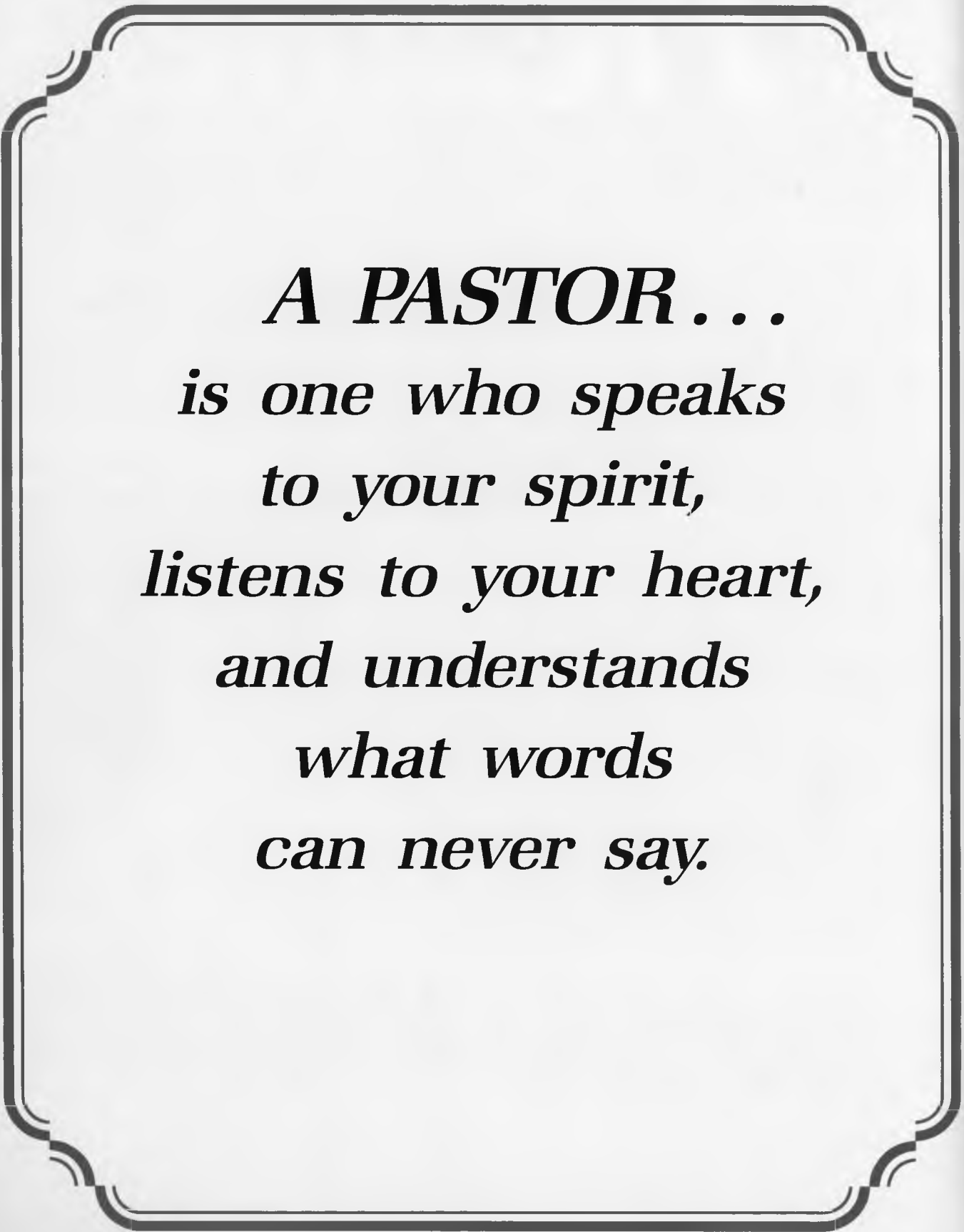




MARCH/APRIL/MAY 1991

THE *Preacher's*  
MAGAZINE

## THE APPROPRIATENESS OF POSTMILLENNIALISM



*A PASTOR . . .  
is one who speaks  
to your spirit,  
listens to your heart,  
and understands  
what words  
can never say.*

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# MY MOTHER— ALWAYS IN MY CORNER

by Randal E. Denny

Spokane, Wash.

**B**oxing is not a kind and gentle sport. The battered athlete treads wearily back to his corner at the end of each round. He is suddenly surrounded by people comforting him, soothing his wounds, and whispering words of encouragement for the next round.

Ministering with sacred values in a secular world—and often in a secularized church—is not a kind and gentle vocation. I have survived 31 year-long rounds in pastoral ministry. I discovered that my mother, Thelma Ruth Denny, was always in my corner. She was always ready to sympathize and soothe and speak encouraging words. As I look back, Mom was always in my corner.

I first noticed her support during school days. Since Mom and Dad were both schoolteachers, the rule was this: If I got disciplined at school, I would get equal discipline at home. That affects behavior. However, a junior high teacher ridiculed me and a Roman Catholic girl for believing the Bible. He whipped me once in front of the class to show his disdain for me as a "Bible believer." Mom went after him like a lioness protecting her cub. He taught elsewhere the next year.

My mother knew more about astrophysics than she did about football. To my father's chagrin, Mom cheered at the wrong times. A befuddled spectator once asked, "What position does your boy play?"

She replied proudly, "My son plays 'center-back.'"

Pasadena College was not so much the college of my choice as it was my inheritance. We kept it in the family. I was fortunate to travel in the Calvary Quartet, raising money for the college. Late one night—actually early morning—we passed through

my hometown, Fresno. Mom fixed something to eat, and we drove on through the night to get to school before Monday morning classes began. Extremely tired, we had some close calls driving that night. The next afternoon Mom called. She asked, "Is everything all right? I woke up in the night hearing you call to me. I got up and prayed for you boys." Mom was always in my corner.

Even in my early years of pastoral ministry, I prepared thoroughly for preaching. At times I got discouraged over small congregations. But Mom would say, "Keep on working hard. Someday people will come to hear you." She was always in my corner whispering encouragement.

At Modesto First Church, our morning worship service was broadcast live for 4½ years. My mother served as organist in Fresno Grace Church. When her pastor got up to preach, Mom would sit down in an inconspicuous place, take out her transistor radio with earphone, and listen to me preach. Pastor Ben Lemaster teased us both, but Mom's reply said it all: "What would you do if that were your child?"

During a difficult transition time in my ministry, we had no income, no jobs, no place to live, and no apparent future. My mother paid our rent until we could get on our feet—and I was 45 years of age. Mom was still in my corner.

The summer of 1990 brought me opportunity to minister to Mom in our home—to help her with the most basic needs. God gave me many special times to express, "Thanks, Mom!"

She's gone now. Things will never be quite the same. I miss her Saturday night long-distance phone calls

with encouragement to preach Jesus Christ to my wonderful people.

When the bell rings after my final round, there will be a familiar face in that great cloud of witnesses. Mom will still be in my corner celebrating the victory that we share in Jesus Christ. She'll be welcoming me home once again!

"Thanks, Mom, for being there when I needed you. You've always been in my corner—even when I didn't know it!"

As editor of *The Preacher's Magazine*, I dedicate this issue, March through May, 1991, to my mother's memory. March celebrates Easter. May celebrates Mother's Day. It will be different for me this time around. Easter and Mother's Day belong together with new meaning and depth of feeling. The resurrection of Jesus assures us of our reunion with Christian loved ones. Jesus explained to Martha after the death of her brother, Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25). At His last Passover Feast with His disciples, Jesus exclaimed, "Because I live, you also will live" (14:19).

The cover photograph is dedicated to my mother also. It was taken years ago from my sailboat in San Francisco Bay. The sunset of one day is the promise of sunrise tomorrow.



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Thank you!

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# Interpreters of Christ

by E. Stanley Jones

**C**hrist must be interpreted. Often in our conferences we felt that the interpretation of Him was adequate and compelling, but once or twice it seemed inadequate and confused.

The gospel is an interpretation. It is the translation of the language of eternity into the speech of time. It is God's redemptive purpose become intimate, actual, available, understandable. It is said that when Dante spoke, the silence of 10 centuries was broken. In Jesus "the silence of eternity" was broken, and we have the gospel.

Now we are called on to interpret this redemptive fact. He instructed it to us to make it plain and meaningful and vital to other men. We are interpreters. Very often that message is emasculated, turned into the trite, its power and meaning taken away when it goes through us.

A chairman one night introduced me as follows: "Some years ago the speaker was studying law, and he heard a minister preach, and he was so deeply impressed that he gave up law and became a missionary." Was that all? Here was all the meaning of these years put into these bald, meaningless words. I winced under it. I have often thought that Jesus must often wince under our turning the wonder of the gospel into a dead commonplace.

I have learned a great many lessons from the interpreters I am compelled to use as I travel about in the different language areas of India. Our meetings for the educated classes are usually in English, but in the meetings for Christians and in many for non-Christians we use interpreters. They speak many messages to me as they give my message to others.

This began some years ago when I saw myself very vividly in one of my interpreters. I have been gathering

No great interpretation of the gospel takes place unless the interpreter abandons himself to the mind of Christ.

lessons ever since. I suggested to him that we go over the message beforehand, but he replied, "Oh, no, I can do it without that." He was cocksure. He stood for a great many of us who take it for granted that we know all about the gospel; we have caught certain ideas and phrases, and we say we have it. But the gospel is an adventure—an opening adventure. It should find us standing before it in a state of constant surprise at its opening wonders.

The Pharisee and the child in the Gospels stand for opposite types—one had attained, had closed up, was impervious to anything outside of his closed system and his closed soul, while the child was open, eager, full of questions, explorative. Jesus could do nothing with the one and everything with the other. My interpreter stood for those interpreters of the gospel who have the closed mind, the closed soul, and the closed system. And Jesus can do nothing with them.

When we stood up before the audience, my interpreter stepped out in front of me, and then began, not an interpretation of my message but a demonstration of his cleverness—in

fact, of himself. I gave short, simple sentences, and he turned them into the most amazing language. He dressed up my simplicities beyond recognition and, of course, killed the message. And all the time a Voice was saying: "Do you see yourself? That's you. That is what you often do with My gospel." And I knew it was true.

In Protestantism we have rightly emphasized the preaching function of the ministry, but it often turns from being a gospel into a display of the "gospeler" and his cleverness. And the gospel dies, strangled by self-interested display.

Another interpreter represented the opposite of this. I soon saw that his words were correct, but commonplace and dead. One felt that he had spoken into a phonograph and his message came back correct, but metallic and ineffective. In China a pastor arose during a conference on evangelism and seriously advocated that they procure the best preachers to preach into phonographs and then that these records should be sent throughout China to grind out their message and so evangelize China! Easy, but deadly. Interpreters who are metallic!

In one place we were having meetings for non-Christians in a most unusual place. A large and deep bathing tank had been dug with the masonry so built that it formed steps leading down to it from all four sides. The tank was dry, and it was proposed that a platform be erected down in the center and the audience seated on these steps, the whole forming a perfect amphitheater. It was a splendid place, but my interpreter's first words when he saw it were these: "But suppose the crowd gets out of hand; there is no way of escape for us down there." His first thought was how to escape from the results of our message! But he is not alone! Many of

us consider how we can dodge the consequences of our gospel. Interpreters who look for ways to escape!

Another interpreter was an official Chinese court interpreter, not a Christian. It was gracious of him to do it for us, but you felt that he wasn't in it. He was still officially interpreting. As I was speaking, I used the word, "Pharisees"; and he, not being at home in our religious vocabulary, hurriedly asked, "What seas were they?" This interpreter represents a vast number of us who speak the gospel but are not really in it. It doesn't come up out of the depths of our souls like a fountain. It is not identified with us. The gospel can never be effective until it becomes so one with us that we cannot think and act and speak apart from it. But our brother interpreting the gospel was still official, and his speech betrayed him. It always does.

Akin to this there was an interpreter who, fortunately or unfortunately, had never been associated with Americans in any close way. He was a bishop's chaplain and rather sedate. I foolishly used some American slang, a thing of which I am not often guilty; in telling a story I said, "She was tickled to death."

He paused for a moment, then translated it, "She was scratched until she died!"

I am not sure how she was resurrected in my story! Word for word he was correct, but the meaning? I am sure when we come to the Gospels, we must enter into them and catch the undertones of idiom and meaning, or else we will end up as far from the mind of Christ as my interpreter ended up from the real meaning of my story. He represents the interpreter of the gospel who seizes the bald literalness in places and does not catch the drift and meaning of the whole.

I had a Chinese interpreter who was not quite sufficiently acquainted with English. I was speaking to a crowd of non-Christian Chinese, and I said: "If you do this, you will be a victorious soul."

He translated it: "If you do this, you will be one of Queen Victoria's soldiers."

He had me out recruiting for the dead queen! But there are many of us recruiting for issues just as dead. I listened in America to professors in a

theological institution who were fighting battles that were over—had been for 50 years. The battle had moved on, and they were fighting rear-guard actions, but religion was at grips with the new, living issues. The Jerusalem leaders represent this recruiting for dead issues, while Paul represents the interpreter of the gospel at grips with things that had a life-and-death meaning in them. He was in the battle that mattered.

In one place they gave me a Hindu as an interpreter—a nationalist. He could not resist the temptation to take my message and give it a political coloring. He used my statements about the gospel for his nationalist ends. He was using my gospel for other purposes. But by doing it, he deeply taught me; for under much of our gospel preaching and work there run other purposes. Men are listening to the overtones, but there is also an undertone that distracts and confuses. Using the gospel for some other ends! How often governments have done it, and how often societies and individuals!

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## We must get in touch with the races.

---

I have in mind two interpreters who taught me lessons akin to each other. The one was a Hindu who, while a fine interpreter and very capable, was very self-composed, even stiff. He was in the attitude that he would do what he was called on to do and do it well, but he would not give himself to it. The first night he stood with his hands on his cane and scarcely moved a muscle, but the second night he got so into the spirit of the message that he was waving his arms as much as I was mine. He had let go. He abandoned himself to the message.

No great interpretation of the gospel can take place unless the gospel interpreter lets go, unless he abandons himself to the mind of Christ. Some of us have not let go. We are afraid of where it will lead us. We

haven't quite got the consent of our minds to be God's fool, if necessary. Only when mind merges with Mind, and will with Will, and being with Being, and life purpose with Life Purpose, can there be the swing of victory and the sense of rhythm with Christ. The religious need of our times is a sane letting go to the mind of Christ.

The other interpreter was a Christian tremendously in earnest. He was very anxious that the message go through with effect and power. He was tense and all screwed up. Although it was cold, in five minutes the perspiration began to roll down his cheeks. It was not that he was nervous about the question of being able to interpret, for he was a graduate of a university, but he was strained because of his inner spiritual anxiety. And this sense of strain was spoiling everything. There wasn't the sense of quiet faith in God and the message. I felt like stopping the address, unfolding his clenched fists, and stroking his overwrought soul into quiet peace and trust and saying, "Now let's trust God—He will see it through." But I could not, and the meeting was spoiled.

I longed to teach him this lesson, for I had been taught it some years before. My whole work was strained. I was so eager that I was overwrought. In a series of evangelistic meetings I was pulling and tugging to get men to decision, but the results were meager. I felt as though I could take a cudgel and beat them into the kingdom of God! After one of the services I went out and lay down under an apple tree, exhausted. The beautiful Virginia apples were hanging on the tree above me. The Master came to me and seemed to say, "My child, you're tired, aren't you?"

"Yes," I replied, "I have a right to be, for I've worked hard."

"And you are out of patience, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," I replied, "but I think I have a right to be when they are so dull and unresponsive."

"Do you see this tree?" said the Master. "How is it bringing forth fruit? Is it working itself up into a strain and frenzy in order to produce fruit?"

"No," I said. "It seems to be just quietly pouring its life through the

branches into the apples, and they are becoming beautiful and ripe."

He quietly replied, "You are in Me, as the branch in the Vine. Keep the channels open, let My life flow through you into the fruit, and it will be abundant."

I arose with a new sense of trust and inward poise and calm. I need worry no more about the results. I would simply keep open the channels for Life to flow. Service was no longer a strain but a joy. And the fruit was now more abundant, for it was not mine but His.

The interpreter must be full of calm faith in the One who commissions him and keep everything open to His mind and His will and His life.

But if many of my interpreters have taught me how not to be an interpreter of Christ, many more have taught me how to be. Among the Syrian Christians of the Malabar Coast, where audiences number 30,000 at times, are magnificent interpreters, among them a young priest highly educated and well trained. An Arya Samaj preacher had been through that country preaching that Jesus was a myth, and he learnedly tried to prove it. I was answering him and was using the familiar argument that it would take a Shakespeare to forge a Shakespeare, it would take a Christ to forge a Christ. Instead of using the word "Shakespeare," which would have been meaningless to many, he changed it immediately into "it would take a Kalidas to forge a Kalidas." Now, Kalidas is a great Indian poet. That was familiar, understandable, and it hit home. Shakespeare would not.

We who are trying to make Christ clear to men should lay hold of thought forms familiar to the people to whom we go. Christ must be naturalized in a situation. Paul did this. He says, "I take every project prisoner to make it obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5, Moffatt). He took hold of everything to bend it to the service of the Son of God. As educationists have begun in the "project method" to lay hold of every project to make it obey education, we must lay hold of everything to make it obey Christ. We must fling our gospel through it. To do this we must get into sympathetic touch with the races; we must sit where they sit.

Another interpreter was a youth

who was a born interpreter. I could say anything, and as quick as a flash he would run back into Sanskrit or Arabic or Persian and bring the technical term. But if he was a born interpreter, he was a reborn one. He had a deep experience of Christ, and he heightened and vitalized every expression with the glow of his own soul. He more than pulled half his load. Again and again I found it necessary to quicken my spiritual pace to keep up with him.

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## If men are going to see Jesus, they must see Him through us.

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One day he was translating so beautifully and so accurately (I knew the language he was using) that I simply stopped, put my arm around his shoulder, turned to the audience, and said, "Isn't that beautiful translating?" They applauded—and well they might. Calvin Singh is dead now, cut off in his youth. It may be the Master had some interpreting He needed done in some other world. I lay the tribute of my love at his feet, wherever he is. He is interpreting somewhere, I am sure. And the hand of the Master is upon his shoulder in love and admiration. For Calvin is doing it well.

One of the greatest interpreters in India—for he is one of the greatest souls in India—is a priest among the Syrians. With his long beard and flowing garments and finely chiseled face, he has the appearance of Moses. And Moses never gave himself more for his people than this Syrian priest has done. For 40 years he has poured out his life for his people; his gentle fingers are always unraveling difficulties, his heart is always going out in tenderness toward suffering, and his feet have borne him innumerable miles to human need in ministry. And his experience of Christ is rich and abundant. He has walked with Him these years.

When he stands up to interpret, no wonder the great audiences bend to catch every syllable, for his sentences scintillate with a natural eloquence. But it is not eloquence that holds them; it is the fact that 40 years of beautiful, Christlike living is speaking. It is not the interpretation of that hour, it is the interpretation of a whole life going into his words. The impact of 40 years of unselfish living is falling upon the souls of the people. Christ becomes living and real because the interpreter is unconsciously speaking from the depths of years of intimacy with Him. This is interpreting in deed and in truth.

But even the finest of our interpretations are faulty. There has been only one Interpreter—Jesus. He has interpreted God and life and redemption. He has interpreted the Father: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath *interpreted Him*" (John 1:18, KJV; *italics Amp.*). As I trace the ways and acts of Jesus, God grows beautiful before me. And when I hear Him say at last, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (14:9, KJV), I know it is so in very truth. A God like that can have my heart without reservation and without qualification.

We are called on to interpret Christ. And some are doing it so beautifully. I sat with a Hindu youth. I soon saw that there was a flame in his soul. While still a Hindu, he had organized a dozen Brahman youths into what he called "A Society of the Friends of Jesus." As I sat and talked with him, he told me of his decision to become a baptized follower of Christ. I rejoiced, for I felt it was right and fitting, for Christ was in his heart as reality. He told me how it came about—the flame had caught from another heart. "Oh, everybody in our city knows Mr. H., and Jesus, and God," he said.

I liked that order of the steps upward—Mr. H., and Jesus, and God. If men are going to see Jesus, they must see Him through us, and if they are going to see God, they must see Him through Jesus. We then seem to be the key to the situation.

What kind of interpreters of Christ are we?



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# After the Delivery

by Ken Chamberlain

Ozark, Mo.

**Y**ou have just sweated out another sermon. Time spent in study has been exhausting, yet gratifying. The presence of the Holy Spirit rested upon you as you moved from exegesis to outline, from outline to final product. As you preached this sermonic jewel on Sunday, the topic, passage, and audience were yours. Another good sermon has been delivered. Now what?

It is time to return to that "still warm" manuscript, whether 10 minutes have passed or two weeks. The five steps that follow will further improve your "delivered" product, rendering it even more useful to you in days to come.

First, the date when the message was preached should be noted somewhere on the manuscript or outline. The back side of the last page is a good spot to jot this down. How long *has* it been since you last preached that sermon on Jonah? Has it been one year, or three? This has been a tough week with a wedding, a funeral, and relatives visiting from Dubuque. If you preached the Jonah sermon again this coming Sunday evening, would anyone remember it? How about Mrs. Starnes, the lady who always writes down every sermon outline she hears in the margins of her Scofield Reference Giant Print Bible? Most of our memories are not quite what we think. It is better to be sure than to be embarrassed.

Second, next to the date of preaching, you should note the church in which it was preached. Every pastor has a few "classic" sermons that God has used and that he enjoys preaching over and over again. But if you preach one to your congregation this Thanksgiving and then preach it again in your town's all-community Thanksgiving service *next* year, members of your church who attend

the ecumenical service may wonder where they have heard that before. This is especially true for evangelists who sometimes commit the "sin" of preaching an identical week of messages at two different churches located only a few minutes apart.

Third, were there any comments about the sermon you want to remember, or changes that may be appropriate? If so, write them down *now* so that your next delivery will be that much better. If your wife told you at lunch Sunday, "You really had it flowing until that last illustration about Lucille Ball," listen to her. If you think she was right, jettison that illustration, or find a better one. Perhaps you felt the Spirit leading you in another direction as you preached, so that the end was completely different from what you had written. If so, write it down. Maybe an illustration came to mind while preaching that was not written in your notes. Now is the time to include it.

Sometimes a sermon starts with an ethical slant and winds up with an evangelistic invitation. If so, write it down. One evangelist a few years back would visibly mark through sections of his sermon that did not go over well—while he was still preaching! The congregation always seemed to enjoy it. If your Sunday School superintendent told you after the service that he would shoot you through the ears if you ever mention gun control in the pulpit again, you may do well to slightly amend illustration 2 under point 3B.

Fourth, always note the source of your sermon's genesis idea if one exists. There is probably no preacher on earth who couldn't be found guilty of plagiarism. The message of God's Word is, after all, a rather unchangeable product. However, every

pastor will personalize his work with his own illustrations, personality, and intellect. "It's OK to borrow others' cream, so long as you churn your own butter." Who *did* say that? The story is told of a pastor who held up two fingers on his left hand as he started to speak, then raised two fingers on his right hand when he was done. When asked what these raised fingers represented, he replied, "Quotation marks." It isn't necessary to give an oral bibliography of every sermon you preach, but if you got the basic outline from someone else, write down the source. Few things are as embarrassing as someone whispering, "He *said* God gave him that message, but I read it last week in *Christianity Today*."

