that: *Divinity is always discovered by those who seem least likely to find it.*

Where were the princes and kings, the rich and the noble—those important enough to greet the newborn king? Where were the high priests, the scribes, prophets, and Pharisees—those religious professionals who should have known enough to greet the Babe?

Fulton Sheen wrote:

Only two classes of people found the Babe: the shepherds and the Wise Men; the simple and the learned; those who knew that they knew nothing, and those who knew that they did not know everything. He is never seen arrogant; never by the man who thinks he knows. Not even God can tell the proud anything! Only the humble can find God! ("*The Life of Christ*," 55).

As we ponder this amazing adoration with Mary we also learn that: *Divinity is always where you least expect to find it.*

A donkey stall, a stable, the filthiest place in the world—here Purity is born. No worldly mind would ever

expect to find Divinity there. And to paraphrase Fulton Sheen again, *No worldly mind* would ever have suspected that He, *from whose* hands came planets and worlds, would one day have tiny baby hands, that He whose feet trod the everlasting hills would one day be too weak to walk, that He, the Eternal Word would one day be unable to speak even one word.

*No worldly mind* would ever have suspected that OMNIPOTENCE would be wrapped in swaddling clothes, that SALVATION would lie in a manger, that the bird who built the nest would be hatched there.

No one would ever have suspected that God breaking in upon human history *would ever be so helpless* and that is precisely why so many miss Him—*Divinity is always where you least expect to find it* (Sheen, 55-56).

Amazing, is it not. Paul M. Bassett in his book of Christmas sermons, *Keep the Wonder*, cites Martin Luther's amazement at it all. Luther marvels that God came to us as a mere mewling, a puking Baby.

As we ponder all of this with Mary we begin to get a clue about the way God does things. *God's way is not the ways of the rich and famous*—not the way of kings, and presidents, and armies, military parades, ICBMs, arms dealers, and secret police. God's way is not the way of the influence peddlers and the power brokers. Rather God's way is about *loving, self-sacrificing, vulnerability!* The Son of the Most High came as a helpless, defenseless, puking Baby. As Rob Staples says—it was an "utterly uncomprehensible condescension" fueled by love and vulnerability.

You do understand that if Jesus came to this generation He could not make His entrance on Malcom Forbes' new \$450 million yacht, don't you?

You do see how much more fitting it was to invite the shepherds—who were watching the Temple flocks—*animals destined for sacrifice*—how much more fitting to send them to see the *Real Lamb of God*.

You see, don't you, that the last thing Mary and Joseph had to worry about was having their privacy interrupted by Robin Leach and the camera crew of "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous"! You do see that human "pomp and circumstance" are mere nonsense syllables to God.

Another thing we learn as we ponder with Mary is that *the real Christmas story is unswervingly subversive to a sinful world order*. The Christmas story will sink Mr. Forbes' yacht. Listen to Mary ponder these things in her "Song" in Luke 1:46-56. She prophetically proclaims that in Christ we see that God has "scattered the proud," "put down the mighty," and "sent the rich away empty." St. Paul ponders this too and says, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are . . ." (1 Cor. 1:27-28, RSV).

The rich, powerful, oppressive establishment will be brought down and the weak, the poor, the lowly, and the least likely will be exalted. The very foundations of sinful human society are threatened by the Christmas story. The gospel of Christmas is diametrically opposed to the methods and purposes of the military industrial complex that runs this world. The Christmas reality calls into

question the very foundations, the very *givens* of this age.

If, when, and to the extent that the church as institution models herself after the example of kings, and armies, military parades, executive orders and secret police, influence and power brokers of the world—if, when, and to the extent that it does this it will find the gospel of Christmas unswervingly *subversive* to the Church herself. The power brokers and self-seekers in the church will be assuredly toppled not by carnal worldly weapons—but by humble, self-sacrificing, poured-out *vulnerability*. The terrible meek will get them.

Some preachers, impatient with a helpless, puking Baby of a Messiah, will remind us, "Remember Jesus will grow up and make demands." But that is to miss the point! Just by being a *Baby*—He makes the strongest kind of demand on us already. If you do not know that the Christmas is that after Tiny Tim cries out "God bless us every one" the very next day Bob Cratchet and his neighbors have to go back to work in a sweat shop!

The big threat to Christmas is not Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Santa Claus, or the commercializing of what goes on at JC Penneys. The big threat to Christmas is preachers who *won't tell the subversive truth* about Christmas—and laity who love to have it so, who think that if the poignant little stories make them cry they have really had a great Christmas!

But the gospel of Christmas is more than social commentary. It deals with personal salvation as well. And as we ponder with Mary we see what Mary surely saw: life takes on meaning primarily because of and in rela-

tionship to the Babe of Bethlehem. Without Christ neither you, I, nor Mary would matter much.

Ponder this too. You have not yet really heard the gospel of Christmas if you do not see in the Babe of Bethlehem God's ultimate response to your rebellious and wicked sins. Look at the Babe in the manger and ponder this: that little vulnerable Baby is what God finally decided to do about you, a sinner.

O come let us adore Him.



## An Advent Idea

Submitted by Carl C. Green

Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Seattle

This year I tried a new (to me) idea for an Advent sermon series. I have been pleased with the results. And I think the congregation has been pleased as well.

The sanctuary choir had selected "He Started the Whole World Singing" to be their Christmas presentation. I decided to let this cantata suggest my Advent sermon topics. I studied the cantata and picked four songs carrying predominant themes that could be adapted for use as sermons.

Week 1: I picked the song "Zion Kept on Calling," and preached from Ps. 137:1-6 and Isa. 9:1-9. I tried to help the congregation imagine what it must have been like to be an exile looking forward to the messianic event, and to realize our privilege in looking back on its completion.

Week 2: I chose the song "Bring Back the Glory," preaching from Rom. 1:18-32: Men have sought the glory (the good life) by alternative

routes. However, these other routes have not produced authentic glory. The concluding question was, "Then how do we get back the glory?" The answer—through Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:24-25; 8:1)!

Week 3: The song selected was "Mary's Song," and the scripture passage was Luke 1:26-52. We explored the wonder and privilege of being chosen by God, and the inner response or compulsion to "magnify the Lord" that hopefully results (Luke 1:46-47).

Week 4: The song was "Messiah Is Born," and the scripture passage was Matt. 1:18-23. We sought to establish Christ's purpose for entering our world as indicated by His names, and to call the congregation to appropriate response.

Week 5: The song was "Next Time We Meet," and the scripture passage was Heb. 11:39-40. Again, we

reflected on our privileged status as persons who looked back to the completed messianic event instead of being one of those who "were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised" (Heb. 11:39, NIV). This concluding Advent sermon was a strong look toward the Second Coming and the messianic feast.

Each week the choir became a part of my message. They sang, as introduction to the sermon, the coinciding song from their cantata. It became a dramatic Advent series.

This approach is, of course, dependent on choosing a cantata with sufficient substance to make it sermonically adaptable. We did not find this procedure to be an overuse of the musical material; rather, it provided insight and a depth of worship to the cantata presentation that might not have been possible otherwise.

I may try it again some year!

# Giving: A Gracious Response to Grace

by Ron Compton

*Church of the Nazarene, Wyoming, Ill.*

**S**hould I tithe on 10% of my gross income or my net income?" "Should I tithe on my tax refund check?" "Should I tithe at all?" "I tithe, what more do you want?"

These are a few remarks that might be heard when the topic of Christian giving is discussed. Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" are sometimes paraphrased to read, "It is more blessed to be a calculated giver than to risk giving too much." Such an approach to tithing and stewardship in general reveals a pinched-soul attitude toward something that should be a joy. Living in a day when the dollar seems to disappear so mysteriously, it only makes sense to sit down and figure out how much can be spent, where it can be spent, and how often. It is against this backdrop of "budget fever" that Paul's words in 1 Cor. 16:1-4 speak a challenge to Christians.

From the outset, it is important to realize Paul's directives to the Corinthians had to do with a particular "special" offering being taken for the

church in Jerusalem. This being true, his words still radiate a "spirit of giving" that is applicable to the whole realm of Christian stewardship.<sup>1</sup>

Paul's instructions in 16:2 can be divided into four phrases. "On the first day of every week" (RSV) may be one of the earliest, if not the earliest, record we possess that shows that the Early Church observed Sunday as their day of worship.<sup>2</sup> Paul's use of "Sabbath" here is related to the Hebrew idiom of representing a week by the use of the term.<sup>3</sup> On this day each of the Corinthians was to "set aside and store up a *treasure*." "To store up" and its derivatives are used in the New Testament to represent that which is stored away because of its great value to the person (notice Matt. 6:19-21). To highlight the importance of this treasure Paul calls for this practice to be continual, not just an occasional or one-time event.<sup>4</sup>

Up to this point, Paul's instructions could be seen as rather insig-

nificant. He is asking the people to set aside a treasure on the first day of the week to help in an offering for Jerusalem. That it is required on the first day shows its priority, yet the significant aspect of Paul's directive comes in the third phrase of verse 2. The treasure set aside by the person is based upon what he "has been given or prospered with."<sup>5</sup> A special amount is not designated; rather something greater than a certain percentage is called for—Paul summons the people to give out of their wealth, whatever that may be.

In 2 Cor. 8:1-15 we find Paul elaborating on this same theme. In verses 9-14 (RSV) we read,

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, so that your readiness in desiring it may*

*be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality.*

Jesus had emptied himself that they might be full. Now Paul calls them to give out of that fullness, according to what they have, not according to what they have not. This idea of giving out of what God gives is elevated to an even higher plane through the words used by Paul to designate this "offering." Aside from the use of "collection" (*logeia*) in 1 Cor. 16:1-2, Paul steered away from words that referred directly to money: "fellowship" (*koinonia*, Rom. 15:36; 2 Cor. 8:4), "ministry" (*diakonia*, 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1), "generosity" (*azpotes*, 2 Cor. 8:20), "blessing" (*eulogia*, 2 Cor. 9:5). "Priestly service" (*leitourgia*, 2 Cor. 9:12) and "grace" (*charis*, 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:1). Giving was not to be seen as a duty. It was a response—a "gracious" response to the grace God had lavished upon the Corinthians.

Turning back to 1 Cor. 16:3, we find Paul using *grace* (“gift,” RSV) to describe the offering being received. Throughout this letter Paul emphasizes over and over that the Corinthians are recipients of grace. In 1:4, Paul tells of his thanksgiving because of the grace the people have received from God. In 4:7 he reminds them that everything they have, they have *received*. The divine initiative was behind all the good that the Corinthians enjoyed.

Now speaking of the offering, Paul calls on the people to respond to God's grace in their lives *by giving grace to others*. To set a percentage or an amount would have been to negate what Paul had been demonstrating throughout the entire letter. God had given freely and sacrificially from His resources; Paul, in response to God, had given freely and sacrificially from his God-given resources (chapter 9). The Corinthians are now asked to do the same. The offering was to be a human response to divine grace.

This “graciousness” is also seen in the final phrase of verse 2. Some understand Paul to say he wants the offering taken before he gets there so he will not need to waste time taking up the offering himself.<sup>6</sup> Based on the message of the entire letter, with its emphasis on the power of the gospel versus the words and wisdom of men (1:18-19), it would seem more in line that this request is one more element in the flow of thought. Each person was to set aside his offering (treasure) in response to that which he “graciously” had received, so that when Paul came “then offerings would not happen.” Paul wanted the offering to be based on the power of the *gospel*, not *his* efforts of abstracting an offering through talk and pressure.

The instruction in verses 3-4 when viewed within this context of grace reflects Paul's concern to protect the "graciousness" of their gift for Jerusalem. He designates the offering as "your" gift (v. 3) emphasizing again that it was their response, not his pressure. Because it was their response, Paul wanted to be careful that nothing in the transference of the gift from Corinth to Jerusalem took away from the "graciousness" of the gift.

There is one more directive given in chapter 16 that relates to this gift. In verse 14 Paul admonishes that all should be done in love. This is a capstone for the offering discussion and ultimately for the entire Corinthian problem. Wisdom, knowledge, factions, words, spiritual gifts, all take on secondary importance when compared to the greatness of love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Yet, even love is the result of being in a right relationship with God (1 Corinthians 8:3), and therefore it is another expression of human response to divine grace.

This entire discussion reveals something very special about Paul's

offering for Jerusalem. For the apostle, this collection was to be an example of each Christian's response to God's grace in his life. Though not the only theological reason for giving, it was a very important one for Paul. It is also important for us as it can bring a freshness to the idea of stewardship. Stewardship is raised from the level of giving out of guilt or pressure to the level of joy. Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," become reality, not just pious jargon. Interestingly enough, along with the joy comes a challenge. In the light of God's grace, quarreling over which 10% to give, tithing on "gross or net" or what should or should not be considered "tithable," like a refund check or a birthday gift, becomes rather petty. Giving is not squeezing out a calculated absolute minimum 10%. Giving is the Christian's "gracious" response to God's immeasurable grace.

## NOTES

1. Verse 1 makes it clear that Paul instructed the churches of Galatia and the church of Corinth in basically the same way. This points to the "universal" aspect of Paul's instructions. What he said to the Corinthians was not contingent upon their particular situation, it was the advice given to the Gentile church in general.
2. Paul's actual phrase is *kata mian sabbatou*. This need not point to the day of worship. It may simply be that the person is to make this "setting aside" on the first day of the week. It is a fact of history that worship did develop around the first day of the week. When this took place is not certain. Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 238; cf. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible (Greenwood, S.C.: Oliphants, 1971), 158.
3. W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 3:945.
4. The use of the present imperative *titheto* indicates this. It must also be noted that it appears this may have been done at home, as there is no explicit mentioning of storing it at the "church."
5. *Euodow* is only used in the New Testament in the passive, and in this passage it could refer to wealth gained from business. This being so, Paul's constant use of the divine passive throughout the letter and the appearance of *charis* in verse 3 indicates the passive is important here.
6. William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *1 Corinthians*, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1977), 356.



"I guess this magazine was pressed for space on this page."

# THE CHURCH'S UNTAPPED WEALTH

by William Tenny

*Music Director, Grace United Methodist Church, Marianna, Fla.*

**T**he nominating committee was having no luck. No one really wanted to serve anywhere. "I got nothing out of that job." "I've taught that class for five years, let someone else have it for a while." "I'm *not* changing any more diapers." All excuses, perhaps valid, but certainly typical.

Finding workers for the church is becoming increasingly difficult. With more working couples and fewer housewives, more responsibilities and less money, church resources for the 60s and 70s are no longer available in the 80s.

However, the church has not been left powerless; there is an untapped wealth of talent in the church. Most churches have a number of retired and semiretired people who are waiting to serve. We often neglect nominating them for positions of responsibility, but for the church to be a growing, thriving institution, we must fully utilize *all* our resources.

When looking for a place of service for our seniors, we tend to limit the scope by imposing strict guidelines "for their own sake." The activities we choose can't tax, confuse, or challenge them. No wonder many of our seniors are so bored they slip into roles of the helpless infirm. These feelings of worthlessness can lead to premature aging and death. Dr. Boaz Kahana, chairman of psychology at Cleveland State University, comments, "When old age has negative effects on a man, he lives only as long as it makes sense for him."<sup>\*</sup>

Everyone needs to be challenged. At the age of 80 Moses dared to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. The

only job we offer a spry 80-year-old today is to help in the nursery. Our seniors can handle responsible, respectable positions—if they're challenged.

The weekly services offer a myriad of opportunities for seniors to shine. Look around. Anywhere an able-bodied young adult can serve, a senior may do as well. Besides the typical Sunday School teacher and nursery worker (important though they are), there are other tasks available. Many seniors have an encompassing love for their fellowman and make the best greeters. A cheery face before the morning service can help create a joyous, worshipful state of mind.

I once visited a church where all the greeters were members of the senior Sunday School class. Each week they would dismiss their class 10 minutes early and assemble at the various entrances. There they would mingle with each arrival, and when a guest was identified, a small appliqued rose was placed on lapel or blouse. This attractive way to greet visitors not only clearly designated guests but also utilized seniors where they often work best—interacting with others. Wheelchairs should be encouraged to serve as well. They are often considered helpless, when often, nothing could be further from the truth. They too can serve aptly as greeters, teachers, and ushers. A wheelchair usher should be able to collect the offering and lead a guest to a seat with little difficulty. Imaginative thinking finds places of service for all.

Seniors have something to offer

that no one else may have—an abundance of time. Many seniors' days are often spent unproductively, a sure cause of depression and anxiety. By supplementing daily housework with meaningful tasks, the church will accomplish its mission more efficiently, and the senior can find fulfillment. The church has enough responsibilities to keep every member busy, day in and day out.

Active seniors can play an important role in the work of the church, if they are allowed to actively contribute to its mission. Visitation has always been one of the pastor's most time-consuming chores, yet one that must be faithfully attended to. By sharing visitation assignments with seniors, the pastor can meet other timely demands. The visiting senior adult should be trained by calling with the pastor several times to become familiar with home ministering.

Visits need not be confined to home ministries. Hospital and nursing home visitation can provide additional opportunities to serve. Hospital visits can be especially spiritually uplifting, with adequate training. Training may be taught by the pastor, or one of several good books on hospital visitation might be reviewed. When the senior is ready to visit, the church could furnish a card, flowers, candy, or fruit, as the situation demands, to help the visitor convey the church's love and concern.

Convalescent centers offer unique opportunities to utilize senior adults' talents. Staff members at the



centers are aware of which residents are in need of visitation, and they are usually happy to provide a list. A visit by a senior who not only sympathizes but empathizes as well can make life seem a little more bearable. Seniors may provide Bible studies, craft classes, and even plan an occasional shopping trip with one or two residents.

In agricultural areas, many senior adults are banding together and gleaning the fields. The Old Testament custom of gathering the produce left after the harvest for the poor has been adopted. Most farmers, when approached, are happy to contribute to the needs of the community in this way. Following the owner's harvest, the gleaners carefully retrace the mechanized reaper's path to collect what has been missed. The produce is then processed in the gleaners' homes and delivered to the needy of the community. My grandmother has been working as a gleaner in Oregon for over five years. As she helps the community, her volunteered labor helps maintain her self-worth.

Ministries for seniors are easier to find than ones for the shut-ins, yet this group of adults has the same need for fulfillment. The physical labor involved must be less demanding, but the tasks should still be challenging.

Ambulatory shut-ins may share in the load of ministry with more active seniors. If the shut-in enjoys cooking, a casserole ministry could be started. The church should provide the necessary ingredients to make the favorite casserole. After it is prepared, one of the visiting seniors can pick it up and deliver it. Recipients may be new residents to the area, victims of misfortune, families

with sickness, or even another shut-in who may not be able to care for himself.

Many shut-ins spend time making handicrafts that can be used in ministry. Again, materials should be purchased by the sponsoring church, while a token payment for labor might be offered (particularly to those on fixed incomes). Ornamental crafts may be used as cheery gifts for other shut-ins, convalescent home residents, and hospital patients, or distributed as gifts for new residents, etc. Many crafts are not only decorative but useful as well. Afghans, sweaters, pot holders, and quilts can aid an individual or a family when tragedy strikes. These items also make great presents to overseas missionaries.


If it is difficult to provide ministries for shut-ins, finding opportunities for the bedridden can seem nearly impossible. This need not be. Even the bedridden can offer services that may result in real church growth.

Every day, the newspaper bears news to your doorstep. Within those pages are opportunities for ministry. Your local paper probably reports the community's births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. In each of these circumstances a life-changing event has occurred, and the opportunity for ministry is high. Bedridden seniors can help contact these families as a church representative and offer its services. The church should supply a newspaper subscription for the shut-in, then prepare several different form letters, one for each situation you choose to address. Leave the signature block open and duplicate the letters. The senior should then find the announcements in the paper, use the phone book to locate addresses, sign the appropriate let-

ters, and prepare the envelopes for pickup by a church visitor. These timely letters may provide many opportunities to witness in situations where there is great need. Other letter ministries may be initiated as well. Personal letters written to other shut-ins, prison inmates, and inactive members can all bring encouraging results.

For those who may not be able to see well enough to write, start a telephone ministry. Loneliness can only be cured by company. Shut-ins with few contacts may find relief in a telephone call. Bedridden seniors are in a unique position to offer their time and kindness to others. There is a spiritual boost to those who give encouragement to the less fortunate.

Another popular telephone ministry is the courtesy call. Compile a list of shut-ins and invalids who need to be contacted for their own safety. Perhaps a family member is concerned about a loved one's well-being; a brief telephone call can insure this. Calls should be placed between specific hours so they can be anticipated. Keep a secondary list in case there is no answer so that competent help can be sought if needed.

There are many other ministries senior citizens can offer; I've only scratched the surface. Home Bible studies, bulletin preparation, day-care for children, and newsletter contributions (articles, poetry, and anecdotes) all are services to the Body of Christ. But perhaps even more than the service these ministries offer to others, they provide a chance for our seniors to be challenged—a challenge to be productive. 

*\*Georgia Barrow, Aging, the individual, and Society, 3rd ed. (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1983), 267.*

## Pontius' Puddle



# *The Minister's Priorities*

by Hugh L. Smith

*Superintendent, Washington Pacific District, Church of the Nazarene*

**T**wenty-five years ago a young, naive, inexperienced preacher-boy met his first district Board of Orders and Relations. He felt he was "looking down a spiritual gun barrel" as they drilled him with question after question—all designed to reveal his attitude, commitment, and call to pastoral ministry.

It seemed to that young preacher that for these ministers on the board, the only acceptable standard of performance in the ministry was excellence. Firmly implanted in that 19-year-old's mind was that one must give his best and be his best for Christ and His Church. Paul must have been motivated to excellence when he wrote, in Col. 3:23-24, "Whatever you do, *work at it with all your heart*, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that *you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward*. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (NIV, italics added). These words point the minister in the right direction. And they keep him moving in the right direction as he performs day-by-day ministerial functions.

## **1. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF MINISTRY?**

Pure and simple, the goal of ministry is the glory of

God! We are not *just* called to go to heaven (that's only a part of the goal); we are called to bring glory to God. This has to do with the kinds of dreams I dream, the kinds of thoughts I think, the *goals* that lead to *the Goal*. The pastor is continually exploring what he should and can be, with the help of God. The goal always remains: Bring glory to God!

What I do, where I go, how I think and act—*everything* is to reflect the glory of God! Priorities are established according to this main goal. Moses encountered God, and his direction was set for life (Exodus 3). He again discovers the glory of God in Exod. 33:12-23 and 34:29-35, and he sets out to reflect it. God told Moses he could not see His glory, but at a certain time He would put Moses in the cleft of the rock and cover him with His hand. Then Moses could see the back side of God and His glory. When Moses came down from the mountain, his face reflected God's glory. He used a veil over his face when he spoke to the people. Why did Moses use the veil? So that the people would not see God's glory fade. I visualize Moses, when the glory is fading, returning to the cleft of the rock often. The minister who would reflect God's glory must do so because he has had a cleft-of-the-rock experience and returns there often. God is concerned that we, like Moses, reflect His glory in all that we are and in all that we do.

## **2. WHAT PRIORITIES LEAD TO THE GOAL?**

Some things to remember about priorities—

### **A. Be willing to work.**

After Pete Rose broke Ty Cobb's record for base hits, Mike Mersch, executive sports editor for *The Bradenton Herald*, wrote the following article, titled "Pete Rose: A Blueprint for Success."

Fathers should thank Pete Rose. Baseball's hitman is a blueprint for success. "How do I make it, Dad?" "Copy Pete Rose, Son."

Rose copied his own father, a Cincinnati banker who played tackle football until age 42. Harry (Pete) Rose gave his son a work ethic. All sons should be so lucky. The credo goes something like:



Hugh L. Smith

1. Sleep with one eye open, bounce out of bed and run all day. Don't stop 'til you drop.
2. The saddest words in the English language are, "I could've made it if only I had tried."
3. Everything has a price. Everybody pays, one way or another.
4. Don't look back. Don't make excuses. Don't be negative. Don't worry. Forge ahead. Onward and upward. Things will work out.
5. Work hard, play hard. Success will follow.
6. All things are possible.
7. Eighty percent of success is just showing up every day.
8. The first hundred years are the hardest.

The impact of the article is evident. There is a price to be paid for success. Nothing is easy. Hard work is a part of life. The minister who is unwilling to work will not enjoy a fruitful life. Work means several things to/for the pastor:

*Work means "calling on the folks."* Whether I feel like it or not, whether they have been nice to me or not, whether they agree or disagree with me, I must call. I have had a goal to make five calls a day, five days per week for almost 20 years. Sound easy? I thought so, too!

*Work means hours of planning, keeping up with the important.* W. A. Criswell says the minister should avoid like the plague the temptation to squander life in endless engagements with little or no meaning. He quotes a poem:

#### *The Modern-Day Pastor*

On Monday he lunched with a Housing Committee.  
 With statistics and stew he was filled;  
 Then he dashed to a tea on "Crime in Our City,"  
 And dined with a Church Ladies' Guild.  
 On Tuesday he went to a Babies' Week Lunch,  
 And a tea on "Good Citizenship";  
 At dinner he talked to the Trade Union bunch,  
 (There wasn't a date he dared skip.)  
 On Wednesday he managed two annual dinners,  
 One at noon and the other at night;  
 On Thursday a luncheon on "Bootleg Sinners"  
 And a dinner on "War: Is It Right?"  
 "World Problems We Face" was his Friday noon date  
 (A luncheon-address, as you guessed);  
 And he wielded a fork while a man from New York  
 Spoke that evening on "Social Unrest" . . .  
 On Saturday noon he fell in a swoon,  
 Missed a talk on the youth of our land . . .  
 Poor thing, he was through! He never came to,  
 But died with a spoon in his hand.

*Work means knowing what is important and staying with it.* A pastor should be present for as many fellowship functions as possible without feeling *obligated* to make them all. I find socials a good time to build relationships.

As to a calling list priority, it presently is: (1) hospital; (2) people in crisis; (3) guests and new people; (4) the elderly; and (5) the established families. Of course there are many "invites" from the established families, and that makes up for the casual calling that might be done from the priority list.