Fifth, buy or make yourself a good sermon file and use it. One hundred or so sermons a year, over a period of only 10 years, can produce a hopeless jumble of paper if only stuck in a drawer or cardboard box. Sermons can be filed by the date preached, but that won't help much if you need to retrieve it at a later date. A better way is to file sermons by topic or theme. Most commercially available files use this method. One real advantage of this strategy is that it points out areas that you may have recently ignored. Does your file on the Second Coming have any messages in it preached in the last 12 months? It may also be helpful to cross-file your messages by the biblical text from which they were taken. When is the last time you preached from the Books of Habakkuk or Jude?

These five suggestions can make your preaching better, whether you write sermons longhand, type them, or use a word processor. As the bumper sticker says, "Organize Thyself!"

# Preaching to Needs

by L. Milton Hankins  
Mineral, Va.

**S**uccessful preaching is needs-oriented. Jacques Ellul, a noted preacher, once said, "[When] we have really understood the actual plight of our contemporaries, when we have heard their cry of anguish . . . , shared their suffering, both physical and spiritual, and their despair and desolation, then we shall be able to proclaim the Word of God—but not until then!"

In the daily activities of Jesus among the people, His public teaching, especially His sermons, are noteworthy for their focus on the needs of those to whom He was speaking. Jesus often pointed out and addressed the needs of individuals within the group, a taboo in modern preaching.

The successful preacher is a good listener, studies the Scriptures with the concerns of his people in mind, and responsibly applies the truths of the Word to their needs. I do not sug-

gest that prayer, counseling, and many other facets of personal ministry are less important, only that successful biblical preaching is characterized by certain fundamentals evidenced by the preaching of Jesus.

Jesus was a good listener. He never seemed too busy to hear and respond to human needs whether great or small. He dealt with complex theological questions and shed light on perplexing social issues, but, on one occasion, He was even sympathetic to the dilemma of an embarrassed host. On another occasion, He listened attentively while a friend complained that her sister was neglecting household responsibilities.

Apparently Jesus studied the Hebrew Scriptures with the needs of people in mind. Early in His public ministry, reading before the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus selected a needs-oriented passage from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the

brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18, KJV).

Time and time again, when responding to His own needs and the needs of others, Jesus quoted from the Scriptures. Jesus called upon His knowledge of the Scriptures to combat Satan's temptation. Many excellent examples can be found in His theological discourses, but Jesus also quoted or referred to the Scriptures when responding to individual needs. An example is found in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:14).

Jesus applied the truths of Scripture to everyday problems.

Successful preaching applies the truths of the Word to the needs of people.

Preachers who are frequently complimented with phrases like, "It seemed as though you were speaking directly to me!" or "Your sermon today was just what I needed!" should be especially encouraged. They must be preaching to real needs. Obviously, they are meeting the needs of their people.



# The Preaching of the Gospel

by Dewey Anderson  
*Farmington, Mo.*

**P**reaching of the gospel has justified itself over the centuries as the most effective way of church growth and spiritual growth. The ministry of preaching molds the spiritual life of any nation. It's the ministry the world looks to for leadership in faith and in the brotherhood of man. The clergy are not mere dabblers but persons of force, courage, integrity, and insight.

By preaching, the church has the ability and capacity for leadership amid the normal times, as well as the times of crisis.

The drama of God and man, the drama of good and evil, are still the greatest themes in the world; and if the church is ever to grasp its opportunity for spiritual leadership amid this drama, now is the time. Too often the forces of evil seem to rout the timid abilities within a man, or a nation, when temptations and opposition come in public or private life.

If people are to win the lifelong struggle for their souls, they must have a rebirth of spiritual elements in their lives, so that they have the power to rise above the filth of sin and evil.

Thus, spiritual leaders of the world must lead the way in personal religious living, in education, in politics, and in the international affairs of men.


While the church is not a specialist in international law, it is a specialist in the interpretation of spiritual life and spiritual values. It must

point and guide the way to eternal principles for people everywhere.

If any influence in the world is to bring peace in our times, it must be the ministry of the church with its pure doctrine of brotherly love and the grace of God reaching for all mankind.

Preaching exists, not for propagating views and opinions and ideals of an individual, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God. This will always give preaching a basic and essential place in human history.

The preaching of the gospel proclaims God's eternal truth and demands a response of every person, either by acceptance or rejection.

The church, like many other institutions, is in a grave position, struggling against the forces of evil. She is fighting desperately for survival with programs, organization, and various kinds of human effort. However, the church of past history and of the present came to her peak of achievement through the means of a pulpit ministry centered on Jesus. Nothing can substitute for the preaching of the gospel to build the kingdom of God. Every human effort and concern make a contribution, yet these weak and limited processes shall never do that which was prescribed by God himself. Rugged, anointed preaching is to the world a stumbling block and foolishness, but to us who are saved it is the power and wisdom of God. 

# Can You Drink the Cup I Am Going to Drink?

## *A Holy Week Devotional Based on the Last Week of Christ as Recorded in the Gospel of Matthew*

by Michael B. Ross

Fort Myers, Fla.

### *Introduction*

These devotionals may provide a resource by which we can grow spiritually during Holy Week. No week is more sacred, yet year after year we miss the opportunity to experience the life-changing impact of the events included in the last week of Jesus' ministry.

Matthew 20 records a request of the mother of James and John that her two sons be granted positions of honor in the kingdom of heaven. Her petition reflects a misconception shared by Jesus' disciples about the nature of God's kingdom. She anticipated that Jesus would soon establish an earthly government that would return Israel to its proper place in world politics. No wonder Jesus replied, "You don't know what you are asking!" (v. 22, TLB).

We, too, may be unaware of the implications of our desires to be great in the kingdom of God. True spirituality is still the goal of Christ's followers, but we often do not understand what we are asking when we seek and pray for places of honor.

Jesus' response to the request was

a question of His own, "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" (Matt. 20:22). Would they have the strength to pray in the darkness of a garden of betrayal? Would they be willing to follow Christ to a cross rather than a throne? Would they withstand the rejection of being a disciple of a crucified Jew? He had one week to prepare them for what they would eventually have to accept.

Are you willing to drink of the same cup from which Jesus drank? If you want to be great in the Kingdom, you must. Reviewing the events of Jesus' last week, you will be renewed in the Spirit and be willing to take from His hand the cup of God's will.

### *How to Use This Devotional*

This devotional contains 10 study guides, 1 for each day through Easter Sunday and an additional 1 for both Palm Sunday evening and Good Friday evening. Read the printed comments after studying the scripture listed for each lesson. Then meditate on the printed questions. End each session with prayer.



### **PALM SUNDAY MORNING**

#### ***CHOOSING THE DONKEY***

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 21:1-11

Even though it may seem that others forced their will on Jesus during His final week, actually He was in control at all times. In fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Jesus chose a donkey on which to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem. Other animals, such as a war-horse, would have given the wrong impression and would have excited the crowd even more.

Do not live according to the expectations of others. People may put you on a level that is too high, and if you accept it, you will lose your usefulness. There is no greater role in the Kingdom than that of servant, but it is not something thrust upon you. You must choose it, even though others may think it is below your level. They may think of it as "a waste," but the greatest decision you can make is to choose the will of God.

#### **CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?**

1. Are you willing to serve God in ways that most others would not?
2. Is the approval of God enough for you, or must you also have the praise of men?
3. Can you thank God when He uses you, or do you find it easy to take the credit for yourself?

#### **PRAYER:**

Father, help me choose to live the way You want. Give me strength to resist the opinion of others concerning my place in life. May I become only what Your grace would make of me.



## PALM SUNDAY EVENING

### TAKING A STAND

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 21:12-27

Soon after Jesus' spectacular entry into Jerusalem, He noticed that the Temple had become a focal point of injustice and greed. He was angered by what He saw, so angered that He drove the racketeers from the house of God. It was a rare sight, indeed, to see Jesus so angry and aggressive, but something was terribly wrong, and something had to be done.

It is not easy to take a stand, is it? No one likes confrontation, especially peace-loving Christians. Besides, it seems impossible for one person to make a difference. But "making a difference" is not the point. We have not been called to change things. Our command is to follow Christ, and that includes taking a stand against people and systems that destroy the sacredness of life and the gospel. Maybe your stand won't change things, but God and you will be glad you made a bold front for righteousness.

#### CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?

1. Are there not at least some issues for which it is worth making a stand?
2. Does not the reluctance of others to speak out make your voice that more important?
3. Are you willing to make a stand for God's truth even if it costs rejection and ridicule?

#### PRAYER:

Father, it is not easy for me to say no! I ask that You will empower me to be willing to resist, in love, those forces that would destroy the right and good.



## MONDAY MORNING

### LOVING GOD AND OTHERS

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 22:34-40

The Pharisees knew all about laws, so the question was worth asking! "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (v. 36). The Pharisees attempted to have a law for every situation. No wonder that by the time this question was asked, there were literally hundreds of restrictions that governed their behavior and life-styles. Jesus simplified the issue: Love God with your whole being and your neighbor as yourself.

There is no way that we can separate these two commandments. They are forever joined together. They are the essence and intent of all other commandments. A new element is now added to holy living—motive. Christian living is more than obeying rules, even good ones. It is fully loving God, which causes us to also love our neighbors. The law of love applies to all situations.

#### CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?

1. Are you as eager to forgive others as you are to accept the forgiveness of God for yourself?
2. Are you willing to examine not only how you live but also the "why" of your actions?
3. Do you agree that your relationships with God and others are inseparable and that one affects the other?

#### PRAYER:

Lord, help me understand that love is the essence of Christian living. May I not attempt to separate my love for You from my involvement with others.

## TUESDAY MORNING

### LIVING CONSISTENTLY

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 23:23-32

Jesus continues His attack against mere religion. He confronts religious leaders who had each other's approval but faced the condemnation of God. Why? Their religion was only external. It was shallow and deceptive; it was incomplete because it neglected the more important matters such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

Following Christ includes two matters often overlooked. First, the trademark of the life of one who has experienced the grace of God is consistency. Religious zeal for truth must be balanced by faithful Christian living. Your stand on any issue, no matter how important and truthful, becomes a mockery if not validated by consistency. Second, as a disciple of Christ you are required to set priorities. Methods and appearance are not nearly as important as Christlikeness and genuineness.

#### CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?

1. Will you allow God to reveal where you do not yet equal your testimony?
2. Can you commit yourself to the only thing that brings consistency in the Christian life—prayer?

#### PRAYER:

Dear Father, give to me Your presence so that I will see myself as You see me. Grant to me Your grace so that others will see You and not me.





## WEDNESDAY MORNING

### ***WATCHING FOR HIS RETURN***

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 24:42-51

Now that Calvary's shadow is drawing closer, Jesus realizes that the disciples' tendency might be to look back. The Cross would have such an impact on them that their faith could become founded only on what had happened at Golgotha. So, during His last hours with His followers, Jesus teaches them what they would not understand until later. "Be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (v. 44).

It is significant that so close to His death and departure Jesus notes that He will return. Wise believers live faithfully in the light of that promise. It is beneficial for Christians to remember that Christ has died, but it is wiser to live in the expectancy of His return. Don't just look back. Look ahead. Your redemption is near!

#### **CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?**

1. Are you ready for the return of Christ?
2. If you knew He was coming today, would there be anything you would want to make right? If so, do it now.
3. Could you be more faithful to your places of service? Faithfulness is what Jesus will be looking for when He returns.

#### **PRAYER:**

Father, help me as I keep one eye on the Cross to keep the other on the skies. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.

## THURSDAY MORNING

### ***ACCEPTING GOD'S WILL***

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 26:36-46

No greater battle has been fought in the spirit of man. There in a garden, Jesus wrestled with the consequences of a choice. He was alone. Judas had made his move. Peter, James, and John could not stay awake. The Son of God prayed for more options. But when the facts were considered, there were none. He had only two alternatives: yes or no to the will of God. Finally, in surrender He cried to the Father, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (v. 39).

And what about you? Life may seem complex, but it is not. All of life can be answered in one question: My will or God's? Hours before His death Jesus illustrated for us the essence of discipleship. All of us do not reach the place of total surrender. All do not honestly pray for the will of God to be done. Do you? Or is the cross too heavy?

#### **CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?**

1. Are you putting more value in your involvement in the church than in your obedience to God's will?
2. Is there still one thing you will not do for Christ? If so, confess it and say yes to His full will.

#### **PRAYER:**

Father, I choose not to notice those who have betrayed what I believe to be sacred. I will not stumble over those who sleep. I simply pray as Jesus did that Your will shall be done in my life.



## FRIDAY MORNING

### ***IDENTIFYING WITH CHRIST***

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 26:69-75

The same disciple who had vowed that if necessary, he would die for Christ—Peter—now three times in succession vehemently denies knowing Jesus. The Master had predicted that this would happen. He saw something in Peter that Peter had not seen in himself. It must have been fear, fear of what would happen if he identified with the One accused of blasphemy and threatened with death.

The popularity of being religious or a member of a church rises and falls according to moods of society. But that is not what we are considering here. The issue is not religion or church; it is Jesus Christ. Sometimes it is exciting and rewarding to follow the Messiah. Other times it is costly and painful. Are you willing to die for Christ? Probably so, but there is a more important question: Are you willing to live for Him?

#### **CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?**

1. Are you ashamed for others to discover that you are a Christian?
2. Do you sometimes find it convenient to keep your faith hidden?
3. Are you willing, no matter what it costs, to remain loyal to the cause of Christ?

#### **PRAYER:**

Father, I know that my claims of loyalty are not enough. But, by Your grace, I will gladly let others know that I am one of Yours. Help me never to be ashamed of Jesus' name.

## FRIDAY EVENING

### DYING

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 27:32-61

Life had come down to this—dying on a cross. No glory, no throne, no angels to rescue. Just dying. Jesus, who had raised Lazarus from the dead, now refuses to save himself. The One who had forgiven hundreds now suffers between thieves. The Messiah, who had been God's presence for so many, now cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (v. 46). Finally, Jesus gave up His spirit. That's a nice way of saying He died. He quit breathing. His heart stopped beating. He surrendered to the darkness, and He died.

Do you understand that it is for our sins He died? He was sinless, but we have fallen short of the glory of God. It is not pleasant to look at, but turn your head toward Calvary. Open your eyes. Go ahead and look. He's dead, and our sins killed Him. Get closer. Don't be afraid of the guards. Even they realize that they made a mistake to crucify this Man. Hear the sobs; see the blood; smell the death. Jesus is dead.

### CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?

1. Can you spend a few hours this night and tomorrow near the Cross?
2. Do you feel remorse for what happened on Golgotha?
3. Would you confess your sinfulness?

### PRAYER:

O God, I am moved to tears. I cannot grasp the awfulness of that hour. How terrible it must have been. Help me to stay here for a while.



## SATURDAY MORNING

### HIDING THE TRUTH

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 27:62-66

They thought once they killed Jesus, that would be the end of Him. But there was something about the way He died that immediately caused some to realize that they had crucified the Son of God. By the next day, they all were wondering if they had done the right thing. They were afraid it wasn't over yet, so they posted a guard and ordered the tomb secured with a seal on the stone. They hoped the public would stay away.

"Out of sight, out of mind" seems the philosophy today. We bury that which we hope never to face again. Moments of weakness, times of rebellion, surges of hatred. "Put them away," we say. "They happened, and there's no reason to worry about them now." We try to hide them from others and ourselves. We smother them with busy schedules and good works. But the memories haunt us, so we post more guards and roll in bigger stones. Are you ready for the good news? What would you say if I told you that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin? The past can lose its grip on you today. You don't have to bury it. Confess it.

### CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?

1. Can you accept that only God can redeem the past?
2. Will you allow God to turn your thoughts toward the future and away from what has happened?

### PRAYER:

Dear God, break the bondage that the past has on my spirit. Give me hope for tomorrow based on Jesus' death for my sins.

## EASTER SUNDAY MORNING

### MEETING THE RISEN LORD

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 28:1-10

The greatest day in history had dawned. It began sadly, though. Two women, both named Mary, traveled to the tomb to pay their last respects. Suddenly, the ground began to shake, and an angel appeared. Walking past guards who had fainted from fear, the two women accepted the angel's invitation to see where Jesus had lain. Excitedly, they rushed to tell the disciples of an empty tomb, but their journey was interrupted by the risen Lord. He spoke to them; they saw Him! He was alive!

Hallelujah, Jesus is alive! There is more to Easter than an empty tomb. We celebrate a risen Savior. More than angels relieve our fears; Jesus speaks and drives away all sorrow. Christian living is more than an occasional encounter with the Divine. The Lord walks with us and talks with us each step of the way. Today, tomorrow, for as long as you live, look for Christ. He will be on your path. You will see Him in the valley and on the mountain. He will walk with you in the light of day and the darkness of night.

### CAN YOU DRINK THE CUP I AM GOING TO DRINK?

1. Will you allow Resurrection power to be your source of victory over circumstances and peoples' opinions?
2. Are you willing to tell others that the crucified Messiah is alive?
3. Will you gladly acknowledge Jesus' constant presence as you make your journey home?

### PRAYER:

Father, I rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus. May I be faithful until He comes again.



# A Father and the Cross

## *A Meditation for Good Friday*

by J. Michael Walters

Houghton, N.Y.

**I**t was undoubtedly one of the worst days of my life. My 17-month-old son was in the emergency room of a nearby hospital. He was seriously ill, and no one knew what was wrong with him. Worse, no one appeared to know what to do for him. Throughout that day I watched him cry and scream at the endless process of being poked with needles in search of blood and prodded by hands of strangers.

By far the worst part of the day came when we took him to the pediatric ward. Since it was Sunday, the staff was shorthanded. We were asked to help hold him down while the doctor tried to put in I.V. needles, first unsuccessfully in his hands, but finally in his feet. Several times I had to turn away because of the tears that clouded my eyes. To prevent him from hurting himself, the nurses produced a board in the shape of a T, ironically called a cross. He was strapped down to restrain his arms so that he would not jerk out the I.V.'s or do something to make matters worse.

It was almost more than I could take, watching my only son be put through such an ordeal. The only thing that made it bearable was the fact that unless I permitted him to be submitted to this process, he might not live.

That day stands out in my mind. It called forth emotions in me as a father that I never knew existed. And yet it stands out for another, more enduring reason. We have moments of sudden inspiration—epiphanies I choose to call them. Moments when our human life parallels some eternal truth in a way that burns itself into our minds. That hot, August Sunday afternoon I stood by helplessly and watched my son suffer and cry out. He looked at me with those big blue eyes as if to say, "Daddy, why are you letting them do this to me?" I consoled myself with the thought

that it was for his own good. I reminded myself that unless I permitted this ordeal, he might not live.

In the midst of it, the strangest thing happened. While experiencing the frustration and helplessness of that awful moment, a verse of scripture kept running through my mind. In Isaiah 53, a chapter referred to as "The Song of the Suffering Servant," the prophet foretold the agony of Jesus' passion. A phrase provided my epiphany. Having described the horror of the suffering Servant, the prophet refers to God: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief" (Isa. 53:10, KJV). Those words would not go away that summer day in the hospital. As a father I suffered, watching my son endure the agony that would save his life. The prophet says that God watched His Son endure that which would cost Him His life. My son would get better as a result of what he suffered. But what did Jesus stand to gain by going to the Cross? How would He be improved? The Scriptures say that He was coequal with God the Father. God watched His Son die for the sins of humanity, solely out of what humanity stood to gain by it. God permitted a sinless, innocent Jesus to serve as a sacrificial victim for mankind. If it isn't enough that God permitted it, we are told that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him."

What kind of father would be pleased to see his only son suffer? What kind of father could overcome every impulse to spare his child from unjust pain and agony? The only answer to these questions lies in a God whose nature is love. I confess: That kind of love totally escapes my comprehension. I allowed my son to be saved through suffering, although I can't say that it pleased me. But the scripture says that God's love for us was so perfect and complete that He

allowed His only Son to die in our stead. He was pleased for it to happen.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him." Don't think being God in any way lessens His pain and agony of watching His Son die. Rather, the suffering of Christ increases our awe and wonder at the love of God. I'm not pretending to know what God saw that day when He observed Jesus hanging on a cross for my sins. But because for a moment as father, I watched my son suffer for good purposes, I have never looked at the cross of Jesus in the same way.

My son got well because of the treatment he received. God's Son died because of the treatment He received. As a father, I regretted every moment of pain and fear and uncertainty that my son endured. Isaiah says that God was pleased to submit His Son to such pain, humiliation, and death.

Some people doubt the love of God. They say that God couldn't love us and continue to allow the kind of suffering that goes on around us. People fail to see that no one has ever endured the suffering that a holy God experienced on that Friday we have come to call "Good." We can go nowhere in human suffering where God the Father and God the Son haven't already been! The cross of Jesus Christ stands today as a powerful contradiction to those who claim that God doesn't care.

He cares! He cared enough to subject His Son to the worst agony in our behalf. And He did it with gladness! Don't feel badly if you can't fully understand that kind of caring love. No one does. But we are beneficiaries of that mysterious kind of love, ultimately expressed in a cross.

Isaac Watts caught that sense of holy awe we feel when considering the cross of Jesus:

*When I survey the wondrous  
Cross*

*On which the Prince of Glory  
died,*

*My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my  
pride.*

*Were the whole realm of nature  
mine,*

*That were a present far too  
small.*

*Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life,  
my all.*



# Palm Sunday's Calmest Participant

## For Palm Sunday

by Morris Chalfant

Norwood, Ohio

**N**ew York City has a history of enthusiastically welcoming heroes with a gigantic ticker-tape parade. When Charles Lindbergh returned from his historic 33½-hour transatlantic flight, the amount of litter picked up after the parade in his honor weighed 1,750 tons. General Eisenhower, returning from World War II, was celebrated with 77 tons of paper. President Truman was showered with 50 tons of paper. Douglas MacArthur, after being released from his Far East command, returned to a hero's welcome enthusiastically expressed with a shower of 3,000 tons of paper.

When Jesus, the Messiah, seated on a donkey, rode into Jerusalem one week before Easter for the first Palm Sunday celebration, the applauding crowds did not welcome Him with a ticker-tape parade. Postcelebration paper cleanup was, therefore, unnecessary. Instead of throwing ticker-tape paper, the crowds waved newly cut palm branches. For their King, they made a carpet of cloth by laying down their own clothes in front of the historic procession.

"Emotion-packed!" That's the only way to describe the first Palm Sunday celebration. Crowds were singing; children, caught up in the excitement, were skipping and dancing; even the disciples, uncertain of what was happening, were caught up in the enthusiasm.

The calmest person in Jerusalem that day was that strange King on the borrowed colt. For although He knew how volatile the situation, He was no agitator; He was no demagogue. He hadn't entered the city to spark revolution. He had come to fulfill prophecy—prophecy like that of Zechariah: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee" (9:9, KJV).

So Jesus accepted the cheers and the hosannas and the acclaim. He lis-

tened knowingly as the throngs cried, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Ps. 118:26, KJV). For all of this was fulfillment of prophecy. All of this was the working out of God's plan. All of this was prelude to the eventful week to follow, a week that would see Him cursed and crucified on Friday, but resurrected on Sunday.

It is easy to welcome Jesus on Sunday in a church sanctuary with joyful music, sweet flowers, and a holy atmosphere. What is our response to Jesus on Monday when He comes to test the sincerity of our welcome the previous day? What we think and what we do in response to His words and in reaction to His cleansing purpose decide what we do with Jesus the remainder of the week.

Jesus speaks of His house; He means the human heart. He quotes God's plan for the human heart—to be a place of prayer, prayer for all nations. God made man to be the temple of His Holy Spirit. When Jesus comes to take His rightful place in that temple, does He find it as a place of worship?

When Jesus comes to the temple, He always commands as Captain of the heart, for that is the seat of man's affections. Out of the heart proceed the real issues of life. Napoleon once said, "Christ asks for and receives the human heart, and He wants it all to himself."

When Jesus comes to the temple, He controls the physical being of man. During the early days of Christianity, a damnable theory was let loose in the world that man could keep his spirit clean, but his body could be given over to every evil. This theory is still believed by some people.

But nowhere does the Bible support the idea that a person can have a spirit that is right with God and a body that is dissipated, corrupt, and at war with God.

By a double process, your body is God's. He created you: "God created man" (Gen. 1:27, KJV). His Son redeemed you: "Ye are not your own . . . ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20, KJV).

Paul said, "Christ is . . . the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23, KJV). How can anyone glorify God in his body when his flesh is befouled with nicotine, alcohol, and dope? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1, KJV).

It will take a lot of clean living and honest discipline to maintain a holy and acceptable body. Why not let Jesus come to your temple? He will help you.

When Jesus comes to the temple, He holds absolute sway over our talents. There will be many disappointed persons at the judgment simply because they did nothing with their talents. One of the most severe curses pronounced by Jesus was directed at the man who locked his own talent in the vault of "do nothing."

We denounce those who indulge in sinful practices, but often we are guilty of doing nothing.

When Jesus demanded allegiance from some men, one wanted to bury his father, another to say farewell to his family, another to go fishing. But Jesus answered them saying, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22, KJV). "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). "Follow me" (Matt. 8:22, KJV).

I have seen the heart temple cleansed. I have seen the harlot become respectable, the thief become honest, the liar become a messenger of the good news of Jesus, and the alcoholic renounce liquor and drink

no more. And why? Because Jesus came into the temple of the soul.

But if we harbor jealousy and ill will and cover up sinful practices and habits, the King of glory will not come in.

If we miss this message on Palm Sunday, we have exchanged the kernel for the husk. The Palm Sunday message is always one of salvation, of the entrance of Jesus into the human heart, Jesus coming to His temple.

Jesus stands at the heart's door and condemns the use made of His house. He tries to cleanse His temple. And what are our reactions?

Do we welcome Him with the song of joy and the flower of commitment? Or do we question His authority and resent His interference? Do we fear the effect that His cleansing will have?


Monday morning brings the test of the validity of the song, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Ps. 118:26, KJV). Be careful how you meet Jesus when He comes to your house, to your heart. His enemies plotted to destroy Him. And as far as His power to help them was concerned, they succeeded in getting rid of Him. That is a frightening thought! How easy it is to find ourselves among them that cry, "Away with him! Crucify him!" (See John 19:15, KJV.)

His many subjects scattered over the world witness:

*King of my life I crown Thee now;  
Thine shall the glory be.*

—JENNIE EVELYN HUSSEY

Jesus is not "a king," but He is "the King." Scripture records Jesus as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15, KJV). Though a King, Jesus plainly revealed by humble means that "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36, KJV). His triumphant entry led not to an earthly throne, but to death at the hands of those whom He came to save. To all earthbound religionists, a King without a lavish kingdom was double-talk. Tragically, even in our day so many fail to see the real, true aspect of the kingdom of God.

Who is this King to you? Jesus came into the world to be your King. For that purpose He now sits at the right hand of the throne of God, praying for you. Will you this day crown Him King of your life? 

# Night of Music on the Life of Jesus

(For Palm Sunday Night or Easter Sunday Night)

by Betty B. Robertson

St. Louis

**Congregational Singing:** "Tell Me the Story of Jesus" (Verse 1, No. 493, *Worship in Song*) and "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" (No. 124, *Master Chorus Book*)

**Reader No. 1:** Luke 2:41-50 (TLB)

**Children Sing:** "In the Temple" (No. 75, *Children's Praises*)

**Reader No. 2:** Luke 4:1-2

**Congregational Singing:** "Tell Me the Story of Jesus" (Verse 2, No. 493, *Worship in Song*)

**Soloist:** "Born Again" (Page 40, *Magnify the Lord*)

**Reader No. 3:** Luke 8:22-24 (TLB)

**Congregational Singing:** "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" (Verse 4, No. 116, *Worship in Song*)

**Reader No. 4:** Mark 5:35-36

**Congregational Singing:** "Only Believe" (No. 94, *Scriptures to Sing*)

**Reader No. 4:** Mark 5:37-42

**Congregational Singing:** "Only Believe" (No. 94, *Scriptures to Sing*)

**Reader No. 1:** Luke 18:35-43

**Soloist:** "Then I Met the Master" (Verse 2, Page 80, *Great Is the Lord*)

**Congregational Singing:** Repeat chorus of "Then I Met the Master" and sing chorus of "Now I Belong to Jesus" (No. 411, *Worship in Song*)

**Reader No. 2:** Luke 19:1-10 (TLB)

**Children Sing:** "Zacchaeus" (From children's music file)

**Reader No. 3:** Mark 6:41-44 (TLB)

**Congregational Singing:** "Break Thou the Bread of Life" (Verses 1 and 2, No. 90, *Worship in Song*)

**Reader No. 4:** Mark 6:56

**Soloist:** "He Touched Me" (Page 46, *Great Is the Lord*)

**Reader No. 1:** Luke 10:38-42 (TLB)

**Congregational Singing:** "Sitting at the Feet of Jesus" (No. 60, *Worship in Song*)

**Reader No. 2:** Luke 13:10-13

**Congregational Singing:** "I'm So Glad" (Verse 2, No. 102, *Master Chorus Book*)

**Reader No. 3:** John 15:5

**Congregational Singing:** "His Banner over Me Is Love" (Verse 3, No. 99, *Master Chorus Book*)

**Reader No. 4:** Matt. 10:5 and 8

**Congregational Singing:** "Freely, Freely" (Verse 2, No. 56, *Scriptures to Sing*)

**Reader No. 1:** Matt. 11:28-30

**Congregational Singing:** "His Yoke Is Easy" (No. 54, *Scriptures to Sing*)

**Reader No. 2:** John 12:12-13 (TLB)

**Congregational Singing:** "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" (Verse 3, No. 116, *Worship in Song*) and "King of Kings" (No. 21, *Master Chorus Book*)

**Reader No. 3:** Luke 22:14-20

**Soloist:** "This Is My Body" (No. 60, *Master Chorus Book*)


**Reader No. 4:** Luke 22:39-44

**Congregational Singing:** "'Tis Midnight" (All verses, No. 138, *Worship in Song*) and "Blessed Redeemer" (Verses 1 and 2, No. 104, *Worship in Song*)

**Soloist:** "Ten Thousand Angels" (Octavo Series No. PAAN-1800)

**Reader No. 1:** Matt. 28:2

**Congregational Singing:** "Christ Arose" (All verses, No. 155, *Worship in Song*) and "Because He Lives" (No. 119, *Master Chorus Book*)

**Soloist:** "The King Is Coming" (All verses, check your local music file) Congregation could join in on choruses. 



# THE ARK ROCKER

## HONOR TO WHOM HONOR BE DUE

**Q**uagmire is ticked, fit to be tied. And Smerdley is on the carpet. Of Smerdley, most of you already know as much as you would wish; but for those of you who don't know Quagmire, he is the ideal layperson, the ecclesiastic's dream. Or at least he was. Boosts his pastor; gets behind the whole program; happily trots off to annual and general conferences and tingles with enthusiasm from call to order to closing gavel; has written all levels of the church into his considerable last will and testament; and, best of all, he assumes that church leaders have prayed plumb through on any big ideas that they drive down the pike. He leaves (or used to leave) their accountability to the Lord.

He is not dumb or naive. He simply figures (or figured) that clerics are as competent at their job as he is at his, and their job is to pray and preach the gospel. At least this is how it was until last month. Now he is ticked, as I said.

Remember the rather handsome love offering taken from across the conference a few months back, the one for Hoss Trayder on the occasion of his transfer to New Opportunities? Well, that, says Quag, was what "woke me up! I suddenly began to put together some half-formed notions and feelings that I built up over the years. It wasn't pretty."

Ideal layperson that he is/was, Quagmire had sat on the conference advisory committee as an elected member since coffee was a nickel.

Across those years he had heard Trayder's work praised only in public, where he was often referred to as "Beloved Trayder." In conference committee circles, the man's folly had helped his fellow reverends to create two thousand one-liners about incompetence, insensitivity, and pettiness. At other times, his didoes had generated anger, plain and simple. But now, those same reverends wanted to give him a nice "going-away purse." What's worse, they had the gall to suggest that the majority of folks in the conference would want to share in the gift. So they voted to take a healthy sum out of the conference slush fund—a fund created by earmarking a small percentage of the annual assessment from the congregations for just such high moments as this.

"This made no sense at all," says Quag. "Either Trayder was an asset, or he was a liability. It seemed illogical—perhaps even hypocritical—to make a public asset of one who in private is declared to be a clear liability. It's an odd way to try to come out even."

It was in those moments, he says, that he remembered an earlier committee-room conversation that had made no sense, either. But now the light came on, and all was all too clear. On that earlier occasion, Bulkington, senior reverend at Narcissusville, had cracked a wildly funny one at Trayder's expense. Says Quagmire, "I remember that I wondered aloud why Trayder seemed not to

have any idea that he was 'a bit of a dud.'" He remembers on that occasion another of the assembled reverends had quickly diverted the question by suggesting maybe it was time to encourage Trayder to "find another arena for the exercise of his considerable talent."

"Then came the part that I did not understand—though now I see it all clearly," says Quaggie. "Orful, pastor at Octagontown, and Snick, administrative reverend at Whoopeeburg First, almost immediately, and together, shouted, 'Remember Rule VII!' In a split second, the subject changed.

"Well, I have since found out that the reference was to Rule VII of the *Cleric's Code*, a.k.a. 'The Beloved Rule VII': 'Preservation of the institution, especially the system of clerical ranks, is the primary duty of all clerics. However, direct confrontation of malfunctioning clerics is strictly prohibited, for this tends to erode confidence in those responsible for his original assignment to a given post. Demotion or removal, therefore, especially in the higher, more visible ranks, is to be avoided. It is the cleric's duty to quash, with all due speed and skill, any suspicion of incompetence or other malfeasance in a fellow reverend's performance of duties. Following is a list of approved means for doing this: (1) Public honorifics. Outright prevarication is absolutely prohibited (cf. Rule XIII), but, as most understand that public

(Continued on page 47)

# Ministry to War-Zone Vets

by William R. Hunter, Jr.

Chandler, Ind.

**P**astor, do you know of any war-zone veterans in your congregation? Have you wondered why so many ladies who attend your services come alone or only with their children? The answer for some may be found in the war-zone experiences of their husbands. War-zone veterans have a unique encounter with horror and fear that defies description to those who have not been in a war zone. While most veterans come home and readjust to peace and society, some do not adjust well.

During World War I we heard the term "war neurosis." Between World War II and the Korean War we heard terms like "shell shock" and "battle fatigue." We now know, as a result of studies following the Vietnam conflict, that people in combat do experience, in varying degrees, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This stress disorder was officially recognized as a mental disorder in 1980 and was included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Third Edition* (DSM III).

Posttraumatic stress disorder is a result of a stressful experience outside the realm of normal human situations. Other causes of PTSD are rape, incest, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes. In reading of the Flood event, in Genesis, there is good reason to believe that Noah suffered with PTSD after hearing the sounds of a drowning human race. The most difficult PTSD to experience and cure is that caused by human effort, such as war, rape, and incest. The war zone produces PTSD in the combat veteran in some of the following ways.

A majority of war-zone veterans suffer depression that results in sleep disturbances, psychomotor retarda-

tion, feelings of worthlessness, and inability to concentrate. The veteran will often have flashbacks and nightmares where he sees, feels, and smells the experience of combat and death. These are often triggered by a noise or smell, etc., which reminds him of an experience in the war zone. Often veterans will withdraw from social interaction because they feel others will not understand. Thus, the war-zone veteran develops or maintains few friendships. This often affects his ability to obtain or retain a job.

Wartime veterans also experience an extreme level of rage and, at times, violent activity. This rage in the war-zone veteran has several sources, including watching friends die without ever seeing the enemy who fired or who set the booby traps or land mines. The veteran often had no opportunity to fight back as death stalked him.

These men are often perceived as uncaring and emotionally cold. But in a firefight situation, seeing friends die, he has no opportunity to grieve because he must continue to fight. By the time he returns home, his emotions have been suppressed for so long that he feels emotionally dead. He is afraid to cry for fear that he might never be able to stop once he starts.

The war-zone veteran often struggles with survival guilt. When others whom he values have died, he wonders why he did not. He feels that they were persons of more worth than he. This false guilt is often expressed in destructive behavior and high-risk recreation. Often they become habitual blood donors. Most Vietnam veterans were home at their kitchen tables in about 36 hours af-

ter being in a war zone with all their emotions still raging within. Without help, some men have a difficult time returning to life at home.

Some of my reading suggests that World War II veterans were treated medically with various amounts of alcohol to depress some of the emotions in turmoil from exposure to war. This may be one reason why a significant number of World War II veterans are heavy drinkers or alcoholics. Modern psychology claims that PTSD is best treated immediately after the stress-producing event. We're also told by some authorities that PTSD is not curable. However, that is not true.

God called me to counsel with people who have experienced life's pains and wounds, especially those who experience grief and stress disorders. We have seen many wonderful transformations as God applies His healing grace to wounded souls.

Joe came in to see us at an alcohol abuse center. He was picked up while going to kill a coworker with whom he had a disagreement. In Vietnam he had been a sniper and had killed several enemy soldiers and then mutilated a portion of their bodies. Finding this out while Joe was being treated for wounds, the hospital staff placed him in a psychiatric ward. There he became addicted to drugs and later to alcohol. During the next 20 years after coming home from war, he suffered flashbacks, nightmares, rage, guilt, and emotional numbing. These problems were complicated by substance abuse in his attempt to forget the war that still raged within.

During the course of counseling sessions and taking his family history, it was found that Joe had committed Christian parents. He had grown up in a Christian home with some church influence. As we tapped that part of Joe's past and prayed for him, the Holy Spirit was at work. Today, many months later, Joe and his wife and children are faithfully serving Christ in a local congregation. Joe's inner war is over, and his PTSD is cured.

Tom came to us in the midst of his second divorce. He acted out high levels of rage and talked of guilt and lack of sleep because of nightmares and flashbacks. His self-esteem was nil. Suicide was becoming a serious option. Taking down his history, we



# How to Be a Comforter

by Eugene F. Gerlitz

Salem, Oreg.

**B**ereavement is a common human experience. One of our most important ministries is comforting those who grieve as well as teaching our people how to be comforters. It is important to know what to do and what not to do.

## What Not to Do

*Don't* avoid the person in grief. It may be uncomfortable to be with the grieving. We may be tempted to think, I don't know what to say or what to do. However, we need to share the suffering as representatives of Christ.

*Don't* give advice. The last thing a grieving person needs at that time is to hear a sermon giving him advice.

*Don't* do all the talking. Listening is more therapeutic than talking.

*Don't* talk about your own suffering or similar suffering of others. The grieving person does not need more negative feelings or more burdens to bear.

*Don't* deny the reality of death. Denial is one of the painful stages through which most grieving persons pass.

*Don't* tell them, "You'll get over it." They never will. Life can never be

the same. Instead, they must learn to accept death as a fact that will not change but which they can learn to accept and adjust.

## What to Do

*Do* spend time with them. Be there. The bereaved will know that you care for them by your *presence* much more than by anything you can say.

*Do* let them talk. Persons in grief *want* to talk about details of those final days and the traumatic experience of seeing their beloved one die. Talking about death is therapeutic.

*Do* weep with them. Never urge them to cease crying. While their loved one is beyond suffering, it does not banish the grief of the one suffering bereavement. Tears are part of the processes of therapy.

*Do* be sensitive to the feelings and wishes of the bereaved. They are hurting and need your help.

*Do* offer to help any way you can. You can offer to provide rides, to run errands, to buy groceries, to baby-sit, or give whatever help they need.

*Do* urge your grieving friend to be active. Encourage him to attend concerts and banquets, to go to social events, to do volunteer work, to at-


tend neighborhood and community events. Activity brings important therapy for the bereaved. It helps them to focus on life. Life must go on.

*Do* share from your own experience of suffering. You gained insight that can give you empathy for the grief-stricken. Help them to know that you, too, have suffered and survived, and so will he.

*Do* share some scriptures that have been helpful to you. You can do so without being "preachy" or judgmental. Scripture contains God's own healing prescriptions for grief.

*Do* speak of our Christian hope. Our hope in Christ is a powerful medicine, even for one who has not thought much about eternal things before.

*Do* put yourself in the other person's place. This is a perfect time to practice the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

These "dos" and "don'ts" apply not only in times of bereavement but in any time of burden bearing or suffering. We need to care for one another. 


found that his wife had experienced sexual abuse in more than one of nine foster homes in which she lived. That had its effects on them as a couple, especially with Tom growing up in a home where little affection was shown. His 2½ years in Vietnam produced some classic PTSD symptoms, which erupted about 20 years after he came home. Tom walked into the Veterans Center one day asking for help.

During testing procedures, we found Tom's rage level was nearly off the graph of our testing instrument. As we do for all our clients, we began to pray for Tom. One day he walked into our office and seemed open to discussion of spiritual needs. That

day Tom's rage and guilt were replaced with God's peace. He experienced God's forgiving grace. Tom's rage level came back to a normal range. His sense of inner peace with himself and God began a wonderful healing process.

While both of these war-zone veterans need more healing, God's grace has brought them a long way. Pastor, it would be helpful to your ministry to read the book *NAM VET*, by Chuck Dean of Point Man International, P.O. Box 440, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043. There are several ways to reach out to war-zone veterans. After over 16 years in pastoral ministry, I do not believe I've seen any more dramatic conversions than those I've

seen in vets who have come through the horrors and extreme fears of battle, whatever war they have been in.

Two other helpful books are: *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders: A Handbook for Clinicians*, Edited by Tom Williams, Psy.D. Published by Disabled American Veterans World Headquarters in Cincinnati. This has a wonderful chapter titled "A Pastoral Response to the Troubled Vietnam Veteran." Also, *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children*, Edited by Spencer Eth and Robert S. Pynoos. Published by American Psychiatric Press, Washington, D.C. 

\*Enough details have been changed to protect clients' confidentiality.

## Brother to Brother

by Larry T. Allen

Chandler, Ind.

Dear Mike:

Since you are in your first year as pastor, I wanted to share some brotherly advice. These insights have helped me over the past 13 years. I hope they help you.

**Prayerfully and promptly handle the problems that arise!** Prayer works wonders! Procrastination can cause a problem to worsen. Someone said, "When you sit, sit, and sit, soon you'll have a situation." It is generally better to do something than nothing.

**Pray for peace among your congregation.** Friction, feuding, fussing, fretting, and fighting destroy a body of believers. Be decisive about what you're willing to bleed and die for! Not many things are worth a disruption of unity. Some churches can stir up trouble over the most minute issues.

**Put the pressure to produce in its proper place.** In my first pastorate I received 29 members in as many months. It seemed I was on the verge of winning the entire city! Even though I'm a better pastor today, the numbers haven't always been as exciting. Remember, attendance can devastate pastors if we allow it. Generally the pressure is self-imposed, so you can change that. Statistics don't tell the whole story. Your role is to remain faithful. God understands what we are doing for Him.

**Pastor your precious people.** Believe in your people. A delicate challenge is to balance leading them and loving them. Your people are not perfect. You are not to punish them, but to push them to new heights. They pay you, pray for you, and most of them will stay with you. Appreciate them. Be a pastor to all of them, not just a select few. Be a pastor to all ages, from the cradle to the grave.

**Be a pertinent preacher in the pulpit!** In two places we must stand tall: the church board meeting and the pulpit. Jesus said to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). Laypersons come to church wondering how they can cope in this world of difficulty. God's messengers must have something pertinent to say to help them in their spiritual journey.

**Pay the price to prevent a personal plateau.** Read good books. Learn from your models. Ask questions. Everyone can teach you something. Spend time with God, soaking in His Spirit. Attend any seminar or conference deemed profitable.

**Participate with other prophets.** Time spent with your partners in ministry is time well spent. Surround yourself with good men. In your lowest moments they can boost your morale. Men outside your denomination can also be a blessing to you.

**Place a premium on the people at the parsonage.** Your wife and children need you. What if you gain the whole world and lose your own family? It's not quality time versus quantity time. Give them both! Your wife, Marla, is a queen—treat her accordingly. Take delight in that darling daughter, Krista. Take satisfaction in that superb son, Joshua.

**Remember that pastors have a pastor!** There will be times you'll need your district superintendent. Go to him when you do. Believe in him. Let him be a model for your ministry. You can learn much from him. Never criticize him. As you need his support, he needs your support. Don't blame him for placing you at a certain church. God placed you and God will help you.

**Keep proper perspective that we are pilgrims here.** A pilgrim is on his way home. This world is not our permanent home; we are only passing through. In spite of obstacles, opposition, suffering, small salaries, or any other challenge, all that matters is how we stand before God on Judgment Day.

Mike, we're proud of you. God has given you abilities, gifts, and graces. He will use you to build His kingdom. Be faithful. Fight the good fight. Persevere. Keep the newsletter coming.

Love,  
Larry

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Mike Allen pastors Burns Chapel in southern Ohio. He is with the Churches of Christ in Christian Union.

# Experience Speaks

by **Albert J. Lown**

*Keighley, West Yorkshire, England*

(A friendly letter of counsel  
from an older minister to a younger one entering his first pastorate.)

Dear Friend:

I enjoyed having fellowship with you and sharing your vision and misgivings as you commence ministry. Move slowly in your pastorate. Do not initiate too much at one time, particularly if an undue burden of leadership and organization will fall upon you personally. Let others adopt your ideas for church board discussion. Good judgment of timing for change or challenge is a chief ingredient in leadership qualification. Never bring personal problems into public ministry. Watch the "I" of personal experience. Use it only when it will endorse or confirm truth.

If intensive study is a change for you, understand that strain and tiredness are a prelude to an increasing capacity to take things in.

If you have further biblical or theological studies to pursue, use the material for preaching. Simplify the content for your congregation. In so doing, you will clarify both comprehension and expression in your own mind. Appraise your general reading and, if possible, devote an occasional midweek service to a lecture about an outstanding life.

In church relationships judge nothing before the time. Quieter people may be the most reliable in the long run. Do not give your confidences too freely to "apparent" leaders in the church.

You will make mistakes in your first charge—less in the second and pro rata—but experience will teach, "Things that once were wild alarms, cannot now disturb your rest."

God bless you. Keep your Sunday morning service to a clock hour, apart from genuine divine visitation. Be consistently punctual in commencing public worship. Keep your evening messages to 25 to 30 minutes. It is better to keep for another day than to overflow minds already filled with weighty truth. Blend dignity with liberty, fresh touches with familiarity, thoughtful and brief opening invocations with warm, compassionate family prayers. Grow in grace and English grammar. Be cheerful, but not a church jester. And, dare I say, in today's first name greetings and reference, there is still a place for title and respect in public address.