I have found the telephone to be a good friend. I set a time to make several calls, find out how things are going, and offer a "telephone prayer." This works well for some busy times, but it should never take the place of home calls.

#### *B. The pastor must be the worship leader.*

To me, this means he prays, he plans, he prepares, he pleads. The pastor labors all week for a fruitful harvest on the Lord's Day. The worship encounter is the most important time of the week. It must have the highest priority of his time and talent. It is taken for granted that the pastor is up-to-date in his relationship to God, has daily devotions and an effective prayer life. He has faithfully called all week and read good books to keep him "alive at the top."

The worship service will be the place where the pastor will fulfill his priestly and prophetic role. He will take the people to God, and He will bring God to the people. He will tell God what the needs of the people are, and he will tell the people what it is that God desires for their lives.

*The worship leader must pray.* To come to Sunday and not have prayed for every part of the worship encounter is to invite failure. Prayer should be offered for the musicians, singers, song leader, offering, public prayers, Scripture reading, and sermon—which will almost always end with an invitation.

*The worship leader must plan the service,* using his best judgment, best material, best methods, usher preparation, etc. This never comes easy. It takes time. If there has been no thought given to the planning for God to do His work, then little is usually accomplished.

*The worship leader prepares.* The sermon is at the center of the worship encounter: a top priority within the top priority. Good sermons are the result of diligent study, inspiration, and a lot of hard work. R. G. Lee has said, "You cannot live on skim milk during the week and preach cream on Sunday." How true. A personal goal for me is reading two to three good books each week. When you combine the formula of five calls per day, five days per week, and two to three books per week, you find you know what the needs of the people are and you have something worth "preaching" to them when they come. Preparation is difficult for me. Except on rare occasions, I have an "open door" policy when I'm at the office. This means interruptions galore. But I choose not to do differently. This means much of my preparation is done late at night, and on some occasions, very early in the morning. But I have learned the importance of preparation and have embarrassed myself only a few times.

*The worship leader pleads.* The pastor prays, plans, prepares, and pleads—ever so gently, but he pleads. He pleads by purposeful invitations to discipleship, "moving up" commitment, etc. It's no good to bring folks to the Living Waters unless they drink. It's futile to bring them to the Bread of Life if they do not taste.

W. A. Criswell preaches with the invitation in mind. He writes:

The sermon and the pulpit are the instruments in the hands of the evangelistic pastor to win souls for Jesus. Sorrowfully there is a modern tendency to turn aside from evangelistic preaching, as though the peo-

# Isn't There a Better Way?

by Kenneth Vogt

Abbotsford, B.C.

**T**he agonizing disruption in the lives of associate ministers and their families when a senior pastor resigns is an increasing problem in our growing church. The *Manual* statement with reference to the requirement for resignation by associates is quite clear and needs little interpretation. The implementation is left largely to the discretion of the senior pastor.


It is true the council of the local board is a safeguard against the hasty use of this authority. It is also true that the consent of the district superintendent must be secured before new personnel are recommended to the board. In actual practice, however, the wishes of the senior pastors, both resigning and incoming, are rarely contradicted. They are the ones who implement the change process.

Therefore, my appeal is for compassion in the implementation of the requirements. Wouldn't it be better for senior pastors to take at least a year to work through the changes they desire to make?

There are many advantages to this approach. This

would enable a senior pastor to find significant places of ministry for existing staff. He would make friends in his new congregation as they see him treating in a thoughtful way a staff member whom they have learned to love.

This would also help him to evaluate his new charge in terms of long-range ministry. He could test the mood, the cultural background of his new church, and the spiritual gifts in the laity, and then begin to select those associates who would help him fulfill his own ministry in the new situation. An associate who fits well with the senior pastor may not fit at all in the new congregation.

Taking at least a year to work through the changes would ease the economic hardships on associates and their families and at the same time alleviate some of the hurt from the sudden tearing apart of affections and loyalties. People who are handled abruptly in areas affecting emotional responses find it difficult to rebuild their affections and loyalties toward a new leader. 

pie outside the church could be reached by lowering our standards and changing our eternal message. The spirit of compromise, secularism, and ecumenism are seen everywhere. It is more dialogue without decision; communication without conversion; universalism without personal salvation. This is not the method of the New Testament. The apostles preached for a verdict.

Jonathan Edwards profoundly believed that the sermon was an agency and a vehicle for conversion. He restored the sermon to its primacy as the center of worship. He made the sermon the focal point of worship, not the sacraments. He expected something to take place when he preached. The one principle aim of preaching was to win others to Christ. Edwards had no desire to be clever, only to be clear.<sup>1</sup>

When a pastor clearly proclaims the truth, great things happen. But it is human to bog down in heavy judgment and harshness with the people (especially if statistics are not moving, or if he has not visited them to know their hurts and needs). Remember, it is the tender, compassionate, pleading voice—like that of the Shepherd—not the harsh, judgmental voice that the flock hears and follows. It's linked with prayer and intercession. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "The pastor is the intercessor for the flock, not the accuser or the judge. Satan is the accuser, and God is the judge. If the pastor is not the intercessor, then the congregation has none."<sup>2</sup>

It would help if we would remember this every time we plead for a decision.

There is no greater fulfillment than to know that someone has come to know the Lord in personal, saving-living-relationship. As Dr. Hardy C. Powers often reminded us, "Not much happens around a church until somebody gets saved." These, for me, are meaningful priorities that lead to the goal.

Reexamine now in outline form:

1. What Is the *Goal* of Ministry?

To glorify God.

To God be the glory. (Not you and me.)

2. What Priorities Lead to the *Goal*?


Be willing to work.

Be a worship leader: Pray

Plan

Prepare

Plead

I am grateful for the start that Board of Orders and Relations gave me 25 years ago. I am putting my whole heart in ministry. I am seeing temporal and eternal rewards. I seek to bring glory to God in all of it. May it never be *my* ministry, or *your* ministry, but *His*. 

## NOTES

1. W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 96.

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. by John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper Publishing Co., 1954), 124.

# Dear Senior Pastor

by Owen Wilkie

Dear Pastor,

I'm sure you remember me. I was your assistant a few years back.

I can still remember that day you called on the telephone and asked me if I would consider working with you.

I was thrilled beyond description! It was God's answer to my prayers. After a lifetime of anticipation and preparation I would finally be "in the ministry."

In the picture window of my mind I visualized myself working with you, feeling fulfilled and happy in this exciting role. I saw myself doing a great job and us as a close-knit team. You would be proud of me. The church would grow, and all would be well.

As you recall, it didn't work out that way—at least not in the beginning.

When I first came to your church you discussed with me my responsibilities. No guidelines had yet been put into writing for an assistant pastor, you told me, but I was sure your verbal directions were sufficient.

With my youthful enthusiasm I plunged ahead, trying to straighten out and develop the areas of ministry assigned to me.

My work had just started to get under way and channeled in the direction I felt it should be moving when I was called into your office. You informed me I wasn't measuring up to your expectations. You felt I was eroding some of the projects you had started and was not following the philosophy of the total church program.

I was stunned by your disapproval. And hurt. I believed I had been doing what you wanted me to do.

This led to my sitting down with you and the church board to clearly define in writing the portfolio of the assistant pastor. The job description was then included in the church constitution. As you recall, we never had any real misunderstanding in that area again.

I remember too that when I first came to your church I had the feeling no one knew quite how to treat me. I was the first assistant pastor you or the church had ever worked with. The board and congregation didn't seem to know if they should relate to me as another pastor or as a lay leader.

You solved that problem one Sunday night when you preached on "The Ministry of an Assistant Pastor."

You outlined my ministry, the importance of my work, and the relationship an assistant pastor has to the senior pastor and to the rest of the congregation. From then on everyone, including myself, had a better understanding of where I fit in.

During my first few months at First Church, remember how busy we both were? Except for an occasional meeting to talk over church matters, we seldom saw each other.

I never did tell you how starved I soon got for fellow-

ship. I longed for someone to talk to; someone with whom I could share honestly and openly my dreams and plans and even my problems and fears.

I would often come home after a busy day at the church, feeling very much alone and unsure of myself. I never quite knew whether you really appreciated me or whether the church people approved of my ministry.

You must have sensed this lack of communication between us, because one day you suggested we begin meeting once a week for an hour just to talk, read the Bible, and pray together.

You encouraged me to open up and share whatever was on my heart. You responded to my bottled-up emotions—my ideas that were often immature and sometimes almost heretical—never with any condemnation but always with love and objectivity. Your counsel led me to make right decisions on my own without feeling forced into them.

I made mistakes in my ministry at First Church, probably more than my share. There were times when I got out of line, but I will never forget how your compassion showed through even when you were correcting me. This helped me to be more tolerant of the alleged flaws I thought I saw in your ministry.

You were very supportive, yet you also taught me to stand on my own two feet. You helped me see that in the ministry there are bound to be times of misunderstanding, loneliness, and lack of appreciation. You taught me to depend on the Lord instead of on myself or others.

Yes, there were struggles. It certainly wasn't the Utopia I had expected. But we came out winning, didn't we?

The congregation grew and people got saved and turned on to Jesus. Everyone seemed to have a good time in the Lord.

As I reflect, I believe the effectiveness of my ministry in your church was primarily because of your guidance, patience, and support. Had it not been for your willingness to work these difficulties out with me, I really doubt if I would be where I am today. Whenever I think of the success I now have in my ministry, I still thank the Lord for allowing me to begin my pastoral work with a pastor like you.

As you know, when I left your church I was elected to a charming little church on the other side of the state. The church is growing, and just last night the board voted in an assistant pastor.

This is a new experience for me. I've never had anyone working under me before. It just happens I'll be over your way next week on some business, and I wondered if I could stop by to get a little advice from you on how to break in a new assistant.

*In Christ,  
Your former assistant*



# From Autographs to Canon

by J. Kenneth Grider

*Professor of Theology, Nazarene Theological Seminary*

I have been thinking of late that it is the biblical canon that we Christians should be primarily interested in, instead of the autographs, and instead of any stage of development of the text between the autographs and the time when the text became esteemed as canon and pretty much frozen as canon.

For at least several decades, evangelicals have expressed perhaps undue interest in the autographs. Yet the longtime interest in classical evangelism has been in the canon. It is the canon that Martin Luther was inter-

ested in, and he was of course much too liberal for many of us in that area—wanting either to “cast James out of the Bible” or to “light” his “stove” with that “epistle of straw”; and giving only quasi-canonical status to Hebrews, Revelation, and Jude. In the various wings of evangelical Protestantism, the special interest has been in the canon and not in the autographs.

The holiness movement has had this kind of interest in the canon. This was the interest of A. M. Hills and S. S. White and H. Orton Wiley—Wiley including an entire chapter titled “The Canon” in Volume 1 of his *Christian Theology* (in which three-volume work he only has one other chapter on Scripture).

With the holiness movement’s considerable interest in what is churchly and in church tradition, we have a special interest in and respect for the Early Church’s Spirit-guided use of and esteem for the Scriptures. This is for the Scriptures as they had developed from the time when they were autographs to the time when they became the useful and authoritative canon of that believing community.

Another corollary of this interest in the canon instead of in the autographs has to do with our profound confidence in the Holy Spirit’s continued help, in the development from autographs to canon. We might not prefer to call that help inspiration. Yet I think I would like to consider inspiration as continuing, up to the time when the text was more or less frozen as the canon of synagogue and church.



J. Kenneth Grider

Still another basis for the congeniality of this canon interest with Arminian-Wesley-holiness theology is because it is consistent with our belief in human freedom and in a related belief: that God works with us through persuasion rather than by force. Perhaps the Spirit obtained, then, in the autographs, the best writings possible, working with us in that way. But then, as time passed and as new needs arose, perhaps the Holy Spirit secured certain additions to the autographs—after which time the somewhat fluid Old and New Testament texts became more or less frozen as the sacred canon of synagogue and church.

What I am meaning to say in part is that I feel that some of the rather recent insight of Yale's Brevard Childs and Claremont's James Sanders can perhaps be utilized by us in Wesleyan evangelicalism. They have both been telling us that it is especially the canon, right at the time when it was accepted as and somewhat frozen as canon, that we ought basically to try to find the meaning of, for our lives. These two widely respected biblical scholars differ on some things. Sanders feels that the Torah and the Gospels are more important than the remainder of Scripture to the communities of faith that developed the Old and New Testament canons, so that we have two canons within the canon. Childs rejects Sanders' view that there are canons within the canon, saying that no part of the canon should be held in higher respect or receive more attention by us than the other parts. These scholars differ on other matters as well. But they agree that form and reduction and other criticisms tend to atomize the text, and to disregard the respect the text had in the believing communities when it came to enjoy canonicity. And both, importantly, focus upon the believing communities, synagogue and church, that produced the canon and were also produced in great part by the canon. This is in distinction from the earlier usual engagement, among the scholarly critics, with individual writers of the canonical books and the ways in which each of their writings is presumed to have developed. Both of these scholars also feel that we should take the canon as it got developed, and as it enjoyed appreciation by the Jewish and Christian communities of faith, and find what the theology of the canon is and apply it to our lives.

Ever since I began to hear inklings of the work of Childs and Sanders, I began to feel they were leading biblical scholarship toward the right directions. Later, hearing them both at meetings of scholars, and having read them, I became still more convinced of this.

I feel that, even if the inspired autographs had read quite differently from the way the writings did at the time when they came to enjoy canonical status in the believing communities, such as that does not greatly matter. I feel that the Holy Spirit might have also actually inspired people to add things to what had been inspired by persuasion rather than by absolute force. It was a text of this sort that believing Israel came to use so meaningfully and so significantly. It was a text of this developed sort that figured so strategically in Israel's being the only Near East civilization to survive—to survive in spite of its loss of the Solomonic temple, and its land and its nationhood, whisked into captivity in Babylon and choosing even the Diaspora.

Take the New Testament canon. It was not being written over a period of 1,000 years, but only for perhaps 50 years—or even for only some 25 years, if J. A. T. Robinson is correct in his redating of the New Testament (saying that it was all written before A.D. 70). As regards the New Testament, not as many centuries elapsed between autographs and canon as was the case with the Old Testament writings. Besides, the believing community of Christians seems to have come very early, at the end of the first century (see First Clement) and soon afterward (see Papias) to respect the writings of the apostolic and other early eyewitnesses of the Christ events (out of due season, as in the case of writers such as Paul and Luke). Holding such writers and their writings in high respect, so early, they seem to have regarded the writings as sacred text more quickly than was often the case as relates to the Old Testament writings. Therefore, the text, when it came to be canon, was no doubt usually closer to the autograph texts than in

**It was not the autographs  
that the early Christians  
respected as authoritative . . .  
it was the canon.**

the case of the Old Testament writings. Yet the Holy Spirit might have inspired or otherwise helped writers to make certain changes in the text between autograph and canon.

At first, it seems, so says James Sanders (who has made in-depth study of the matter), the people viewed what came to be the canonical books as containing sacred story. This relates more especially to the Old Testament writings. As centuries passed, he says, the sacred story came to be conceived of as sacred text.

While Scripture was sacred story, it was changed in various ways, according to the interests and the needs of people in various eras. And perhaps the Holy Spirit inspired these changes. Since it was not as yet conceived of as sacred text, this changing of it was simply utilitarian and was not prohibited by their conception of what it was that they were making adaptations of. Support of the understanding that adaptations were made is in the actual texts, and in allusions to texts, that are available to scholars.

As generations passed, however, as mentioned, what was conceived of loosely as sacred story became thought of as sacred text. Then, adaptations were discouraged. Then, the text came to be protected. Care in preserving the text was then stressed. No doubt, the Holy Spirit figured profoundly in this.

This would make for difficult problems for the fundamentalist type of Christian who believes in verbal inspiration and in total inerrancy—on faith and practice matters, which importantly count; and also on mathe-

matical and historical and geographical matters, which often count very little.

Yet we Wesleyan evangelicals have no problems with inspired writings becoming changed somewhat between the time they were first written and the time they became canon. Believing in thought inspiration in general, instead of the word-attached-to-word kind, we are not anxious about an unaltered text as the fundamentalist is. And understanding that the inerrancy is in matters importantly related to doctrine and practice, we get less uptight about finding certain Spirit-guided alterations.

Yet, of exceeding importance is our understanding of the Holy Spirit's continuing protection and preservation of the story-text that became our canon.

Actually, this is a confidence not only of Wesleyan Protestants but also of Martin Luther and Protestantism generally, and it has only tended to be forgotten in fundamentalist Protestantism of rather recent vintage—especially beginning with B. B. Warfield, who began his influential teaching career at Princeton in 1893.

Protestants generally have long believed profoundly in the Holy Spirit's continued help in guiding the church into and in all truth. We believe profoundly in the Holy Spirit's continued help as guide—in various changes that seem to have occurred between the time when the text was first written and when it became recognized as canon; in the translating of the text of the canon; in the interpretation of the meaning of the canonical text. Since He ministers by persuasion instead of by coercion, He has not always secured exactly what He has ideally wanted. Yet He is content to guard orthodoxy by persuasion instead of by coercion even if certain exactness of the originally inspired writings might have been lost to us.

Exceedingly important, in all of this, is the fact that when the 66 books of the Christian canon were gradually decided upon, so that nothing else was to be read in the churches as Scripture, it was not the inspired autographs that were so esteemed. In the Early Church, at the council of Carthage in 397, and at other times, when our forebears, guided as we believe by the Holy Spirit, became confident about our canon, they were making decisions not about the inspired autographs but about autographs that had been altered somewhat—yet protected from significant error, preserved in their basic integrity. While inspiration had to do especially with the initial writing of the autographs, and with decisions to include what was already written, the Holy Spirit continued to guide God's faith-filled people all through the centuries, from autographs to canon. And it was the text as it appeared in the early centuries of the Christian era that the Spirit-guided church viewed as canon. This being so, some of us will let the fundamentalists worry about the autographs if they persist in doing so. We will let them conjecture about the degree to which the early canon conformed to the autographs if they must. We do not have those autographs, and it is not very likely that we will ever have them. If one of them were ever unearthed, we could hardly be certain that it was indeed an autograph—the inspired writer's original copy.

I myself hold a confidence about the inspiration of the original writers. But I also hold a confidence about the

Holy Spirit's continued protection of the text. Perhaps He inspired, as well, later additions to the autographs and other changes in them. I am confident about the Spirit's guiding the church, in many ways, to forge a canon gradually. Therefore, my confidence does not have to do simply with autographs that we do not have and probably never will have, but with a canon we do have, in more or less its pure form, and probably always will have.

We have New Testament manuscripts that date approximately to the time of the formal decisions on the canon—and papyrus fragments dating to as early as A.D. 150. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus date to the fourth century, and other manuscripts such as Alexandrinus date nearly to that time. And it does not overly concern us that these various handwritten manuscripts have numerous minor variations in them. It does not even concern us greatly that, for example, Sinaiticus contains the Shepherd, which is not one of the canonical books according to the Roman Catholic and Protestant West (only to Eastern Orthodoxy).

If we were bibliolatrous, and were worshiping the Bible instead of the God of the Bible and His Christ, we would have problems over the thousands of variations in the manuscripts and even over the early writings that wound up in certain New Testament manuscripts such as Sinaiticus. As it is, we keep our heads on, our hearts open, our hands lifted to heaven. We steadily, knowingly, happily worship the God of the Bible and His Eternal Son, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—one God, world without end. Scripture points us to them, and it does so with a full adequacy. Like the Lord Christ it points us to, Scripture is human as well as divine. And if Christ's humanity does not bother us, but if, instead, we glory in it, we ought not be put off if Scripture was not simply dropped down from heaven, dictated, and preserved unaltered as always and only the very words of God spoken only to the originally inspired writers.

After all, it was not autographs that Christ and other New Testament personages quote as Scripture. It was not even the autographs of the Old Testament plus about half of the changes between autographs and canon. It was a Greek translation of texts that had developed somewhat from the autographs. It is that kind of canon that the first-century believing communities (synagogue and church) respected as canon and found functionally useful. Likewise, in the case of the New Testament writings, it was not autographs that the church of the early centuries respected and found to be useful. It was the autographs plus changes—not nearly as many as in the case of the Old Testament.

What I am meaning to say is that it was not the autographs of the Old Testament and the New Testament that the early believing Jewish and Christian communities respected and referred to as authoritative; it was the canon that had developed somewhat from the autographs. And, lo, we have that canon, pretty much intact.

That canon is richer than the autographs had been. It contains what the Holy Spirit had persuaded people to add to the autographs, perhaps with a help that we could properly call inspiration. It might even contain deletions from the autographs, if the Holy Spirit, persuading rather than coercing, had not persuaded the

*Continued on page 37*

# *Helping Alienated Families*

by Rickey Short

**M**ary had known the phone number by heart for years . . . but she had never dialed it, afraid of what might happen. Her nervous fingers reluctantly did their job.

"Mother has died and Tim has to be told," Mary kept convincing herself. The phone kept ringing while Mary bit her lower lip.

"Hello, Tim Vanderlinden speaking."

"Tim, . . . this is Mary. Mother has passed away and the funeral is Tuesday."

"Mary, I am sorry about Mother, but I asked you never to call me about family matters—including this. Please don't bother me again." CLICK.

It is a unique pastor who has not heard in his office a similar story of family alienation from a distraught church member. Family alienation is a too-common problem that goes back to the beginning of families.

The very first brothers, Cain and Abel, could not get along. Jacob had to flee for his life because he tricked his brother, Esau, out of his inheritance. Joseph was sold into slavery because his brothers were jealous about his dreams and the favoritism shown to Joseph by their father. David certainly had his share of family problems.

The motivations and problems that sparked conflict between these biblical families still separate families today.

In New York\* a son tricks his father out of a retirement fund. Other family members have "cut off" the son until he returns the money.

In Ohio, a daughter arrives at her mother's house while funeral services are being conducted for the mother. The daughter takes various antiques she has always wanted. Some of them were apparently promised to other sons and daughters. Now there is a significant family split over her actions.

\*Locations changed

Part of the price we have paid for the Future Shock generation we live in has been an increasing amount of brother-to-brother, brother-to-sister, and parent-to-child alienation. Husband-and-wife relationships are in trouble as well, but adults born and raised in the same family are finding themselves separated over every imaginable kind of problem.

The Lilliputian War was started over which end of the egg to crack. The Inheritance War is frequently started by an object as small as a baby spoon. Gulliver's war seems easy to resolve in comparison.

Is there anything a pastor can do in this situation? Does a pastor dare try to resolve sticky, messed-up family problems? Regardless of how we answer that question, the truth is the family will come to us and ask for help. "What can we do about this situation?" is the plaintive cry every pastor will hear sooner or later . . . again and again.

Most of us cannot send our church members to a family therapist. We will go through the fire with them. Hopefully, we will emerge without the smell of smoke, knowing there was Another One present in the furnace with us.

## THE FIRST SIGN OF BIGGER TROUBLES

Preventive actions make more sense than crisis reactions. Often we do not have any say in a developing problem, but if we can recognize the early warning signals, we may head off a future disaster by our preaching, personal counseling, or simply by getting the family to draw up a will.

A family crisis begins to brew when individual thoughts turn inward toward the injustice "I" have suffered. "Why do they expect this of me!" "We agreed to keep mother for a month apiece, but none of the other brothers and sisters will take their turn. They always have an excuse. I am getting tired of it!"

The rash arguments, verbal abuse, and fighting comes down to "I feel wronged. I have been mistreated. I am a victim, not a perpetrator."

When those attitudes begin to be expressed verbally, the process of alienation has started. That breakup process may be sudden, or it may last for years.

One man refused to speak to his mother for 8 years because she called his former wife of 20 years to arrange an exchange of Christmas presents. He had divorced that woman, and his mother was not to speak to her. The family split was sudden, emotionally based, and seemingly final.

Other breakups are dependency related and take longer to accomplish. The family can see them coming but seem unable to stop the process. When they get together for a social event they end up arguing, but they must continue to work together for legal or financial reasons.

#### WHY THE FAMILY FRAGMENTS

(1) *A defense against further hurt and pain.* One person with a great deal of anger may leave a family because the family has offended, ignored, or hurt him. The descriptive term for this behavior is flight. Running from the problem may be based on the need to escape pain and the hope that the problem will resolve itself in time.

There is a germ of truth in believing time will resolve the problem, but the natural fatigue that leads to the death of an emotional issue may be found in the old age of the individuals involved. Anger can exist independently long after the circumstances that caused it should have lost their power to generate further frustration and anger. In short, people can stay hopping mad about something for years.

There is more truth in the fact that while you run you carry with you the damage already done.

When she was 12 her father began to rape her. After two years of abusive treatment, knowing her mother knew what was going on, she ran away to live with a brother. She ran from the pain and refused to speak to her parents for 18 years. She had four children but could not give or receive love on an emotional level. She lost the capacity to give love. Affairs and other attempts to solve her problem only brought more tragic consequences.

You can run, but you can't hide from yourself.

(2) *Somebody does somebody wrong.* The person who slams the door on the way out is angry. He wants to punish the family. Sometimes after being gone for years he will show up just long enough to slam the door again. "Get the message?"

Such persons want to hurt and punish the family. This punishment will take the form of silence and resistance to communication attempts. It is also an attempt to regain "control" of the situation.

"I'm in charge now. You can't solve anything until I decide to talk to you again." "It is none of your business why I took the quilt grandmother said you could have."

This refusal to talk blocks the healing process while it inflicts pain and guilt on the family. Unfortunately, when many families begin to talk again they completely avoid the "problem situation" as though it didn't exist. This is almost a guarantee that things will blow up again.

However, while hostility and resentment are running

high over the door-slamming, any attempt by the pastor to quickly solve the problem will run into strong resistance. A slow, steady approach will do much more than a quick fix. It is asking a lot to try to solve 20 years of developing conflict in an hour.

#### WHAT THE FAMILY MUST CHANGE

A pastor who has been asked to help resolve a family conflict must have some assurances from *both* parties involved that they are open to a spiritual and constructive resolution of the problem. It is of very little value to get the family together only to let them vent their frustration and anger on each other without guidelines for that venting. A healing attitude must be present on both sides for even the possibility of understanding and communication to exist.