A happy ministry to you. Please write if I can help you further.

Sincerely in Christ,  
The voice of experience

# The Lonely New Member

by Velva Lorenz

Stockton, Calif.

**A**s Carol approached the open door, she could see the crafts and food on display inside the church hall. She felt apprehensive; it was always difficult to do something for the first time. Then she shook off her misgivings. After all, she and Jim had joined their new church after moving to a town that seemed perfect for their retirement. They wanted to get involved. Carol had signed up to help at the bazaar specifically to meet people.

So here was her opportunity. She squared her shoulders and stepped into the hall.

Later, she described the experience to a friend. "When I entered, I expected some kind of greeting, as several groups of women stood near the door. But they were deep in conversation, and I hesitated to intrude. But I had come there to get acquainted.

"So I stepped up and smiled at them. 'I'm new here,' I said, 'but I have come to lend a helping hand. Is there anything I can do?'

"Several women looked at me, and one said, 'Oh, there's always something to be done.' Then she turned back to her group, apparently dismissing me. I felt foolish and invisible.

"I almost left then, but a small, elderly woman, standing nearby, smiled sympathetically. 'I'm new too,' she said. 'I'll stay with you until we're told what to do.'

"Eventually we were assigned to pouring coffee, and we met a few friendly people who made me feel a little better. But I have never felt so lonely and rejected before. It took lots of prayer before I felt comfortable going to that church.

"I've heard of this happening to others, but this was my first time," she continued. "Why would people who are part of a Christian congrega-

tion behave with such indifference toward newcomers? If you are a recipient of God's love," Carol concluded, "don't you want to share that love rather than withhold it?"

Indifference indicates coldness, insensitivity, and apathy. Yet the command that Christ has given us is this: "Whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 John 4:21). Indifference and Christian love are completely incompatible.

John praised Gaius for "what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love" (3 John 5-6).

Even church leaders can become so immersed in congregational affairs that they forget the command of love. They may not realize that some of their new members feel lonely, rejected, or friendless.

Ed and Linda, upon transferring to a new church, decided to join the choir, having been part of the one at their former congregation. The choir director ignored them at the first rehearsal, neither welcoming them nor acknowledging their presence. Bewildered and hurt, they were uncertain of what to do.

Only because other choir members were cordial did Ed and Linda remain. But because the choir leader never lost his cold demeanor, Ed and Linda could never quite rid themselves of a nagging doubt about their true welcome into the choir.

If you are mature and strong in your faith, you may experience cold responses but overcome them. On the other hand, a chilly response to an unsure member will invariably send him reeling. In either case, extending a warm and gracious greeting to a newcomer not only makes his introduction to the congregation pleasant but builds a Christlike attitude in the congregation as well.

People who cannot handle indifferent treatment will often leave the church and, in effect, have their faith further weakened or lost. Had Carol been a young person that day at the bazaar, shy and new in her belief in Christ, she doubts she would have continued in that church.

Congregations should know that many good and practical ways exist to welcome and keep new members.

Certain Sundays can be set aside throughout the year to welcome and acknowledge people. Name tags can be worn by members and special tags pinned on visitors for easy recognition. New members may be assigned to a family or person who takes responsibility for the newcomer's spiritual welfare. This assures, at least for a while, that someone cares.

Greeters before the service can and do provide a welcoming, special touch. But if the members believe that greeting duties have been assigned to a chosen few, they may be tempted to ignore their own responsibility toward showing kindness to newcomers.

No program will achieve its objective, however, unless each member develops a new attitude toward his fellow members in Christ's body. As personal witnesses to Jesus Christ, we are disciples of the Word. God wants us to be mindful of the work He has given us to do. Ask yourself this: How would I feel as a newcomer to a congregation if all I received from fellow members were stony silence and averted glances?

Congregations should initiate an ongoing fellowship plan to commit the total membership to a warm and personal relationship with newcomers. Use every means available to make people aware of your commitment—home Bible study groups, fel-

*(Continued on page 47)*



# The Bivocational Pastor

by James L. Snyder

*Glen Burnie, Md.*

**I**n evangelical Christian circles today the church-planting "entrepreneur," operating with flash and dash, tends to capture attention. However, such flamboyant ministries make up only a small percentage of church planters.

Greater numbers of new churches are being started by men and women who, for the most part, work with little or no recognition from the public. Without the sacrificial work of these ministers and their families many churches would not exist today.

## SECULAR WORK

"Bivocational," as it relates to church-planting ministry, refers to a person called of God to a church ministry unable to support him or his family adequately. Therefore, he must find secular employment that enables him to do his pastoral work.

Bivocational church planters come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are recent seminary graduates. However, a growing number are older men who have felt God's call to make pastoral ministry their primary vocation and their former professions or businesses secondary. For some pastors, this means leaving their business and taking a less demanding job to support their ministry.

For some, a bivocational ministry is a special calling from God for their entire career. In these situations a pastor holds an outside job only until the church is able to support him. When a church does become able to support a pastor, he packs his bags and relocates in order to start all over again in another community.

A bivocational ministry has unique advantages. For example, it eases the financial pressure of a new, small congregation. In light of recent scandals and abuses uncovered by the media, the bivocational pastor can

help to reestablish integrity in pastoral ministry. The community sees a pastor who is not preaching for money. He actually supports the family and preaches without salary.

According to some bivocational pastors, working outside of the church helps them identify with people working in secular jobs. Their job may even provide a steady flow of prospects for the church.

## THE DEMANDS

The bivocational pastor faces many demands. Church planting is more than a part-time job. Usually the church planter has no one to whom he can turn for assistance. If he doesn't do the work, it doesn't get done.

The first demand a prospective church planter faces when he arrives in his target community is to find a job to accommodate his financial needs. In the initial stage, a job can be his most difficult problem. Many church planters are not skilled in marketable jobs. Seminary training does not prepare people to work in the marketplace!

Many available jobs pay only \$4.00 to \$6.00 per hour, which is not enough to support a family. Few businesses want to invest in a person who will not be a permanent employee.

The bivocational pastor must work around his secular job's schedule. As a pastor, he must be a self-starter, highly motivated and organized. He must learn to squeeze out of each day as much opportunity as possible. If he has a day off from his secular job, he needs to spend it in church work. Many of these men work seven days a week.

One pastor reflected, "It is difficult to see people giving little or nothing while my family and I are giving everything." Continuing in such a situation week after week de-

mands that the pastor trust God implicitly.

The average church led by a church planter does not experience rapid growth. Some churches take years before getting established. The church planter and family may face a long, difficult road before seeing a church firmly established in their community.

The person who shares the burden of a bivocational pastor is his wife. She works side by side with her husband and experiences what he experiences. She sees her husband working hard at a secular job, then coming home to work even harder for the church.

Week after week, she sits in the small congregation and listens to her husband preach out of his heart to the few people of his congregation. Nobody calls her at home during the week to find out how things are going.

At times the glamor of their earlier days degenerates into gloom and discouragement. One pastor's wife reflected, "Sometimes I feel like we're being used by the district and the denomination to fulfill their goals at our expense."

## THE DILEMMAS

The contemporary bivocational church planter faces many dilemmas. Perhaps the most unexpected paradox is that people and fellow pastors do not seem to view a bivocational ministry as viable. Some look upon bivocational pastors as inferior to other pastors.

Moreover, due to secular jobs, bivocational pastors often have little fellowship with other pastors. Frequently they must pass up conferences because of their jobs. Attending denominational meetings is just a dream for some bivocational pastors.

Circumstances may cause the bivocational pastor to feel cast adrift by  
*(Continued on page 47)*

# Stay Put!

by Lois Hoadley Dick

Newton, N.J.

**A**n old Japanese proverb says, "With time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes silk." From mulberry leaf to a genuine silk kimono is a long, long wait, but the process from beginning to end is one of the fascinations of nature.

For weeks silkworms are carefully tended and kept in a damp, warm corner. When about three inches long, they are placed in boxes where they begin to spin a delicate thread around their own bodies.

This thread, made from a liquid gum excreted by the silkworm, forms the cocoon that is wound in gossamer layers—slowly, ever so slowly—around the busy worker.

It takes time and patience. The finished cocoon is taken to a silk factory and heated in an oven to kill the moth. Next, the cocoon is placed in hot water and steamed to loosen the delicate thread. Each thread is so fine and sheer that three threads must be wound together by machine to make a single strong thread. Three thousand feet of thread come from a single cocoon.

The patient process pays off as the Japanese lady admires herself in a silk kimono as filmy and sheen as a spun web. Genuine silk is always priced higher than most fabrics.

Patience—is it out-of-date? Are we in such a hurry that this virtue eludes us?

Do we resent any annoyance? The Latin root, *pati*, means "to suffer." The Greek word for patience, *hypomonē*, means literally "to stay under." Taken together, these words mean "to stay put and suffer!"

What is patience? It is not gnashing one's teeth in silence nor a passive submission. Henry Ward Beecher described patience as "lying to and riding out the gale."

"Patience is the art of hoping," said a French philosopher. "Concentrated strength," claimed a novelist.

Staying put and putting up with it means to remain in the trial or situation where God has placed you. "Expose yourself to the circumstances of His choice," an older missionary told a younger one. This may mean sticking to an unpleasant job, "bearing with" an annoying neighbor or in-law, or holding your tongue when a sharp word would give you temporary relief.

In the spiritual life God places a premium upon patience. Since the branch of a grapevine patiently trails quietly over a low stone wall, God used a branch to describe the believer in Christ.

In John 15, our English word "abide" is translated from the Greek root, *menō*, meaning "to stay put, in a given place, relation, or state." A branch doesn't wander off by itself looking for a better vine. A branch can't move itself to a higher position on the same vine. A branch can't move out of the scorching sun, get away from the damp, depressing corner, or run away when it is being pruned. A branch can't even object!

A branch is patient. It stays put and suffers! And it bears fruit.

Patience obtains the promises of God (Heb. 6:12). Have you come across a promise in the Bible and wished it belonged to you—and wondered why it didn't? You can't hurry God. Promises are given to the patient—those who wait for God.



Patience produces experience (Rom. 5:4, KJV). We want experience—the right kind. Patience produces experience for us, the best kind, that of knowing how to help someone in similar trouble.

Patience makes the Christian "perfectly and fully developed (with no defects), lacking in nothing" (James 1:4, Amp.). The results of patience are wonderful. Patience makes us whole and complete, without anything missing in our personalities that should characterize Christians.

Who are the patient? Those who have seen their need for God's help. Those who have had their faith tried and counted it joy. Those who were "tortured, not accepting deliverance" (Heb. 11:35, KJV). Those who have "suffered a while" (1 Pet. 5:10, KJV). Wait for God to work!

## The Inferiority of the Apostle Paul

by Jim W. Smith

*Danhof, Blemfontein, South Africa*

**I** was privileged during this term of missionary service to teach extension Bible school courses. Recently, I taught a class on the Pauline Epistles. I have been challenged as I prepared and presented these lectures. Most rewarding has been the interaction between students and teacher. We wrestled together with Paul over problems of the New Testament Church and realized how up-to-date those difficulties are.

In Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, he deals decisively with the pressing problem of the "super-apostles" (2 Cor. 11:5, Barclay and NASB margin) afflicting that already troubled congregation. He boasts about his apostleship over and over. This was contrary to his normal practice and appears not to be in accordance with the spirit of Christ (see v. 17). But Paul was affirming his apostleship to destroy the influence of the false apostles.

Certainly Paul was not inferior to those deceitful men. In fact, the apostle towers over people as one of the most influential individuals of all biblical, if not human, history. This issue is as modern as tomorrow and has its counterparts in contemporary religious society. But in 2 Corinthians he admits inferiority to these "super-apostles" in at least three ways.

I. Paul did not extort support from the people to whom he ministered (2 Cor. 11:7-9; 12:13).

It was Paul's policy to not receive any remuneration from the congregation to whom he was ministering. When he was in real need, he was not too proud to receive help from other congregations, however (see 2 Cor. 11:9). Paul protected himself from being accused of coming to a place to preach the gospel for personal gain. Evidently those super-apostles did not share his inhibition but were

exploiting the people. In this, Paul emulated the prophet Elisha in his dealing with Naaman.

How different are many of the super-preachers today who make themselves rich by exploiting their gullible audiences. Paul insisted that it was not wrong but scriptural for a minister of the gospel to make his living from those who hear. But the minister's motivation must never be money. Paul preached because of the compulsion of Christ, which cries out, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16; see vv. 6-18). Let us follow the dedication of Paul.

II. Paul did not exploit the people to whom he ministered (2 Cor. 11:20-21).

Paul was amazed at the abuse those foolish Corinthians tolerated from super-apostles. He says he, indeed, had been weak in comparison (2 Cor. 11:21, NASB). It is surprising what people endure from super-preachers today.

I was on furlough in 1987 when scandal broke out over certain TV personalities. I vividly recall what a man said in a Sunday School class that I was visiting. The subject had come up about the disgraceful behavior of a certain televangelist. A member of the Sunday School class informed us in no uncertain terms that he had been supporting and would continue to support that ministry. After all, he said, God had told him to send the money. He was not responsible for how it was used.

Of course, the ultimate example of the enslaving influence a power-hungry person can have over people is the Jimmy Jones tragedy a few years ago. Paul's description in 2 Cor. 11:20 could have been written with Jimmy Jones in mind. But his excesses are only in degree. Any minister who exploits people in any way exalts himself and hurts the people. May

we never be guilty of this sin even in a small way.

III. Paul did not emphasize his ecstatic experiences but rather the grace of God (2 Cor. 12:1-5).

Paul was a man of visions and revelations. Christ revealed himself to Paul on the road to Damascus, resulting in his conversion and call (Acts 26:12-18). Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia calling for help, which compelled him to open Europe for missionary work (16:9-10). Paul had a vision of encouragement while preaching under difficult circumstances (18:9-11). He had a vision of his rejection by the Jews and his call to the Gentiles (22:17-21). He had a vision of deliverance that he would meet his destiny to preach in Rome (27:23-24). Paul could testify that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (26:19). However, the vision he mentioned to the Corinthians is couched in vague terms and is only mentioned this one time. Evidently, the super-apostles were claiming to be great visionaries. Paul, too, had seen a vision that took him into the third heaven. But he would not glory in it, but rather in his weakness. For by this weakness the grace of God was displayed.

When I was a theological student at Bethany Nazarene College, we listened to various radio preachers. One radio preacher to whom we listened was a certain man from Mississippi. He was always having visions. Describing those revelations, one would have thought that he was on LSD. Once he announced that he had received a revelation that God would give him a message for all the leaders of the world. The message would only be given if he would go to the Isle of Patmos. Of course, he then appealed for funds in order to go meet his destiny—at Patmos. Paul, who had been given genuine revelations from God, chose rather to glory in the grace of God that helped him in his weaknesses, even his thorn in the flesh.

May we always glory in the grace of God that He imparts to each of us. In these three ways Paul was certainly inferior to the super-apostles. My prayer is that I will share these same traits of inferiority compared to the false prophets of our generation. ✠

# But When Life Tumbles In, What Then?

by Arthur John Gossip

*This was the first sermon Gossip preached after his wife's dramatically sudden death.*

*"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jer. 12:5, KJV, all this article).*

Here is a man who, musing upon the bewilderments of life, has burst into God's presence, hot, angry, stunned by His ordering of things, with a loud babble of clamorous protest. It is unfair, he cries, unfair! And frowningly he looks into the face of the Almighty. It is unfair! And then suddenly he checks himself, and putting this blunt question to it, feels his heart grow very still and very cold. For after all, he asks himself, what is it you have to complain about so far? Nothing that everybody does not share. Only the usual little rubs and frets and ills of life that fall to everyone, no more. And if these have broken through your guard, pushed aside your religion, made you so sour and peevish and cross toward God—God help you, what will happen when, sudden as a shell screaming out of the night, some one of the great crashing dispensations bursts in your life, and leaves an emptiness where there had been a home, a tumbled ruin of your ordered ways, a heart so sore you wonder how it holds together? If you have caught your breath, poor fool, when splashing through the shallow waters of some summer brook, how will you fare when Jordan bursts its banks and rushes, far as the eye can see, one huge, wild swirl of angry waters, and, your feet caught away, half choked, you are tossed nearer and

nearer to the roaring of the falls, and over it? Suppose that, to you as to Job, suddenly, out of the blue, there leap dreadful tidings of disaster, would you have the grit to pull yourself together and to face it as he did? "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Suppose that to you as to Ezekiel, that valiant soul, there comes a day when, with no second's warning, you are given the bleak message: "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down . . . So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died." Suppose that to you, as to Christ, it became evident that life was not to give what you expected from it, that your dreams were not to be granted, that yours was to be a steep and lonely road, that some tremendous sacrifice was to be asked of you, could you make shift to face it with a shadow of the Master's courage and the Master's calm? For there is no supposing in the matter. To a certainty to you too, in your turn, someday these things must come.

Yes, unbelievably they come. For years and years you and I go our sunny way and live our happy lives, and the rumors of these terrors are blown to us very faintly as from a world so distant that it seems to have nothing to do with us; and then, to us too, it happens. And when it does, nobody has the right to snivel or whimper as if something unique and inexplicable had befallen him. "Never morning wore to evening but some heart did not break"—hearts just as sensitive as yours and mine. But when yours breaks, what then? It

is a bit late in the day to be talking about insurance when one's house is ablaze from end to end: and somewhat tardy to be searching for something to bring one through when the test is upon one. And how are you and I, so querulous and easily fretted by the minor worries, to make shift at all in the swelling of Jordan, with the cold of it catching away our breath, and the rush of it plucking at our footing?

Goethe, of course, tells us that all the religions were designed to meet us and to give us help, just there; to enable us to bear the unbearable, to face the impossible, to see through with some kind of decency and honor what obviously can't be done at all.

But then so many people's religion is a fair-weather affair. A little rain, and it runs and crumbles; a touch of strain, and it snaps. How often out at the front one lay and watched an aeroplane high up in the blue and sunlight, a shimmering, glistening, beautiful thing; and then there came one shot out of a cloud, and it crashed down to earth, a broken mass of twisted metal. And many a one's religion is like that. So long as God's will runs parallel to ours, we follow blithely. But the moment that they cross, or clash, that life grows difficult, that we don't understand, how apt faith is to fail us just when we have most need of it! You remember our Lord's story of the two men who lived in the same village, and went to the same synagogue, and sat in the same pew, listening to the same services: and how one day some kind of gale blew into their lives, a fearsome storm. And in the one case, everything collapsed, and for a moment there were some poor spars tossing upon wild waters, and then, nothing



at all. For that unhappy soul had built on sand, and in his day of need, everything was undermined, and vanished. But the other, though he too had to face the emptiness, the loneliness, the pain, came through it all braver and stronger and mellower

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## What is it you have to complain about so far?

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and nearer God. For he had built upon the rock. Well, what of you and me? We have found it a business to march with the infantry, how will we keep up with the horsemen: if the small ills of life have frayed our faith and temper, what will we do in the roar and the black swirl of Jordan?

That has always been my chief difficulty about preaching. Carlyle, you recall, used to say that the chirpy optimism of Emerson maddened him, Emerson across whose sheltered life no cloud or shadow was allowed to blow. He seemed to me, panted the other, like a man, standing himself well back out of the least touch of the spray, who throws chatty observations on the beauty of the weather to a poor soul battling for his life in huge billows that are buffeting the breath and the life out of him, wrestling with mighty currents that keep sweeping him away. It did not help. And I, too, have had a happy life: and always when I have spoken of the gospel, and the love of God, and Christ's brave reading of this puzzling life of ours, it has seemed to me that a very easy answer lay ready to anybody's hand who found these hard to credit. Yes, yes, they might well say irritably, if I stood in the sunshine where you are, no doubt I, too, could talk like that! But if your path ran over the cold moors, where the winds cut and whistle and pierce to the very bone, if you were set down where I am, I wonder if you would be so absolutely sure? As Shakespeare says, it is not difficult to bear other people's toothaches; but when one's

own jaw is throbbing, that is another matter. We will listen to Jesus Christ: for He spoke from the darkness round the Cross. We mayn't understand Him, or agree with Him, or obey Him: but nobody can challenge His right to speak. But you! Wait till you stand in the rushing of Jordan, till to you there has come some fulfillment of that eerie promise, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," and what will you say then?

I'll tell you now I know that we are warned in Job that the most drastic test of faith is not even these tremendous sorrows, but a long purgatory of physical and mental agony. Still, I don't think that anyone will challenge my right to speak today. And what I have to say is this: when Claverhouse suddenly shot Brown of Priesthill, he turned to the wife and asked, the callous brute, "What think you now of your braw guidman?" And she, gathering together the scattered brain, made answer, "I aye

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## Suppose life was not to give what you expected from it?

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thought muckle of him, but I think more of him now." I aye thought muckle of the Christian faith; but I think more of it now, far more. I have never claimed to understand many things in this perplexing life of ours, have always held that my dear master Browning went by much too far when he said confidently that for a Christian man there are no problems in the world or out of it. Surely the acknowledgment of God's love raises new problems. If love, then why and why and why and why? To me the essence of the faith has always seemed a certain intrepidity of loyalty that can believe undauntedly in the dark, and that still trusts God unshaken even when the evidence looks fairly damning. Do you think Christ always understood or found it easy? There was a day when He took God's will for Him into His hand, and turned it

round, and looked at it. And, "Is this what You ask of Me?" He said; and for a moment His eyes looked almost incredulous. Aye, and another day when, puzzled and uncertain, He cried out, "But is this really what You mean that I should give You, this here, this now?" Yes, and another still, when the cold rushing waters roared in a raging torrent through His soul: yet He would not turn back, fought His way to the farther bank, died still believing in the God who seemed to have deserted Him. And that is why He is given a name that is above every name.

I do not understand this life of ours. But still less can I comprehend how people in trouble and loss and bereavement can fling away peevishly from the Christian faith. In God's name, fling to what? Have we not lost enough without losing that too? If Christ is right—if, as He says, there are somehow, hidden away from our eyes as yet, still there, wisdom and planning and kindness and love in these dark dispensations—then we can see them through. But if Christ was wrong, and all that is not so; if God set His foot on my home crudely, heedlessly, blunderingly, blindly, as I unawares might tread upon some insect in my path, have I not the right to be angry and sore? If Christ was right, and immortality and the dear hopes of which He speaks do really lie a little way ahead, we can manage to make our way to them. But if it is not so, if it is all over, if there is nothing more, how dark the darkness grows! You people

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## Nobody has the right to snivel or whimper.

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in the sunshine may believe the faith, but we in the shadow must believe it. We have nothing else.

Further, there is a grave saying in Scripture, "Receive not the grace of God in vain." That Christ should die on our behalf, that God should lavish



His kindness on us, and that nothing should come of it, how terrible! And were it not pitiful if we receive the discipline of life in vain: have all the suffering of it, pay down the price in full, yet miss what it was sent to teach! I know that at first great sor-

hurt things? How did the Psalmist know that those who are broken in their hearts and grieved in their minds God heals? Because, of course, it had happened to them, because they had themselves in their dark days felt His unfailing helpfulness

it is not willingly that God afflicts and grieves us children of men. Anyhow that is true.

There is a marvelous picture in the National Gallery. Christ hangs upon the Cross in a dense darkness; and at first that is all one sees. But, as one peers into the background, gradually there stands out another form, God's form; and other hands supporting Christ, God's hands; and another face, God's face, more full of agony even than our Savior's own. The presence, the sufficiency, the sympathy of God—these things grow very real and very sure and very wonderful.

Further, one becomes certain about immortality. You think that you believe in that. But wait till you have lowered your dearest into an open grave, and you will know what believing it means. I have always gazed up at Paul in staggered admiration when he burst out at the grave's mouth into his scornful challenge, his exultant ridicule of it, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But now it does not seem to me such a tremendous feat: for I have felt that very same. True, I can tell him where death's sting lies. Ah! it is the constant missing of what used to be always here; the bitter grudging every second of the dear body to the senseless earth, the terrible insecurity, for one is never safe—anything, nothing, and the old overwhelming pain comes rushing back. Yet when the other day I took up a magazine, it was with amazement I discovered they are still chattering about whether we people are immortal or not. I am past that. I know. "I believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrec-

## I cannot comprehend how people in trouble and loss and bereavement can fling away peevishly from the Christian faith.

row is just stunned, that the sore heart is too numbed to feel anything, even God's hand. When his wife died, Rossetti tells us, he passed through all that tremendous time with a mind absolutely blank, learned nothing, saw nothing, felt nothing; so that, looking back, all he could say was that, sitting in a wood with his head in his hands, somehow it was photographed permanently on his passive mind that a certain wild flower has three petals. That was all. But by and by the gale dies down, and the moon rises, and throws a lane of gold to us across the blackness and the heaving of the bumbling waters. After all it is not in the day, but in the night, that star rises after star, and constellation follows constellation, and the immensity of this bewildering universe looms up before our staggered minds. And it is in the dark that the faith becomes biggest and bravest, that its wonder grows yet more and more. "Grace," said Samuel Rutherford, "grows best in the winter." And already some things have become very clear to me.

This to begin, that the faith works, fulfills itself, is real; and that its most audacious promises are true. Always we must try to remember that the glorious assertions of the Scriptures are not mere suppositions and guesses. There is no perhaps about them. These splendid truths are flowers that human hands like ours plucked in the gardens of their actual experience. Why is the prophet so sure that as one whom his mother comforts, so will God comfort all

and tenderness and the touch of wonderfully gentle hands. And it is true. When we are cast into some burning fiery furnace seven times heated, we are not alone, never alone; but there is One beside us, like unto the Son of God. When our feet slip upon the slimy stones in the swelling of Jordan, a hand leaps out and catches us and steadies us. "I will not leave you comfortless," said Christ. Nor does He. There is a presence with us, a Comforter, a Fortifier who does strengthen, does uphold, does bring us through somehow from hour to hour and day to day. Pusey once wrote that when his wife died, he felt "as if the rushing waters were up to my chin; but underneath the chin there is a hand, supporting it." And that hand is there. And as the days go by, what grows upon one more and more is the amazing tenderness of God. Like as a father pitieth his chil-

"Grace grows best in winter."

—Samuel Rutherford

dren, mused a Psalmist long ago. I have been wondering these days whether he too, poor soul, had suddenly, without one second's warning, to tell his children that their mother was dead, and that remembrance of that agony made him sure all his days

tion of the body, and the life everlasting."

But there is one thing I should like to say which I have never dared to say before, not feeling that I had the right. We Christian people in the mass are entirely unchristian in our

thoughts of death. We have our eyes wrongly focused. We are selfish, and self-centered, and self-absorbed. We keep thinking aggrievedly of what it means to us. And that is wrong, all wrong. In the New Testament you hear very little of the families with that aching gap, huddled together in their desolate little home in some back street; but a great deal about the saints in glory, and the sunshine, and the singing, and the splendor yonder. And, surely, that is where our thoughts should dwell. I for one want no melancholic tunes, no grey and sobbing words, but brave hymns telling of their victory. Dante had a sour mind. Yet, as he went up the hill that cleanses him that climbs, suddenly it shook and reeled beneath him. What's that? he cried out in alarm. And his guide smiled. Some happy soul, he said, has burst through into victory, and every other on the mount is so praising God for that, that the whole hill rocks and staggers. And is not that the mood that best becomes us? Think out your brooding. What exactly does it mean? Would you pluck the diadem from their brows again? Would you snatch the palms of victory out of their hands? Dare you compare the clumsy nothings our poor, blundering love can give them here with what they must have yonder where Christ himself has met them, and has heaped on them who can think out what happiness and glory? I love to picture it. How, shyly, amazed, half protesting, she who never thought of self was led into the splendor of her glory. As the old poet put it centuries ago,

*Our sweet is mixed with bitter  
gall,*

*Our pleasure is but pain,*

*Our joys scarce last the looking  
on,*

*Our sorrows still remain.*

*But there they have such rare de-  
lights,*

*Such pleasure and such play,  
That unto them a thousand years  
Doth seem but yesterday.*

To us it will be long and lonesome: but they won't even have looked round them before we burst in. In any case, are we to let our dearest be wrenched out of our hands by force? Or, seeing that it has to be, will we not give them willingly and proudly, looking God in the eyes, and telling

Him that we prefer our loneliness rather than that they should miss one title of their rights. When the blow fell, that was the one and only thought that kept beating like a hammer in my brain. I felt I had lost her forever, must have lost her, that to all eternity she must shine far ahead of me; and my heart kept crying out, "I choose it, I choose it. Do not for my sake deny her anything." I know now that I have not lost her. For love is not a passing thing one leaves behind. And is it not love's way to stoop?

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You people  
in the sunshine  
may  
believe  
the faith,  
but we  
in the shadow  
must  
believe it.  
We have  
nothing else.

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And, after all, thank God, our gift is not an absolute one. When we are young, heaven is a vague and nebulous and shadowy place. But as our friends gather there, more and more it gains body and vividness and homeliness. And when our dearest have passed yonder, how real and evident it grows, how near it is, how often we steal yonder. For, as the Master put it: Where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. Never again will I give out that stupid lie, "There is a happy land, far, far away." It is not far. They are quite near. And the communion of the saints is a tremendous and most blessed fact.

Nowadays, for example, to pray is to turn home. For then they run to meet us, draw us with their dear fa-

miliar hands into the Presence, stand quite close to us the whole time we are there—quite close, while we are there.

And for the rest, many poets have told us of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. But Dante, in his journeyings, came on another, the Eunoe, to taste the sunny waters of which is to have recalled all the gladsome and glorious and perfect things one has ever experienced. Eunoe runs beside the track all through the valley of the shadow; and a wise soul will often kneel, and lift a handful of its waters to his thirsty lips, and, ere he rises, wonderingly thank God for the splendor he has known, that never would and could have been at all but for His marvelous grace. And so back to life again, like a healthy-minded laddie at some boarding school, who, after the first hour of homesickness, resolves, if he is wise, he will not mope but throw himself into the life about him, do his part and play the game, and enjoy every minute of it—aye, and does it too—though always, always his eyes look ahead for the term's end, and always, always his heart thrills and quickens at the thought of that wonderful day when he will have not memories and letters only, but the whole of his dear ones really there, when he will be with them again and they with him. Well, that will come in time. Meanwhile, "Danton, no weakness," as that brave soul kept muttering to himself on his way to the guillotine, and he showed none.

I don't think you need be afraid of life. Our hearts are very frail; and there are places where the road is very steep and very lonely. But we have a wonderful God. And as Paul puts it, what can separate us from His love? Not death, he says immediately, pushing that aside at once as the most obvious of all impossibilities.

No, not death. For, standing in the roaring of the Jordan, cold to the heart with its dreadful chill, and very conscious of the terror of its rushing, I too, like Hopeful, can call back to you who one day in your turn will have to cross it, "Be of good cheer, my brother, for I feel the bottom and it is sound." 

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# When Not to Build

by Ray Bowman and Eddy Hall

*Goessel, Kans.*



**W**hen a young, growing church in suburban Philadelphia asked me to design them a thousand-seat sanctuary, that's exactly what I expected to do. They had called me for the usual reasons: Their sanctuary was full and they were running out of Sunday School space. It was time to build.

My wife, Sally, and I, working as a team, met with the church board for four hours on a Saturday morning to get all the information we could. During the next several days we scrutinized the church's facility usage, finances, and ministries. With additional input from the church growth committee, we developed a comprehensive plan to accommodate the church's growth.

The next Saturday, we presented

our report to the board. Sally and I were no less surprised by what we felt we had to recommend than they must have been: "What you really need to build," I announced, "is a storage building."

Had the church invited me a year earlier, my response would have been completely different. I would have designed them a thousand-seat sanctuary and cheered them on. "The building will bring more people to Christ," I'd have said. "Its beauty will draw you closer to God. People will notice you're here and that you're an important part of the community."

During 23 years of designing church buildings, I had heard all these statements and more from pastors and church boards. For 23 years, I'd seen no reason not to accept their

assumption that bigger buildings translated into greater ministry.

But then Sally and I began church consulting work. It was this new hat I was wearing—consultant rather than architect—that made the difference.

As an architect, my job had been to design the kind of building the church people expected. As consultants, Sally and I had studied this fast-growing church through new eyes and come to a startling conclusion: A major building program at that time would in all likelihood stop the church's growth and create financial bondage for years to come.

There is, we have been forced to see, a time not to build.

As we've consulted with scores of churches in the six years since our Philadelphia trip, we have identified factors that indicate whether con-

struction will help or hinder the church in carrying out its mission.

They fall into three areas.

### **Seek Other Alternatives**

*First, a church should not build when a better alternative is available.* As Sally and I studied the Philadelphia church, we agreed at once that it had a space problem. At its rate of growth, the congregation would soon be bigger than their worship space. Between Sunday School and their Christian school, their educational space was full. They had no room for additional staff offices. Building was the obvious solution.

But the wrong one. "I found a room filled with missionary boxes," I told the board. "Now those boxes don't need heat. They don't need lighting. They don't need windows or carpet, do they?" We recommended a low-cost storage and maintenance building to free up existing space for educational use.

"This barn on your property is a historic structure," I told them. "It's worth preserving. But you're not getting good use out of it." Then we discussed how they could remodel it into a gymnasium, kitchen, and educational space at half of the cost of a comparable new structure.

"You can meet your needs for worship space for years to come," I went on, "without the tremendous commitment of time, energy, and money involved in building a new sanctuary." The wall between the existing sanctuary and foyer could be removed to enlarge their worship area. A modest addition could provide them with a new, larger foyer, one that would make it practical to hold two Sunday morning services, immediately doubling their worship seating capacity. The new addition could also house the office space they would soon need for their growing staff.

Finally, we suggested they replace the fixed worship seating with movable seating. For the comparatively low cost of new seating, the church could use the largest single space in their building for a wide range of activities. Space that would otherwise lie useless for all but a few hours a week.

The church accepted the suggestions, completing their remodeling and modest construction projects

within a couple of years. From 350 people at the time of our visit, the church has kept reaching the unchurched, and now, six years later, is running 850.

What would have happened if the church had moved ahead with their building plans six years ago? The growth histories of other churches suggest the answer.

A fast-growing church launches a major building program to create space for more growth, taking on heavy debt. Though not by design, the building program becomes the congregation's focus. People give correspondingly less attention to the outreach ministries that have been producing growth. Church attendance peaks, drops slightly, and levels off. Their mind-set now changed from growth to maintenance, the church may continue for decades with no significant growth.

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## **There is a time not to build.**

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Whenever the church seeks creative alternatives to building prematurely, however, "people ministry" can go on uninterrupted and growth continues. Later, when growth requires more space, a well-planned building that will be fully utilized can be built without interfering with the work of the church.

Many churches call consultants because they believe they need a new building; few actually do. What most need is a way to use their existing buildings more effectively.

A church doesn't need more space until it is fully utilizing the space it already has. Full utilization almost always means multipurpose use of space. This may call for such moderate-cost alternatives as remodeling, refurnishing, or making modest additions. In many cases, though, it requires no money—only a willingness to do things differently.

### **Minimize Debt**

*Second, a church should not build when building would increase*

*the risk of financial bondage.* When the Philadelphia church commissioned our study, it was still indebted for the existing building. The congregation planned to borrow most of the money for their new one, but the loan payment would have been larger than their existing congregation could have met. Their ability to repay the loan depended on future growth.

To build, the church would have been forced to redirect to the building fund much of the money then being used for needs within the body, local outreach, and missions. The congregation lacked the financial strength to maintain, much less expand, their present level of people ministry while constructing a building. Building, far from furthering the work of the church, would have crippled the church's ministry.

We recommended that this congregation convert their finances onto a provision plan, living within the income God provided. This meant they would first pay off their existing mortgage. Then they would do the necessary remodeling and build their modest additions on a cash basis.

Operating on provision would mean setting aside regularly for future building needs so that the congregation could pay cash for most or all of their next building. The many thousands of dollars saved on interest would be freed up for the church's true work—ministering to people.

The church followed this plan, paying off their debt and expanding the facilities on a cash basis. Then they began setting aside funds regularly so that they could pay cash for an anticipated building program in five years.

Because they are not saddled with debt, they have been free to invest more and more money in ministry to people including their Christian school and a multifaceted inner-city mission in a nearby neighborhood.

By not building at the wrong time, the church enjoys a financial freedom that allows them to minister to more people than ever before.

Today, six years after our study, the right time to build has come. The church is building. They are doing it

with cash and without pulling funds away from its essential work.

### Scrutinize Motivations

*Third, a church should not build if its reasons for building are wrong.* Richard Foster speaks to the need for brutal honesty in discerning whether a building project is for prestige or the glory of God. He describes the first building program he was involved in: "It was actually a rather small project—an educational unit that was to double as a day-care center. We had all the right reasons for needing such a facility. We had gone through all the appropriate committees. We had the architect's drawings and had even launched a fund drive."<sup>1</sup>

A congregational meeting was called to pray for God's guidance on the decision. "I went into the meeting thinking that probably we should build, and left certain that we should not," Foster writes. "The crucial turning point came when I saw the driving force behind my desiring that building to be my unarticulated feeling that a building program was the sign of a successful pastor. Theologically and philosophically, I did not believe that, but as we worshiped the Lord, the true condition of my heart was revealed. Eventually, we decided against building, a decision now validated by hindsight."<sup>2</sup>

Years ago a church of about 150 people in Arkansas hired me as architect to design a new sanctuary for them. When I saw their building, I was puzzled. Though the building was older, its location was good, but the congregation had never filled it.

Finally, I asked the pastor, "Why do you want a new building?"

"The first reason," he answered, "is that these people haven't done anything significant for 25 years. This is a way to get them to do something significant.

"Second, the people aren't giving at anywhere near the level they could or should be. A building program would motivate them to give more.

"Third, a building program will unite the people behind a common goal."

I could understand his concerns, but this pastor was looking to a building program as a substitute for the work of the church. He was try-

ing to do something that never works—solve nonbuilding problems with a building.

A congregation of about 175 on the West Coast brought us in as consultants, but only after they had put up the shell of their new building. Someone had offered the church a piece of land visible from the interstate at a bargain price. The church had jumped at it.

Confident that an attractive, highly visible building would stimulate growth, they were building a luxuri-

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**The building  
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ministries.  
Most churches  
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existing buildings  
more effectively.**

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ous, thousand-seat sanctuary. "We didn't want the inconvenience of building in phases," the pastor explained, "so we built it all at once. I believe that if we just have the faith and the vision, God will provide the money."

By the time we arrived on the scene, for all practical purposes, the church was bankrupt. All we could do was commiserate with them and sadly recommend that they board up the unfinished shell, keep using their old building, and wait until future developments enabled them to complete their move.

In a bigger-is-better world, the church is not at all immune to the temptation to see church buildings as signs of success, statements to the community, or substitutes for minis-

Buildings are tools, pure and simple. When a church wants to build for any reason other than to provide a functional tool to facilitate the ministry of people to people, it is time not to build.

### When to Build

But there is a time to build.

When a growing church is so fully utilizing its facilities that they can find no alternative to building less costly in time, energy, and money, it passes the *need* test.

When a church is living within the income God has provided and can build without resorting to borrowing or dipping into funds needed for people ministry, the church passes the *readiness* test.

And, having passed these two tests, when pastor and people have come to see buildings merely as tools and nothing more, then it is time to build.

The church in Philadelphia has grown faster than we projected and so has had to launch its building program a year earlier than originally planned. Although the building will cost \$1.1 million, they are paying cash for it. And this building is not even a sanctuary; it's an educational and fellowship center. Why? Because that's what they need.

The design plans for their new thousand-seat worship space are ready and waiting—now called a ministering center rather than a sanctuary. When the time is right, they will build it. But first, a couple of things need to happen.

Sometime in the next year or two, the church will slip over from two worship services and Sunday Schools to three. Then, over the next few years, all three services and Sunday School sessions will fill up. Only then will they need more space. Meanwhile, the church keeps setting aside funds for building so that they can once again build debt-free.

Someday, probably five to seven years from now, Lord willing, the church will get out the design plans, dust them off, and hire a contractor.

Then it will be time to build. 

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1. Richard Foster, *The Freedom of Simplicity* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 153.

2. *Ibid.*, 153-54.

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# A System for Church Files

by Carl G. Conner

Durham, N.C.

**T**he owner of a filing cabinet stood back and looked with pride at her new acquisition. She had just put a label on the top drawer that read, "Things I want to keep!"

Such a designation always results in "piling" instead of "filing." One may as well put items in a cardboard box as to have a disorganized plan of filing. Yet many churches have never developed a workable filing system.

Before beginning a system, someone should establish general rules to be followed. These might include:

1. Date each item placed in the file when it is received.
2. Be sure every letter and/or carbon of outgoing mail has the full name and address of the person writing or being written to.
3. Never file the envelope in which correspondence came. This simply clutters the file.
4. Purge the file at least annually to remove out-of-date items. In the case of catalogs, some need to be removed monthly.

With general rules established, one is ready to begin putting the file together. Each system will include at least seven alphabetical divisions. In case of specialized files, more divisions may be needed. The divisional files will include (1) Accounting, (2) Catalogs, (3) Committees, (4) Correspondence, (5) Departments, (6) General, and (7) Historic.

While hanging files are more expensive initially, they save hundreds of dollars over the long run. I have set up files now more than 25 years old that are still in excellent condition and need no replacement folders.

In the process of planning your filing system, purchase colored gelatins to be used to designate various levels of your organization. The seven divisional sections should all have red tabs. This tells the individ-

ual seeking material from the file where to look without a long search.

Departmental files under the divisions should have a blue tab on the initial folder. As an example, if a church has a divisional section, "*Departments*," blue tabs under the section might include Sunday School (or Christian Education), Men, Women, Youth, etc. Individual tabs under each department should include varied colors placed in the same sequence under each department. The gelatins may include green, orange, pink and yellow.

Type divisional tabs in all capital letters to help indicate where they belong in the system. The color coding system, red in the case of the divisions, completes the placement designation.

After the skeleton of the file is in place, you may begin to fill in the departmental designations and other lower levels. When a small-to-medium system is begun, it may have files under the seven divisional sections as: *ACCOUNTING*, Bills Outstanding, Bills Paid '91, Financial Reports, Insurance, etc.; *CATALOGS*, Audiovisual Equipment, Audiovisual Films, Choir Robes, Miscellaneous, Music, Office Furniture, Office Supplies, etc.; *COMMITTEES*, Benevolence, Building, Flowers and Decoration, Grounds and Equipment, Missions, Social, Telephone, and Ushers; *CORRESPONDENCE*, A-through-Z tabs obtained from your office supplier with a separate section for each year (you should retain correspondence at least three years); *DEPARTMENTS*, Men, Music, Women, Youth, etc.; *GENERAL*, Affiliations, Annual Reports, Incorporation, and any other related general areas of the church's business; *HISTORIC*, Documents, Pictures, etc.

A carefully followed system in the Correspondence division will result in never losing one piece of mail. Of

course, begin with the A-through-Z tabs. These should be clear gelatins. All correspondence should be filed alphabetically under the name of the person from whom the mail is received or to whom it is sent. To avoid loss of a piece, be sure to cross-index names of persons whose firm might be more familiar to you than the individual.

The cross-index sheet, best in a colored paper, will have the name of the firm, such as *JONES, SMITH, AND COMPANY*; and under the firm name, add the name of each person who writes or is written to in that firm. Under the firm's name you may type, "See:" It is better to type all of this on the long side of the paper so as not to have to stand on your head to read the information when a cross-index sheet is checked.

Within the individual files of the A-through-Z section, file alphabetically within the folder with the latest correspondence from an individual at the front of the particular name. That is, should you write to a *JONES, H. L.*, when you open the cross-index section or regular A-Z folders, the last correspondence from Jones should be seen first.

It is not necessary to establish separate folders under the A-Z tabs, but if you have an unduly large volume of correspondence to one person or firm, you may do so. Such a file would simply be placed behind the correct A-Z tab.

In no case should hanging folders be removed from the files. Nor is it necessary to place manila folders within the hanging folders. This is duplicate work. But if you need to work with material in a particular folder, place the material in a manila folder temporarily while out of the permanent files. Be sure to label the folder in order to know where the material needs to be returned.

(Continued on page 51)

# Evangelism Must Return to Biblical Basics

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.

Walpole, Mass.

Those who claim biblical truth as a firm foundation upon which to build the gospel-telling must vow never to deviate from it—regardless of the popular winds that blow. That means, then, preaching, teaching, and witnessing with the following basics in the forefront of our work.

**A**s with pop art, so with pop doctrine. Both become fads and eventually pass from the scene. However, the difference with pop doctrine is that it endangers destinies, while pop art simply leaves a giggle.

There has been a lot of pop doctrine around for the last 15 years or so. It is characterized by dilution of biblical truth in order to please the greatest public. Biblical basics are discarded in order to appeal to the masses.

Consequently, such biblical terms as "sin," "carnal nature," "Satan," "hell," "saved," and the like are replaced with more comfortable words such as "deficient," "lacking in self-confidence," "immaturity," "discovering the self," and the like.

To be posh in the pulpit, one learns early not to turn off the congregants with old-fashioned lingo. Instead, to make points for another Sunday's filled sanctuary, one will come across with the latest in psychological jargon so as not to offend with biblical terminology.

Now the bent of the homo sapiens is to evade. He does not want to own up to his wickedness, selfishness, hell-bent drive, nor his worship of idols. Consequently, when clergy convince him that all of such is merely a hallucination and that there really is nothing more to dread than a lack of self-confidence, he is apt to lend a willing ear.

However, we are now coming to realize that this is a farce with dire consequences. We are presently in danger of losing a generation for the biblical truth, because of a subtle departure from the biblical moorings. Witness the current craze of defining the word *evangelism* as constructing one's own empire, erecting a religious Disney World while the world goes starving, grabbing for more and more of the religious bucks in order to fund more and more televised opportunities to go for still more of the religious bucks.

Is this biblical evangelism? Obviously not. Yet how we have been lulled into tolerating some with a hallelujah enthusiasm. In other words, we have found the enemy, and it is us! (More grammatically accurate: It is we!)

What can we do about it? Those who claim biblical truth as a firm foundation upon which to build the gospel-telling must vow never to deviate from it—regardless of the popular winds that blow. That means then, preaching, teaching, and witnessing with the following basics in the forefront of our work:

1. *We are all sinners.* "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, KJV). "Sinner" is a perfectly good word, for it speaks to the truth of our fallen states before God. We are not simply wayward, mixed-up, hankering-for-the-good-

life-but-missing-it folk. We are born in a desperate condition of being sinful with a bent toward the same.