To bring that attitude the pastor can work with individuals on both sides in the family to help them be ready for reconciliation. If the proper groundwork is laid before any partial or final reconciliation attempt, the chances for a future split will be reduced.

Specifically, the family must learn about and change behaviors in three major areas:

**ANGER.** The family must learn new ways to express this volatile emotion. In some cases they will not admit that they are even angry with each other. Anger expressed is very likely to produce conflict, so they deny and suppress the feelings of anger to maintain control and keep from fighting.

Learning to vent small amounts like a safety valve will keep things from being bottled up to the explosion stage.

**HEARING.** Sometimes we shout at people because they are not listening or hearing what we say. In family conflicts it is often evident that neither side really hears the other. Instructions on how to listen, to reflect what you understand is being said, and to speak on a feeling level can improve what the family hears. The pastor can help them improve these skills as he counsels and observes the failure to communicate.

"What did you hear?" "Is that what you meant?" are the types of questions that help the family learn to listen better and to hear what is being said—not what they think is being said.

**GIVING, ACCEPTING, AND FEELING LOVE.** In the crisis the giving and receiving of love is conditional. The first condition is whether or not I feel like it.

The alienated family must learn to express love to each other even when they do not feel like it. The feeling of being loved *cannot* be a prerequisite to reconciliation because it *ONLY* comes out of loving acts. In the middle of a fight nobody feels loved. *Feeling follows behavior*, and the family will need to do what Dr. James Hamilton recommends to estranged couples: "grit their teeth and act loving." Small, hard-to-do things must be done. Send the flowers, buy the birthday card, answer "stupid" questions, clean off the table, return the baby spoon, and on and on.

If the family does not arrive at an understanding and agreement of how to live out the future in a way different from the past, the alienation will worsen. The family will begin to fall apart if they are not willing to give and receive love from each other, hear what each other is saying, and take steps to reduce their anger with each other.

*Continued on page 37*



# Families at Risk: No Exemptions

by Jean Purcell  
*Founder, Families For Life*

**M**oving toward the long-heralded year 2000, strong families are beginning to resemble social dinosaurs—increasingly less visible, apparently less able to thrive. Was Emile Durkheim, the 19th-century French sociologist, prophetic when he wrote that the family, along with religion, was an increasingly weakened institution, no longer able to provide purpose and meaning? The American society, in which the strong family seeks to survive, reports increasingly worrisome statistics.

In 1970, for example, the percentage of U.S. children living in single-parent homes was 12%; by 1985, 23% of the 62.5 million children under 18 lived in single-parent homes. A few years ago, we were told that for every four marriages in a given year, one would end in divorce. By 1986, we were told that if the 80s trends continue, one divorce will occur for every two marriages that begin.

The percentage of teens using family planning services since 1979 has increased—300% for blacks and 1,700% for whites. In 1980, 2.5 million U.S. teens received contraceptives, followed by increases, not declines, in teen pregnancy and abortion rates. Since 1973, approximately 20 million babies have been aborted for reasons of convenience or economics, 97% of all abortions in the U.S. during that time.

About 1 million teens run away from home every year.

The average five-year-old child spends about 25 minutes per week with Dad and about 25 hours per week with the TV.

Given the trends, many families considered to be traditional (those placing a high value on family life, nurturing, and moral and religious guidance in the home), feel immune from the statistical averages, while other traditional families feel tense and vulnerable.

I have seen some of the reasons parents feel they and

their children are vulnerable. Since 1983, when I began working as a volunteer counselor at a crisis pregnancy center, I have talked with approximately 200 young girls and women. Of those who told me initially that they were leaning toward abortion if they were pregnant, few fit the stereotype often assumed for teens in trouble. Few were poor. Most were white. Many reported some religious background or reference point.

On the other hand, about one-third were children whose parents had divorced. Some split residence between two homes, sometimes several hundred miles apart. Few reported use of any kind of drugs, but many said they used alcohol. For those in their 20s, some had divorced or were divorcing. Some were married but did not want a child, "at least not yet."

**I** remember Alicia,\* a quiet, pretty, polite, and very frightened 15-year-old. A gold cross hung around her neck—a present, she said, from her mother. Alicia was new to our town, having moved from another state in order to live with her father. A few months after moving, she had let herself be talked into her first and only sexual intercourse, which she had immediately regretted. Nevertheless, Alicia was pregnant.

Bob\* came to the center with his daughter who was in her 20s—married but separated. A strong family man, Bob believed babies should be born into a secure home environment. He did not believe his daughter was ready to be a good provider for a child. Bob was raised in a church, but he thought his daughter should have an abortion. Tears filled his eyes when I commented, "You really care about the well-being of children, don't you?"

\*Names have been changed.

Nazarene

## Update

UPDATE EDITOR, MARK D. MARVIN, PASTORAL MINISTRIES

## A STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE

Nazarene pastors are not guaranteed placement. Graduation from college and/or seminary does not mean that one will be automatically stationed in a pastorate. A minister must create a demand for his services. Even after one has served in pastoral ministry for several years, this principle is still valid. In effect it is a "survival of the fittest."

All this being true, pastors who wish to survive will do well to give careful attention to a standard of ministerial excellence that will commend them to congregations looking for pastoral leaders. Such a profile recently emerged when a district superintendent met the board of one of his strongest churches, which was needing to call a pastor. He began by asking them, "What qualities are you looking for in a new leader?" To guide their discussion he handed out a list of some possible characteristics they might think were important. Then he invited them to add others that seemed essential.

The results of this survey were most interesting. Here they are ranked in the order of priority indicated by the members of this church board.

1. *Clear emphasis on holiness preaching and teaching*

This is significant. Our laymen still believe that Christian holiness is our distinctive message. They expect to hear their pastors give strong attention to this vital truth.

2. *A strong Bible preacher*

The first words of the ordination charge are the timeless exhortation of the apostle Paul to young Timothy, "Preach the Word." People come to church to hear clear, authoritative exposition of the written Word. And scriptural holiness is the only real holiness. "Sanctification," "filled with the Holy Spirit," and "be holy" are all biblical terms that validate the doctrine of Christian holiness. Time spent in careful study of the Word in preparation for preaching is prime time.

3. *A model of personal godliness*

The expectation is that not only will we be holiness preachers—

but we must be *holy* preachers as well! The most eloquent proof of the reality of the Spirit-filled life is the bearing of the fruit of the Spirit.

4. *A "pastor" first—an administrator second*

Sheep still need shepherds.

5. *People-oriented more than program-oriented*

The Good Shepherd's major concern was for His sheep, and every pastor deserving of that name will reflect this same basic interest.

6. *A calling pastor*

This was a large church that had an associate whose major responsibility was visitation. But they still expected their senior pastor to make calls on the seriously ill, new converts, and those with other critical needs.

7. *Interested in and able to develop a strong prayer emphasis*

His disciples did not petition the Master to teach them how to preach—their request was, "Teach us to pray."

8. *A man with a vision for a great church*

Growth ideals are imperative.

9. *Able to lead strong staff members and build a team*

The gift of administration is essential.

10. *Pastor's wife who is part of the team*

The shepherd and shepherdess must be partners in ministry, each exercising his or her spiritual gifts.

11. *He must evangelize and train for evangelism*

"Go make disciples" is still the Great Commission for "missionaries" everywhere.

12. *A good communicator both publicly and privately*

Getting the message across is crucial. The best ideas must be clearly expressed to be effective.

13. *Able to relate to various socioeconomic levels*

White collar, blue collar, or no collar—all are precious in Jesus' sight.

14. *Able to manage conflicts and interpersonal relationships with wisdom and love*

Where there are people there will be problems. Helping them get along together is "the name of the game."

15. *Successful pastoral experience in growing churches*

Nothing speaks louder than a proven "track record" of church growth.

16. *Seminary graduate*

While academic training is important, it is interesting that this qualification ranked last. It takes more than a graduate degree to achieve success.

Pastor—how do you measure up on this "Standard of Excellence"?



by General Superintendent  
Dr. Eugene L. Stowe

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(Monthly states published in the first issue of the "Herald of Holiness" each month)

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 TAYLOR, ROBERT W. (C) Learn to Live International, Box 669, Wright Brothers Branch, Dayton, OH 45409  
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 ▽THRASHER, OREN D. 2414 High Pine Dr., Louisville, KY 40214  
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 WYLLIE, CHARLES R. (R) Box 162, Winfield, KS 67156  
 ▽WYRICK, DENNIS. 603 Reed Dr., Frankfort, KY 40601

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●YATES, GREG. (C) 505 E. Alabama, Casey, IL 62420  
 YINGLING, KEN. (R) 1003½ E. Smith St., Yorktown, IN 47396  
 ●YOUNG, LOWELL. (R) 10209 Cliff Circle, Tampa, FL 33612

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

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Former Church \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Church \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

New Position: Pastor (    ); Evangelist (    ); Other \_\_\_\_\_

All official records at Headquarters, including those in the General Secretary's office, and the periodicals checked below will be changed from this one notification.

Check *Herald of Holiness* (    ); *World Mission* (    ); *Preacher's Magazine* (    );

Other \_\_\_\_\_

(Clip and send to the Subscription Department,  
 Nazarene Publishing House, P.O. Box 527, Kansas City, MO 64141.)



The Alabaster Offering, a tradition since 1949 and based on scripture found in Matt. 26:7-8, 10, 12-13, is collected in February and September each year in the Church of the Nazarene worldwide to provide property and buildings on the Nazarene mission fields.

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# THE SHEPHERD'S LIFE

Coming to you each quarter from Pastoral Ministries, Wilbur Brannon, Director

LEADERSHIP • INSPIRATION • FULFILLMENT • ENRICHMENT

## HOPE SHINES THROUGH

Thirty years ago Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk, speaking to a group of journalists concerning his people, announced, "We are going to die."

The journalists protested such an idea. "No one wants to see Cambodia die," they said. Angrily, Sihanouk replied, "You don't understand. There is no hope. We have to die!"

Hope is a star that shines through the Advent season and sparkles at our inspiring resolutions for new beginnings at the dawn of each new year. We must not give up hope. As long as there is hope there is life! As Christians who know the gospel, there is hope; so there is life.

Hope burns rather dimly for some. Even ministers don't see much of its light if they doubt the meaning of their exhausting activities. It's OK to ask questions of meaning. This is one way God confronts us with our life and reminds us what must have priority.



**Wilbur Brannon**  
*Pastoral Ministries Director*

We need to see the shepherds' star. But more importantly we need the shepherds' eyes that are looking for a sign of hope! Perhaps more than anything else in these days we need to be possessed by a vision.

A new day is about to dawn! Our ministry does not have to drone through another year. We are energized when the gospel is understood with fresh meanings and persuasive convictions. People touched by the hope that is inherent in the "good news" will be changed.

The minister's heart is enraptured with the flame of devotion when he knows his life is making a difference in someone else's. The same star of hope that guides the lost one to love, forgiveness, and acceptance shines on me. It shows me the way to the stable, too. There I find Christ's transforming presence.

Self-pity, perfunctory service, and an empty faith cannot survive the light! It reveals a new sense of who I am in relationship to Him, who I had so carelessly taken for granted. Then my service truly becomes sacramental in the living reality of God's presence. The difference is evident in His work of redemption.

What a privilege to be a minister of His! ☐

## WORSHIP AND PREACHING HELPS FOR 1989

Four pastors, Rev. Carlton Hansen, Rochester, N.Y.; Rev. Steve Green, Cincinnati, Ohio; Rev. Dennis Johnson, Kent, Wash.; and Rev. Gene Williams, Wichita, Kans., met with Rev. Wilbur Brannon in Kansas City to plan and strategize for effective development of the 1989 "Worship and Preaching Helps."

Planning included discussions about what constitutes worship, the relationship of evangelism to worship, and brainstorming ideas for creative worship.

Pastoral Ministries continues to develop these practical aids to help busy pastors plan worship services, evangelistic services, and annual preaching programs. Included are calls to worship, benedictions, evangelistic invitations, pre-offering sentences, Communion formats, sermon outlines, and illustrations.

These helps fit in Section III of the Pastor's Program Planner and are mailed quarterly to every pastor without cost through the Minister's Book Club mailing. Watch for your packet to arrive! ☐



## NEW CEU COURSES AVAILABLE THROUGH "APPROVED WORKMAN"

Five new courses have been developed in the "Approved Workman" series. Course No. 21, *Managing Your Ministry*, is a video-aided course for clergy who want to increase ministerial effectiveness. Dr. Ponder Gilliland, president of Southern Nazarene University, addresses four management topics. 1 CEU in the "Church Administration" category is offered for completion of this course.

Course No. 22, *Strategizing for Local Church Growth*, has been prepared by Lyle B. Pointer. This course is an excellent resource for pastors who are developing church growth strategies for their church. 1 CEU in the "Evangelism" category is offered for completion of this course.

Course No. 23, *Effective Pastoral Preaching*, uses the aid of two audio-cassettes developed by Eugene Williams. Dr. Williams helps pastors in developing the scriptural passage, outline development, and sermon delivery in the worship service. 1 CEU in the "Preaching" category is offered for completion of this course.

Course No. 24, *Pastoral Authority*, is a video seminar presented by Dr. Millard Reed. Dr. Reed highlights topics such as "The Pastor and Identity" and "The Pastor and Community." 1 CEU in the "Pastoral Care" category is offered for completion of this course.

Course No. 25, *Understanding the City*, is a 10-hour seminar presented by Dallas Mucci. This course was developed to help pastors in urban areas develop strategies for reaching the city. 1 CEU in the "Urban Ministries" category is offered for completion of this course.

If you would like more information about the "Approved Workman" series or a complete list of all the courses presently available, write to Pastoral Ministries. ☐



## HEARTLINE WELCOMES NEW COORDINATOR

Kent Hughes has recently joined the staff at Christian Counseling Services (CCS) as the new "Heartline" coordinator. He replaces Dan Croy, who has been the coordinator since the onset of the program. He is ready, along with other CCS staff, to help meet your needs.

Pastors continue to get professional help on unique counseling questions, personal and family issues, and referral information through CōNET "Heartline."

People in leadership don't just *feel* overloaded, they *are* overloaded. Ministers and their families are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The constant time pressure on parsonage families can create frustration and feelings of depression. The trained professionals at Christian Counseling Services can help alleviate this frustration.

Nazarene ministers and their families can receive help from the "Heartline." Great care is taken to assure confidentiality. Professional Christian counselors answer calls Monday through Friday from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. (CST). The toll-free numbers are 1-800-874-2021; (Tennessee residents) 1-800-233-3607; (Alaska residents) 0-615-255-5667, wait for dial tone then dial 8081.

"Heartline" is cosponsored by district superintendents and Pastoral Ministries. ☐



## COURSE OF STUDY UPDATE

There is a printing error in the revised *Handbook on Ministerial Studies*. An Errata Sheet, sent to Nazarene Publishing House to be included inside the front cover, reads:

Page 73

Under the category, SKILLS, there is a reading book missing. The reading books should read as follows:

- \*444a *About the Hymns We Sing*, Vol. 1, Floyd W. Hawkins
- About the Hymns We Sing*, Vol. 2, Floyd W. Hawkins
- \*444b *Fundamentals of Music*, William L. Hooper
- \*444c *Christian Music in Contemporary Witness*, Donald P. Ellsworth

Under the category, WORK OF THE CHURCH, eliminate the first sentence before 445 that reads:

Read one of the two following reading books: ☐



## CALLING ALL ASSOCIATE PASTORS!

Pastors, if you have multiple staff personnel in your church, we need to know who they are! Did you know that by simply filling out a MULTIPLE STAFF INFORMATION CARD on your staff personnel they will be eligible for membership in the Nazarene Multiple Staff Association?

The Nazarene Multiple Staff Association (NMSA) was developed to:

- ... Provide interchange of information, ideas, trends, and resource materials.
- ... Encourage personal efficiency, growth in spiritual development, academic improvement, and ministry performance.
- ... Foster an understanding of the nature and function of staff ministry.
- ... Help implement the policies and programs of the various ministries of the Church of the Nazarene.
- ... Facilitate effective communication with the senior pastor.
- ... Assist in the placement of staff personnel.

In addition to access to workshops, seminars, conferences/conventions the Association membership entitles them to receive the "ASSOCIATE"—the official publication for dissemination of ideas, trends, resource information, articles of philosophical and theological understanding, and articles designed to equip the associate to more effective ministry.

If you have not received a MULTIPLE STAFF INFORMATION CARD for those serving in your church, please contact Pastoral Ministries right away. ☐



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- June 13-17 Olivet Nazarene University
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**RENEWAL TO MINISTRY AND MISSION**





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NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ANNUAL OFFERING — JANUARY 31, 198



# GIVING BEAUTY TO ASHES

The call of God is a call to service. Being a pastor and a member of the community provides many opportunities for service. One area of ministry in which efforts could be channeled and a challenge provided is an area that perhaps you have not considered before: that of a fire department chaplain.

Rationale for the service of a fire department chaplain can be found in Isaiah 61:1-3. The key thought is "to give beauty to ashes." The fire department chaplain goes into a situation—fire, accident, or disaster—to minister just as Christ would do.



## RESPONSIBILITIES

The chaplain's first responsibility is to minister to firefighters. Areas of service include:

- Dealing with families experiencing the death or injury of a firefighter.
- Responding to major fire, accident, or disaster scenes, to be available for any need that might arise.



Being an effective listener to firefighters who have been involved in stressful incidents. When firefighters return from major fires or accidents, they may feel frustrated, depressed, or angry. The chaplain gets them to talk about these feelings, helping them vent the stress and depression.

The chaplain's second area of responsibility is to the general public:

- Helping to calm the public or an individual in panic situations.
- Ministering to individuals who are experiencing material loss through fire. This includes contacting the Red Cross or the Salvation Army for immediate personal needs—food, clothing, shelter, etc.
- Comforting the bereaved:
  - contacting family members
  - contacting the family's clergy
  - keeping distraught persons from interfering with rescue efforts or firefighters' performances



Other areas of ministry and service include:

- Officiating or assisting in the funerals of firefighters
- Counseling—either by being available for counseling or by referral
- Visitation of sick/injured firefighters or their family members
- Attending official functions for the department or city, and offering invocations/benedictions

## QUALIFICATIONS

A chaplain is "a minister who is interested in the Fire Service, and who sees such work as the opportunity to serve others first, and to keep his own particular religious beliefs in the background until people ask him about them." The chaplain has to be able to work with people of all faiths, as well as with those of no particular faith.



A chaplain must be available to work with victims in emergency situations, or with fire personnel—either in an emergency or in counseling on a longer term. There must be a willingness to undergo some training. "One should know something about the way a crew goes about attacking a fire, so he understands what they are doing and why; he should know something about what the paramedics are doing when they are working on a victim. This knowledge is important so that he can help interpret to the families what is happening. He should know a great deal about the psychology involved in handling stress and depression; and he should understand just how his religious faith fits into the work he does with victims and personnel.

I hope some of you might consider this area of ministry and service. For more information, contact Chaplaincy Ministries, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131.



Article by Donald H. Wilkins, pastor, New Lothrop, Mich., Church of the Nazarene, and Hazelton Township/New Lothrop Fire Department chaplain and volunteer firefighter.

Fire Chaplain badge photo courtesy of the V. H. Blackington Co., Attleboro Falls, Mass.

# Is There Hidden Giving Power in Your Church?

Seated in *YOUR* congregation on any Sunday morning may be "hidden giving power," people whose giveable assets are unknown even to them . . . because they think only in terms of cash gifts. But they actually can give more, can give through plans which provide them with additional income, plans which help them make use of government-approved tax benefits, plans that can solve their money management worries, and plans that can bring lifetime satisfaction as they have a greater part in helping fulfill the Great Commission. It can all happen through the **LIFE INCOME GIFTS SERVICES** Planned Giving Program, helping congregations discover their own giving power.

## Hidden Planned Givers may be . . .

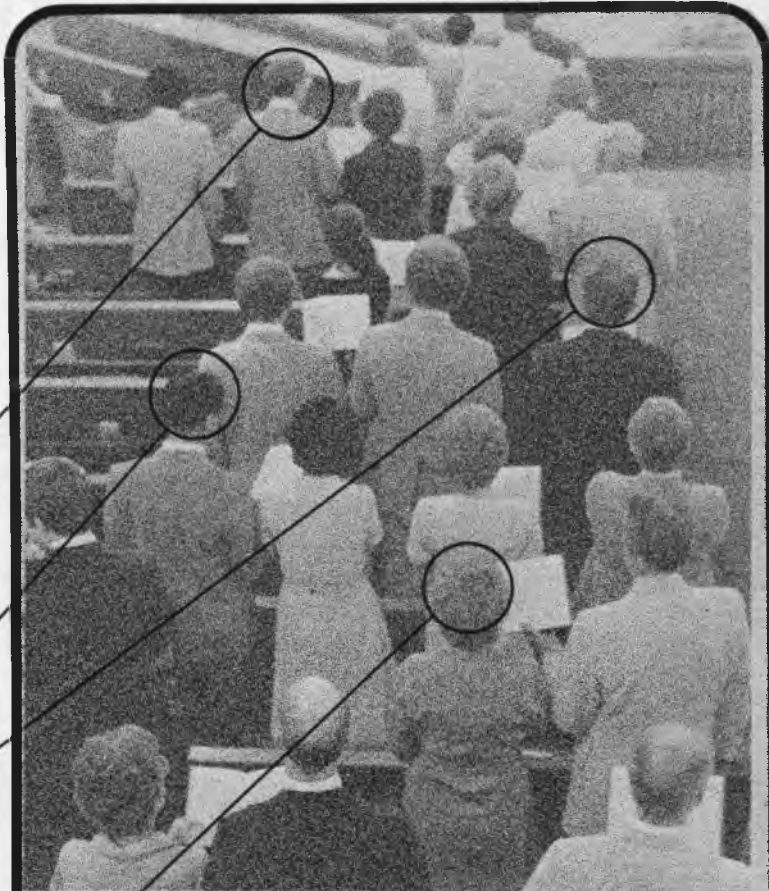
dedicated people who have never written a will and who would cherish the opportunity to plan a bequest for the church while also providing for their heirs ●

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members who hold real estate which they never plan to use ●

people who have few if any heirs, who need to know God can use their resources to enlarge their heavenly family ●

**Your church can begin here:**



FOR MORE INFORMATION WRITE:

Life Income Gifts Services  
**Church of the Nazarene**  
 6401 The Paseo  
 Kansas City, MO 64131  
 Attn: Robert D. Hempel

IN CANADA:  
**Church of the Nazarene**  
 Executive Board  
 P.O. Box 30080, Station "B"  
 Calgary, Alberta  
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## LIFE INCOME GIFTS SERVICES | PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM

Please send me information about how my church can benefit from the Planned Giving Program. I am especially interested in the items checked at left.

- ☐ Would like a LIGS rep to contact me about a seminar at our church.
- ☐ Brochure "How to Make a Will That Works."
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Bread Plate	PAE-505A	PAE-505AB	\$19.75

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**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION** on the above items as well as other related supplies, such as offering plates, Communion linens, and Communion cup fillers, consult our latest Supplies and Equipment catalog sent to all pastors or free upon request.

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- Church-Type Mission (CTM)

Churches, districts, clusters of churches, pastors, and laymen have all started new works in myriad ways. Contact your district superintendent and find where you can best start something on your district.

## HOME MISSION SUNDAY:

### MARCH 13, 1988





# EDUCATION SERVICES

WILLIS E. SNOWBARGER, ACTING SECRETARY

INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

December 1987

Dear Pastor:

Remember the slogan of the Marine Corps: "We are looking for a few good men!" Nazarene colleges, universities, and seminaries need a few choice churchmen and churchwomen.

We need well-prepared, spiritually alive, scholar-teachers who would excel as FACULTY members at Nazarene colleges and seminaries in North America and in other parts of the world.

There are not large numbers of openings, but there are openings in nearly every field of study for top candidates. We would like to know about those you could strongly recommend.

Nazarene students deserve the most highly qualified teachers we can find. The college and the church need the quality service these choice persons could render.

Education Services operates a faculty referral service. Name, address, and telephone number would do it. We'll take it from there.

I think God would be pleased.

Sincerely,

*Willis E. Snowbarger*  
WILLIS E. SNOWBARGER

6401 THE PASEO  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64131  
(816) 333-7000

Send one name or make a list. Here's what we need to know:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHING FIELD \_\_\_\_\_

HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED \_\_\_\_\_

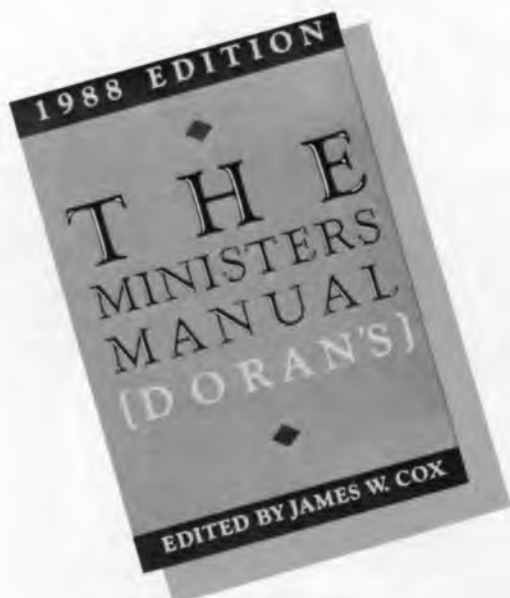
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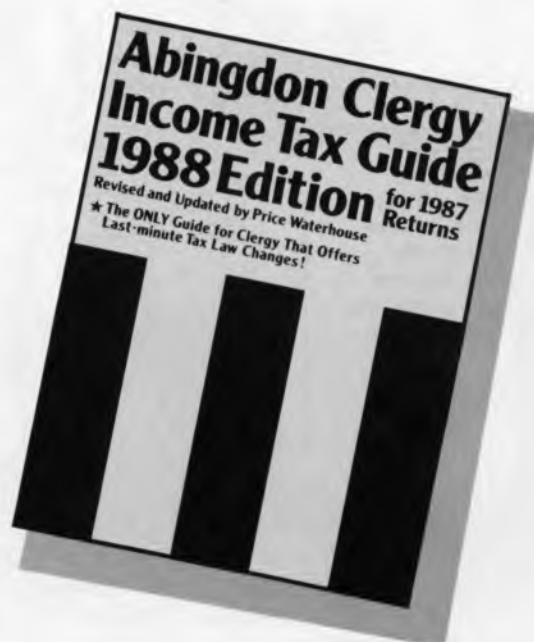
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The best Nazarene growth has largely been in a band from Texas to the Pacific Northwest. Other growth areas have been Florida, the Virginia area, and New England.