To sin is to consciously disobey God, breaking His commandments. It is imperative that the preacher communicate this definition of sin, whether or not the actual term is used. If need be, the pastor must help his hearers understand that sinning is both fleshly and spiritual. Though the sins of the flesh often receive the most condemnation, yet the sins of the spirit are just as repulsive to God's holiness.

Granted, there will be those who will not like that biblical concept of "sinner." But that does not matter. Evangelists who are true gospel-tellers do not first take public opinion polls; they do the will of the Father, as their Savior did the will of the Father. The will of the Father is to proclaim the truth, which begins with the true announcement that persons are lost in their sins.

2. *We are spiritually lost.* "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10, KJV). If Jesus thought it crucial enough to go for the lost, certainly the evangelist must do so. People are, in other words, on their way to an actual hell, regardless of whether those people in a nuclear age of potential planetary flame want to face up to it or not.

Therefore, one who is true to the biblical basics will not, once again, stage a public popularity stunt by checking out the populace's waters to find out whether or not the "hell truth" or the "lost truth" will hold up. The evangelist is simply to declare that which Jesus pronounced boldly, that is, that we—along with the lost son, the lost coin, and the lost lamb—are lost.

3. *We cannot save ourselves.* "For by grace are ye saved . . . not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9, KJV). Obviously this audacious statement from Holy Writ flies right in the face of all the paperbacks that are telling us otherwise. This verse would do much to dent the happy mug shots on myriads of best-sellers, the latter attempting to convince us that we indeed can save ourselves.

Yet certainly a century that has lived through two world wars and is on the edge of the third and last war could not realistically conclude that so many psycho push-ups could save us. Therefore, the biblical evangelist will warn against such an illusion; it is not workable on the global scale nor on the individual world stage of our personal breathings.

4. *Jesus can save us.* "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Jesus said (Matt. 11:28, KJV). "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, KJV). Naturally, this cuts through all the attempts current to make all paths lead to heaven. No wonder the so-called "scandal of particularity" in Christianity has been blunted for the past 20 years; we have been on a socializing kick of bringing everyone together on the sole basis of our humanity. In this, it has been proclaimed, is our salvation.

But look around us. Note that it has not worked. Nor will it work. That is not biblical; it is wishful thinking. Only One from outside of us can save; He is Jesus. When then the biblical evangelist returns with enthusiasm to declare that Christ indeed is our Redeemer—and that there is no other—we will begin to discover the spiritually hungry with whom the Spirit has been dealing, readying them for saving grace.

5. *We must confess our sins to Jesus.* "If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, KJV). Those who will not own up to being sinners will not hear or understand this biblical truth. But is that all that strange? So what is new? There have always been the scores who are in such a fix.

Yet there are those others who want the truth; they have been questing for it for a long time. Now that they have heard that Jesus does in fact forgive and cleanse all sins, they will latch onto it, hope in it, and be saved. Such is the core message of the evangelist.

6. *We can experience salvation, going on our way in joy.* "Sin no

more" (John 5:14, KJV). Self-help merely leaves us with increased despair after the merry-go-round stops. The groping continues, but on a more intense level, fraught with deep frustrations.

Yet when one does bring his sins to Jesus, confessing them to Him and dedicating his life to serve the Savior till death, then salvation is realized within and expressed in the Christian life that follows. This is not all that difficult to preach or to understand. Yet Satan has blinded us to think otherwise in order to increase the soft underbelly of religion. However, the results in religious disaster areas, fallout within the church community, and disenchantment concerning ecclesiastical toutings have been enormous and will increase unless we have the courage to return to what the Bible sets forth as eternal truth.

## No Respect

by Chris Smith

Memphis

"What does Mr. Chris do?" That question caught a church member off guard one evening during a worship service. Her fourth grade son was completely serious as he wondered what the man standing on the stage did for a living.

Being a loyal supporter of me, the preacher, the mother did her best to explain the various responsibilities of a minister. After the detailed explanation of sermons to prepare, counseling, Bible classes to teach, visiting sick people, and two or three other impressive-sounding duties, the young boy responded without a blink of an eye, "And you call that a job?"

## Tax Procedures for Congregations

Part 2

by The Board of Pensions and Benefits

USA of the Church of the Nazarene



**T**he federal tax information included in this article is offered *only as a guideline* to help local churches cope with the legal requirements of being an employer and is intended to provide some resources for further investigation. In the previous Part 1, the differences between ministerial and lay employees were discussed. In this Part 2, the various forms necessary for proper reporting to the IRS are reviewed.

### FORM W-4

All employees, whether part-time or full-time, *must complete a Form W-4*, "Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate." That form reports the number of withholding allowances requested by the employee and is the basis upon which the amount of federal income tax to be withheld is determined. A Form W-4 remains valid until a new one is filled out or required. Usually, all W-4 forms are retained by the employer.

You should keep on file for *your minister* a Form W-4 noting that no federal taxes are to be withheld pursuant to Section 3401(a)(9) of the Internal Revenue Code, which specifically exempts a minister's wages from income tax withholding. Of course, *if* the minister wants *income taxes* (not Social Security—FICA) withheld, then the Form W-4 should indicate the correct number of withholding allowances and any amount of extra withholding requested.

Employees who actually paid no income taxes in the previous year, and do not expect to pay a tax in the current year, may request that no taxes be withheld in the current year by completing the appropriate lines on Form W-4. However, if the individual can be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return, the individual may still not be exempt. Also, an individual cannot claim exempt

status if they have nonwage income and they expect that their *combined* income will exceed \$500.

On another line of Form W-4, employees *may* request that additional federal income tax be withheld. *If* your minister elects to have income taxes withheld *and* desires additional income tax to be withheld in order to cover the personal obligation of the Social Security (SECA) tax payment (which must be paid at the self-employment rate), that amount should be shown on the appropriate line.

### DEPOSIT OF WITHHELD AMOUNTS

The funds deducted from the salary checks are to be segregated into separate accounts in the treasurer's bookkeeping system. There are very specific instructions on the frequency of depositing these funds to the proper location. IRS Publication 15, "Circular E—Employer's Tax Guide," explains this process in detail. Deposits must be made properly and on a timely basis. A penalty is charged for late payments. Each quarter, Form 941 must be filed to report the amounts withheld to IRS.

### FORM 941

Form 941 is used to report the taxes your congregation has withheld and which are owed for each quarter. This form is used to report

both federal income taxes and FICA taxes withheld.

By the last day of the month following the end of each quarter, Form 941 must be filed. There are penalties for not doing so. You should file the form *even if* you find the tax withholding amounts are zero, otherwise the IRS computer cannot be reconciled, and an "inquiry" will likely be generated.

As soon as you owe more than \$500 for employment taxes (withholding of federal income and FICA taxes, as well as the employer's FICA taxes), your congregation must make a deposit of that money with an authorized bank depository. You should automatically receive from the IRS a supply of computer readable forms and instructions for making those payments. In any event, all federal employment taxes due must be paid at least quarterly.

On Form 941, you will report:

1. On line 2, report total wages subject to withholding *plus* other compensation, that is *all* the wages you paid, *including* your minister's salary subject to federal income tax.
2. On line 3, report total federal income tax withheld from wages.
3. On line 6, report total FICA wages paid (this may not be the same amount as reported in item number 1 above) and the amount of tax due on those wages (employee *and* employer taxes). Since your ministerial employees are not subject to FICA withholding, do not include that compensation in this total.
4. On line 14, report total payment due to the IRS. This is the sum of federal income taxes withheld, FICA taxes withheld, and FICA taxes due from the church employer.

You must also report on Form 941 any *deposits* made for accu-

mulated withholdings exceeding \$500. Upon filing Form 941, *any taxes still due must be paid.*

### FORM W-2

If your congregation does not receive a supply of employment tax forms before the end of the year, you will want to request them by calling the IRS. (1-800-424-FORM) By January 31, each employee must be given a Form W-2 reporting wages paid during the preceding tax year.

The IRS in Publication 517 has clearly indicated for a number of years that the church employer should provide the *minister* with a Form W-2 at the end of the tax year. This is true even though there may have been no withholding for federal income tax due to the exemption and even though the minister's wages are not subject to withholding for Social Security (FICA).

The *lay employee* must also be provided with a Form W-2 by the church employer. Since the employer is required to withhold for federal income tax and any applicable Social Security taxes, the treasurer can determine the amount withheld and the amount of taxable wages from the accounting records. The taxable wages will, of course, be determined keeping in mind that the value of any housing or utilities provided is reportable as taxable income.

The Form W-2 requests the employer's name, address, ZIP code, and Employer Identification Number (EIN), as well as the employee's name, address, ZIP code, and Social Security number. In Box 9, show any federal income tax withheld. In Box 10, show wages paid. Boxes 11 and 12 are completed with dollar amounts *only* for lay employees. (For ministers, both Boxes 11 and 12 should be marked "0" [zero]. Do not leave them blank.) The following statements give general guidelines that apply to the minister's Form W-2 and the layman's Form W-2.

**On the minister's Form W-2**, report salary paid in Box 10. Include the following: any Social Security allowance; car "allowances"; and church-paid "love offerings" in excess of \$25.00 per year. Exclude the following: any auto or business "reimbursements"; contributions to a Tax-Sheltered Annuity (403b) plan; and any designated housing allowance. If federal income tax has been

withheld from a minister's wages, fill in Box 9; otherwise mark it "0" (zero). Mark Boxes 11 and 12 "0" (zero).

**On the lay employee's Form W-2**, report salary paid in Box 10 just as you did for the minister. But also include any housing allowance. (The *cash* housing allowance *or* the fair market rental *value* of a parsonage and utilities must be reported as taxable income for lay employees. Only ordained and district-licensed ministers serving in a ministerial capacity can exclude it from income taxes.) Auto and business reimbursements are excluded from Boxes 10 and 12. All Tax-Sheltered Annuity contributions are excluded from Box 10; however, only employer-paid contributions over and above salary are excluded from FICA wages, Box 12. Voluntary salary reduction TSA contributions are included in Box 12, and FICA tax must be paid on these funds, Box 11.

**Box 6**—Two items may apply to church employees. They are "Pension Plan" and "Deferred Compensation."

**"Pension Plan"**—This item must be checked if the church employee is an active participant (for any part of the calendar year) in a retirement plan maintained by the church employer.

For example, employers who have contributed to a Tax-Sheltered Annuity (403b) plan on an "above salary" basis for either a minister or a lay employee must check this item. A lay employee having a TSA contribution under a voluntary salary reduction basis would not have this item checked. (See below.)

**"Deferred Compensation"**—If the employee, ministerial or lay, has any *voluntary* salary reduction TSA (403b) contributions, this item must be checked.

**Box 16**—If the church owns or leases a vehicle for an employee's use, the value of the "personal and nonbusiness" use of that vehicle is taxable income. The value of the use of the vehicle is established by using official tables available from the IRS. The amount of the *personal and non-business* use must be included in Box 10 and in Box 16 (and in Box 12 if a lay employee). The employee is required to maintain a mileage log or similar records to substantiate

business and personal use of the vehicle and submit this to the employer. If not substantiated, the employer must report 100 percent of the use of the vehicle as taxable income (Boxes 10 and 16).

If the employee fully reimburses the employer for the value of the personal use of the vehicle, then no value would be reported in either Box 10 or in Box 16. You may want to refer to IRS Publication 535 for more information on vehicle usage valuation and reporting.

**Box 17**—Several separate amounts may need to be reported in this box. *Follow the Form W-2 instructions carefully.* Any entry made should be carefully entered and labeled according to IRS codes printed in your W-2 instructions to avoid confusion in reporting these amounts. At least two items may need to be considered when completing Box 17.

**"Group Term Life Insurance"**—If the church employer pays for more than an aggregate of \$50,000 of group term life insurance for an employee, the cost of the coverage over \$50,000 must be reported both in Box 17 using code B and in Box 10 (also in Box 12 if a lay employee).

**"Deferred Compensation"**—Any contributions made through the church to an employee's TSA (403b) plan under a voluntary salary reduction agreement must be reported in Box 17 using code E. This amount would not be included in Box 10 for either ministerial or lay employees. This amount would be included in Box 12 for a lay employee. If more than three items need to be reported in Box 17, you may use a separate Form W-2.

### FORM W-3

In order to transmit the W-2 forms to the IRS, your congregation must file Form W-3, "Transmittal of Income and Tax Statements." A Form W-3 will be provided to your congregation at year's end with the supply of employment forms from the IRS.

The purpose of the Form W-3 is to summarize for the IRS the number of W-2 forms being transmitted. Information required includes the name, address, ZIP code, and EIN of the employer; the number of W-2 forms being transmitted; the total amount of federal income taxes, wages, FICA taxes withheld, and FICA wages reported on all of the W-2 forms. Totals



# Hindering Hang-ups

on the Form W-3 should balance to totals reported on the 941 forms submitted during the year.

A Form W-3 and all attached W-2 forms must be submitted to the IRS by February 28. No money is sent with the Form W-3.

## FORM W-5

The Form W-5, "Earned Income Credit Advance Payment Certificate," is used by eligible employees (low-income employees with children) who elect to receive advance payments of the earned income credit. IRS Publication 15, "Circular E—Employer's Tax Guide," describes the use of the Earned Income Credit Advance Payment Certificate.


## FORM 1099

While the church is not required to withhold taxes from nonemployees, a Form 1099 must be filed for payments to a self-employed person or *unincorporated* business if payments have equaled or exceeded \$600 per year. This includes payments to *unincorporated* evangelists (excluding any housing allowance properly designated in advance and paid to them).

## RECORDS

Your congregation must keep accurate records of all wages paid and all taxes withheld. An individual ledger sheet should be maintained for each employee plus a similar summary sheet for all wages paid to all employees.

## Checklist for Procedures

1. All employees should have a valid Form W-4 on file with the employer.
2. Employer withholds federal income taxes and any applicable FICA taxes from *each* paycheck, *except* paychecks of the clergy in the exercise of ministry.
3. Employer files Form 941 by the end of the month following each quarter and taxes withheld and due are paid to the extent not previously paid.
4. At year's end, the employer issues a Form W-2 to *all employees* and files Form W-3 transmittal.
5. Issue Form 1099 to whom necessary. 

The information contained in this article is of a general nature. It is not offered as specific legal or tax "advice." Each person, local church board, and district should evaluate their own unique situation in consultation with their local legal and tax advisers.

# Hindering

by Ramond C. Kratzer

Yakima, Wash.

## Introduction

**Y**ears ago a popular radio program was titled "People Are Funny." Probably its popularity was largely due to the reality that people *are* funny! For example, you see a friend heading for the airport, suitcase in hand, all set to take a trip. You ask, "Going somewhere?" Our conversation involves the very obvious.

Many of us have unique idiosyncrasies that may or may not irritate others. Things that may be of little consequences in other people may have an unusual impact in ministers. For instance, a minister who preaches with his hands in his pockets can distract a segment of his audience. This same habit in someone else would not be noticed.

More particularly, some ministers have certain habit patterns, personal prejudices, or attitudinal peculiarities that inhibit their effectiveness in many ways.

In Paul's "Credo of the Ministry" in 2 Corinthians 6 he says that we should conduct ourselves so that the "ministry will not be discredited" (v. 3). Consequently, the minister of God should be eager to discover any hang-up he may have that short-circuits his effectiveness and then set about with determination to correct it.

Most of us resist looking at ourselves objectively. Someone has said that Mother Nature's greatest contribution to man is in making him blind to his faults. Robert Burns put it another way: "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us, / To see oursels as others see us!" Wisdom would tell us to "wise up and get with it" in order that we should do the greatest amount of good in our sojourn here.

In observing the successes or failures of many pastors, I have cataloged some things that need correction when they influence the minister's impact upon his circle of influence. These word pictures are not designed to bemean or hurt those who might be included in the various categories. They are only pointed out as hopeful insights toward a more effective ministry. Someone has said that the most famous last words of friendship are: "Tell me what's wrong with me." And if you proceed to carry through, it is often the conclusion of a good friendship.

Many of us insulate ourselves against being reminded of our faults. But wisdom suggests that, even if it hurts our egos, we should know the worst in order to make corrections.

The first hindering hang-up is:

# Hang-ups

## The Hang-up of Extreme Individuality

**W**e all recognize that the uniqueness of our personhood is a God-given endowment. God has made us individuals, and we each have a personal contribution to make.

However, in the scheme of things, there must be a blending of personalities so as to add beauty and symmetry to the whole, without which there is chaos and disruption. For example, think of a great orchestra playing an overture. The second trombone player decides to express his individuality. He says to himself, "Phooey to the conductor and to the other players. I'm going to play 'Home on the Range,' because I don't like this overture. It's too restricting. I'm sick of being regimented." And so he blares out his own number, perhaps beautifully done, but nonproductive and disruptive to the whole. Think of the chaos if every player would likewise decide to do his own thing.

The truth of the matter is that this person could have expressed his individuality by cooperating through his assigned portion. A merging of each contributor would have produced beautiful harmony.

I have known pastors who were bent on being themselves. They prided themselves on making fun of the team member and on doing their own thing in their own way. They seemed to think that any conformity to an overall pattern was a compromise of their personal privileges. Often these men were hard workers and did well on a unilateral level. But their rapport with fellow pastors and leadership was out of step and tended toward tension and disunity. To others they appeared negative, touchy, uncooperative, and slightly touched with jealousy because others seemed to be more accepted. Their *extreme individualism* stuck

out like a sore thumb until they were rather unapproachable and appeared offish.

Such persons probably long for a greater fellowship and less friction in their fraternal relationships. But extreme individualism has a way of developing its own isolationism. It becomes a vicious circle in which an arrogant attitude begets a silent rebuff, which in turn evokes further unpleasant behavior with its counter "let alone policy." Soon the pastor is isolated and finds resentment eating his heart out.


Growth in grace is as important to the minister as spiritual and social improvement is in the laity. The writings of Paul to the minister is loaded with advice toward courtesy, humility, selflessness, cooperation, and love of the brethren. Cooperation as "workers together" with God (2 Cor. 6:1, KJV) is the strength and dynamic within the household of faith. Unilateralism is always foreign to judicious, consecrated leadership. We are too dependent upon each other to go it alone.

A side effect of extreme individualism is the debilitating results upon the laymen in the church. A pastor can, by his resistance to a district program, cause many members of his congregation to become a part of his individualistic approach. Budgets will become a burden, Sunday School emphasis will lose its luster, and the many rewards incumbent upon wholesome cooperation will be denied both pastor and people.

Often within a church shepherded by an extreme individualist, there are wholesome, dedicated members whose hearts are torn by such an attitude. They refuse to manifest disloyalty to their pastor, but they are embarrassed and distressed when they observe the erosion of fellowship between their church and the

denominational program. In one situation, a pastor made a fuss in the Ways and Means Committee at his district assembly concerning budgets. He then proceeded to sow a discordant note to his people until some of them almost wept in embarrassment. His church had always paid its budgets and was proud to carry its proportionate share of the load. They were not in agreement at all with their pastor, whose vision was so small. And, after all, they were the ones who paid the bills—not the pastor. All they wanted was a chance.

Often an entire congregation becomes infected with a spirit of negativism through extreme individualistic leadership. It is unfair for a minister to impose such an attitude upon a people who have been lent to him as a privilege and an opportunity to serve. The credentials he holds should cause him to boost his denomination through wholesome leadership so that he can present his congregation to the next pastor in as good or in better shape than it was presented to him.

Let us be ruggedly individualistic when it comes to fundamentals. Preach the truth without fear or favor. But let us share our lives in wholesome cooperation through the methodology of our Zion, even though our ideas may not always coincide in every detail. We should strive to keep in the mainstream of the church. Resist a critical attitude that separates you from your brethren. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15, NASB). "Become all things to all men so that by all . . . means [we] might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Refuse to highlight your individualism, but, rather, let your life blend into the whole of God's work, leaving the results to Him. 

# Relocating— Trauma or Triumph?

by Betty Norcross

Rockford, Ill.

**Y**ou're planning to move. You don't know whether to be glad or sad, enthused or defused. Pulling up roots and relocating is not easy. It means saying good-bye to friends and maybe even family. It means bidding farewell to those familiar places and routines. All of a sudden that rut you've been complaining about appears comfortable and appealing. Anyone who has faced this experience knows that the prospect of relocating generates a spectrum of emotions.

## THERE'S REASON FOR TRAUMA

Apprehension is not entirely unfounded. A cross-country move can be a traumatic experience. Believe me, I know! As a pastor's wife, I've had a few unforgettable *moving* experiences. For instance, there was the time we loaded our furniture and belongings on a van for a 500-mile move. The driver wasted no time in getting started on the trip. We, however, wanted time to say good-bye to some friends, so we chose to stay in town overnight and leave the next morning for our new horizons.

Consequently, the van with our furniture arrived at our new address before us. Anticipating this, we told the driver where to get the house key so that he could unload our belongings.

Arriving the next day, we were shocked to learn that the outgoing pastor had not yet vacated the parsonage. He and his wife were out of town and not planning to return for their things until the following week. Our driver, however, had followed our instructions implicitly, unloading our furniture at the address we provided. So there we were—with three small children and all our household effects, boxes, and wardrobes piled on top of the other family's belongings. That's what I call trauma!

Then there was the time we moved

from a southern climate to a town in northern Canada, arriving in mid-February with a 10-day-old infant. The temperature had fallen to a chilly 35 degrees *below* zero! We were dismayed to discover someone had forgotten to pay the gas bill, so there was no heat in the house!

## MOVING CAN BE A GREAT ADVENTURE

Moving can be traumatic. Of course, the instances I have described here are not the norm, but experience has shown that the unexpected can happen. Although it's impossible to be prepared for every eventuality, there are some things I can do to smooth out some potential rough spots. Furthermore, I have found that with the right mental attitude the move can actually be a rewarding and exciting experience.

I say, "right mental attitude," because my attitude influences the family's ability to cope with the traumatic changes about to descend on them. If they perceive apprehension on my part, it magnifies and confirms the fears they are already experiencing. So, if I am to help them make the transition, I must show that I am confident about our move and looking forward to it as a great adventure—which it is!

## MY "THINGS TO DO" LIST

The first order of business is to ask for divine guidance and help. Many decisions will be thrust upon me relating to schools, housing, shopping, banking, church involvement, and much more. There is no way I will always be able to make all the right choices without the wisdom God has promised.

The next item on my list is to contact the Chamber of Commerce before our arrival. Often they help by providing street maps, shopping guides, school information, and interesting historical background of the community.

Also, I have discovered I can contact the Welcome Wagon before we arrive, letting them know when we expect to get to town. They have a unique way of welcoming newcomers, and it involves much more than the freebies they offer. Entertainment, recreational events, local businesses, restaurants, and places of interest are featured in their literature. All of this helps us get acquainted with our new area even before we arrive, and that often relieves some of the insecurity the children are feeling.

## SOME POSTMOVE DANGERS

When some of the children have reached high school age, there is a serious problem area that should be addressed, though it often gets overlooked. School standards are not the same throughout the country. It is wise to make an appointment with a guidance counselor as soon as possible. This, too, we learned the hard way. Some of the credits our daughter had earned in another school did not satisfy the graduation requirements of her new school. For a while it looked like she would not be allowed to graduate with her class! This stress could have been avoided if we had made intelligent inquiries at the proper time before enrolling her in school.