The American population has continued to shift to the west and southeast. Northern states continue to grow more slowly, if at all, with the exception of New Hampshire.

Nazarene presence has increased in the Midwest, as existing churches held their own or even grew while the population failed to grow. Of the sunbelt states, only church planting leaders like Florida, Virginia, and North Carolina showed good gain against population.

How have Nazarenes done in winning their neighbors to Christ and the Church? The maps above indicate areas of success and areas where more attention is needed. The goal of each church and district ought to include seeing a larger proportion of the people in the area acknowledging Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Growth in membership is not the only criterion for judging effectiveness. How has the population grown in the same time period? If a church is the same size it was 10 years ago in a city where 10

percent of the people have moved out, that means the church has reached a larger portion of the population today. Or, if a district has grown 10% while the population grew 15%, it may have lost ground in the battle against unbelief.

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### CHURCH GROWTH RESEARCH CENTER

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Katherine\* was a career woman with a happy marriage and school-aged children. She just did not want a third child. "I know it goes against God, against all I've been taught," she said, "but it's *my* choice, and I will not let this baby ruin my life!"

Mary\* was four months pregnant, had no job, home, car, husband, or money. Abused by the father of her baby, she was living in a temporary home. Mary had nothing of material value, yet she intended to have her baby. She wanted an adoption agency to arrange for a good home for her child. She gave the one thing she had power to give—hope for her child.

As I read some of the files of my clients, I am struck with the fact that people often plan to make wrong choices, like abortion, for totally right reasons, as Bob did at first, regarding his daughter and grandchild. People often face difficult circumstances because they were caught in a particularly vulnerable frame of mind, as Alicia was. People like Katherine, who looked like a family magazine's picture of Supermom, are willing to rebel against what they've been taught about God in order to exercise what society has proclaimed their most treasured possession, the right to protect themselves from consequences of life's choices. Families are made up of vulnerable individuals and tough choices in these times, and our neighbors, work associates, and collaborators in church are affected, sometimes personally drawn into situations far removed from their expectations and desires.

In 1985, I founded a family ministry to reach out in the church, to help strengthen families, equip them to deal with crisis, and affirm the unborn child's God-given need for life. When God began calling me to begin Families

For Life, I knew firsthand that when one member of a family suffers, all suffer. I knew, also, that heartbreak or fear of the unknown can tempt even the strongest Christian to believe it impossible to survive. I wanted to obey God's call, yet I assumed that in the church there would not be as much need for family ministry as the need that I saw in the lives of Alicia and the others.

I now recognize an urgent need for family ministry in the church. Becoming aware of the many needs has helped me understand why God called me to begin from within the church, rather than as an independent ministry, which I had first assumed He wanted. Christian families are suffering over heavy indebtedness, family conflict, divorce, homosexuality, AIDS, suicide, runaways, physical abuse, pornography, substance abuse, sexual immorality, and abortion. Many individuals and families suffer almost without hope, silently and alone. Often, as a result, things become worse with each passing day and year, as unconfessed and unhealed worry and guilt pile up.

Can the church help without blundering in? We *can* and we *must* learn the many affirmative answers to that question. Christ's people are desperately needed in the midst today, learning how to help one another, learning how to strengthen families, sharing information. How many prayer groups or Sunday School classes, for example, are sharing simple yet powerful tools, such as the facts that experts urge more regular family time together and listening to one another without criticism? Or that financial indebtedness and too much time spent in activities outside the home are shown to contribute to the weakening of the family over time? Much informa-

tion is available, but we are not using the resources as well as we can.

**T**wo major, false assumptions impede many local and church-wide ministries to families. The first is that the strong Christian family will be exempt from the moral and ethical problems of the times. It is true that church-affiliated families, in general, show a lower incidence of problems previously outlined than do nonchurched families. But it is also true that there are exemplary Christian families experiencing brokenness, particularly in the area of parental concern for children. What good are we missing until we become more willing to admit that many family-related issues warrant aggressive, preventive, Christian response and attention?

A second assumption impedes ministry to families in crisis. This assumption is that preaching the gospel is the sole mission of the church, and anything else will take away from that. If that were true, we should ignore the accounts of Christ purposefully placing himself in the midst of hunger, disease, disability, rejection, insanity, and brokenness. A hurting and desperate world, inside and outside the church, desperately awaits Christ to be preached and *exemplified*.


Soon after its beginning, Families For Life, with the help of a team of dedicated laymen from my local church, began to produce an audiovisual presentation. "You Are a Promise" focuses on the miracle of life before birth. While taking it into churches since its completion, I have tried to express the link between abortion and family values. I contrast the Christian message of hope to the world's message of false hope; that is, man's best intellectual resources topped off, sometimes, with scripture. We are now planning a revised "You Are a Promise," with translations in Khmer, Spanish, and other languages as needed. I hope to take these versions not only to U.S. churches with English-speaking, Asian, and Hispanic ministries but overseas as well.

**F**ear, hopelessness, and human willfulness are at work in the rush to abortion. But they are active in other destructive areas, sapping families of life. As Christians work sympathetically and sacrificially in new or difficult areas, we must establish and follow lines of open accountability. Otherwise, well-intentioned solutions can be employed that directly oppose biblical truth. Locally

and nationally within the church, I have tried to direct Families For Life with full disclosure. I know that few heartaches can tempt one to compromise more than family pain. Marital discord or dullness, unwanted pregnancy, drug abuse, homosexuality, and other problems are powerful issues. If we are not on guard, desperation can lead us to ease suffering by means that will not bear the light of examination by Almighty God.

The current debates over contraceptives for teens, condoms for sexually active homosexuals and AIDS carriers, and the abortion of babies conceived by AIDS-infected mothers or mothers assumed to be potential child abusers (accurate prediction is impossible, due to selectivity of abuse within families), are cases in point. We must not usurp God's instructions by becoming accomplices to immorality or violence as we seek to alleviate further suffering and violence.

We must pray continually for wisdom to discern the medical, sociological, and spiritual approaches that please Christ and sanctify His church. Part of the role of Families For Life is to invite the church to minister, discuss, and address family needs with greater energy and courage. As we minister to families, however, we must beware of betraying the message of Christ. If we, by any means, lead in ways that teach or imply that there are situations in which God's way is insufficient or unacceptable, we need fear for our souls' health and for the life of Christ's church. Christ did not call me to work on behalf of families for any reason less than to fulfill the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, I care deeply about families, and my family has not been without severe, heart-rending hurts and testings. But because I know what Christ is able to do for His faithful ones through difficulties, I know He only is able to bring praise in face of deep sorrow and restoration in face of seemingly unbearable hurt. Only He is able, and if we forget that, or fail to live it, we forget the gospel. The key to right approaches is to let the whole gospel prove its truth.

Emile Durkheim's predictions of the meaningless and purposelessness of the family will not prove true if a strong church helps build strong families. I pray for more prayer, for revival in Christ, and good uses of excellent resources. As for Durkheim's views on the future of religion, I agree. No religion has given lasting purpose and meaning to life. But Jesus Christ has, does, and will forever. Families have a strong, secure hope in Him. 



## Pontius' Puddle





# AN APPROACH TO PASTORAL VISITATION

## Third in a series

by Jerry W. McCant

*Professor of Religion, Point Loma Nazarene College  
San Diego, Calif.*

**P**astoral visitation is primarily a priestly function. The priest's role is to bring God and people together. Thus pastoral visitation is a way to proclaim God's love, compassion, forgiveness, and presence. As a servant of God, the pastor seeks to bring healing to broken lives. A priest, unlike the prophet, is not as interested in telling people what's wrong in their lives as he is in making them aware of God's grace for their needs. Priestly pastoral visitation nurtures the presence of God among His people. In planning an approach to pastoral visitation, this purpose must not be forgotten.

Despite changes in the times, basic human needs remain the same. One's approach may differ from that of another generation, but the need for visitation remains. Pastoral visitation is every pastor's terrible duty and high privilege. It is not optional; it is a vital aspect of ministry. Few, if any, church members are such stalwart saints or so self-actualized that they don't need pastoral visitation. Every member of the congregation needs to be included in the pastor's visitation program.

### ***The Pastor Goes to the People***

Other professionals wait for persons needing their services to come to them. Ministers go to the people, because that is what God does.

Perhaps it would be useful to use the Christological analogy when discussing the minister. Jesus Christ was both human and divine. Likewise, the minister is human, but his work is divine. The pastor goes to God's people in the name of Jesus Christ and in His stead. When a pastor does pastoral visitation it is not as a buddy but as God's representative.

The pastor's presence represents the presence of God. It is a sacramental symbol of grace, speaking of mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness. It is the pastor's task to represent the compassion of Christ and the caring presence of God. In caring for people by pastoral visitation, the pastor has the privilege of nurturing them in their faith and cultivating His presence among people.

Every pastor who understands that a call to ministry is a call to servanthood should be committed to a ministry of visitation. The pastor's conduct should be professional in the best sense of the word. But that is not inconsistent with servanthood. In the spirit of Jesus Christ, who emptied himself and took on the form of a

servant, the pastor must take on the form of a servant as His representative. Pastoral visitation does not reinforce people's neuroses. In the name of Christ, who is our great high priest, the pastor "binds up the broken-hearted" and declares grace and forgiveness to people. A pastor who so cultivates the presence of God will seldom need to worry about revival.

Pastoral visitation is not optional. It is a vital aspect of pastoral ministry, and its neglect is perilous to both the pastor and the church. There is no more effective way to teach people about the compassion of Christ than through compassionate pastoral visitation.

### ***Schedule Pastoral Visits***

A pastor risks a waste of time and service if he attempts "dropping in" on people. The "drop in" visit is much too casual and vitiates the priestly function of the pastoral visit. Pastoral visitation is much too important for such a helter-skelter, hit-and-miss approach. Its purpose is not to make a social call but to care for spiritual needs.

Laymen lead busy lives. Unexpected intrusions are inconvenient and disruptive to their family lives. Little spiritual good can be done when everyone present resents the pastor's uninvited interruption. Once the visit is scheduled, the pastor should be on time. If the family knows the purpose and approximate length of the visit, they can be prepared to make the time meaningful, knowing that they can move on with other scheduled activities afterward.

Planned visitation helps the pastor avoid favoritism among church people. A pastor who cares for people cannot afford the luxury of always visiting the people he prefers. Scheduled visitation also helps overcome being monopolized by the neurotic fringe element of the church. If a pastor will plan this aspect of his ministry, it may still be possible to visit every home in his church within the course of a year; an idea worth considering.

Some pastors use one of two indexes for pastoral visitation: alphabetical and geographical. The geographical index may be the more valuable. Before the pastor leaves the office there should be a planned route in the interest of time and mileage on the automobile. Index cards should be taken from the file when the pastor

visits. Before arriving in the home, he may wish to glance at pertinent information on the card. After the visit, the pastor should jot down important data (date, results of visit, needs discovered) for future reference.

Some pastors do not enjoy pastoral visitation. That is all the more reason to plan scheduled visitation. Pastors who have problems preparing sermons will set a deadline for themselves to have the Sunday morning sermon ready by Wednesday or Thursday. Likewise, pastors who have problems with pastoral visitation should set aside certain hours to make scheduled visits. Hopefully in time the pastor will experience the rewards and learn to love pastoral visitation. Until love motivates the work, a schedule will certainly help.

### ***Decorum for Pastoral Visitation***

A pastor's clothes or demeanor should never call attention to himself. His goal should always be to point the minds of people toward Christ. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said: "He shall not speak of himself" (John 16:13). While no pastor can go to people incognito, every effort should be made to emphasize that he comes in Christ's stead. The presence of God, rather than the presence and person of the pastor, should be emphasized.

The purpose of the pastoral visit is always spiritual. It is not necessary for the pastor to know all of the latest jokes. Wisecracking about spiritual subjects during pastoral visitation nullifies anything meaningful that might ever be said about those subjects in the pulpit. There is no place for the pastor to trivialize the doctrine of entire sanctification by jesting about believing in "the second blessing" when inadvertently shaking hands or speaking to a person the second time.

Confidentiality is essential. What is discovered in one home should not be revealed in another home, not even under the guise of "concern" or a prayer request. The pastor does not have the right to expose the problems of members even to the most trusted saints in the church. A "gossipy" pastor will soon be discovered, and no one will feel comfortable sharing needs with him. One parishioner was recently heard saying, "I would like to ask the pastor to pray about this matter, but he simply cannot keep a confidence." Few liabilities could be sadder in ministry.

No one expects a pastor to be a pious prig, but they do rightfully expect that his conduct be reflective of a person of God. Questionable language and off-color remarks are never appropriate. A pastor should be and should appear to be kind, gentle, loving, and compassionate. It should be obvious that he is interested in the person being visited. The focus should be on the person visited, and the pastor should then focus that attention on God. Pastoral decorum should make God's presence felt during the visit!

### ***The Length of the Pastoral Visit***

How long should the pastor visit? That may have to be determined by its purpose. Regularly scheduled pastoral visits should seldom exceed 15 minutes, but there may be times when that will hardly be sufficient. Certainly the pastor should not appear to be in a hurry. Constantly looking at one's watch may give the impression

that the visit is a duty or that there are more important events on the pastor's schedule. However, if people know the purpose and are educated in the nature of pastoral visitation, they will seldom be offended by brevity. A prolonged visit tends to become social in nature, losing its spiritual purpose.

Times of crisis and trauma may require longer visits, but the pastor should be careful that the spiritual nature of the visit is understood even then. When a pastor goes to a home after a member of the family has committed suicide, he may have to stay as long as the family needs a pastor. If called because a family member is threatening the life of another person, the pastor may have to be there for an unscheduled length of time. But these exceptions are not pastoral visitation in the best sense of the term. Crises demand exceptions to the usual rules of pastoral visitation.

Effective pastoral visitation requires educating the people. They should know what to expect when the pastor arrives. Thus the pastor comes prepared to minister briefly, and those to whom he ministers are prepared for that kind of service. For the moments the pastor is in the home, the focus will be on spiritual concerns, and the people will come to appreciate the priestly presence of the pastor in their homes.

### ***The Nature of the Pastoral Visit***

At the risk of being redundant, the pastoral visit is always spiritual in nature. There will undoubtedly be social implications, but the focus must always be spiritual. This requires the pastor to understand the divine nature of the call to ministry. The purpose of pastoral visitation is to bring God and people together.

Since pastoral visitation is spiritual in nature, it requires some use of Scripture. Any Scripture passage should be carefully chosen in advance. It should have relevance to the person with whom it is shared. To simply open the Bible and read a few verses without any forethought trivializes the use of Scripture and treats the Bible as an object of magic or superstition.

After the Scripture is read, there should be a brief moment of sharing and relating what has been read to the lives of the people to whom one is ministering. In this atmosphere someone may feel free to share needs or express concerns for oneself or for the family. This is not to suggest that the Bible will be treated like a "collection of promises" or that persons will be asked to say "what it means to me." Scripture speaks to our existential situations and persons may sense this and, in the openness of the moment, may wish to express felt needs.

The visit will usually conclude with a pastoral prayer, including a representation of the person's needs to God, but it should not focus so much on the person as it does on God, who makes himself objectively real through the presence of the pastor. A pastor's prayer educates the people to pray in the same way, focusing on God, not themselves.


Following the prayer the pastor will leave, so as not to vitiate the power of God's presence by useless talk at the door. In this way people may learn to practice the presence of God. This kind of pastoral leadership teaches them the true meaning of spirituality and helps them grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

People fortunate enough to have such a pastor may be able to move from purely egocentric, experience-centered religion to a deeper level of commitment to Scripture and the presence of Jesus Christ who has promised: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20, NASB).

### **Conclusion**

Compassion is the heart of pastoral visitation. However, the pastor's purpose is not to impress others with personal compassion so much as to bring desperate souls into the healing presence of a compassionate Christ. Often pastoral visitation is a ministry of building bridges from the painful wasteland of the human predic-

ament to the presence of a God who is a great Companion and fellow-sufferer. There will always be a need for the ministry of compassion.

Pastoral visitation is also committed to Christian nurture. Far too many people have become fixated, and spiritual growth has ceased. A nurturant pastor who ministers through private home visitation as well as through pulpit ministry may stimulate spiritual growth. Periodic visits from a pastor who cultivates the presence of God among the people through sharing in prayer and Scripture may aid the spiritual development of God's people. Christian life is not static. Pastoral care releases the dynamic of the Holy Spirit's presence in the lives of God's people. 

## **Helping Alienated Families**

*Continued from page 31*

### **LAYING A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR RECONCILIATION**

Since there are two sides to the conflict, the pastor must hear and understand both sides, if this is possible. After the conflict is understood, a counseling process should be developed that, while supportive, also teaches. The nature of that counseling would vary from situation to situation, but many family problems could be helped if people would put into practice two simple (complex) Christian behaviors:

#### **1. An Unconditional Forgiving Spirit**

Unconditional forgiveness is a difficult concept to live out because we do not want to turn loose of our demands on how others are to behave. It can begin as a prayer (out loud and in front of the pastor) for those who have hurt us. Interceding and asking forgiveness for those who have hurt us is biblically based and brings a special kind of healing. Jesus provides the best model for teaching this concept.


#### **2. Apply/Claim God's Word or Promise**

Many scriptures are very helpful in the alienated family situation. The promise of 1 Cor. 10:13 is that we will not be tempted, tested, or hurt beyond our capacity to endure. Especially if we lean on Christ. We can cast our care on Him because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7).

The concept of giving thanks in, for, and through the pain is a difficult but helpful concept for a hurting Christian to grasp (1 Thess. 5:18). Normally it is some time after the healing process has begun that a "light" comes on and the person sees how the pain was used to mold and change him for the better. This light includes the realization that God is active when He appears silent or indifferent to our pain.

Selecting a few scriptures such as Phil. 4:6, 8; James 1:19-20; or Col. 3:12-14 and coming back to them over a period of weeks plants, waters, and produces the fruit the scripture was given to produce.

### **GIVE HOPE**

In those long-term situations that cannot be resolved, a final task is to give the family hope of a future reconciliation. No matter how hopeless it seems. After 20 years "Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept" (Gen. 33:4, NIV). 

## **From Autographs to Canon**

*Continued from page 29*


original writers to write precisely what He had wanted them to write. It contains changes in the writings that part of the Old Testament the believing community possessed during the Exile and during the later Diaspora could hold it together when all other peoples of the Near East lost their continuity with their past and ceased to exist, give me that part of the canon. And give me the rest of the Old Testament canon, and the New Testament canon—for the whole of it, changed somewhat from the autographs, was found to be survivingly and nuturingly and evangelistically useful by my forebears.

I might take that canon and study how and why it developed as it did. I might study, say, the traditions about Creation and the Flood and the Red Sea crossing, and all the other traditions, and how and why accounts of those traditions got into our canon—my canon. I might study the various literary genres that are part of the canon, the various literary forms, why and how redactors might have edited certain writings. I might do that, if I am of a mind to do so. It will not lose my soul if I do, and it might well enrich my understanding of the heritage that I hold and that holds me.

Yet I am not wildly thrust into such pursuits. I do not crave such pursuits as perhaps what will give me a pre-canon text that I can use somehow more wholeheartedly than I can use the canonical text.

I am saying also that I am more interested in dropping from my biblical text whatever post-canon changes there are in it, such as 1 John 5:7, than I am in dropping from it the pre-canon changes from the nonextant autographs.

In all of this, I am saying that to theologize about the meaning of the canonical text is basically what I am interested in. I need to know about genre and forms and how and why redactors did what they did, so I am not interested in altogether dispensing with historical-critical sciences. They can help me find out what the meaning of the text was and is. But what I am hungry for, what I pursue, is this meaning, this theological meaning, this evangelistic meaning, this meaning that searches me and stretches me and secures me.

O give me that canon! It will point me to Christ, and to the lost and the least of this world, and to my ethical responsibilities, and to heaven. 



# A MINISTRY OF MERCY TO THE NEEDY

by David F. Nixon  
*Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Pekin, Ill.*

**T**he anxious woman on the telephone plaintively asked, "Can you help me?" She had no food, and she did not expect to receive her monthly disability check for several days. She did not receive, nor had she applied for food stamps or any other governmental assistance. She had no connection to my church, nor did she attend church regularly anywhere. She simply needed help.

My wife drove the woman to a grocery store and paid for the items she requested. Later, another distress call came from the same woman, and two caring women from our church responded. Her neighbors subsequently informed us that as soon as the ladies left, she began to sell the groceries to people in the neighborhood in order to buy alcohol.

On another occasion, I arrived at the church to learn

that the father of one of our members had been stricken with a severe heart attack in another state. He was not expected to live. His anxious daughter yearned to be with her dying father. Hard-pressed for unexpected expenditures on her limited income, Katie knew she could not afford a plane ticket. When her need was presented to the small Wednesday night Bible study crowd, all but a few dollars came in toward the cost of the ticket.

Thus began our benevolent ministry to the needy of our church and community. Since its inception over three years ago, we have ministered to over 75 families, providing nearly \$6,500 in emergency relief. The needy abound on almost any 20 feet of street the world around, particularly in those regions of the United States immersed in recession and high unemployment. Industrial giants who thought the sky was the limit for expan-

sion in the 70s have experienced enormous losses. Uncompleted skeletons of steel beams and girders, empty buildings, and abandoned homes are grim reminders that dreams of expansions have turned to ashes.

At one point in our town of 34,000 people, 1,000 homes were on the market as people migrated to wherever work could be found. Many who have stayed are chronically unemployed. That is, they've been unemployed so long that they are no longer counted in the government's optimistic unemployment figures. They have held on for the maximum allowable time unemployment benefits are paid, hoping against hope to be recalled to their previous positions.

Those with good-paying jobs have fared well in these economically hard times. This began to give me an uneasiness about how good I had it while others in my congregation and community teetered on the brink of financial disaster. For years I have been guilty of seeing people in need and wishing them well but doing nothing about it (James 2:15-16). Something had to change. Because I did not want to claim faith not backed by deeds, I became constrained to share. What we call our benevolence ministry came into being to meet some of the irrepressible needs of people.

At Christmas, we started sending checks for cash to our unemployed and poor. A home mission pastor with a family of seven, earning less than \$4,000 per year, received cash, food, and gifts. When fire burned out one of our families, the church was there to support. A family in our community facing eviction asked for help. We were able to give it.

A young mother of four small children, abandoned by her husband and trying to survive on ADC (Aid to Dependent Children), discovered that the electricity could not be turned on in her apartment until her husband's delinquent bill incurred before they were married, was paid. When we learned she had no electricity—no means of cooking other than a charcoal grill, no hot baths, etc.—we paid the bad debt so that power could be restored.

When fire destroyed one of our people's sole means of transportation, with no insurance to replace it, money was donated toward the purchase of a replacement so that the husband could continue to provide for his family.

The needy are turning to the church in greater numbers than ever before. Other wells of help are drying up. In difficult economic times the church can no longer depend upon the government to do its benevolence work.

How does the church respond when families must choose between food for their babies or heat for their homes? What are parents to do when they cannot purchase orthopedic shoes needed to correct a child's birth defect? Do we say to the needy, "We sympathize with your plight, but there's nothing we can do," or do we reach out and help?

Many people identify with the bumper sticker, "I'm po', but proud," and will not ask for help. But sensitive Christians with open eyes and listening hearts are impelled to respond. Before, because I did not have a plan for benevolence, I normally said a flat "No!" to the many cries for help I received. My guilt was short-lived, because I knew I could not afford to do much out of my own pocket, and church funds were unavailable for compassionate ministries. But as more needs pressed upon my conscience, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the hungry, naked, and needy at my doorstep. I had to act.

For me, the problem was not a failure of compassion but a lack of organization. When Ezekiel went to the exiles who lived at Tel Aviv near the Kebar River, he "sat among them for seven days—overwhelmed" (Ezek. 2:15, NIV). It would be easy to sit down among the needy, so overwhelmed that we do nothing. But if you want to turn your compassion into a helping response, you need a plan of action. Before you rush out to make a directionless response to the needy all around,

#### DEFINE YOUR PURPOSE

A caring response to the poor and needy cannot be sustained by guilt. It may motivate to action, but once the conscience is soothed, concern walks by on the other side. A clear, biblical purpose is essential. We settled on this: to express the compassion of Christ through His body, the church, by *helping to relieve human want*. We will never totally relieve human need, "The poor you will always have with you," Jesus said. The total elimination of poverty and need is beyond our reach. If we think otherwise, we will end up sitting down in Ezekiel-like fashion, overwhelmed. Though we cannot eliminate it, constrained by the love of Christ, we at least put forth an effort. Help should always be given in such a way that both the giver and receiver are aware that Jesus Christ is the motivator of the act of benevolence. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

#### DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY

At first, I made all decisions about benevolence help. The burden soon became too heavy and had to be

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shared, not because of criticism but because it was difficult to determine who needed help most. The Board of Stewards serving in an advisory capacity with the pastor, shares in the administration of our merciful acts. This aids in the decision process of who shall receive help and how much. Acts of benevolence became the confidential responsibility of the pastor and committee.

The church and all its organizations were urged to do its benevolence ministries through this structure. If Sunday School classes or other church groups wish to have special benevolence projects, they are encouraged to confer with the pastor or benevolence committee or help in confirming the existence of need, within the scope of the church's program, and to be sure all other sources of help have been or are being explored by or for the individuals in need. This guards against the possibility of someone receiving duplicate aid from several church organizations.