One area of personal stress for me is the task of making new friends and getting acquainted with my new neighbors. I have learned that these people are only mildly interested in my past accomplishments. If I don't want to be labeled a bore, I must take care not to succumb to the temptation of repeatedly making references to how we did things "back home" or "where I came from." Sometimes my desire to win acceptance has clouded my good judgment.

Another personal battle I have had to fight, along with loneliness and homesickness, has been the tempta-

tion to feel sorry for myself. This frame of mind spills over and influences my family, making their adjustments more difficult. Not only that, if it goes unchecked, before long it will defeat me spiritually. I must make a conscious effort to overcome self-pity.

## HELP FROM THE SCRIPTURES

When I am faced with another move, these disturbing happenings of yesteryears can rob me of my peace of mind—but only if I let them. I find encouragement reading again the story of Abraham and remembering how God called him to

go into a new and distant land (Gen. 12:1). The Lord had great things in store for him, but they could only be realized as Abraham obeyed divine directions.

Then I read again the story of Peter's experience when the Lord invited him to step out of the boat and walk across that watery pathway. The apostle may have hesitated for a moment. Fear could have kept him chained to the boat, but faith rose in his heart, and he accepted Jesus' challenge. And Peter actually "walked on the water" (Matt. 14:29)! It's interesting to note, that while he was having this remarkable experience, 11 disciples remained in the boat. They

never attempted to answer the Lord's challenge! Peter's memorable adventure occurred because he was willing to accept Jesus' invitation and step out in faith.

When I'm presented with the challenge of moving one more time, I remind myself that this experience will provide me with an opportunity to find a new dimension in my own faith walk. Courage gradually begins to replace fear. The move becomes an exciting adventure. I begin to look forward to new horizons and to anticipate new relationships. With God's help, my fears are banished, and instead of a trauma, it becomes a triumph!

# Today's Books for Today's Preacher

## *ANTAGONISTS IN THE CHURCH How to Identify and Deal with Destructive Conflict*

by Kenneth C. Haugk, Ph.D.

Augsburg Publishing House, 1988  
PA080-662-3101 \$9.95

This book, by pastor and clinical psychologist Kenneth C. Haugk, should be recommended reading for all ministerial students. It is also an important study for pastors. Not only does it explain the destructive consequences of antagonism plaguing so many of our congregations, but it will help those same congregations avoid a great deal of the harmful conflict now tearing so many of them apart.

Haugk helps church leaders identify individuals who are the source of antagonistic trouble. He encourages an awareness that leads not to rash judgmentalism about people but rather to sound judgment informed by educated observation. He points out that church leaders must discern the different antagonist types from activists whose critical input is actually healthy for the congregation.

Having set forth the personality dynamics of antagonistic individuals, the book explains how and why the normal methods for dealing with them are usually counterproductive. Turning the other cheek, placating the antagonist, or even using the Matthew 18 procedure are inappropriate scriptural models for dealing with such situations. We are urged to avoid such entanglements and simply to take Paul's advice as the proper biblical remedy: "If a man is causing division among

you, after warning him once or twice, having nothing more to do with him" (Titus 3:10, TCNT).

Not only does the author show how embattled pastors can cope with such difficulties, he also gives preventive strategies to help them deter antagonistic attacks from recurring. For those who have not yet experienced such pressure, he prescribes techniques to stop it either before it occurs or before it becomes a serious threat.

This book will set dedicated church leaders free from thinking that the problems they face are always their own fault. Here is wisdom to liberate God's people from the paralysis that often prevents them from mobilizing their God-given authority against the internal enemies that afflict the church.

If you are a pastor who wants to learn to apply the kind of tough love needed to confront destructive church conflict, read this book. While it will take a few hours, it may help you and your congregation in a lifetime of ministry.

—by Roberto Munoz

## *NOTHING TO DO BUT SAVE SOULS— JOHN WESLEY'S CHARGE TO HIS PREACHERS*

by Robert E. Coleman

Zondervan Publishing House, 1990  
PA031-075-481X \$5.95

Are you looking for some new challenges on personal evangelism and witnessing? If so, you will profit from Robert Coleman's work on evangelism.

He has distinguished himself in the text as a person born in Wesleyan-Arminian thinking on evangelism and witness. He writes with a heart on fire and compels the reader to proclaim God's good news to a lost world.

Coleman reminds the reader that the character of Wesleyan evangelism need not change to be effective. It needs to be rekindled and used anew for a society in waiting. He expresses in clear theological terms the lostness of humankind and the sense of urgency the church needs in order to reach today's world for Christ.

Coleman interprets in new terms the position of "the just shall live by faith" and strongly reminds the reader that Christian holiness is always God's perfect desire for Christians. He encourages religious leaders and laypersons to maintain a walk and a message of responsible holiness.

Coleman's "epilogue" serves the reader with an excellent tool for reference. By featuring some of the strengths of Wesleyan Methodism and the work of Francis Asbury, Coleman demonstrates that Christian ministries today should succeed when permeated with biblical truth and passionate witness.

I found the book easy to read, interesting, insightful, and inspirational. I have already used ideas gleaned from this text in my preaching. Any preacher wanting to communicate the message of holiness would profit from reading this book, for Robert Coleman has provided us with some thought-provoking and practical emphases on holiness.

—by Montford L. Neal

## A Matter of Style

by Barry E. Bryant

London

**I**n 1764 John Wesley exchanged several letters with a young preacher named Samuel Furly. Sammy, as he was affectionately called by Wesley, was having trouble finding a suitable style of preaching and writing. He turned to Wesley for advice. Wesley was obsessed with clarity, concision, and contraction. He always struggled to say as clearly as possible with as few words as possible the most he could possibly say. Because of this, his advice to Sammy Furly is timeless and is good advice for us preachers today.

**His first advice to Sammy was to keep it simple.** Wesley offered three ways to do this. One way is to use simple words. Wesley said, "Write, imitating the language of the common people throughout, so far as consists with purity and propriety of speech." Wesley wrote in common, everyday English. He was the champion of the one-syllable word. He told Sammy, "We should constantly use the most common, easy words (so they are pure and proper) which our language affords," so never use a hard word where an easy one will do (*Letters* 4:232). Genius in writing and preaching is known by its simplicity.

Another way to keep it simple is to always address "everyday" people. Wesley wrote in the language of the people for the people. He desired "plain truth for plain people" (Baker, *Works* 1:104). He always wrote "to the bulk of mankind" (pp. 103-4). They were always his audience. In all Wesley said and wrote, he tried to bring theology from the top shelf so that it could be reached by "everyman."

One of the great enemies of this simple style was what Wesley called

the "University." Wesley said to Sammy, "When I had been a member of the University about ten years, I wrote and talked much as you do now. But when I talked to plain people in the Castle or the town, I observed they gaped and stared. This quickly obliged me to alter my style and adopt the language of those I spoke to" (*Letters* 4:258). Wesley knew that at the university the object was to impress your teachers and peers with what you knew. The way to impress them was to use big words with lots of jargon. In the ivory tower world of theologians, everyone knows what "supralapsarianism" and "post-tribulation millennialism" and "antidisestablishmentarianism" mean—don't we?—but does anyone else? Words like that might go down well in a theology class, but throw them out in the pulpit, and you'll get a lot of blank stares. It takes time to leave the language of the classroom behind before entering the pulpit, but the sooner the better. But abandon only the words, not the learning or understanding.

Another thing Wesley suggested to keep style simple is to use short sentences. Wesley said to Sammy that the opinion that people in the pew "understand long sentences better than short is an entire mistake. I have carefully tried the experiment for thirty years, and I find the very reverse to be true. . . . If you would be understood by them, you should seldom use a word of many syllables or a sentence of many words. Short sentences are likewise infinitely best" (*Letters* 4:267). Sentences are like rope. Use one just long enough to get the job done.

Otherwise, you may get tangled up in the mess left on the floor. Sim-

plicity was Wesley's most important rule in style. He told Sammy, "Easiness, therefore, is the first, second, and third point" (*Letters* 4:232, 257).

**The second rule he gave to Sammy was to be natural in all that is said and written.** That is, be yourself. Wesley told him, "**Artificialness** of style [is] the main defect to be avoided" (*Letters* 4:232). "Stiff" was Wesley's favorite way to describe the artificial style. He pointed it out in another writer, Lord Boyle, and said, "It is abundantly too artificial . . . his art glares in every sentence" (p. 257). Wesley even offered advice on how to keep style natural and not stiff. "As for me, I never think of my style at all; but just set down the words that come first. Only when I transcribe anything for the press, then I think it my duty to see every phrase clear, pure, and proper. . . . If, after all, I observe any stiff expression, I throw it out, neck and shoulders" (pp. 257-58). Stiff style is like an overstarched shirt. It is uncomfortable. Because it is uncomfortable it puts the reader or listener ill at ease. This was Wesley's point. It takes experience and a certain amount of self-confidence before one can be oneself in the pulpit or on paper. But this is the only way to be natural.

**Third, he told Sammy to be careful in selecting role models.** "You point wrong, Sammy: you aim at the wrong mark. . . . Dr. Middleton is no standard for a preacher. . . . His diction is stiff, formal, affected, unnatural. . . . Always to talk or write like him would be as absurd as always to walk in minuet step. O tread natural, tread easy, only not careless" (*Letters* 4:232). Wesley suggested to Sammy that he read

(Continued on page 51)



# Parsonage Prayers

by Celia Jolley

Roseburg, Oreg.

**W**e had just moved to our new pastorate and found a problem. The laymen's children behaved so well in church that no one saw the need for a nursery. Even their babies were piously quiet with rare exceptions. However, our children thought the familiar verse declared, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go to the nursery to play with 20 toddlers fellowshipping there." They had never experienced the blessing of sitting in a pew. At 14 months of age, our daughter learned to talk quite well; she just couldn't get the hang of whispering. She attempted stage whispers so loud that she drowned out her father's best preaching voice. One time as Communion was passed, her hoarse voice echoed, "Is that *blood*!"

Our son had just entered his fourth hyperactive year. I was so proud when he learned to be quiet in a service. He became a "holy roller," taking out his excess energy by rolling continuously under the full length of the pew. Looking at his buddies who had nodded off peacefully during the sermon, he would say, "I sure wish I could do that!"

It was a *rare* moment when one of our young ones did drift off to a sound, deep sleep during a sermon. My heart strangely warmed, I stroked the sleeping head, every muscle relaxed in that precious little bundle—including a very full bladder. What do you do when a gully washer erupts on your lap? All of my previous "warm fuzzies" of motherhood were considerably dampened. I wished pews came equipped with a few towels and a few less hymnals.

Our children were the most disciplined of any in our church—that is,

I took them out and disciplined them more than anyone else! It never seemed to help much. Every time I reentered our sanctuary, the congregation would be singing "Blessed Quietness." After the third trip down the aisle in one service with a chastised child, I noticed that our son was so distraught he was walking bent over double, chewing on his belt. As his bowed form marched up the aisle in front of me, he passed our pew and headed in a daze for the platform. Panicked, I grabbed for whatever I could reach and caught a fistful of hair. After church I composed an ultimatum, but my husband would not let me nail it on the church's front door: "No Nursery, No Church!"

Two years later, we had 20 "squirmers" under two in our nursery. Many of them might not have been in the house of the Lord if their parents would have had to hold them on their laps in the sanctuary. A nursery is an answer to a mother's prayer, especially a pastor's wife. After all, Mary did not loose Jesus in the sanctuary till 12 years of age. I have lived to see our children sit quietly in the service gazing intently at the preacher—their dad—hardly glancing at the cartoon figures scribbled in their laps.

We heard the story of a boy whose stern father was taking him out for disrupting the service. As he was being carried away, he pleaded, "Y'all pray for me, ya hear!"

With active little ones underfoot, parsonage life is demanding. Feeling the need for someone to love our children unconditionally, we prayed that our Heavenly Father would send someone who could see our children

without the "preacher's kids" stereotype. God soon answered our prayer twofold. First, He sent His sweet grace through a couple in their 70s. Grandma Ora and Grandpa Paul did not enjoy the full measure of health or wealth, but their hearts and home were open to our three children. They invited our children to come over at least an hour once a week while Mom and Dad had a special time out. A toy box awaited them with the special charm of the unfamiliar: simple crayons, coloring books, and yard-sale stuffed toys, dolls, and trucks. A bond formed. Little prayers were heard and answered for the "grandparents" as they faced surgeries and recuperation time. These "grandparents" were always an encouragement to worn-out parents who needed to hear a good word spoken about their children.

Second, God sent another family to us with children as imperfect and lovable as ours. That family interweaved with our children as fingers clasping in friendship. Our family always had a home away from home. I found someone to seek and share the humor in the momentary insanity of motherhood. This friendship has stood the test of time and miles. Though we have moved, our children know there are church people who love them. And I know a friend who would think life's twists are laughable instead of "cryable" if she were here.

Sometimes in the daily struggle and battles of spiritual warfare, a mother's armor gets very heavy. But God sends special recruits for reinforcement at just the right time. He also sends laughter. God answers parsonage prayers.

## The Appropriateness of Postmillennialism

by J. Kenneth Grider

Kansas City

**A**long with biblical inerrancy, millennialism is one of the two most controverted doctrinal areas within recent evangelism.<sup>1</sup> Three principal millennial theories have been held across the centuries, as is well known: premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism. They are based on interpretations of various Old Testament and New Testament passages, but most particularly of the one passage in all the Bible that refers to a millennium: Rev. 20:1-7.

With this special passage in mind, and with the use of numerous other related Bible passages, a number of supports will be presented here for a postmillennial understanding: that we are already in the millennium; that the Second Coming will occur at its close; and that the Judgment will then occur.

1. For one thing, when all of Scripture is taken into account, it seems to teach, against amillennialism's spiritualizing of the millennium, a real, historical one—although not of precisely 1,000 years in length. The millennium extends through approximately the same length of time in both views and, in both, includes the reign over the triumphant dead. And in both, it precedes the Second Coming. But in the very spiritualizing of the Kingdom in amillennialism, a platonism is at work that tends to depreciate history and physicality. It is likely to work havoc with a bedrock Bible teaching: that both physicality and history are real and also important.

The writer has been helped in this view by Donald Bloesch, who describes his own view as "a postmillennialism within the framework of a modified amillennialism."<sup>2</sup> Bloesch believes in a real millen-

nium of indefinite duration, with four dimensions in it. He writes:

The millennium can therefore be seen to have four sides: the outpouring of the Spirit upon the church at Pentecost and continuing in all periods of missionary expansion; the paradise of the blessed, where the church triumphant intercedes for the church militant; the great harvest of souls as history moves toward a grand climax; and the final triumph over the adversaries of God and man on the great day of the Lord, inaugurated by his second coming.<sup>3</sup>

Surely, this four-sided millennium would account for much that is taught in Scripture on this matter—and especially for some of the unusual statements about the millennium in Rev. 20:1-7. It views the millennium, in which the reign of Christ is made possible by Christ's victory over Satan by the Resurrection, as bursting forth at Pentecost and as obtaining wherever and whenever the Holy Spirit has helped the Church implement Christ's reign in the world.

Some postmillennialists have understood that the millennium has not begun as yet. One such person was Henry Cowles, a professor at Oberlin College in Ohio and editor of its magazine, the *Oberlin Evangelist*.<sup>4</sup> Cowles wrote 23 essays on the millennium for that magazine beginning in 1841, urging implementation of Jesus' teachings. This, in order for the millennium to begin—after which would occur the Second Coming, the resurrection, the Judgment, and the eternal separation of persons into the tormented and the blissful. This Cowles-type scenario was the usual teaching of the American holiness movement of the 19th century. The

present writer is persuaded by the postmillennial view but understands that the millennium, of indefinite duration, began with the Christ event and particularly with the resurrection of this crucified God-man Savior, with Pentecost as the hilarious early implementation of God's reign.

2. Further, in the postmillennial view here discussed as probably the biblical teaching, the reign of Christ also obtains, as the triumphant martyred dead view the Church Militant—and this might explain a part of the Rev. 20:1-7 passage. There, not all the redeemed dead, are spoken of. "And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God" (v. 4b), John says. "They came to life," John says, which might refer to a blissful alerting in paradise, and they "reigned with Christ a thousand years" (v. 4d). When they themselves had made it triumphantly into the next world, they "came to life" with thankfulness, and they began to "reign with Christ" as redeemed persons. For them, Satan was entirely bound, unable to do them any hurt whatever. Their reigning with Christ a thousand years seems to refer to their victorious reigning as the martyred dead during the entire millennial age—when, on the earth, the resurrected Christ continues to reign and to suppress Satan.<sup>5</sup>

3. This understanding of a real, historical, indefinitely lengthy millennial reign of Christ is preferable to amillennialism's spiritualizing of a quite detailed portrayal of the millennium in Rev. 20:1-7. It is one thing to spiritualize your interpretation of the references to specifics such as "woman" and "beasts" and

"Babylon"; it is another to spiritualize such a detailed passage as we have in Rev. 20:1-7.

Even though the postmillennial view is here treated as more acceptable than amillennialism's saying that there is to be no historical millennium, the view here inclined toward is similar to amillennialism in understanding that the millennium is not literally of 1,000 years duration. A certain degree of spiritualizing is involved in understanding that, while actual and literally historical, the millennium is of much more than 1,000 years duration. It uses, as amillennialism does, the Scripture passage which reads, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Pet. 3:8).

4. This understanding also encourages Christian social action, which the prophets and Jesus and James and Paul did—and this is preferable to premillennialism's history of not exerting itself very much in this regard since it assumes that things are supposed to get worse and worse until the Second Coming.

5. Another desirable aspect of the type of postmillennialism being proposed here is that it is consistent with the hope of the Second Coming's occurring at any time. According to the postmillennialism of Cowles and Finney and other 19th-century holiness movement leaders, the kingly reign of Christ has not begun. Christ will return after it is finished, so His return could not be expected at any time. The dispensational premillennialists such as Hal Lindsey and John Walvoord, likewise, cannot expect the Second Coming at any time. Another Temple is to be built first, according to that scenario.

But according to the usual postmillennial scenario, Christ's kingly reign started with Christ's resurrection, and the millennium can be completed at any time—allowing for the Second Coming at any time.

6. Further support for this scenario is that it views the Church as the true Israel and as the inheritor of the promises made to Israel. It does not understand that Israel will be given a second chance to accept Christ during a future millennium, as dispensational premillennialism does. It does not understand that Israel will be treated in one way and

Gentiles in another, but that all must accept Christ before the Second Coming as the one way to salvation.

7. A strong point in favor of this postmillennial vision is that it encourages the proclamation of the gospel. If the gospel is to flourish more and more, instead of less and less as in premillennialism, this encourages an all-out endeavor to proclaim Christ "where'er the sun / Does his successive journeys run" (Isaac Watts). Indeed, it is only after the gospel has been proclaimed to all the world that this age will end. Thus we read, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end [not a millennial reign] will come" (Matt. 24:14). It is in keeping with Ps. 108:5 where we read, "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth." It is in keeping with Jesus' parable of the mustard seed in which the "kingdom" "grows" and "becomes a tree" where birds "perch in its branches" (Matt. 13:31-32). It is in keeping with Ps. 102:15-16 where we read, "The nations will fear the name of the Lord, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. For the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory."

This healthy proclamation of the gospel fits in well with Jesus' teaching that the Church, on the offensive, will not be deterred. Jesus, who usually talked about the Kingdom, spoke twice of the Church. In one such reference He said, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matt. 16:18).

8. This postmillennial scenario also allows for the biblical teaching that there will be tribulation; and Antichrist's opposition of the gospel; and in many, a falling away, just before the Second Coming. Thus we read, "These in white robes," who cry out, "Salvation belongs to our God," are "they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:10, 13, 14). Thus we also read of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him," that "that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness [Antichrist] is re-

vealed, the man doomed to destruction" (2 Thess. 2:1, 3).

In the American culture as the 20th century closes, this matter of the flourishing of the gospel, along with widespread opposition, is in play. Right while evangelical faith is succeeding as never before, with its bulging local churches and the diminishing memberships of local mainline churches, the opposite also obtains: Drug dependency, pornography and public vulgarity, and Supreme Court opposition to biblical teachings are also in play as never before. All this is within the purview of postmillennialism, which also knows that the One who is in the Christian is greater than the one who is in the world (see 1 John 4:4), and that Christ's kingdom will triumph at the Second Coming—when Antichrist and Satan and wickedness in general and in particular will be subdued and soon judged.

9. This scenario also views probation as over when the Second Coming occurs, whereas premillennialists of the dispensational ilk understand that much redemption, especially of Jews, will happen after the Second Coming and during a so-called thousand-year reign of righteousness. Jesus urges people to be ready for the Second Coming, implying that no one will be given a later opportunity to be saved. After speaking of the people in Noah's time who did not prepare for the Flood, Jesus says, "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt. 24:44). Jesus continues, "The master of that ['wicked'] servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vv. 50-51). It is to be noted also that, in light of the previous point, no millennial time is to separate the Second Coming and the Judgment.

10. Still another advantage of the postmillennial vision is that it compacts together in a brief span of time the Second Coming, the subduing of all alien power, the Judgment, and the final heaven-hell parting of persons. While one passage of Scripture can be interpreted as teaching that

there will be a first resurrection of the righteous, a millennial reign, then a second resurrection of the wicked and the Judgment, numerous passages teach clearly that there will be only one resurrection at the Second Coming, and that the Judgment will occur right away after that.

For one thing, Dan. 12:2 speaks of only one general resurrection, and no millennium is there mentioned as preceding the Judgment. We read, "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." Likewise Jesus' parable of the net has in it no separate resurrections and no millennial space between the end of the Kingdom work and the Judgment. There we read, "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fisherman pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:47-50).

One general resurrection and immediate judgment are clearly taught in John 5:28-29, where Jesus says, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming [one time!] when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

And Paul teaches that there will be only one general resurrection, which he says that the Jews also taught. Before Felix, the Caesarian governor, Paul says, "I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men [the Jews], that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:14-15).

11. This kind of view is also in keeping with everything becoming subjected to Christ, and Christ to God the Father, as Paul tells us will happen in 1 Cor. 15:23 ff. There Paul, referring to the time "when he [Christ] comes," says: "Then the end will come, when he hands over the

kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power [of Antichrist, Satan, demons, wicked humans]. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (vv. 23-25).

12. Also, postmillennialism seems to be what was in the minds of the very early writers of the Apostles' Creed. The oldest of the ecumenical creeds, which serves all of Christendom as no other creed does, gives us no hint of a millennium between the Second Coming and the Judgment. In this creed we simply affirm that Christ "will come to judge the quick and the dead."

13. Also, as mentioned in what is quoted just above, this postmillennial scenario is in keeping with the Bible teaching that the kingdom of God was not replaced by the Church but is still operative. The 1 Cor. 15:23-25 passage speaks of Christ's continuing "reign" and of the "kingdom [of] God the Father," and of Christ's second coming and His subduing all alien powers. The very last verse of the Book of Acts says that the imprisoned Paul "preached about the Kingdom of God" (TEV). He preached about a present kingdom, not a kingdom to begin many centuries later.


14. Still another support for postmillennialism is that, in some form, it has a long and significant acceptance in church tradition, including the Wesleyan-holiness history. John Calvin taught in this way,<sup>6</sup> as did some Puritans such as John Owen. It is the view of certain Anabaptists and of Pietism. John Fletcher taught in this way, as did John Wesley.