### DESIGNATE YOUR SCOPE

A benevolence program cannot be long-range relief. There are never sufficient funds, so the scope of our ministry is for *temporary relief arising out of emergency situations*. The scope of the benevolence activity should be as broad as possible and is usually determined by the available funds. We determined that emergency help would be given as follows: (1) To members of our church; (2) To nonmembers and Sunday School members recommended by a member of our church; and finally, (3) To all other needy people, especially those within our denominational affiliation.

The reason for these priorities is obvious. The Scriptures command us to help our own people—"But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). Many times, those who apply for assistance are just as needy spiritually as they are materially. Their first application for help should be to a church of their own denominational preference, for that church can better respond to their spiritual needs. A church located near them should have the first chance to respond to their needs, for it will be in a better position to cultivate them as prospects. Persons receiving assistance are encouraged to attend our services, but attendance is not mandatory to receive help.

One cannot always respond positively to all requests for help. So we determined in advance what geographic area we would attempt to serve. The boundaries estab-

lished do not apply to our own members or to persons referred to the church by our members. This protects the church from those who may live many miles away but use the phone directory and randomly dial the church or parsonage requesting help.

The type of assistance to be made available also needs careful consideration. The church cannot be all things to all people. As a general rule, only those things considered to be necessities should be provided: food, clothing, shelter, and medication. Only in rare cases, as in providing a plane ticket so that a member could visit her dying father, do we respond to needs not covered by the foregoing. Money should never be paid directly to an individual, except perhaps at Christmas. If a person needs to pay a utility bill, mortgage, etc., the bill should be paid for them. If food is needed, food is supplied.

Some people get themselves into a bind through poor financial planning and overextension. One family received several hundred dollars to pay their mortgage, but only on the condition that they receive financial counseling regarding their problem, and to obtain help with financial planning.

### DESIGN A FUNDING SYSTEM

For there to be an outgo, there must be an inflow of funds, for the benevolence ministry. Wednesday night offerings are a good source of income for this ministry of mercy.

All monies received for this ministry are channeled through a special account that the pastor and committee members administer. A monthly report of benevolent activity is made to the church board, and the books are audited periodically. Names of those receiving aid are never published or mentioned in the monthly report. A confidential record of all assistance is kept by the pastor and upon request by any member of the church, the benevolence committee certifies that the records are in order and funds are being properly used.

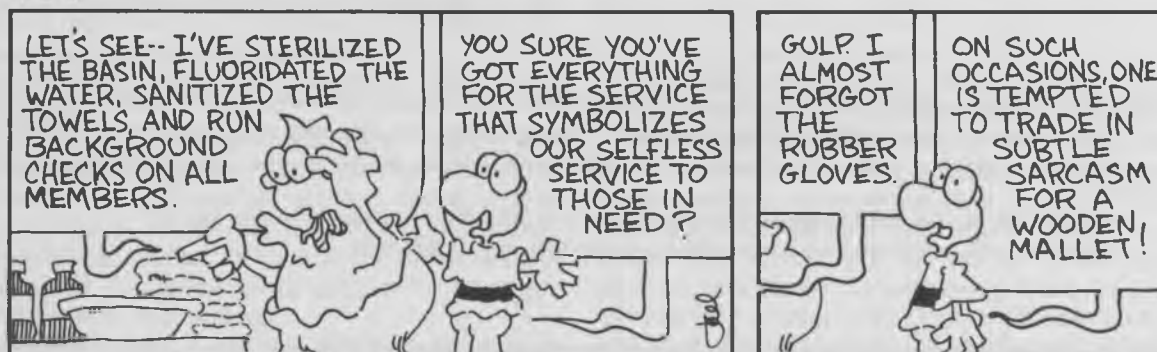
### DETERMINE YOUR LIMITATIONS

The needs are so great that types of assistance available have to be determined. In keeping with the aforementioned priority system, church members having emergency needs receive a one to two week's supply of staple grocery items, clothing, emergency medication, assistance with the payment of utilities, rent, health insurance, or house payment.

Non-church members living in our community and



## Pontius' Puddle



certified to be in need may receive \$25.00 in staple food items, clothing items as available, and possible other help with the above needs, depending upon available financial resources. Such help is usually not given more than once per year. With the limitations clearly marked, even if the church's generosity is abused somehow, the loss is minimal. Besides, when the benevolence is given in Jesus' name, any deception is directed toward Him, not the helping agent.

Non-church members outside our geographic area are referred to a church or agency in their area. These are usually transients making their routing treks. Some claim to be members of our denomination with a convincing story of hard luck. With limits clearly defined, the most that is offered is \$25.00. Many communities have a local agency or organization set up to serve transients. Our local ministerial alliance was the catalyst for our town's Christian Civic Outreach. Clothing, food, used furniture, and emergency help is given to the poor and transients. The churches cooperate in providing financial support to this vital outreach that averages helping over 900 families per month. It also serves as a clearing house for those receiving help. Churches may contact CCO to see if those requesting help from the church have been assisted by CCO, and to what extent.

If assistance is needed more than once in 12-month period, the benevolence committee should approve the action. In cases where it is difficult to determine the appropriate response, the input of several people is helpful. At times help is denied. One time a frantic mother tearfully asked if I could help keep her son from going to jail for a bad debt. He had been summoned to appear in small claims court. The request was for nearly \$200. A radiology group had given the past due account to a credit bureau. After checking with the bureau, several discrepancies were uncovered. Help was denied by the committee, and the man paid his own debt to avoid jail.

The authority to grant requests for help must be determined. In our church the pastor, if he is available, has authority to grant all requests for help according to the outlined priorities, not to exceed \$100 for members, or \$25.00 for nonmembers. If the pastor is unavailable and the need is an emergency, committee members have authority to supply the need in an amount not to exceed \$25.00. Committee members are subsequently reimbursed. The pastor is contacted and advised of this situation as soon as he is available.

When repeated requests for assistance are received from the same people, or where requiring a cash outlay of more than a \$100 is needed, I always confer with the stewards for help with the decision. In some cases, help is rendered only after all requests for information from the pastor and committee have been met. Persons requesting assistance are encouraged to avail themselves of any public assistance to which they are entitled.

When the guidelines are established and agreed upon, the procedures should be followed by all concerned. If an emergency demands a response that requires moving more rapidly than the guidelines allow, absolute authority must give way to administering help in the name of the Lord. Whenever normal channels cannot be followed, the remainder of the benevolence committee is informed of the action and the circumstance surrounding it as soon as possible.

Jesus commissioned a ministry of mercy when He said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matt. 5:7, NIV). Mercy is simply concern for people in need; ministry to the miserable; help for those who hurt; salve for those who suffer the distressing blows of adversity and hardship. It is more than sympathy—feeling sorry for those in trouble—it is actually getting inside their skin. It is more than an emotional wave of pity; it is a deliberate effort of the mind and will. A merciful pastor and church cannot be content to watch from a safe distance, keeping the needy at arm's length. Instead, they must get involved, rendering assistance where feasible to alleviate the pain of adversity.

We deserve no accolades for our attempt to be true followers of the compassionate Christ. We care because He cared. We're involved because He was involved. We can no longer sit idly by offering pious words of pity. We finally realized that we'll be shown mercy in the same measure of the mercy we show. I could not remain detached, distant, and disinterested to the predicament of the poor and needy. Blind Bartimaeus everywhere cry out for mercy. They are hungry, cold, helpless, with no place to turn. "I worked hard for what I've got, let them work!" is not the boast of the merciful. Some want to work, but cannot! To be needy is not only to suffer want but also to feel isolated from the world of those who have, to feel that no one cares. A religion that is "pure and faultless" must find a way to minister to the less fortunate. My only regret is that I did not begin a ministry of mercy sooner.



## Pontius' Puddle

NOW'S OUR CHANCE TO SATIRIZE THE GREED AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF CHRISTMAS. JUST SAY WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND.



PEACE ON EARTH AND GOD'S RICHEST BLESSING TO YOU AND YOURS.



I HOPE YOU REALIZE YOU JUST BLEW A PERFECTLY GOOD CARTOON STRIP.



# ON THE CHURCH:

## *A Dialogue with Mr. Wesley*

by Leon O. Hynson

*Professor of Theology and Church History  
United Wesleyan College, Allentown, Pa.*

**Student:** Mr. Wesley, you were one of 18th-century England's leading churchmen. You have been nominated the greatest Anglican theologian of your time. You were nurtured in the Church of England, educated at Oxford University, sent to America as a missionary of the church, and gave your life to promote the church's message and to encourage its renewal. We have learned much from you concerning Christian faith and ethics. Now we seek your counsel on several issues involving the church.

### MEMBERSHIP STANDARDS

**Student:** The doctrine of the church is critical to developing an understanding of church life and witness. Is the church to be inclusive or exclusive? What standards of membership should it establish, and how should we apply those standards to our special problems? How should we respond to the increasing number of persons who come to Christ from an entirely worldly and sinful background? Many of us have said that the church must be separated from political and social questions, but we are continually mopping up the lives broken, even ruined, by the world from which we have separated ourselves. The people who come to Christ need direction for their lives, renewal and redemption.

How would you advise us to address these problems?

**Mr. Wesley:** The "ideal church" doesn't exist, not since Constantine compromised the purity of the church by drawing in a mass of un-

converted persons. If you want to see the church in its highest power and beauty, look at the Pentecostal fellowship described by Luke (Acts 2—4). However, we must find unconverted people wherever they are and bring them to Christ. That means both *in the visible church and in the world*.

I recommend the strategy we employed in the Methodist societies. To be a member of the society, one needed only affirm a desire to flee from the wrath to come. Afterward, they were to bear the fruits of righteousness. However, they must be babes in Christ before advancing to youth, and youthful before achieving maturity. Achieving maturity is a lifelong process.

I cannot support too strongly the need to reform social wrongs. The people in London's slums, in Bristol's wretched mines, or poor people expelled from their little farms for wrong economic reasons, were some of the persons we sought to assist. The gospel of salvation, freely offered to every person, changed their lives and led them beyond despair, drunkenness, and immorality, to Christ's new creation. As my brother Charles wrote:

*Suffice that for the season past  
Hell's horrid language fill'd our  
tongues;*

*We all thy words behind us cast,  
And lewdly sang the drunkard's  
songs.*

*But, O the power of grace divine!  
In hymns we now our voices raise.*

### THE MINISTRY

**Student:** What concept of minis-

try informed your work in England? What do you believe to be the biblical symbol of the minister? Comment on the use of lay preachers, both men and women, and the ordination of women. The holiness movement, which generally adheres to Methodist theology, became strong proponents of a Pentecostal basis for women in ministry. Lastly, how should we deal with those called to ministry who have suffered serious social or moral lapses, such as divorce or financial failures, whether before or after their conversion?

**Mr. Wesley:** My answer begins by suggesting that Christ's gospel offers redemptive solutions to tough human situations. Otherwise the gospel isn't helpful news, and isn't therefore, good news.

First the matter of the New Testament model of ministry. In my century, priests of the Church too often lorded it over their flocks. Charles once described them as "heathen priests and mitred infidels," words he later regretted using. There are many ways of climbing the ecclesiastical ladder, but they frequently follow worldly, not divine wisdom.

Second, the church must draw every believer into its ministry. All are part of the body. I had great difficulty in reaching the decision to send out lay ministers. My mother gave me much more encouragement. I learned that many persons, like Stephen in Acts, were capable of leading people to Christ.

My mother is the best model for women in ministry. Although my father wasn't comfortable with it, she conducted Sunday evening services around Epworth. Charles' theology was more "Pentecostal" than mine, but I too saw the directions of Spirit-informed theology. St. Paul taught that under the special impulse of the Spirit, a woman was able to speak or prophesy even in church. (See my *Notes* on 1 Cor. 11:5, 11; 14:34.) Why I should allow prophesying but reject public teaching for women, I cannot easily explain. In the Kingdom, there are no preferments based on sex (*Notes*, 1 Cor. 11:11).

When we deal with persons whose lives have been damaged by divorce, failure in morality, or wrong financial dealings, we need to proceed redemptively. There isn't any other Christian alternative. But redemptive ministry isn't spineless. Rather, we must "offer Christ" as the healing answer to the human problem. Christian persons with backgrounds that are especially problematic for ministry, require all wisdom and love, to the end that the "called of God" are supported toward ministry. However, let there be no haste to lay hands on anyone, since we are to be Christ's examples.

## CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH

**Student:** Mr. Wesley, what about

the nature of the church, including both its evangelical and sacramental character? While we seem to have captured the "evangelical" reasonably well, we need help in appreciating the church sacramental.

**Mr. Wesley:** In the original formation of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, the term "faithful men" meant men having saving faith. That is what the church is, in its "essential" nature.

I also need to affirm the "sacramental" emphasis. I insisted that members of the societies should attend church and receive the sacraments. While it was proper (and quite common) to establish small societies in the larger church for renewal and reform, the church was still the center for accomplishing Christ's work in the world.

What about the value of the sacraments? I consider them to be a "means of grace." The Lord's Supper is to be frequently received in positive memory of Christ's death and our spiritual participation in Him. Even a penitent sinner is encouraged to receive, because Christ is spiritually present to forgive and convert.

## POLITICAL CHURCH

**Student:** Finally, how should we evaluate the church as a political institution? Is political activity in the church consistent with the spirit of

Jesus? Should we "play" church politics in order to improve our opportunity for ministry?

From the perspective of the church's relationship to the state and society, is political action legitimate?

**Mr. Wesley:** The Church has always experienced internal politics and that is seldom, if ever, good for the Christian community. I follow the thinking of the Pietist Gottfried Arnold, who stressed that the Church suffered spiritual dilution when the Emperor Constantine became a political churchman. No, church politics are not good. The New Testament model is different: "The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2, NIV).

We have another problem with the relation of the church to the social-political world. Holiness does not take us from the world but sustains us in it. In my tracts on politics, economics, social life, or slavery, I taught that the Christian must apply the moral values of Jesus to human issues. God's standards are higher than political law or social customs. All human authority is derived from Him. When, for example, the state legalizes slavery, it contradicts divine law, and must therefore be resisted. I do not support revolution by force but by active Christian resistance.

## WHAT COMES BEFORE THE SERMON?

*Continued from page 14*

want to get my shins kicked." Preaching to the dark side of human nature can be easy preaching.

- Am I a proclaimer of Good News or summer reruns? The television network programmers give us repeat programs every summer. Preachers may be tempted to shortcut their preparation of sermons and starve their congregations at times too.

My son surprised me while parading his first grade reading skills. As he scanned our shelf of Bibles at home, he read, "God News for Modern Man." I was shocked, then taught. His slip was correct. God's news makes good news. That's always better than a stale rerun.

- Am I a direct or indirect communicator? Subject—active verb—object. That's the most powerful sentence construction. Someone does something.

Simplicity has impact. Too often we use softeners and water down our statements. "Do you suppose . . ." "As you well know . . ." "Could it be . . ." "It goes without

saying . . ." Padding dulls the force of any communication. In preaching, poor communication is a sin.

Good preaching is lean and clean. It has the clout of "Thus saith the Lord." If I can't communicate my sermon directly, I may be ill-prepared. Worse yet, I may not believe my own message.

## PERSON, PREACHER

No one becomes a better preacher than he is a person. So five basic ingredients precede the sermon. First, the preacher needs a vision of ministry. Second, he needs a sense of his gifts. Third, he must recognize his ministry style. Fourth, he needs to filter the rent out from his basic role. Fifth, he must check his emotional preparedness for preaching.

What comes before the sermon? The preacher's self-knowledge. Self-examination contains a risk. We may not like what we learn about ourselves. But, in the classic statement of Socrates, "The unexamined life isn't worth living."

Look at yourself and your ministry foundations. Then read yourself full, pray yourself hot, and tell the Good News.

# THE ECSTASY AND THE EDIFICE

by Dan Steele

*Associate Minister/Music, Kansas City First Church of the Nazarene  
and Lecturer in Music, Nazarene Theological Seminary*

**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 14<sup>1</sup>**

Author Helen Temple said, "Learn to hear and know the voice of God, or Satan will make a fool of you." Satan is doing just that in many of our worship services. God is seeking to break through to us in worship. But we are often confused as to which is God's voice and which is our own, the manipulation of a persuasive leader, the spirit of the crowd, or our own aroused emotions.

Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 are given to a church with a problem. Their worship gatherings were chaotic and confusing, as self-centered people childishly clamored for spiritual gifts. Were they that different from us? Our own local church services frequently appear fragmented and confusing.

A church staff member complained that his pastor insisted on singing one song over and over. I asked why the pastor wanted the same song repeated. He said, "Because it blesses him." Self-centered worship is alien to Paul's concept.

Too many of our people attend our services expecting (demanding?) God to do something for them because of what they have done for Him. It seems they feel, "I should be rewarded for coming." A line from a song by Ken Medema says, "I-am-His-and-He-is-mine-and-doesn't-it-make-me-feel-good." That is contrasted with "We-are-His-and-He-is-Lord, He-calls-us-to-His-service."

We encourage the self-centered

attitude by insisting that the ingredients of our services be "crowd pleasers." One pastor's pat criterion for what goes into worship is "Will it fly?" Will it get the desired immediate response? "If it works it must be right," is just one short step from, "If it feels good it must be right." This "playing to the galleries" has created congregations of spectators. Too many insist on perfection in the "performers." Television and concert art-



Dan Steele



ists become, for them, the paragons of Christianity. But what our people often think they see in these celebrity Christians has often proven to be an illusion created by market strategy. It distorts the realities of what being in the church is all about.

The worship gatherings of the Corinthian church were definitely free-style. They were much like later Quaker meetings, in which anyone could lead. They would usually go on for hours. The ingredients included psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, prayers, lessons read either from Scripture or letters, prophecy, praise, speaking in tongues and interpretations, and Communion. The services were based on the proceedings of the synagogue with the addition of the Lord's Supper and ecstatic experience.

The combination of the size of the group meeting, the amount of time they had together, and the people's lack of training made their worship style possible and necessary. We, however, have little time together, we have generally much larger groups, and we have the privilege of much more training in things related to worship. Yet, I see evidence of unnecessary casualness and carelessness in our planning approach to worship.

Public services of our conservative evangelical holiness churches have been formed predominantly on the basis of that which was practiced in the revivalist and evangelic tradition. It is to pour the ingredients of all services into the revivalist mold as though the only purpose in gathering is to call unbelievers to conversion. We thoughtlessly follow the standard procedure: two congregational songs (usually whatever is familiar), a chorus, a prayer, a choir number, announcements and offering, "special" music, a sermon, and an invitation or closing prayer. In fact, at least one pastor's only planning for services, outside his sermon preparation, is to take last week's order of service, change the names and numbers, and reprint it.

Church bulletins reveal our carelessness. Notice how we carefully print the announcements, being sure there is some response for us to put on our Friendship in Worship cards, then read them carefully to be sure everyone hears, understands,

and responds, but when it comes to the sermon the most we get is a title and scripture reference. Judging by the bulletin, what is most important?

How often is there any reference in sermons to the music, scripture, or anything else that has taken place in another part of the service? It's as though the sermon had no worship context. It just appears.

Yet, in spite of the carelessness, confusion, and self-centeredness, God really wants to break through to us in worship, and I believe we want God's presence in all His glory and power.

The people of Corinth, much like the charismatics of today, considered the gift of tongues to be a sign of God's presence. Ecstasy was the experience to which they aspired because, to them, it was evidence of God's blessing. But Paul tried to redirect their aspirations to that which would edify the church. An edifice is a building. To edify is to build up. Paul's lesson might be said to come down to a choice between the pre-eminent importance of the ecstasy or the edifice.

Paul emphasized that God is more concerned with breaking through with that which brings salvation, instruction, encouragement, and comfort to His church. The Psalmist said he desired to "inquire," to "seek," to be "taught," in God's temple (27:4).

Our encounters with God do not always make us ecstatic, or even feel good. They are sometimes very disturbing, even distressing. To insist otherwise is illusion and superficiality.

In *Worship and Spirituality*, Don Saliers says, "Worship is always twofold: it is the action of glorifying God and the sanctification of all that is human before God. . . . Worship lifts up what is human to the transforming and sanctifying power and presence of God. It ascribes to God the honor due God's holiness and brings human life to a new intensification before God."<sup>2</sup>

In Ephesians 4, Paul says that God gifts His people for the purpose of perfecting the church, including coming to unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son, growing into Christ, and strengthening the church in love. The failure of this happening in our public worship has led to the ne-

cessity of developing more and more small groups for Bible study and discipleship. The worship services have been turned into little more than pep rallies, and the Sunday School classes are gatherings for fellowship and a short lesson. The few people who will really make the effort are invited to spend extra hours during the week in a spiritual exercise that will be more apt to lead to spiritual growth. This is not to speak against the small groups, but our worship services need to become more spiritually substantive and life-transforming events.

Paul gave the Corinthians some guidelines. First, he said, Follow the way of love I just described (1 Corinthians 13) and desire the gift of prophecy (see 1 Cor. 14:1). Prophecy, as used by Paul, meant an utterance of a message directly inspired by God that all people understood. Here is an example of God's seeking to break through to us in worship. Prophecy may mean preaching, but it may be much more than preaching. Not all prophecy is preaching, and not all preaching is prophetic.

God used many media for revealing His Word, including the vine that grew up over Jonah's head for protection, the whirlwind out of which God spoke to Job, the donkey that spoke to Balaam, and many others. Reading scripture, playing or singing music, sharing a testimony, or exercising symbolic gestures such as serving Communion may all function prophetically.

God also wants to speak to us through the very design of our worship. Paul said everything should be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). Why? So that people will be impressed with our organizational skills? No! Paul said, because the God whom we represent is not a God of disorder but a God of peace (v. 33). We serve a God of order and therefore should worship Him with order. He is a God of excellence and should be worshiped with excellence. He is a God of holiness and should be worshiped in the beauty of holiness. The shape of our worship should be a reflection of the God whom we love and serve in Jesus Christ.

Paul further asks, Did the word of God originate with you Corinthians?

Are you the only ones to whom God has revealed himself? (1 Cor. 14:36). His rhetorical question was to remind them that their behavior was judged by the wisdom of other believers, perhaps in other days. God has been speaking to Christians through the ages. To assume that we can ignore all and do it "our way" is arrogance. Bob Benson, in his last devotional book before his death, said that to worship without knowledge of its historic meaning and precedent is a little like tackling higher mathematics by counting on our fingers and toes. God wants to speak, to reveal himself, and He has been doing it to people for centuries. We can certainly learn much from them and give Him a better chance to break through to us.

Paul's second guideline is that desires and practices in worship be conformed to the objective of strengthening or edifying the church (1 Cor. 14:26). It is logical and natural that the intention of love is to strengthen, encourage, and comfort others rather than seek blessings for oneself. In Romans, Paul says, "Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself . . ." (15:2-3). "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (14:19).

Again, edification is not confined to preaching. It should be the aim of everything done in worship. Paul said, "Speak to one another with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19).

Paul emphasizes prophecy as the superior gift, because through it believers are strengthened, encouraged, and comforted (1 Cor. 14:3), and through it unbelievers (including both seekers and the uninitiated into the faith) are brought under conviction, judgment, and disclosure of their hearts (14:24).

A community of believers should have a strong sense of mutual responsibility in worship, so that the motivation is more others-oriented than self-oriented. Paul said, "In the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue" (14:19).

One commentator writes, "The criterion of any gift is its value to the

church." I would apply that to any act of worship. Its value is dependent first on whether or not it meets the test of strengthening the church.

Paul said, when a man speaks in tongues no one understands him. He utters mysteries with his spirit (14:2). "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful" (v. 14). "Stop thinking like children" (v. 20). He quotes a passage from the prophet Isaiah (28:11-12) in which the children of Israel were condemned for their rebellion. Someone speaking in tongues didn't help them then, and this gift would not help the church now.

In effect, Paul was saying, ecstatic signs or charismatic gifts other than prophecy are not supporting beams to the church, essential to the system. He would not forbid them, but they did not strengthen the church.

It is important for us to remember that even today, the charismatic movement is heterodox, not emphasizing any particular, distinctive doctrines as the holiness churches do. The praise music they use is general and doctrinally vague. It has in it the kerygma but very little of the didache. It neglects revealed insights and much of the historic and effective use of music for specific teaching such as was used by the Wesleys, Zinzendorf, and many others.

Like Paul, we would not forbid the practice of so-called praise music (choruses, repeating pat phrases), but it is not essential, not staple, because it does little to edify the church. It would be tragic for it to replace the historic hymnody or become a thing of satisfaction, thus discouraging the writing and composing of more great hymns today. It would certainly be inappropriate for an orthodox church such as ours.

The thrust of Paul's admonition is the edification of the congregation or church as a whole. He contrasts that which edifies oneself with that which edifies the church (14:4). This is a collective concern.

As products of a pietistic church emphasizing personal salvation, we in the holiness tradition have failed to grasp the significance of acting as a unity, a community, a family. Individualism is deeply imbedded. Recently, the pastor of our church mentioned, in a message, that the

reason we believe Christian weddings should be in the context of the congregation is that the presence and participation of the body of believers validates the commitment that is made. We are more than spectators, we are validators. There is a sense in which the commitment would be less than Christian without our fellow believers participating.

If it is true of wedding worship, why not other kinds of worship? In fact, is there really any spiritual growth that takes place outside the Christian community?

How much more this reinforces the statement of the writer of Hebrews that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (10:25). We need to be present in worship to be the means of edifying our brothers and sisters. We need to carefully plan and lead worship events that will help our people be, not just spectators, not just an "audience," but instruments God can use for mutual edification.

What, then, should we do about our worship? First, we can't be satisfied with mere cosmetic changes in our worship practices. The use of fads and slogans don't represent improvements in worship. More entertaining music, redecorating the sanctuary, insisting on more zip in the prelude music, making changes just for the variety and novelty of it, adopting styles of the more popular churches are superficial at best. If your objective is better worship, remember that scripture says no one can even say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Spirit. Pray for the Holy Spirit to saturate your study, planning, and preparation for worship. He is not just the Spirit of the last desperate moment. Carefully prepare for leading worship and for worshiping with the guidance of the Spirit.

Second, seek to prepare an appropriate framework for your sermon. If you were an artist and wanted to display your work, you would be careful to create just the right framework and environment in which its most important features would be highlighted, its whole effect intensified, and its message understood. Why not do the same for your sermon? We claim the preached word is central by placing our pulpit in the middle of the chan-


cel, but then reduce the sermon's effectiveness by lopping it off with a closing prayer and sending our people on their way with hardly a chance to respond.

Third, remember, as Paul said, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1). If your main objective is edifying the church, then you must lead with longsuffering, kind, self-effacing, trusting, hoping, persevering love. There are many "holiness" traditions in worship that are unique but valuable, such as the freedom for a variety of expression and the use of the public altar. Don't ignore them. At the same time, there are many historic practices that when reintroduced can enrich our experience of worship but that need to be lovingly and properly prepared for rather than surprising our people with them.

Don Byerly of Byerly's department store in Minneapolis operates his successful business on the premise that "the only reason people will come back to our store is because of what happened to them the last time they were here." The same is true in our churches. God is as interested in having something significant happen as we are, perhaps even more. Paul said that when the unbeliever or uninitiated hears the word of God coming through in your gatherings, he will "fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (1 Cor. 14:25).

God really wants to be present with us. But we are so often careless and chaotic in our worship service that it is a wonder He can find a place. The great pianist Arthur Rubinstein arrived at a concert hall where he was to play one night, and accidentally entered the wrong door. He was about to go into the aisle of the auditorium when an usher stopped him, saying, "I'm sorry, Mister, but we can't seat you. We're full."

Mr. Rubinstein replied, "May I be seated at the piano?"

Prepare for God the place of preeminence in your worship so He might break through, not just to bring ecstasy but to edify His church. 

#### NOTES

1. All Scripture quotations are from the NIV.
2. Don E. Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 34-35.

## A FAMILY CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

William L. Poteet

**C**hristmas is always a special family time. I prepared the following devotional guide for distribution to encourage setting aside a few moments either on Christmas Eve or Christmas night to celebrate as a family the Savior's birth.

You will need a Bible, a large candle to represent the Lord Jesus, enough smaller candles for each family member to have one, and a few quiet moments in the midst of a busy and happy day.

As you read the Christmas story from Luke's Gospel you will note that there was preparation (Joseph and Mary searched for an inn and settled for a stable), declaration (the angel's song), adoration (the shepherds), sharing (the shepherds told everyone they knew), rejoicing, and remembering (Mary). Our family Christmas celebration follows this same format.

#### PREPARATION

Darken the room except for the fireplace or the tree, and give each family member an unlighted candle (to be used later). Light a large candle representing the Lord Jesus. Gather around this Christ candle and read a favorite Christmas story or poem.

#### DECLARATION

Have another family member read the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-20.

#### ADORATION (Drawing Near)

Have a family member pray with this concern: "Dear Jesus, bless us every one, come into each heart and home" or pray conversationally, inviting Christ to come among you.

#### SHARING (The Gift of Love)


Following prayer each person in turn should light his candle from the Christ candle and as he does so, share his love with each member of the family individually (i.e., "Mom, I love you because you take such good care of us and make such good apple pies!" "Sis, I love you for your sense of humor," etc.).

#### REJOICING

Join in singing a favorite Christmas carol or let several family members choose their favorites.

#### REMEMBERING

As each family member in turn blows out his candle, he should make a wish, for these are Jesus' birthday candles. This wish is really a prayer to the Lord Jesus asking Him for a gift. It should be personal and meaningful to each individual, "Dear Jesus, I wish You would give me more patience with the children" or "Jesus, I wish You would give me the courage to resist the temptation to be 'one of the gang' when what they're doing is wrong."

When the Christ candle is extinguished, each family member should silently ask Christ to share with him what He would give them as His Christmas gift. 

## Treasure the Temporary—by Acceptance

by Cheryl D. Skinner  
Spokane, Wash.

I can still see the wisdom on my friend's face as she said, "Cheryl, treasure the temporary. Soon the crib and diapers will be far behind you."

My friend never knew the depth of truth those words lodged in my heart. Motherhood had not quite been what I had expected. Two and a half years, a toddler, and a six-month-old had worn my patience to a low ebb. It was difficult for me to "treasure the temporary" because I was in bondage to idealistic perfection.

Jesus knew about such restrictions when He said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32, NASB). In time the revelation of her words were inscribed in my soul. "Treasure the temporary" reverberated off the walls of my memory and challenged my exhausted perspective of parenting. Awkwardly at first, I began to live life as a celebration. The lessons were not learned overnight, rather over a decade. However, learning to treasure the temporary has added dimensions of truth, setting me free in my own family relationships; therefore, it is time I shared, as someone did with me.

This summer our family will celebrate LeAnn's 12th and Chad's 10th birthdays. The piles of dirty laundry, endless diapers, sleepless nights resulting in aching muscles, blurred vision, and spacey mentality seem remote from today's realities.

How thankful I am that I listened to my friend. For in so doing, I discovered that the monotony of the daily routine

need not cloud my eternal vision. And what joy comes from seeing life through the eyes of a child.

My first "treasure the temporary" lesson was acceptance. I learned that true acceptance of children meant treating them as people, unique, "fearfully and wonderfully made." God helped me know when to give them space and time to develop. The result of this attitude of acceptance brought true freedom in our homelife. I began to relax about them. They no longer had to "perform" in order to please me. They became dearly loved individuals, not based on their performance but on being who they were becoming. Sometimes the lessons seemed harsh or unfair. As I look back, however, I am so glad I learned acceptance.

Through acceptance, God taught me the difference between punishable actions and permissible first-time offenses.

It was one of those wondrous Midwestern snowy days—just the time to be thankful for my warm Kansas home. The day I had planned was busy enough. Laundry was at the top of the list. Through each load of clothes our then two-and-a-half-year-old son had stayed right beside me. Since his sister was away at preschool, he was content to play at Mama's feet. However, somewhere in the middle of putting the last load of clothing away, he slipped over to the large front room picture window, mesmerized by the snowfall. Probably

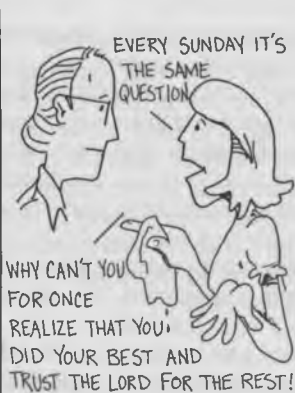
five minutes passed before I realized he was gone.

Discovering his whereabouts became priority. I called and looked for him. No answer. No Chad. I quickly searched the house, all three levels. Stumped and somewhat annoyed, I repeated my search. Surprised by the closed door to his room, I gave it a push, only to freeze when Chad and his horrendous mess caught my full attention.

Disgust overwhelmed me as I thought about cleaning baby powder and baby oil off a boy, carpet, walls, bedding and furniture where he had flung them. Oblivious to the fact that his life hung in the balance, Chad looked up, flashed me a smile, swung his arms toward his creation, and squealed, "Mama, 'nowing and 'aining!"

Suddenly I realized my toddler did not maliciously set out to create more work for me. His obvious innocence allowed the Holy Spirit to melt away my reactionary anger. God's view of the situation began to seep into my perception. By helping Mama clean up the mess, Chad would learn that this action was a one-time experiment. But for now, I would treasure the temporary, as I sighed and heard myself calmly say, "Wow, Chad, you really *have* been snowing and raining. You like the snow and rain?"

And from somewhere within me came a giggle, joined by the laughter of the greasy, powdered little boy I embraced.



# I DO HAVE A NAME

by Frankie Roland

*Coffeyville, Kans.*

**A**nd this is our minister's wife." Outwardly, I smiled and shook hands. Inwardly, however, I was becoming more irritated each time it happened.

I looked into the face of the other person to see if I could detect what she was thinking. No, just curiosity as she looked me over quickly, then the usual question, "So, how do you like our town?"

No question about my career, what some of my goals were, if I'd read a recent book or tried a certain shade of lipstick—just polite chitchat.

I was still upset when one of my fellow choir members started to introduce me to her visiting brother. I interrupted her, smiled, and extended my hand. "Hi, I'm Frankie."

Ruth just looked at me, and her brother acted slightly alarmed. I felt a slow flush and tried to cover up my outburst.

Later, in my place of prayer, I could contain myself no longer. I began to cry and tell the Lord about my problem. "O Lord," I wept, "I'm just a nobody. I try so hard, but all I'll ever be is 'the minister's wife.' No one knows I have a master's degree in gifted education, that I have aspirations to be a writer, that I have hobbies, or that I like to jog." I went on and on. "I'm just an extension of my husband. I don't even have a name!"

As I continued, the Holy Spirit began to minister to me, never telling me that I was feeling sorry for myself, that I had an ego problem, or anything else, but gently showing me things I'd overlooked:

The Vaughns, who looked on me as a daughter while Arnold and I were newlyweds in college.

Mrs. Poole and Mrs. Brown, who mothered me when my firstborn

came and I was hundreds of miles from my own mother.

Verna, Judy, and Iva, who treated me as a sister when we shopped for bargains, compared joys and problems in raising young children, or tried to do something with our "early Salvation Army" furniture.

Jo, who sweated and jogged with me as we fought the battle of the bulge.

Laura, who held my hand and cried as I poured out my shock and anger over my father's sudden death. She had lost her own dad just months before.

I understood many things as I knelt there and the Holy Spirit ministered to me. Finally I rose. "Thank You, Father," I whispered, "for the times I've not been treated as a minister's wife at all, but rather as a daughter, a sister, or a child."

On Sunday, Marion Allen approached me, eyes twinkling, never realizing the agony his teasing had caused me in earlier months.

"Let's see now," he smiled. "You're the minister's wife, aren't you?"

"Yes," I shot back, "but I have a name. It's Frankie, and let me think. You're Jeanie's husband, aren't you?"

A big smile, a squeeze in the handshake, and I knew the battle was won.

I'm still the minister's wife, and the person to whom I've just been introduced stands hesitantly, waiting for my name to be mentioned. Perhaps it will never change. But I'm no longer irritated when I'm introduced as "the minister's wife." I just smile and shake hands. But behind my smile I'm saying, "I have a name!"

# BETTER TO ASK THAN TO BE ASKED

by Leone A. Browning

*Pastor's Wife, Moses Lake, Wash.*

**M**y mind raced when the Mother's Day Mother and Daughter Tea was announced. Maybe I should stay home this time, I thought. I wasn't looking forward to Mother's Day since our only child passed away just the previous year. I had no mother or daughter to accompany me. I didn't even have a daughter-in-law. She died the summer before. My granddaughter was away in college; we hadn't seen her since our son's funeral. I felt robbed! I shuddered as I thought of all the songs and poems they would use for the program. I didn't want to hear them! I realized it would be easy for me to slip into depression.

However, I had learned to lean on Jesus through many past difficulties. Once more, I asked God to sustain me in this situation. I mentally switched gears. I thought of other women who had no family, and decided to adopt a few daughters—and perhaps a mother and grandmother—for Mother's Day.

As I phoned to ask people to be my guests, I found joy in visiting with them. Soon I was even looking forward to the tea. I even dared to think it would be nice if someone invited me to be *their* companion for the event.

On Mother's Day, I was delighted to find two of the people I had invited to church saving me a seat between them. At the tea, an elderly widow filled the place of my mother. She had never had children, and usually didn't attend such things. Her radiant smile warmed my hurting heart. The daughter I borrowed completed my happiness. She was a new Christian who had no family in the area and was delighted to be included.

Jesus told us in Acts 20:35 that it is more blessed to give than to receive. It is also more blessed to ask than to wait to be asked. What a blessing I would have missed if I had stayed home feeling depressed. By giving a little time and thought to others, I lifted my own cloud of sorrow and loneliness.



# GROWING THE CHURCH

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.

*Pastor, Walpole, Mass., Church of the Nazarene*

**R**ecently, some of us were munching on crumpets and talking about the state of the church. We began by stating firmly that it could grow if only certain variables would fall into place. In other words, most of us could realize our own "crystal cathedrals" if we could only get the right handle on things.

For instance, one chap asserted with conviction that churches grow because the pastor spends his days "beating the bushes." He said this with arms beating the air; we got the impression that he was dead serious.

I tried not to show it, but inside I wilted. Why? Because I have beaten so many bushes where I live that I am beginning to get briar prick all over my arms. Nevertheless, I kept smiling. But when it came to nodding in total agreement, I refrained, in order to keep my honesty basically intact.

Beating the bushes, eh? How nifty a cop-out. How energetic it sounds, particularly when spoken emphatically. But what if you live in the country where humans are scarce? What if you live in a resort area where the bushes produce mainly summer chicks out for a tan? What if you live next door to the Vatican?

Anyhow, I let the bushes go by. I stared at the ceiling while pondering the next formula for growing the church. He claimed that neighborhood Bible studies did it for him. Great, I thought. Now we are getting to something practical. At least we were moving from "beating the bushes" to something one could schedule.

He proceeded to tell what these gatherings meant—intimate groups, informal fests, in-depth explorations. I could picture all those hungry people showing up for gospel food on Tuesday and Thursday nights, mouths open, ready for feeding. Yet I knew that we had tried that too, and it fell flat. Why? I'm not sure. I just know that it fell flat. I tried jazzing up the prospects with Saturday all-day seminars in current, popular religious topics. When I had spent one full day with one applicant, I decided that perhaps there was another tactic wait-

ing in the wind somewhere.

Nevertheless, just as I got that weeded out of my thoughts, another brother came through with a dogmatic, sure-fly measure: circles of contact. Each new convert has 5 to 12 persons to whom he can witness. And then with that new math, one moves to large math by multiplying those statistics around the globe, bringing in the sheaves till the Second Coming.

I thought to myself of our few committed souls who had done that. They had *really* done that. They had told their close relatives about Jesus. They had told their workmates about Jesus. They had even gone to neighbors across the street and told them about Jesus. In most cases, the ones witnessed to told the converts to "bug off"—and some expressed it in less complimentary language.

As if all that was not enough in our give-and-take around coffee mugs, another chap suggested that truly getting the people to pray—and fast—would bring the power down so as to see the pews filled. I decided to get into the dialogue then, because he was nailing me with his eyes. No doubt he suspected that prayer and fasting was a major deficiency in our small group.

"We do that. We do that faithfully. We have one special day each month for prayer and fasting for the church. And the people are very good about it. They really mean business when it comes to praying," I stressed it over and over so that he could not help but get the message—with sincerity.

"Good. Good," he replied. The duel was over quickly. He was pleased with my earnest orthodoxy. And I was pleased that he accepted the truth of my declaration.

"Programs!" another exclaimed. "You have to have the right kinds of programs." Then the litany began—women's fellowships, youth fun-times, young adult gatherings, senior citizen's events, studies, recreation, and cell groups, children's parties. There was no limit how to fill up the weekly schedules of committed church people to bring

them—one by one—into the Great Crush, flattening them with overcommitment.

I expected everyone in the room to pounce on the guy. How could we take this pious agenda seriously? If ultimately the killing of family and marriage, not to mention exhausting the ministerial staff? Yet we did. Heads nodded in agreement as bobbing birdies dipping for water.

I have to admit that it was starting to get to me, yet I could not let on that it was. That would invite misinterpretation, labeling me a rebel or uncooperative. I did not want that, so I smiled all the more. At the same time, I was lecturing the inner self on not being more adept in response.

I thought of our loyal few. We had no crystal cathedral. We had no gymnasium, no new educational wing. We had no trophy case in the church foyer. We had no buses lined up on the parking lot. We had no one writing up our exploits in church periodicals.

And yet I had beaten the bushes. The people had told their pals about Jesus. We had prayed and fasted. We had carved out a sensible rhythm of worship, study, and fellowship. But—grow?—not really. Dwindle, yes.

Could I help it that faithful believers died and were struck from the rolls? What could I do when others were transferred out-of-state? Even with those who cooled on their spiritual commitment dropped off would be another way of putting it I, being one mortal dealing with another, had only so much power for retrieval.

And so it was that I recalled reading in one of Paul's letters—the exact place seemed to be 1 Thessalonians somewhere—that he asked that congregation to keep the work of faith, the labor of love, and the hope of patience.

Oh, really, I asked myself, somewhat startled at the encouragement those three phrases gave me. The work of faith—biblical belief founded on faithfulness in action. Why, our believers were doing that. And laboring love—fellowshipping genuinely, free of gossip

and in-house fighting. We were right on target with that one. And maintaining the hope of patience—believing that God was still at work, meticulously caring about our church family. Why, our group of Christians certainly knew the weekly pang and pleasure that comes in keeping the hope of patience.

So I leaned back in my chair and poured another cup of coffee. Voices were trailing out to other frequencies as I settled in on a fresh find. It was the Spirit speaking to my heart, resting my spirit in the realization that, as far as God was concerned, our church was a success.

But further, I recalled Paul telling that first-century church to abound. To increase. Here we go again. Beat the bushes some more. Pray some more. More programs. One more ream of neighborhood Bible studies. Perhaps a bus or two to run side streets on Sundays.

No. Paul spoke not of statistics but of

sincerity in service. He spoke not of hype but of hope. He spoke not of figures but of faith. He wrote not of one grand push as much as one grand patience. He encouraged, not for leverage within the denominational structure but of abounding more and more in love.

Those men's voices still moved further and further away from my weary ears as the voice of the Comforter spoke to me. He was talking to a fellow in need. I didn't need worn clichés, more how-to-do-it advice from the pros, or oversimplification. I needed counsel that tied in with the reality I was experiencing.


I know that I was a bit discourteous, but without thinking I interrupted someone else in the circle. (Besides, it was about time for him to wind down anyway.) But the find was so exhilarating, I had to blurt it out. So I did.

"I believe that our little group—not content with being little, but content with being where God wants us right

now in the work of His Church—is a success."

No one wanted to offend with snickers or put-down glances, so they all simply put facial expressions on hold and waited for further details.

"We are successes, for we are meeting the biblical criteria for church growth. We are working the work of faith, laboring the labor of love, and hoping the hope of patience. And God knows our hearts. He knows that we are going about His business to the best of our abilities. And we *are* increasing. We *are* abounding. Not in numbers at the moment, but we are in line with the Boss."

And with that I poured myself one more cup. The reaction of my comrades? They clapped me on the back and assured me of their continued prayers. They were happy that I was happy. I was happy that God was happy. And God was happy with what we were trying to do in His holy name. 

## PRERETIREMENT YEARS

*Continued from page 56*

Adequate health insurance is a must. The misfortune of ill health cannot be predicted, but financial protection in that event can be assured. The Social Security Administration will provide at no cost general information materials on Medicare. Everyone should know what Medicare *does not* pay for. This understanding will allow one to shop intelligently for insurance to supplement Medicare coverage. Many insurance companies offer such plans with a variety of options and premiums. Again, it might be wise to contact a qualified professional to help you analyze insurance needs and evaluate options for coverage.

### RETIREMENT ACTIVITIES

Most full-time ministers are scheduled to the hilt. For these men and women, the change retirement will bring in the level and nature of activity is a particularly important issue for scrutiny.

No one can prescribe beforehand *all* the appropriate activities for either the person (even if that person is you!) or the schedule that will exist after retirement. Some individuals continue many of their ministerial activities even though retired. Others pursue interests in different areas. Whatever your choice may be, some basic questions regarding retirement activities should be investigated during preretirement years. Consider the following:

"What have I always wanted to do that I never had time for?"

"What service opportunities are there that I would find fulfilling?"

"If I do volunteer for service in an organization, how much of my time do I want controlled by others?"

"Will my hobbies or recreational activities keep me busy and happy?"

"What will be my role in the activities of my local church?"

Answers to these questions will be unique to each individual. A key to successful planning is being prepared for change. With regard to retirement activities, part of that preparation includes *being willing to reevaluate and adjust* any ac-

tivity when necessary. Each of us has skills, abilities, and needs that should be challenged, used, and fulfilled by wisely planned retirement activities.


### EMOTIONAL CHANGES AND ADJUSTMENTS

Any major change in a person's life, such as retirement, brings with it a time of emotional adjustment. Although the areas of adjustment may vary with the individual, it is important to remember that a time for accommodating this major change is normal.

For one minister, retirement brought the need to adjust his feelings regarding self-identity. This man had been so busy that unscheduled time was nearly nonexistent. When retirement came, people did not call for him "like they used to," and free time was abundant. For this individual, some special time had to be spent alone and with his family to discover just who this "newly retired" minister really was.

Sometimes adjustment is needed in the relationship to husband or wife. Most ministers and their spouses have found that the demands of ministry often left precious little time to spend together. In retirement, they may be constant companions on a daily basis. One semiretired friend commented that he really enjoyed having more time to spend at home. The only problem, he said, was that his idea of when to tackle a project around the house was not the same as his wife's. Retirement may bring the need for some "fine tuning" of interpersonal relationships.

Accommodating the emotional changes that occur with retirement is not always easy, even with the best planning. Knowing that these changes and adjustments are normal is an important first step in coping. Being willing to share personal feelings with your spouse, a fellow minister, or a trusted friend who has recently made successful adjustments to retirement often helps this adjustment process.

Preretirement planning is an essential task each minister should undertake. Certainly the transition from a "full-time-plus" work routine to a retirement routine is a major change in one's life. Identifying the issues that accompany this change and preparing to resolve them are central to any type of preretirement planning. 

**Editor's Note:** This is the first in a series of articles on preretirement planning presented by Pensions and Benefits Services USA.

# FIVE SMOOTH STONES

by Albert J. Lown

*West Yorks, England*

**A** decade of intense evangelism in churches large and small, in varied denominations and several countries, has molded my ministry and confirmed five basic aims. These aims have remained constant against the pressures and privileges common to all itinerant ministries that, in my case, include revivals and lecturing assignments, camps and conventions, preachers' workshops, and missionary tours.

Travel and time changes, contrasts of homes and hotels, seasons of merciful unction and perplexing heaviness, even dryness, packing and unpacking, welcomes and partings, surprising generosity and the testings caused by limited remuneration have combined to hearten and humble me; but through it all there has been unceasing gratitude for maintained health, choice fellow-workers, appreciative congregations, sincere seekers, and the sustaining grace that compensates for but does not banish the inescapable strain, separations, and sacrifice.

Over these years the goals of evangelism have become confirmed and articulated as five smooth stones in the sling of commission and ministry.

## **PASTORAL HANDS STRENGTHENED**

A strengthening of the pastor's hands is a first priority in every revival. Memories of pastoral days quicken my desire to preach positively and discerningly to the church's vision and problems (if any), leaving the pastor with less dif-

ficulties and an enriched preaching ministry. A revived spirit for the highest office in the church is often an admitted by-product of such priority and can only enhance all areas of ministry.

Complementary to the shepherding care of district and general superintendents, the evangelists can be a pastor's confidant and counselor. Deep and unexpressed needs of pastor and family can be alleviated by the ministrations of a God-sent evangelist.

## **MEMBERSHIP FAITH**

There is a hunger for clear, balanced, scriptural presentation of the experience of entire sanctification. In one short week an evangelist can reinforce the faith of the members of those things most surely believed among us: the essential (familiar or neglected) doctrines of Armenian Wesleyan holiness upon which our churches were founded. The evangelist supplements and reaps from the foundations of truth laid in regular pastoral ministry. The anointed exposition of the cleansing, crisis, and process of perfect love will gladden the sanctified, challenge lukewarm members, and encourage sincere seekers. They need to know that in spite of mistakes, shortcomings, and fears they have a lifetime to implement this in conduct and relationships.

## **HEADACHES AND HEARTACHES OF YOUTH**

Young people can be spared needless perplexities in the realm of

faith, and unnecessary guilt and grief produced by unduly high ideals and expectations for the sanctified, Spirit-filled life. The realities of temptations, moods, and unwelcome experiences in an imperfect church and an alien world must be given high priority in the evangelist's aims for ministry to young people.

A "superhuman" holiness, radically presented, is often just legalistic bondage that confuses and discourages. Bereft of religious heritage, I was often baffled and bewildered. I long to save today's youth from the errors and travail of my postconversion days. Even afterward, I searched for answers and "something more." Finally, after a night of groaning in determined prayer, God's fire was set aflame on my heart's altar, indwelling sin was crucified, and Christ was crowned Lord of a cleansed, liberated self.

To minister the encompassing truth of Gal. 2:20-21 to believing young lives and to make the way of holiness more inviting and intelligently livable is an investment indeed.

## **MINISTRY ON THE FRINGE**

In lesser or greater numbers "the fringe" is present in every church. To bring fringe people into closer fellowship with the Lord and His Church and inspire them to membership commitment is a stone never absent from my sling of purpose. Longstanding family ties and Sunday School links exist in which people are sympathetic and sup-

portive but hesitant to accept membership responsibilities.

Wise, warm, and challenging messages will call these natural respondents to faith and blessing. Scriptural "salesmanship" is needed to promote "the hallowed association and mutual helpfulness in service that cannot otherwise be found." A heartfelt "Come with us, and we will do thee good" is often all that's needed.

Visitation during the revival should include home contacts with fringe prospects, hospital calls, and "pop-ins" at members' professional and employment premises. Meeting

people where they serve during the week gives added impetus to serving them on the Lord's Day.

#### WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

The community and city should not be overlooked. Preparation and prayer must include indirect meetings, contacts and conversations, and introductions and invitations in the community. These providential links may lead some to the church even after the revival.

The "passing-by" ministry of Jesus featured in the Gospels, afflicted Zacchaeus, a man blind from birth, and many others, in the same

way an evangelist's short-term relationships might. Apart from public services the evangelist's bearing, openness, interest, and friendliness will enhance the image of the church through chance encounters and civic associations. "Incomprehensible in the pulpit, and invisible outside it" is a cynicism every evangelist will avoid.

Strengthened hands, stimulated members, safeguarded youth, a saved, committed fringe and a community warned and warmed: the sling goes round and round and Goliaths fall with the use of all five stones.



## SIGNS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

1. THE PLACE IS FULL OF LOSERS—People who have lost friends and loved ones; people who can't make it on their own and must get help from Jesus.
2. THE PASTOR IS ALWAYS KEPT AN EXTRA HOUR AFTER THE SERVICES because people would rather visit than go home.
3. THE BOARD CAN NEVER SEEM TO MAKE ENDS MEET FINANCIALLY. They're forever giving money away.
4. THE PASTOR IS ALWAYS BEHIND IN HIS WORK.
5. CHILDREN ARE EVERYWHERE AND NOISY—even during the worship services.
6. PEOPLE FEEL FREE TO DISAGREE—right out in the open, "in front of God and everybody."
7. THE PEOPLE FEEL FREE TO BRING ANYONE THEY WANT TO—the drug addict, the drunk, the beggar, the dirty toddler, the prostitute, the gambler. . . .

—Adapted by David W. Waltner

# The Sure Rewards of Faithful Ministry

by Ralph J. Ferrioli

*Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Philadelphia, Pa.*

**A**fter 31 years in the ministry, I am persuaded that too often ministers reflect more on "battle scars" than on recognizing the rewards and blessings of their great calling. Dwelling on "battle scars," the pastor tends to measure his success in the ministry as his ultimate and only reward. If he has had larger churches, then he has received greater rewards. If he has served in smaller, struggling situations, he has not been successful or well rewarded. He underrates his own situation and overrates the success of others. He measures the success of a minister by the size of his church and assumes that this, after all, is the goal for which all pastors must strive. He then begins to "lick his wounds," instead of glorying in his calling.

All ministers should strive to excel for the Lord. However, to measure their success or failure by the size of a church leads to discouragement and despair. We are so willing to build God a temple but find it difficult to be that temple ourselves.

God as the Great Counselor looks fondly upon the struggling pastor who prepares himself well for the preaching of the gospel; who keeps a band of people together by wise shepherding; who supports his district as part of the team, regardless of size or numbers. We need to separate the success of the minister from the "rewards of the ministry."

What are the rewards of the ministry? Here are a few of them.

1. Uplifting humanity. Have you called on members of your flock in their hour of sorrow and seen the look of relief cross their face and hear them say, "Here comes my pastor!" What a reward. What a privilege. The spiritual touch, the helping hand, the tender words lift the heart of the bereaved. And think of those hospital calls when a spark of divine love is transmitted to the heart of the sick. Christ gives us the power to uplift humanity by His very presence within us. The size of the

church doesn't determine this! The size of the congregation doesn't change this!

2. Anointing the sick. The Lord has given us power (as human instruments) to perform the divine task of healing. By the "laying on of hands" and the "anointing of oil," bodies may be healed. This is not mere sentiment, but a reality! In many cases, I have seen His healing power at work. Our Lord is the same today as when He walked the Galilean way. Pastors need to exercise the power God has given them in the use of His gifts.

3. Our families. Our sons and daughters sit around the family table with holy missionaries and evangelists. When Mark and Elizabeth listened to these godly men and women, their eyes sparkled with the marvel of what they heard. They were disappointed when a missionary or evangelist had to leave. More than once Mark begged them to stay "for just one more day." No other home is so blessed with guests who inspire and motivate our sons and daughters to the Lord. Don't you agree that this is a special reward to the parsonage family?

4. The apostle Paul talked about "pressing forward to the mark." Most people go through life in about the same routine manner as others around them. They are born, grow up, work, and finally die. They are never again heard of. Not so for God's minister. He leaves a mark for Christ on earth, an indelible mark that will last for eternity.

5. Carrying the banner of Christ. Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself." Picture the faithful pastor marching in the ranks of God's army, carrying His cross—lifting up Christ before men and witnessing the result of His drawing men unto himself "through the foolishness of preaching."

6. Prayer. To ask, knowing we are not alone in this conflict against the devil, to seek in prayer His guidance, wisdom, and understanding; to unburden our hearts and have communion that is real,

wonderful, and lasting; these are their own rewards.

7. To be a student of the Bible. The layman may feel that he receives enough of God's Word from hearing the pastor's messages from week to week and attending Sunday School. He is apt to neglect his daily Scripture reading. The Bible is a "living book" to keep men spiritually "alive." The blessing to me is that I am kept "spiritually alive" by constant searching of the Scriptures daily.

8. Administering the sacraments to believers. It is an honor to serve Communion, symbolizing the Lord's sacrifice, and to unite a man and woman in holy matrimony and later dedicate their children to God.

9. Christian fellowship. I look forward to every opportunity to be with the brethren. My heart beats a little faster when I fellowship with God's finest men and women on earth. Christian fellowship is so needed and so very precious. We can carry this a step further and say, "Thank God for the reward of good laymen." Those who stand with us and behind us in the Christian battle. I do not know what I would do without them!

10. Perhaps the greatest reward of them all is the one that reveals what the ministry is all about: "spiritual reproduction." There is no reward in the ministry that surpasses the conversion of a soul! To reproduce what the Lord has done in us is an overwhelming and glorious event. It's the very reason for our existence. It is the reason for our calling. And when one or two of those converts is called into special Christian service, a "double" reward is ours.

When we pastored in New Hampshire, near Dartmouth College, "Chic" Shaver was converted and later called into the ministry. Chic said to me after graduating from seminary, "For every soul I win to Christ, you will have a share." What a reward! Chic has dedicated his life to personal evangelism and has led thousands to the Lord and trains others to do the same. And when

*Continued on page 61*



# THE ORDAINED FISHERMAN

by Jesse E. Pitts  
*Brazil, Ind.*

Love nudged me when I learned that an 85-year-old retired minister was to speak at the Morristown church. My wife and I drove with anticipation across central Indiana to see and hear him once again. He had given me something in my childhood that I clearly remembered across 46 years.

H. S. Martin was, and is, a preacher of the gospel—and a fisherman. He was the only full-time pastor in our small village of Stinesville in 1940. As our minister, he preached short, interesting sermons. More important to some of us, he enjoyed camping out and fishing on the river overnight—even when he had a half-dozen teenage boys to corral.

When he took us fishing, we had no tents or fancy sleeping bags. We were short on money but long on fun and going on outings together. We'd take old cast-off comforters and blankets, a coal oil lantern, an assortment of food, and a vial of salty grease for insect bites.

It was great fun to put out the trotline. We'd take turns paddling the boat for our pastor while he tied the trotline to a tree on each side of the river. He'd pull on the line, once it was in place, to help move the boat along as he tied on the leaders. Then he'd put a minnow or dough ball on each hook.

"You've got to use a square knot when you tie these leaders on the line," he'd say. "If you don't, they will come loose when the fish gets on the hook."

"Phil, when you use this boat paddle, put it into the water nice and easy," he'd firmly urge. "Otherwise, you'll let every fish in the river know we're out here in this boat!"

One of the joys of camping with the preacher was mealtime. We tried our hands at frying fish—or canned meat, depending upon our luck—along with sliced potatoes, in an iron skillet over an open fire. We indulged in homemade cookies, lemonade, and fresh tomatoes brought from home. Sitting cross-legged on the sand, we told stories with our mouths full and laughed at our-

selves under an open Indiana sky. Crickets and frogs soon started their chorus of tenors and basses and evening was upon us.

When darkness came, it was time to run the trotlines. We climbed back into the boat and inched across the river, checking each hook as we went. Rev. Martin would have one hand on the line so that he could feel the tug of any channel cat or flathead that might be on a hook. Then he would call out in a stage whisper, "We've got one! We've got a nice one! Get the net!"

We would lean dangerously over the gunnel of the boat to try to see the action in the glow of the lantern. We would take hold of the line, too, as we strained to see, to hear, and to feel the thrill of the catch as he did. Soon, we'd catch sight of a thrashing three-pound catfish as he lifted it over the side of the boat. We grimaced as he twisted the hook out of its mouth and dropped the flailing fish into the wire net bag at his feet.

Along the way we'd listen to his river stories. One he told was of a man who had fallen into the water somewhere near where we were camping! The old man's body had never been recovered. The preacher, with a twinkle in his eye, suggested that it might just be that some time, probably at midnight while someone was running their trotlines, they would discover that the weight on their hook was not a fish, but the grisly remains of old Mr. Woods, the fisherman who had drowned! (Getting to sleep was a chore with such stories to think about!)

We seined minnows, paddled the boat, swam in the shallows along the sand bar, baited hooks, slept in our homemade bed rolls, and tasted the joys of being young, lighthearted, and out-of-doors with a caring minister.

When the time came to go and we gathered up our damp bedrolls and empty food baskets to return home, we took a great deal more with us than we had brought. He was not highly edu-

cated, and he was sometimes abrupt with us. What came through to us, however, was that this man clearly loved God, a good story, and fishing. But most importantly, he loved us.

In the Sundays that followed such outings, when Rev. H. S. Martin announced his text from the pulpit, we'd listen with somewhat more interest and attention because he was our friend, and we had seen the human side of this good man. We loved him, too.

As the years have passed I have remembered more about the sermons of his life and example on the sand bar than those he preached from the pulpit. He had used bait at the river he never told us about, and he had fished for something much more important than the bass or channel cat of White River. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that most of the boys who enjoyed those good times on the river so many years ago have served the Lord Jesus Christ since their youth.

When the moment came at the homecoming, Rev. H. S. Martin stood, strong and straight for all his years, in the pulpit of the Morristown church. Once again, he clearly and effectively presented the gospel of Jesus Christ with a dash of well-placed humor. He spoke to us as God's messenger and our good friend. The memories of his influence upon my life came flooding back.

In my imagination I can see him standing on the opposite shore when I come to the water's edge, ready to make the Great Crossing. He may well call instructions over to me. I can just hear him: "Now, step over into the middle of the boat, Jay, so it won't tip. Be careful to take good full strokes with the paddle. Come nice and easy, now. Point the boat a little upstream, so you will come straight across. I will be here to help you ashore, friend."

Yes, he is clearly ordained to preach the gospel, but God has used him as a fisherman, too.

# THE PRERETIREMENT YEARS: A TIME FOR PLANNING

by Don Walter

*Manager of Office Operations, Pensions and Benefits  
Services USA, Church of the Nazarene*

A good friend, now retired for eight years, has a plaque hanging on his wall that reads, "Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart." That saying would seem more humorous if it were not so true in a lot of cases. My friend's plaque suggests that many of life's lessons were learned "the hard way." And it hints that some learning could have been easier had we been more alert, sooner. Consider particularly the task of planning for retirement.

For many individuals, retirement is the "tomorrow" that will "never come." So preparation for that event occurs minimally or not at all. Then one day the main entry on the daily schedule is a retirement celebration—theirs!

Suddenly income shrinks, but living expenses stay the same. Questions about where to live or how to spend the newly limited income disrupt sleep. Important decisions are made "spur of the moment." As a result problems develop, and well-intentioned men and women struggle with unfavorable circumstances caused by a retirement that was poorly planned. These folk are caught, "Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart."

For each of us to heed the warning of the plaque, retirement should be anticipated and planned for during preretirement years. Psychologists M. F. R. Kets de Vries and Danny Miller identify the preretirement stage of life as the years from 56 to age 65. During this time many people tend to look forward to retirement, yet they often experience anxiety due to the uncertainties retirement may hold. Careful and adequate planning during these years will do much to relieve anxiety and facilitate the transition into a meaningful retirement.

Effective preretirement planning should involve four main areas: (1) personal finance, (2) health and health care, (3) retirement activities, and (4) emotional changes and adjustments. The following brief discussion of these topics may give the minister initial guidance in preretirement planning. A more in-depth treatment will occur in future issues.

## PERSONAL FINANCES IN RETIREMENT

The main financial issues during preretirement years are (1) what to realistically expect as financial need and income during retirement, and (2) how to structure financial resources to best guard against outliving wealth.

A crucial item to be included when assessing financial need is housing. Most likely a minister will have to provide his own retirement housing and utilities. This will be quite a change from living in a parsonage or receiving a housing allowance. Since housing can represent a large part of retirement living

expense, available alternatives should be considered early. Reasonable choices for many geographic areas include single-family or multi-family dwellings, apartments, condominiums, retirement village housing, and prefabricated or mobile homes.

To provide for retirement needs, a supplemental retirement savings program should be started as early as possible in a minister's career. If this has not occurred, benefit still can be gained during preretirement years by establishing and contributing to a tax-sheltered annuity (TSA), an individual retirement annuity (IRA), or a KEOGH (HR-10) plan. Most denominational pension boards can provide information on such plans.

When projecting retirement income, be sure to contact the Social Security Administration for free material regarding general benefit calculation. Also, it is wise to request a report of personal income. This report should be checked every two or three years to make certain your records are being updated accurately. Local Social Security offices will be able to provide appropriate forms for each of these requests.

Another helpful procedure is to contact your denomination's board of pensions for a summary explanation of its basic ministerial pension plan. From this plan description, it should be easy to closely estimate the amount of pension to anticipate. This information, together with the information from the Social Security Administration, should be adequate to provide a close estimate of the fixed income amounts to expect from these two sources.

To help conserve supplemental cash resources for retirement purposes, a life income annuity contract is frequently used. A number of options exist for this type of contract. When evaluating options, remember that *the need to guarantee a retirement income from supplemental cash resources must be balanced with the need for liquid reserves available for emergency use*. When reviewing these needs and considering the options, it might be wise to consult a certified financial planner.

## HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

As all of us get older, our health and health care become increasingly important. With age come increased health risks and the increased possibility of needing extended health care. Health issues to deal with in preretirement planning include: (1) how to best maintain good health, and (2) how to pay for health care services in the event of ill health.

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# TODAY'S BOOKS for TODAY'S PREACHER

*What Every Church Member Should Know About Clergy*, by Robert G. Kemper (New York: Pilgrim Press), 1985, \$7.95 (PA082-980-7284)

This book seeks to develop "significant conversation between lay people and clergy." It is "a book about clergy for lay readers." Its design is preventive, and its writing is long overdue. I am not sure this is the best that could be written, but it is adequate.

The author's concern is for healthy churches. Kemper writes, "The health of a local church is directly related to the quality of the pastor/parish relationship. Mutual understanding and mutual respect between a pastor and a congregation result in healthy churches." He later writes, "Health emerges when clergy and laity have a mutual understanding of the power and authority they share in the church." This is significant. Every church—pastor/parish—needs to have a clear view of the expectations, the authority, and the agenda.

I feel sometimes, in my role as district superintendent, that I am at a great disadvantage, in a crisis, because there have been no beginning guidelines, expectations, etc. So, when the "pulling apart" occurs, each goes separate ways with his own list. I have begun in the last six months to work on a board's "expectation" list—their agenda—for a pastor. Kemper, then, is leading us in a good direction, with his underlying thesis of health and relationship.

Kemper processes the area of criticism well. To place before the congregation the role and expectations of ministry means one must be open to critique (evaluation) and even criticism. But the pastor must not be too sensitive here. Kemper writes, "I want, I expect the best. I am not satisfied with second-rate performances. We all can do even difficult tasks better. So, this book is about the difficult tasks of the ministry."

Where is the final line for clergy evaluation? "What are you trying to accom-

plish?" is the phrase postured by Peter Drucker, management expert. This question, at the outset of a relationship between clergy/congregation, would establish some expectations that would lift the evaluation above the emotional level. Kemper says, "... the informal, casual evaluation of clergy is often individualistic, removed from the contest of the church. This kind of evaluation reduces to appearances and demeanor. People like—or do not like—the way they talk, look, or act. The casual expertise in evaluating clergy is often based on personal likes and dislikes." True!

What does Kemper suggest as a way to better the system? "The first step in a quality pastor/parish relationship leading to a healthy church is mutual, realistic goals developed together in a planning process. Realistic goals are the key." I agree! I would hold out for an agenda of goals that are spelled out and fine-tuned. So, if we come back together in a few months, in a potential conflict situation, I would want to know that we could locate the problem.

The states of ministry, agewise, is a big issue. Every D.S. faces it and feels the pain when a church rejects a great pastor, simply because of age. Kemper writes, "There is no prime time for clergy. What there are, are trade-offs. A young minister may be enthusiastic but short on the wisdom that only experience brings. An older minister may be savvy in the ways of churches but less than enthused about innovations." This section about age is important for a number of reasons: (1) age is not really the issue—growth and aliveness is; (2) measurements other than age need to be devised for pastoral evaluation; (3) pastors do need to realize that the body language of "getting old" can creep up on them. They can slip into patterns that "tell" the people they are "slowing down." Their dated illustrations reveal a lack of study. Life has settled for the "easy" and mediocre. This is an area

that needs to be considered by every pastor.

Trust is the bottom line for a healthy church, or relationship. He gives four elements of truth: (1) mutual accountability. The very word is an anathema to a pastor. Think about it; (2) spheres of authority, a knowledge of where the authority lines are and respect never to trespass these; (3) communication. Kemper writes, "If ministers do not tell their congregations who they are and what they do, the congregations may think that their pastors do not know what they are doing or that they are doing the wrong thing"; (4) constancy.

In a chapter titled "What Do Ministers Do?" Kemper states that "the laity receive their impressions of clergy work from the clergy themselves, and the judgment is that the clergy simply have not taught the laity about the work of the pastor in the local church." It defines the work of the clergy under presence and performance. This is a good section that gets at the heart of biblical ministry. Under the category of presence, Kemper says, "Clergy work is representational. . . . It is about mission, being sent." The representative clergy do not "attract attention to themselves, but attract attention to the reality of God in all of life."

The category of performance Kemper describes as leadership. His summary is good: "Both lay and clergy have derived power and authority, derived from servanthood to Christ. I therefore disapprove of haughty, mountaintop leadership for local churches. I approve of dreams and visions of the Christian traditions that are taken so seriously that they are infused within the life of a whole congregation until the people move toward those dreams and visions; that is how clergy lead. That is the ministerial presence in a church."

Kemper sees the functional/performance/leadership of the pastor under six headings, as outlined by Samuel Blizzard of Harvard Divinity School: (1)

Preaching. Kemper states, "Congregations have an uncanny ability to discern the character of a pastor through his or her preaching. By listening and watching laity can tell what preachers care about and how they relate religion to life . . ." He further says, "The pastor to worry about is the pastor who has stopped trying to learn to improve, to experiment." A crucial word is given us about preaching and feedback: "Frankly, it is not enough for lay people to say 'our minister cannot preach.' What is required is some honest feedback to the pastor about his or her preaching. Such feedback must be constructive, offering particular suggestions about the better use of theme and technique. Lay feedback is encouraged because preaching is a corporate, not an individual act. It requires active listening." This exercise, I feel, would salvage some ministries. It is worth exploration.

The other areas of performance/leadership are: (2) priest; (3) counselor; (4) teacher; (5) organizer. Here the author suggests that this is best defined as planning. His argument: "... clergy are the primary planning officers of a local church. One reason he must function in this way is to protect the church from special interests. . . . In the process of decision-making in churches, those groups vie for the available resources. Clergy with oversight of the whole group need a comprehensive strategy for integrating those special interests into the life of the whole church. This comprehensive strategy is planning"; (6) administration (management).

In Chapter 3, "How One Becomes a Minister," Kemper discusses, among other things, the tension in the classroom of being too practical or too academic. Its debate is still going on. Perhaps the value of the chapter rests with the author's promotion of continuing education. He sites the failure of pastors to keep up their disciplines.

The final chapters of the book are diagnostic and prescriptive. He covers clergy expectations. Clergy expect employment satisfactions and career satisfactions. Kemper processes the salary and sees the big obstacle as one of mission. He states, "The greatest inhibiting factor to clergy in matters of compensation is the multiplicity of roles. The self-interests of the clergy are in conflict with the total demands on the church budget. . . . Many a pastor accepts lower compensation so that other objectives of the church may be met." He writes to an area that is little considered, and too much ignored, by some laymen.

The morale factor is covered by Kemper, in regard to salary. He presents this with good rationale. Among them is the professional development, especially the periodic sabbatical leave. Kemper says here, "For the good of the whole church, local congregations should demand this of their pastors."

Kemper covers the job of the search committee, interviewing and calling a pastor. But he goes beyond to state that "the search committee [in our case the church board] does not quit when the pastor begins. Their next responsibility is the creative assimilation of the new pastor into congregational life." How Important!

In Chapter 6, "Ministers Are People," the author discusses the personal tensions, temptations, and trials of ministry. Among them—loneliness, the public image, family life, identity, stresses, etc.

While the book is helpful I kept hoping for more transparent writing. Most laymen who would read this already know what Kemper has written. What we need is something that gets under the surface and probes a bit deeper. But the book is certainly worth the price and the reading.

—C. Neil Strait

*The Case Against Pornography*, by Donald E. Wildmon (Victor Books, 1986), 204 pp., paper, \$6.95 (PA089-693-1781)

This book by the executive director of the National Federation for Decency is exceptionally well written without being hyper. Case after case is presented to support opposition to pornography. The book is loaded with rational grounds for putting up a good fight in the name of God against published filth, without the preachiness one could expect, particularly taking into account that the author is a United Methodist preacher. Sound, logical arguments are offered with much support from legal, religious, and educational bases.

Special mention of the Church of the Nazarene is made in the first chapter, as the author recognizes its forthright efforts in seeking to mobilize church action against porn.

The whole book holds together tightly; excellent writing style as well as a gripping cover (slick, eye-catching, contemporary format). Every concerned churchman, especially the clergy, should digest this book. It should be pushed in Sunday Schools and worship services as well as small group studies and youth gatherings. If ever there is a publication that educates on the topic "to the latest minute," this is it.

—J. Grant Swank, Jr.

*The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, by John E. Stambaugh and David Balch, Library of Early Christianity; Wayne A. Meeks, editor (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 194 pp., \$18.95 (PA066-421-9063)

The second in a series from Westminster Press, this work by Stambaugh, a professor of classics, and Balch, a New Testament scholar at Brite Divinity School, offers new perspective on the Gospels in general, and in particular enhances our understanding of Gospel passages that discuss the economy of Palestine. In this regard, the index of New Testament passages included in the indices is particularly helpful.

Essentially, the sociology of the New Testament broadens our understanding of the context in which Jesus and Paul ministered and in which the Early Church developed. Since exegesis begins with the setting in which the writing was done, this work and others like it add enormously to our New Testament understanding.

The value of this particular volume is enhanced by its clarity of language and thought. One need not be versed in sociological methodology or have read other works in the field to grasp its meaning and relevance. The subject matter is exciting, particularly when one considers the fact that we have done a lot of biblical interpretation without such tools. Of particular interest to this writer was the discussion of social characteristics of Christian mission. This section discusses the impact of Christian conversion on individuals and the fact that upper-class women played significant roles in the Early Church.

If the work has any flaws, it is the fact that one's appetite is whetted but not satisfied by the effort. A careful perusal of other works in the field will, however, uncover material to chew on.

If all of this does not encourage the reading of this work, more encomiums could do no more. Read the book! I doubt if you will disagree with me.

—Philip Park

*Concise Sermon Outlines*, by Russell Spray (Baker Book House, 1985), 73 pp., paper, \$3.95 (PA080-108-2587)

*Concise Sermon Outlines* accomplishes its stated goal of being "easy to remember." I do not, however, find the outlines easy to use. I look for a clear, logical outline that contains, in addition to a single sentence under each sub-point, a bit more meat. These outlines are almost too brief and simple to be useful.

—Don Welch

# SERMON OUTLINES



## Sermon Outlines on the Seven Churches in Revelation

by Richard Knox

*Sermons 4-7 in a series of 7*

### THE CALL TO REPENT

Rev. 2:18-29

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Thyatira was the least important of the Revelation cities; a military outpost to protect Pergamum.
2. Thyatira was similar to Pergamum.
  - a. Trade guilds (or unions), each with its own patron god.
  - b. Festivals and celebrations dedicated to the pagan gods.
3. Thyatira was different from Pergamum.
  - a. The problem at Thyatira was within the church.
4. God issues the call to repentance.

#### I. THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

- A. The call to repentance is issued to the church.
- B. The call to repentance is issued to the "Sunday only" Christians.
  1. Jezebel was teaching that it didn't matter what you did during the week.
    - a. It was permissible to participate in the pagan festivals.
    - b. She was trying to accommodate the values and activities of her world.
    - c. She wanted it both ways: Christ's way on Sunday; her own way during the rest of the week.
  2. Jezebel of the OT.
    - a. King Ahab of Israel married the daughter of the king of Sidon in order to keep the peace between them.
    - b. Jezebel introduced Baal worship to Israel.
    - c. She wanted Baal worship to be practiced alongside the worship of God.
- C. The call to repentance is issued to us.
  1. It's time we offer God more than lip service.
  2. God calls those who want to practice "Sunday only" Christianity to repent.

#### II. THE UNWILLINGNESS TO REPENT

- A. Jezebel was given ample opportunity to repent (v. 21).

1. She was bent on her own way.
2. God's will is not punishment but your repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).
- B. Jezebel was punished for her rebellion (v. 22).
  1. Punishment was the consequence of Jezebel's actions.
  2. The punishment included those who followed Jezebel in her false teaching.
- C. Jesus searches our hearts and minds (v. 23).
  1. The eyes like blazing fire (v. 18) symbolize the searching eyes of Jesus as He looks into our lives. The feet like burnished brass symbolize His righteous judgment.
  2. "I will repay . . . according to your deeds."

#### III. THE REWARD OF REPENTANCE

- A. To those who have not followed Jezebel: Hold on to what you have.
- B. Authority over all nations.
  1. To him who does God's will to the end.
  2. This passage looks forward to the return of Christ for its final fulfillment.
- C. "I will give him the morning star."
  1. Rev. 22:16.
  2. The greatest reward that any victorious Christian can receive is Christ himself.

#### CONCLUSION

"Sunday only" Christians—will you repent?

#### A DEAD CHURCH

Rev. 3:1-3

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The city of Sardis.
  - a. Famous for wool; noted for luxury; one-time capital of Lydia.
  - b. Famous past/declining future; deplorable contrast of past splendor and present decline.
2. The church at Sardis.
  - a. Church received the most complete denunciation—for its laxity and carelessness.

- b. The church had conformed to the world around it.
- c. The church at Sardis was condemned for living under false colors, disappointing those who may have sought help at her altar.

#### I. WHEN IS A CHURCH DEAD?

- A. When its deeds are not complete (vv. 1-2).
  1. Going through the motions—lots of activity but no ministry.
    - a. This was the problem at Sardis.
    - b. Services were probably well-attended and properly conducted. It may have numbered prominent social leaders among its members, yet it was dead.
  2. More concerned about programs than people.
- B. When it fails to fulfill its mission.
  1. The church flounders because its mission is not clear.
    - a. Survey church members—"What is the mission of our church?"
    - b. We are too busy with buildings and mortgages for missions and ministry.
  2. The Great Commission—Matt. 28:19-20.
    - a. Make disciples—going, baptizing, and teaching.
    - b. Everything in the church must fulfill the mission.
- C. When the people lose the challenge of their commitment.
  1. When their Christian relationship becomes mediocre, lackadaisical, drifting aimlessly.
    - a. No zeal; no enthusiasm; no radiance; no burden; no vision.
    - b. Living on past blessings and in present bankruptcy.

#### II. WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO REVIVE A CHURCH?

- A. Wake up.
  1. Wake up from complacency and lethargy.
    - a. Shake out of a drowsy stupor.



- b. Lulled to sleep by an easy beliefism.
- 2. Wake up to commitment and life.
- B. Strengthen what remains.
  - 1. Jesus says, "Strengthen what remains. Build on what you have."
  - 2. Illustration: The boy with the lunch brought what appeared to be meager and inadequate resources, but in the hands of Jesus his lunch was sufficient to feed the multitude.
- C. Remember what you have received and heard.
  - 1. What you have been taught.
  - 2. The Word of God.
- D. Obey it.
  - 1. Obey God's Word.
    - a. John 14:15.
    - b. Matt. 28:19-20.
    - c. 1 John 2:4.
  - 2. Do we want revival in our souls badly enough to obey all that God commands?
- E. Repent.
  - 1. Transformed instead of conformed.
    - a. Turn around; quit sinning.
    - b. Life lived by a different set of values.
  - 2. Present reality.
    - a. Not a reference to a transaction in the past.
    - b. A daily, living, dynamic relationship.

## CONCLUSION

- A. Verse 3—He is coming like a thief in the night.
  - 1. The surprising military defeat of Sardis.
  - 2. Time is short; Jesus is coming soon.
- B. What does it take to revive a church?
  - 1. Wake up.
  - 2. Strengthen what remains.
  - 3. Remember what you have received and heard.
  - 4. Obey it.
  - 5. Repent.

## THE CHURCH WITH AN OPEN DOOR

Rev. 3:7-13

### INTRODUCTION

- 1. Philadelphia—less than 30 miles from Sardis.
  - a. Strategic location on an important post road from Rome to the eastern provinces.
  - b. Founded as a missionary city—to spread the Greek culture to the eastern provinces.
  - c. As a result of an earthquake (A.D. 17), Philadelphia was a small and struggling city.
- 2. "I have placed before you an open door" (v. 8, NIV).

- a. The figure of the open door was familiar to the first-century Christians.
  - (1) Acts 14:27—Paul and Barnabas reported that God had "opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (NIV).
  - (2) 1 Cor. 16:9—Paul, concerning Ephesus: "a great door for effective work has opened to me" (NIV).
  - (3) 2 Cor. 2:12—Paul, concerning Troas: "the Lord had opened a door for me" (NIV).
  - (4) Col. 4:3—Paul asks Colossians to pray that God would open the door to the gospel in Rome.
- b. Three open doors.

## I. THE OPEN DOOR OF MISSIONARY OPPORTUNITY

- A. Opportunity for mission.
  - 1. We have received the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).
  - 2. We have received empowerment by His Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).
  - 3. There is much work that needs to be done; there are people around us hurting. We have better tools and facilities than ever before.
- B. Opportunities in spite of hardship.
  - 1. The church at Philadelphia was small and struggling.
  - 2. Main opposition came from the Jews.
  - 3. Jesus commends them for enduring patiently and then instructs them to hold on.
  - 4. Meet the challenge of missions and overcome the opposition.

## II. THE OPEN DOOR OF LOVE

- A. A love that is different.
  - 1. So often our love is really "love if."
  - 2. Our love must be unconditional, uncritical, uncondemning.
  - 3. As holiness people we are often the most critical when we should be the most accepting; we are often the most judgmental when we should be the most unconditional.
  - 4. It is this kind of love by which we are judged.
- B. A love that draws to Christ.
  - 1. Love that is so accepting that it reaches beyond circumstances.
  - 2. When people see the fruit of the Spirit in us, they are drawn to Christ.
  - 3. Jesus said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).
  - 4. Familiar slogan: "Our church cares because He cares."

## III. THE OPEN DOOR OF CHRIST HIMSELF

- A. Christ offers himself to us.
  - 1. He lived among us, gave himself for us, and now offers himself to us.
  - 2. Picture the prodigal son's father—standing with arms outstretched.
  - 3. Christ of the Ozarks.
  - 4. Christ provides salvation, and invites us to "Come."
- B. Christ awaits our response.
  - 1. The Creator has taken the initiative. He waits for us to respond.
  - 2. We must respond in faith and obedience.

## CONCLUSION

- A. Promises of God.
  - 1. I will make you an overcomer.
  - 2. I will make you a pillar in My temple—a place of honor in the presence of God.
  - 3. New names.
    - a. The name of God—ownership; complete consecration.
    - b. The name of the city—citizenship.
    - c. His new name—fuller knowledge of Christ.
- B. Putting it all together. If our missionary opportunities are to be successful, we must have an unconditional love that will draw people to Christ.
- C. We need to be like the church in Philadelphia—the church with an open door.

## LUKEWARM AND INDIFFERENT

Rev. 3:14-22

### INTRODUCTION

- 1. Last and sternest of the seven letters.
- 2. Laodicea.
  - a. Banking center; wealthy city.
  - b. Known for its garment industry, specifically black wool.
  - c. Medical center; had produced an eye salve known throughout the empire.
- 3. "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot" (v. 15, NIV).

## I. THE CHURCH IS INDIFFERENT

- A. Nauseating to God (v. 16).
  - 1. Laodicea had no water. They had built an aqueduct to pipe water from a hot mineral springs six miles away.
    - a. By the time the water got to Laodicea it was cool and was nauseating to smell and taste.
    - b. The people of God are accused of the same distasteful condition.
  - 2. The church had become complacent.
    - a. They had lost their concern for others.

- b. No vision; no burden; no zeal; no ministry.
- 3. Indifferent:
  - a. To the needs of others.
  - b. To doctrine.
  - c. To commitment.
  - d. In devotion, in zeal, in energy, in earnestness.
- 4. No enthusiasm.
  - a. We are too sophisticated to get enthusiastic about religion.
  - b. There is no religion without enthusiasm.
  - c. Religion is a moving in the soul, a stirring of the heart. It is a commitment.
- 5. The complacency of the church made God nauseous.
- B. Unacceptable to God.
  - 1. This is more than just a sad situation in the church.
  - 2. The Laodiceans are unacceptable to God.

## II. THE CHURCH IS SELF-DECEIVED

- A. "I am rich . . . I need nothing."
  - 1. The church had deceived themselves into believing they had everything they needed.
  - 2. Content with themselves; satisfied with where they were.
  - 3. Self-sufficient—no need of God.
  - 4. Comfortable in their religion.
- B. "You are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."
  - 1. To the church in the city known for its wealth, Jesus says, "You are poor." To the church in the city known for its wool, Jesus says, "You are naked." To the church in the city known for its medical center, Jesus says, "You are blind."

## III. THE CHURCH MUST REPENT

- A. Jesus loves the church.
  - 1. He is not scolding them; He is challenging them because they mean so much to Him.
  - 2. He invites them to "buy from me" pure gold, white garments, and eye salve.
  - 3. He rebukes, disciplines, and judges because He loves.
- B. Jesus demands repentance.
  - 1. Jesus' appeal in verse 20 is not to sinners but to the church.
  - 2. His love does not *compel* us to repent, it *calls* to repent.
  - 3. We must open the door that lukewarmness has closed.

## CONCLUSION

- 1. This letter is both stern and tender.
- 2. Has your Christian experience lost its glow? Have you grown complacent?
- 3. He's knocking at your door, wanting to fellowship with you. Will you open the door?

—Richard Knox

## GET READY—HERE HE COMES

**Scripture:** 2 Pet. 3:14-18

**Text:** 2 Pet. 3:14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

### I. He Is Coming—Be Diligent.

- A. Keep doing your best—diligently.
- B. Keep sharing your best—diligently.
- C. Keep wanting the best—diligently.

### II. He Is Coming—Find Peace.

- A. Peace—found in happy people.
  - 1. Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
  - 2. Peace with our own conscience.
  - 3. Peace with men.
- B. Peace—found in heaven-bound people.
  - 1. Because of the Cross.
  - 2. Because of the sprinkling of the blood.
  - 3. Because of the Holy Spirit.

### III. He Is Coming—Find Holiness.

- A. In crisis experience.
- B. In everyday walk.
- C. In purity.
- D. In usefulness.

—Derl Keefer

## POSITIVE SANCTIFICATION

**Scripture:** 1 Pet. 1:1-22

**Text:** 1 Pet. 1:2, ". . . through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

### I. Sanctification Come from the Holy Spirit.

- A. Results from the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. Purification of life.
  - 2. Yielding of life.
  - 3. Obedience of life.
- B. Foundation from Christ's blood.
  - 1. Atoning work.
  - 2. Sacrificial work.

### II. Sanctification Is Holy Living.

- A. Incentive to holy living.
  - 1. Christ's imminent return.
  - 2. Believer's precious hope.
- B. Christ, our example of holy living.

### III. Sanctification Is Love Living.

- A. Love for God
- B. Love for each other.
  - 1. Continual love.
  - 2. Unashamed love.

—Derl Keefer

## CLEANSSED CREATURES

**Scripture:** Eph. 5:8, 25-33

**Text:** Eph. 5:8, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

### I. Cleansed Creatures Represent Light (v. 8).

- A. Light coming by God (Genesis).
  - 1. Planned before world began.

- 2. Pointed to by Old Testament.
- B. Light came by Christ.
  - 1. Redemptive plan of God—fulfilled.
  - 2. Resurrection plan of God—fulfilled.
- C. Light comes by the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. Christ no longer a reflection of light to man.
  - 2. Holy Spirit now reflecting light to man.
- D. Light comes through the believers.

### II. Cleansed Creatures Represent Love (v. 25).

- A. Love as represented in marriage.
  - 1. Old Testament background—marriage of Yahweh and His people (Hos. 2:16; Isa. 54:4).
- B. Love of holiness replaces love of sin.
- C. Love as represented in purification.
  - 1. Old Testament meaning of purification.
  - 2. New Testament meaning of purification.

### III. Cleansed Creatures Represent Care.

- A. Care reaches outward to others.
- B. Care reaches inward to self.
- C. Care reaches upward to God.

—Derl Keefer 


## Faithful Ministry

*Continued from page 54*

our sons or daughters are called to serve the Lord, how can we measure that in success?

Think now of the future rewards coming to the minister. As an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. As kings and priests in His future reign, if we are faithful over a few things, He will make us master over big things. Brethren, if we ever are tempted to feel sorry for ourselves, we need to begin counting all the rewards God has given His servants, and we should rejoice.

The only difference between ministers is that some have more responsibilities than others. Not more blessings—not more rewards—just more responsibilities (more work).

When I was converted from Roman Catholicism, God called me to preach. After college, I took my first pastorate, and imagined that when I preached everyone who heard would accept Christ—because to me He seemed too wonderful to reject. Can you imagine how surprised I was to find it just doesn't work that way! Oh, there were converts, but not like I thought there would be. This troubled me. Later in my ministry I learned that the number of converts does not determine success or failure for the Lord's servants. Neither does the size of the church, nor the salary we earn. Our success is in answering the call of God and serving honestly and diligently in any situation. 

# SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS



## I AM RESPONSIBLE

In April 1912 the largest, most luxurious sailing vessel ever built set forth on its maiden voyage. The *Titanic* had a double-bottomed hull, divided into 16 watertight compartments. Because as many as 4 of these could be completely flooded without endangering the ship's buoyancy, she was considered "unsinkable."

Shortly before midnight on April 14, the great liner was steaming through the foggy North Atlantic when it collided with an enormous iceberg. A 300-foot gash was ripped in the ship's starboard side, rupturing five of its watertight compartments. The *Titanic* sank into the icy depths, taking 1,500 lives with her.

A tragic, often untold story about that night concerns a man on another ship, less than 20 miles away from the *Titanic*. The man was the radio operator on the *Californian*. The *Californian* could have come to the aid of the doomed ocean liner, if only someone had heard the *Titanic's* S.O.S. But her radio operator had fallen asleep on duty! When help finally did reach the disaster area, it was too late to save more than a few.

The greatness of the *Titanic* had caused her passengers and crew to feel inordinately confident. "Unsinkable" was such an assuring term; it proved to be a fatal misjudgment.

Do we consider our Christian friends to be "unsinkable"? They may appear strong, sailing through troubled waters, able to withstand the icebergs of life. But just as the confidence of the *Titanic's* passengers and crew was misplaced, so can our confidence that all is well with our Christian friends prove to be a fatal misjudgment.

Many lives were lost because the *Californian's* radio operator had fallen asleep on duty. We must be alert and listening for the cries of other Christians in distress.

## SOURCE

*The Rebirth of America*, January 1986 issue. Published by the Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation.

## TRUTH, CONCEPT, OR DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

Though some Christians may appear

"unsinkable" to the human eye, we have an obligation to be alert—to listen for cries of distress and be ready to help them in their times of need.

## SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE VERSES

Heb. 3:13;

1 Thess. 5:11

—Submitted by David Singer

## SOMEONE STRONGER THAN OURSELVES

When, in the 1940s, the gallows were replaced by poison gas as a means of capital punishment, a microphone was placed in the gas chamber. This allowed witnesses to hear the last words of the condemned.

The very first victim of the gas chamber was a young black man. As the pellet dropped into the container and the gas curled upward, over the microphone came the plea, "Save me, Joe Louis; save me, Joe Louis; save me, Joe Louis. . ."

In the condemned man's dying breaths, he desperately called out to the only one he thought capable of saving him. In his hour of greatest need, he called out to a fellow black—one who knew the plight of black people; one with whom he felt a bond, a oneness that seemed to promise him comfort. But Joe Louis was also a fighter—not just a fighter, but the world heavyweight boxing champion; probably the strongest person that this young man facing eternity had ever known to exist. In his agony and despair, he hoped that if anyone could save him, surely Joe Louis could.

## SOURCE

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: American Library, Inc., 1963).

## TRUTH, CONCEPT, OR DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

Despite the human tendency to rely on things or other people, Jesus Christ is our only hope of salvation. Only He can save us in our hour of greatest need. Because He bore the flesh of mankind without sin, He understands our human weaknesses. And because He is the "Champion"—the only One

who has conquered sin and death—His salvation for us is complete, and final, and perfect.

## SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE VERSES

1 Cor. 15:54-57;

Heb. 4:14-16

—Submitted by Dan Ames

## SET FREE?

In 1949 John Currier, a man who could neither read nor write, was found guilty of murder. He was sentenced to life in prison. He was later transferred from prison and paroled to work for a wealthy farmer near Nashville.

Life was hard and filled with hard labor. Currier slept in a drafty trailer, taking baths with a garden hose in a horse trough.

In 1968, his sentence was terminated. State Correction Department records show that a letter was written to the convict and the farmer for whom he worked, saying that John Currier was a free man. But Currier never saw the letter, or even knew it existed. A year went by, then 2 years, then 5, and finally 10. Still he did not know that he was free.

By this time, the farmer to whom he had been paroled was dead, but Currier kept working, serving out his sentence.

This went on until just a few years ago. Then, according to the February 7, 1979, *Chicago Tribune*, a state parole officer learned of his plight and told him of the missing letter. John Currier was finally a free man—over 10 years after he had been set free!

## SOURCE

George Sweeting, *Quotes and Illustrations* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985).

## TRUTH, CONCEPT, OR DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED

Christ died to set you free from sin. Have you received the message? Has anyone told you? Or are you still living in bondage to sin—even when you don't have to?

## SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE VERSES

John 3:16;

Rom. 10:13-16

—Submitted by Jerry Spann



# We Get Letters

## SOUTH AFRICAN NAZARENES SPEAK OUT

On page 55 of the March, April, May issue of the *Preacher's Magazine*, the following paragraph appeared:

Use your Christian conscience when investing. I avoided investing my few dollars in a certain mutual fund because the prospectus revealed that most of the money was loaned out through finance companies whose exorbitant rates make the poor pay double. Again, how could any Christian invest in a South African gold mining firm?

The last sentence in the preceding paragraph triggered the following letters to the editor

As missionaries in the Republic of South Africa, we are very distressed by your remark in your editorial regarding the Republic of South Africa. This is a very negative and derogatory remark and could adversely affect our mission work in the Republic of South Africa. We are sorry that a statement like this was printed in one of our church periodicals.

—*Ralph and Elizabeth McClintock*  
*Republic of South Africa*

I was greatly disappointed by your statement, "Again, how could any Christian invest in a South African gold mining firm?" Let me answer that question for you by posing three questions:

How could any Christian invest in any company that contributes to the manufacturing of machines of war? I refer to software as well as hardware.

How could any Christian invest in a company that supports communism—be it by providing technical information, manufactured goods, food products, or whatever?

Come to think of it, how could any Christian invest in *missions* in South Africa? After all, we who serve here do use RSA products, pay RSA professionals for their services, purchase RSA real estate, send our

children to RSA schools, and "invest" our lives here.

Your off-the-cuff illustration is totally unnecessary and will only serve to injure. It is not the kind of statement I would expect from the editor of our magazine. Please assume the responsibility your editorship implies and consider the far-reaching effects of your published word.

—*George A. Hurst, missionary*  
*Republic of South Africa*

... Such statements should have no place in our church periodicals. Even if this is your opinion, it should not be publicly expressed in a church magazine. We now have misunderstanding, confusion, and hurt within our own ranks and additionally, before South African authorities, we stand embarrassed. Our credibility is in jeopardy since we have insisted all along that our church is apolitical on all levels.

Our focus on [the] primaries of God's Word has enabled us so far to work as a denomination in ALL countries and under ALL regimes. Do not forget that the church has work in countries with one-party systems, military and benevolent dictatorships, Marxist/communist governments, and absolute monarchies. Preserving and protecting the nonpolitical approach to the preaching of God's Word should

have priority with all Nazarene leaders, and especially with those who are responsible for our media.

We respectfully request an apology from you in the next issue. Please believe me that the above-mentioned "slip-up" does by no means intend to minimize your otherwise excellent work.

—*Richard F. Zanner*  
*Director, Africa Region*

Unfortunately, an excellent article was spoiled by an injection of personal political prejudice, that I believe stems from a mind that has been indoctrinated by equally prejudiced media. The context of your statement conveys the idea that you do not see any credibility in the future of South Africa's mineral industry. In reply, I ask you to consider the following:

1. South Africa has been described by the Soviets as one of the two greatest "Treasure Pots" in the world. (He refers to South Africa's gold and Iran's oil.) The mining industry is far from expiry in this country. Ask your economists.
2. The very gold mines you attack are giving work to blacks from neighboring countries, whose governments have adopted Marxist policies. Their econo-

mies are on the brink of bankruptcy. Ask Dr. [Richard F.] Zanner for better information than you get in the media.

3. You are probably not aware that your statement can earn the wrath of the South African government against the Church of the Nazarene, and that it could, in extreme cases, close the door for further missionary exploits in South Africa.
4. Your statement has been met with contention amongst pastors and Nazarene leaders loyal to South Africa. You have attacked our nation, unjustifiably, and it is to this nation that you would do well to apologize in print. God did not ordain your magazine to be a political mouthpiece, but a medium through which His kingdom can be expanded.

This has not been intended to attack you as a personality, but rather as a magazine editor whose views have been expressed in an insensitive manner through a medium that should be otherwise used.

I am a part of a team whom God has called to proclaim the message of heart holiness to South Africa. God's flock [here] must be protected politically as well as spiritually.

—Bill Steyn, missionary  
Republic of South Africa

The point of this letter is to respectfully challenge your statement, "Again, how could any Christian invest in a South African gold mining firm?" You begin the paragraph by stating, "Use your Christian conscience when investing." If you are meaning that mining stocks in general are generally risky, then I would concur. However, you specifically refer to *South African* stocks. This would lead to an interpretation that investments in South African stocks specifically should be avoided for reasons of conscience.

Some of the mines that bring gold to the surface in South Africa employ Nazarenes. Is it immoral for a Nazarene to work for such a mine? For your information, I received a tithe cheque for R2,000 from a missionary who serves on the Mozambique and Mines council. That cheque represents tithes and offerings from Mozambique miners who work in South Africa mines. Are you

implying that we write off these brothers in the Lord?

It is very unfortunate that the words "South African" appear in your article, which goes to the international church around the world! May I kindly but firmly remind you that we are an international church. I sense you had an exclusively American audience in mind as you wrote, which is deplorable for an international church.

Your article has no doubt reached government officials in Pretoria, where the church is privileged to enjoy a good name by sticking to our "high calling" and not resorting to lower standards of politics. Your article, by negatively referring to South Africa, can in one minute destroy what hundreds of missionaries and national workers, over a 60+ year period, have invested their lives to build up. Our biblical mandate is clear. God loves His creation, which includes the people of South Africa, and its government is under God's will.

May I respectfully bring to your attention these facts:

1. The South African government has worked closely with our church in a beautiful partnership over the years. One example is the Ethel Lucas Memorial (now Tintswalo) Hospital, funded for many years by the RSA government.
2. The RSA government has—and is—freely granting visas to expatriates for freely communicating the gospel message to our church, in spite of [U.S.] sanctions (a moral injustice, as they most hurt the most needy). The church continues to enjoy a very respected reputation by this government. Your article could change their view and does not represent the church's viewpoint.
3. As guests here in South Africa, we are given complete freedom to preach and proclaim the "Good News" to all peoples in this great land. But your article could easily be construed as the "official voice" of the Church of the Nazarene International, and the results would be disastrous.

Please be careful in the future. You are writing to the international

church audience, representing our church at the highest level—ex cathedra. I encourage you to use wisdom and discernment in the future, for the sake of the gospel!

—David B. Moyer  
Administrative Assistant  
Africa Region

## MAGAZINE NOT AFRAID OF CONTROVERSY

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the June/July/August, 1987 issue. Over the past few years it seems that each issue gets better. I'm glad to see that there is a vehicle within the church that is not afraid to deal with issues that are controversial. And I appreciate the approach to each issue, for it seems to deal more with where we live than it used to.

Thanks for your efforts in making the *Preacher's Magazine* such a valuable tool.

—Tim Stearman  
Independence, Kans.

## WHO CARETH?

In the DJF '86-'87 "We Get Letters," my dear brother "perceiveth a slam" against the KJV. In his letter, he speaks of the Authorized King James Version. My question is, "Authorized" by whom, for whom? Let us not forget that all Christians do not speak English, and could care less if some "chooseth to useth beseecheth" or not. If you want my opinion, I like "fesoasoani" (from the Samoan Bible) for "Comforter" as used in the KJV, or "Helper" in the NIV. Maybe we should consider using this work instead and end the debate between the KJV and the NIV.

God does not speak in Shakespearean English or 20th-century English. His language is one of the heart that all people everywhere can understand. Let us be assured that God's revelation does not indeed rise and set on the English speaking world.

—James Johnson  
Apia, Western Samoa

## APPRECIATES "MINISTER'S MATE"

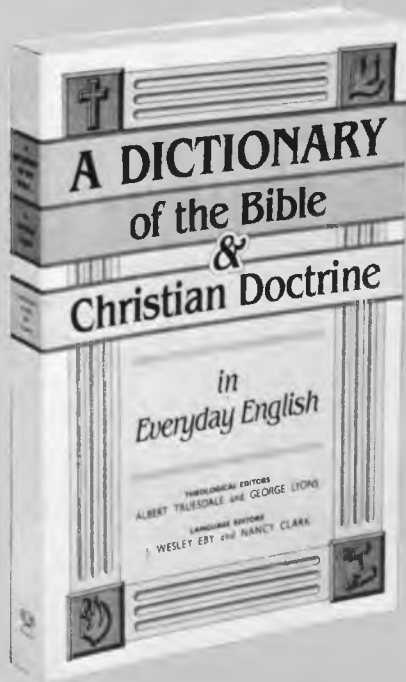
I want to express my appreciation for your magazine. The first thing I do when it comes is to read the section for preachers' wives. I hope you will continue to make this a part of your magazine. Of course, if you could include more articles in this section, I'd be overjoyed! There is precious little being published for pastors' wives.

I also read some of the other articles (before my husband gets hold of it!).

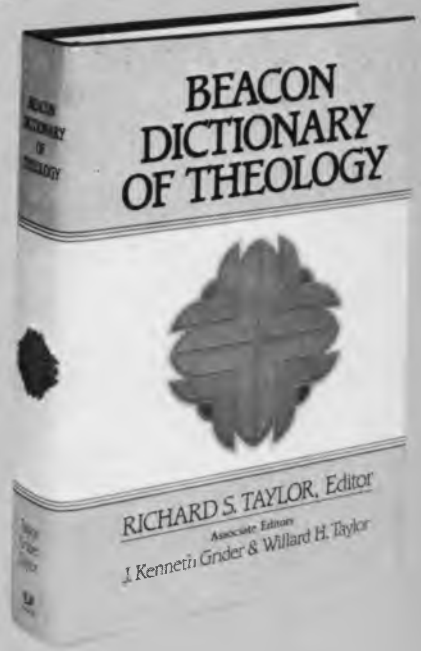
—Sharon Mitchell 



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MINISTERS ARE  
RECOMMENDING  
TO EACH OTHER



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