In Wesley's sermon on Christians as salt, from Matthew 5, he outlines a strategy for gradual social change that is postmillennial.<sup>7</sup> Wesley believed that the church should establish holiness in society, including the abolition of slavery and poverty.<sup>8</sup> He was what Reinhold Niebuhr would call a "transformationist"; he was a man with a brave and stout and pure heart, who lived simply and worked assiduously.<sup>9</sup>

Adam Clarke, who constantly cared for the poor during his half-century of pastoral ministry, was also of the postmillennial persuasion. Commenting on Rev. 20:2, he says, "Yet, there is no doubt that the earth is in a state of progressive moral im-

provement; and that the light of true religion is shining more copiously everywhere; and will shine more and more to the perfect day."<sup>10</sup>

Postmillennialism, in one or the other of its two main types, was also the vision of Asa Mahan, Charles G. Finney, Phineas Bresee, and A. M. Hills—and the early American holiness movement generally.

I myself was a premillennialist until 1988, when I made a somewhat thorough study of millennial views. My chief disappointment, from the standpoint of my own teachings as a career theology instructor and writer, is that I promoted premillennialism for more than four decades. This treatment of postmillennialism has in it the reserve, the restraint, that is appropriate to scholars. It disguises what I have really become: a desk-pounding postmillennialist. 

1. Donald Bloesch is surely correct in saying, "Apart from biblical inerrancy no doctrine has caused greater division in evangelical Christianity in the present day than the millennium." *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 1:189.

2. *Ibid.*, 2:201.

3. *Ibid.*, 202.

4. See this, and much else, on the usual postmillennial views held by significant figures in the Methodist tradition from John Fletcher and John Wesley onward and especially in the American holiness movement of the 19th century in Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, Zondervan, 1987), 143 ff.

5. On the view that this does not refer to the martyred dead, but to all the deceased believers, and to their physical resurrection, you have two resurrections. An interpretation of this type would be possibly valid, based solely on the Rev. 20:1-7 passage. Then, however, the interpreter will have trouble with all the remainder of the Bible passages referring to our physical resurrection—which make no time distinction between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked. A number of these passages will be quoted and discussed presently.

6. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, bk. 3, chap. 25, "The Final Resurrection."

7. Ralph Thompson says, "While John Wesley did not emphasize postmillennialism, his writings reveal that he tended to think in keeping with that frame of reference." "Eschatology," in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, ed. Charles W. Carter (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983), 2:1119.

8. For a treatment of Wesley's postmillennial type of view, see Leon Hynson, "The Kingdom of God in the Theology of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 23, 1988.

9. Mortimer Arias, who suggests that Wesley did not believe with Augustine that the Kingdom became the Church, entertains the idea that Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace might be his kingdom of God—that type of grace being broader than the Church, even as the kingdom of God is. Although this is inviting, it might be an inappropriate identification, since God is not nearly reigning in many of the people to whom He extends prevenient grace. *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 23, 1988.

10. Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), 6:1054.



# Honor to Whom Honor Be Due *(Continued from page 17)*

accolades are not to be taken seriously, such an occasion may be used to hint that seeds of virtue are often hidden in personal flaws—e.g., “caution” is a good synonym for indecisiveness, “passion and concern” may substitute nicely for hotheadedness, etc.

“Then,” says Quag, “when I asked, as I awoke, if it were not a bit cynical

to call this offering for old Hoss a ‘love offering,’ I learned even more. Someone quoted the first one and a half sentences of what I later found out was part of Rule V of the *Code*. I also found out that the whole rule says, ‘Following close behind the duty to preserve the institution is the duty to maintain and adorn the public image of the church. Therefore,

cynicism is absolutely prohibited in public. Of course, it is recognized that it is an absolutely necessary instrument in the forwarding of institutional aims and plans; therefore, its private use is permitted.’ Well, I decided at that meeting that Trayder does deserve a real love offering, for once. As incompetent as he is, at least he falls under the category ‘neighbor,’ not simply under ‘ecclesiastical patsy.’”

Oh, yes, about Smerdley on the Bigelow. He’s getting wigged for letting Quagmire think. Smerdley forgot Rule IV of the *Cleric’s Code*: “Thinking interferes with loyalty. Loyalty is in; thinking is out. Three steps shall be taken to prevent thinking: (a) be alert to signs of thinking (then follows a list of signs); (b) encourage folks to think that they are thinking; (c) remain outwardly calm when signs of thinking appear, but begin *immediately* to eliminate the plague.”

In case you are worried, maybe even feeling a bit guilty yourself, Smerdley’s penalty will not be very severe. He did not ask Quagmire to think. He simply neglected to observe the telltale signs of lay thinking and to nip them in the bud—see Rule IV.A.2. A Level Three offense: serious, but not unforgivable.

## The Lonely New Member

*(Continued from page 22)*

lowship meetings, newsletters, and announcements from the pulpit.

As participants in such a fellowship program, we learn to see more people than those we know and to seat ourselves near strangers rather than with friends. We learn how to approach those we have not yet met. We discover the need to become acquainted with the unfamiliar person, to become generous with invitations.

Of course, some people are too shy or reserved to talk to someone they do not know. But as a minister once asked in his sermon: “What are the barriers that prevent you from speaking a hopeful, decent, truthful, and saving word to others?”

Each of us must search his own heart and mind. We who are shy may empathize best with a new member. We understand—vividly—how it feels to stand alone, while others talk around us or ignore us. If we consider the feelings of others before ourselves, our initial reluctance to begin a conversation will disappear.

Paul’s words must assume their true meaning: “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Cor. 12:26-27).

We must realize that our lonely members—if they remain lonely—will simply leave.

## The Bivocational Pastor *(Continued from page 23)*

his denomination. Often he labors without public recognition. He is usually aware that missionaries to foreign countries are supported conscientiously, while he, a North American church planter, struggles to make it.

Sermon preparation poses another dilemma for bivocational pastors. One pastor confessed, “I don’t know how many times I’ve finished writing a sermon on Saturday night and felt that if I had just one more day I could do so much better.” Another pastor said, “I don’t feel I have adequate, quality time. Therefore, while preaching, I have a sense of guilt that I’m not doing my best.”

Reaching new families and con-

vincing them to become part of a fledgling congregation is another dilemma. People moving into the vicinity of a small church would rather support an established church with programs for their children.

In church planting, meeting the needs of hurting people is especially important. However, the bivocational pastor often misses opportunities to assist members of his congregation. One pastor lamented, “I missed an important event in the life of one of our church families because of my job. Apologies don’t always make up for such failures.”

Sometimes, after working all day, the pastor has little energy left over to minister. One pastor said, “Some

days my work takes so much out of me, I don’t have the energy or emotional strength to visit during the evenings or do other ministerial duties.”

### THE HARD PLACES

In early days of the holiness movement large numbers of laymen responded by leaving prominent positions to work in storefront churches, missions, and a host of other projects.

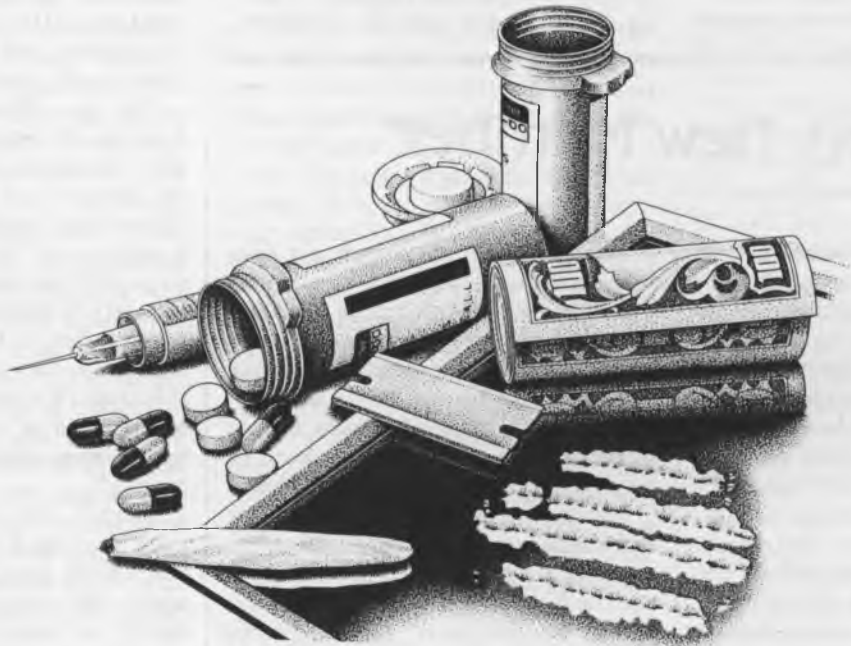
That passion is resurfacing today! Many persons who could serve as pastors in established churches that offer good salaries and effective ministries are being led by the Holy Spirit to hard places. When God leads, God enables!



# From Drugs to Deliverance in Christ: *Rev. J. A. Blake Preaches a New Message*

by Angela Elwell Hunt

Largo, Fla.



**T**he pastor's phone rang at 3 A.M. "Hello?" he answered, fighting to force the sound of sleep from his voice.

"Please, Pastor, I need help." The pastor recognized the voice of a young girl from his church. "I've just got to get away from here. How can I get off drugs if I can't get away from this place where everybody is doing them?"

The pastor despaired. Where could she go? She couldn't afford the high-priced clinics with their extensive waiting lists. There was no place to send her.

But Rev. Junious A. Blake, 52, was determined to find a solution. During his years in San Diego he had noticed a drastic increase in drug use. Drug addicts were on the street, in his church, and even in his home. Recently he had discovered that his own son was a drug user and pusher.

Today Blake's church, the Jackson Memorial Church of God and Christ in San Diego, is planning to fight the widespread drug problem of their

community with more than words. The 500 members of the church have pledged their time, money, and talents to construct and maintain a drug rehabilitation center.

The center, which will be designed for an extended ministry of the church to seniors and others, will primarily be used as a ministry for drug addicts. "God has directed our church out of the 'traditional church' mold into a ministry to the drug-addicted," says Blake.

It has not been an easy vision to accept. Blake had previously served as copastor of the church with his father for 14 years but had left the area to pastor a church in Texas. When the elder Blake died, however, the church called his son to continue the work the father had begun. Junious Blake returned in 1985 but found almost immediately that the focus of the church needed to change.

"When I was appointed pastor, many of the older members had left, but we found a deluge of young people coming. Many of these new

young people were or had been drug-addicted. So many of the last two generations have contact with drugs, I believe in the future as many as 80 percent of the typical congregation will have had some contact with drug addiction.

"I understand these things, but many of the older members were either ignorant or insensitive to the problem and unwilling to address it. God ushered a great number of them away. At the time I thought it was a tragedy, but God sent 150 young people to replace those people. These young people have no fear about going to the streets and witnessing to other addicts. Older people would never have gone to the streets."

The members of Blake's church are willing to go to where the addicts and pushers are because many of them know from personal experience how devastating drug addiction can be. "We have many people who were miraculously delivered from their addiction by the power of the

Holy Spirit, the preaching of the Word, and love," says their pastor. "Drug addiction is a problem we have to address. We have at least 45 people now who were once in the pits of addiction but now are fully recovered and are the strongest members of our church. Seeing these people and understanding our community, I realized we were going to have to modify our facility, our approach, and our ministry."

Blake says that drug use is so prevalent in his community that "8 of 10 young people I encounter as I walk down the street are high on something."

But it was seeing his own son on drugs that brought Blake to an awareness of how crucial the problem is. "My son was an addict and a pusher for eight years," says Blake. "God kept me in the pits of the problem so that I could have a sensitivity and understanding. My son would take things from our house—a great deal of money, his grandmother's furs, jewelry, watches—anything he could get. He was not in school; he was living on the street like a bum, and the only time he came home was when somebody got after him."

"Formerly he had been meticulous, washing his hands constantly; but when he was an addict, he got down to one pair of torn pants and didn't care. His hygiene was horrible. Everything he could get went for cocaine. We didn't know whether to kick him out or try to keep him at home. When he was out, every time we heard a siren, our hearts jumped. You see, in San Diego an average of two to three young men are slain in the streets each week in drug-related incidents."

Blake did what he could to help his son, but he soon ran out of options. "I'd try to keep him with me

during the day, but he would lie constantly. He literally couldn't help himself. We couldn't give him anything because he would use it for drugs, though we would have given anything to help him."

Finally Blake sent his son to Arkansas to live with his grandparents. Inside his Bible, next to the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, Blake kept a photograph of his son. He also made the decision to change the direction of his church. From now on, the church was going to focus its ministry on those who needed to escape from drug addiction to Christ.

"As soon as I acknowledged what God was leading me to do, my son recovered. He turned around, but I believe God took us through the experience to make us aware of the horrors of drug addiction. Until you have gone through the experience, you just have no way of knowing what it is like. When we were committed to the problem, God delivered my son."

"I now believe that narcotics are probably the devil's most effective tool. Narcotics destroy life before a person has an opportunity to come to God. It is a foundational evil upon which other evils arise—murder, prostitution, homosexuality, theft, robbery, and murder. The devil is using drugs to destroy our nation and our society."

How can other parents help keep their children from drugs? Blake believes the Bible holds the answer. "First and foremost, we must bring children up according to the Word of God. It takes a lot of prayer. I believe drugs are a spiritual evil from hell, and the answer is also spiritual. Drugs are so prevalent, I believe that the average child will probably be exposed to drugs by the age of six. Some children will be weak, some will be stronger."

"Parents must also be present. Parents must be close to their children to see the changes in their behavior. You can sense a subtle change in children who indulge in dope. Our son was old enough to know how to conceal it for at least four years. He wasn't listless, didn't flash money, and stayed in school; so when a friend of his told us, we were stunned."

"But the best answer is contained in the same old story—love. Many of our youth are simply looking for love. Family and church are the best outlets for love, and if a child is satisfied, the chances of seeking drugs are lessened. Young people need the security of love in the home from both parents. You must take the time to love them. Love is also important in recovery."

Blake realizes that love is the key to keeping young people off drugs and in helping them recover from addiction. Christians are commanded to love, and Blake's church is committed to loving others back to health and spiritual freedom.

"We need an army of people," says Blake. "Not psychiatrists or doctors, but people who are aware and willing to go out today and address this problem. Tomorrow it will be larger and more formidable."

"If someone gave me a million dollars, every penny of it would go toward addressing ministry toward the drug-addicted," says Blake. "The best thing about my job is seeing recovered drug addicts become strong members of the church. When I see it, I get a thrill and a high from which I never come down. I've done three weddings where either one or both partners were formerly not fit to become members of a home. I've seen God take people who were rotting away and set them up on their feet with a brand-new start."

## Pontius' Puddle



# Departure Time

by G. R. "Scott" Cundiff

Vivian, La.

Scripture: 2 Tim. 4:6-8

Text: 2 Tim. 4:6b: "The time has come for my departure."

**T**he apostle Paul is writing to Timothy, the young minister who has been a spiritual son to him. Paul senses that his life is soon to end and has been giving Timothy his last instructions. But now the tone of his letter changes. Rather than instructing the young minister, Paul begins to speak of his own life. What we see is the testimony of a saint. I doubt you will be surprised to find that Paul's testimony sounds as if it could be the words of the one whose memory we honor today.

When Paul talks about the departure time for the believer, he is sharing a concept that only comes with Christian maturity. He has served the Lord for many years and has daily dealt with the deep things of God. Now he seems to see life's end coming into view. He remarks that he feels that his life is passing as quickly as a cup of liquid is emptied out. However, he gives no sense of panic or despair. In fact, he reminds his young friend that "the time has come for my departure."

This phrase is quite an interesting one. The picture is that of a ship that has been tied to the dock, but the time has come for the knots to be undone and the ship freed to sail the open sea as it was designed to do.

Of course, this concept is just mainstream Christian thinking. It isn't that Christians hate life; the truth is, they enjoy it more than anyone else. However, we do realize that we are only here for a while, each awaiting our own departure time. As that day draws nearer, departing comes to mean less and less separation and more and more reunion with our Lord and those who have gone before. As a believer, Paul saw death as a loosening from the body that bound his spirit. He looked to his "departure time" with a wonderful confidence.

Why did he have such confidence? Verse 7 gives three reasons.

First, Paul testifies, "I have fought the good fight." Right off we are reminded that there are some battles in

life, and that Christians are not free from such battles. Also, that it is possible to handle life's tough days with an overcoming spirit. Days like this one can be especially difficult, but by God's help we can have real inner victory. One reason Paul and you and I can face our departure time with confidence is that we have maintained spiritual victory through the battles of life.

Second, Paul says, "I have finished the race." I can tell you a lot about how Paul started the race. One of the great incidents recorded in the Book of Acts is the conversion of Paul. His start for God was totally unique—he heard Jesus speak, saw a bright light, and was left blind for days. However, it is interesting to note that Paul doesn't refer to that here. He is more interested in telling Timothy that he has finished what he started. So it is with everyone here. We should each have a story of conversion to tell, but how we finish is more important than how we start! Before us today is a prime example of this—a life lived for Jesus right to the finish line. The second reason we can look to the departure time with confidence is that we have not only started for Jesus but finished the race for Him as well.

Third, Paul says, "I have kept the faith." Being a minister, I often hear people give their philosophy of religion. One of the more common goes something like this: "It doesn't matter what you believe so long as you are sincere." This idea would be hard to get past Paul. He has totally committed his life to what he here calls "the faith." He has dedicated his life to his personal faith in Jesus as the Son of God, that Christ died for our sins and arose the third day, and is coming again. This is what he, and every Christian, is called to believe. Paul tells Timothy, "Not only have I believed these things to be so, but I have lived as though I believed them." As we "keep the faith," we can have confidence as our departure time draws near.


Not only does Paul have confidence,

but we see a wonderful sense of anticipation in his testimony, as we see in verse 8. This verse has three important phrases for us today.

The first is: "The crown of righteousness." Almost certainly this is built on the idea of finishing the race. In athletic contests of Paul's day, the winner of the race received a crown or wreath proclaiming him victor. Paul firmly believes his "good fight" will be rewarded by the Lord. While life is often unfair, God is always perfectly aware of and willing to reward those who live for Him. As Christians, we ought to go out of our way to recognize those who make special contributions to our lives. But whether we do or not, God promises that He will. To tell the truth, I'd rather have God's reward than man's anyway!

The second important phrase is: "The righteous Judge." This is especially important for us to note during a service such as this one. If I were called upon to judge this life we honor today, no doubt you know what my decision would be. However, the truth is, God hasn't given me or anyone else that responsibility. I can assure you of this: God is "the righteous Judge"—we can leave this life in His hands without any fear whatsoever.

The third important phrase in this verse is: "Not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." The heart of the great apostle is seen here. He has been talking about himself and his anticipation of reward from God. But his evangelistic message comes through even in all this. Paul says, "Not only do I anticipate the reward that my departure time will bring, but others can have this anticipation too." I am convinced that we are perfectly on target to remind family and friends that the quality of the life we honor today is not beyond reach. The same God who worked here can work in you too. The same hope can be yours. The same reward is available to you.

There is nothing wrong with grieving at a time like this. One has been called away, and our lives will never be the same again. But our grief is not without hope. Our loss need not be forever. We can make Paul's testimony and this loved one's testimony our own: "The time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness." 

## Someone Will Always Need Your Message

by C. Neil Strait

Grand Rapids, Mich.

**I** recall something that the late William Barclay wrote to preachers, when he said: "Remember, there will always be someone present with a broken heart."

Sometime ago when they came back to me, these words put me to thinking. Out of my thoughts came the reminder that every pastor will have someone listening to what God has given him to share. It is an encouraging thought, indeed.

Too many times we let the voice of our critics or the apathy of some listeners dampen our motivation and preparation. But, Pastor, be encouraged—there will always be someone who needs what you have to share!

Pastor, be encouraged because three types of people attend your church. One, those I have mentioned—the brokenhearted, hurting, lonely, and problem-laden people. They need you! They need what God wants to say to

them—through you. You are their link to God, to good news, and to hope. Let their needs, and their support, be encouragement to you.

The second type of people who attend your church are those good, faithful people. They are positive, optimistic, supportive, and helpful. They love their pastor, pay their tithes, pray for the church, serve, and reach out. They are the "salt of the earth" people. They need you! They need your love and encouragement to nurture all their positive potential. Their support needs the nurture of the gospel, and they wait to hear what God will say to them through your preaching and ministry. Let their support and hunger be encouragement to you.

A third type of people who attend your church are the new families, the new Christians, people searching for answers to life's challenge and confusion. They need you! They need a

word from God. They need the challenge and direction of the gospel. Let their searching be an encouragement to your ministry. Be uplifted by their confidence.

Let us be honest. A fourth group attends your church—those critics, power brokers, negative thinkers, and people of similar slant. They also need your ministry. They may not motivate you as much as the other three groups, but God has a word for them—through you! Be encouraged that God has given them to you. The challenge to minister to them, to reach them, to help them, will send you to your knees, and that will make you a better pastor.

So, be encouraged even with the fourth group. Always remember this about the last group—they are not the last, the best, or the right word about your ministry. They may be more vocal than the other three combined, but do not let their volume convince you that "loudness is better." They are not the authentic word on your ministry. That belongs to God. Let this truth encourage you as you minister to this fourth group.

Pastor, be encouraged! Three out of four groups who want to hear your message from God is enough to keep your head high and your heart mellow and open. So, Pastor, be encouraged! ✠

## A System for Church Files *(Continued from page 33)*

No filing system is any better than someone's faithfulness in following the system. Thus, only one person should file and retrieve items from the files. That individual should be completely familiar with the system. A reference or index of the complete files can be typed on a sheet of paper or on 3" x 5" cards for reference in finding the location of a particular item.

As new items are added to sections of the file, be sure to place your "fifth cut" tabs so as to stagger from one to another, thus avoid hiding any item. You may have to move a few tabs from one location to another when adding tabs.

Keep in mind that the colored gelatins help you identify the level of placement of each section. As an example, your use of red tabs for the divisions tells you that each red tab is a divisional folder. If a folder has a blue tab, it is a departmental tab under the red divisional ones.

Unfortunately, the system is no better than the care of the filing clerk's faithfulness in following directions. Properly used, the system could save

you hundreds of man-hours a year that might otherwise be spent in looking for lost items that should have been filed correctly. ✠

## A Matter of Style *(Continued from page 42)*

South, Atterbury, Swift, Prior, and Pope. They might be a bit dated for us to imitate, but the point Wesley was actually trying to make is that the preacher should read good writers and listen to good preachers. Wesley would say, look for those who show "no stiffness, no hard words; no **apparent** art, no affectation; all is natural, and therefore consummately beautiful. Go thou and **write** likewise" (*Letters* 4:257).

All of this was, and still is, good advice. Keep it simple. Use simple words, short sentences, and preach to "Everyman." But also keep it natural. Don't be stiff. Be yourself. Also, read good writ-

ers and listen to good preachers. They are the ones who demonstrate these traits. The best advice Wesley gave to young Sammy was this: Remember, "you are a Christian minister, speaking and writing to save souls. Have this end always in your eye, and you will never designedly use an hard word. Use all the sense, learning, and fire you have; forgetting yourself, and remembering only these are the souls for whom Christ died" (*Letters* 4:258). ✠

Barry E. Bryant is pastor of the Thomas Memorial Church of the Nazarene, London. He is also working on his Ph.D., on Wesley's doctrine of sin, at King's College, the University of London.



# Red, Telephone Cables, and Ministry

## An Urban Metaphor of Ministry

by Fletcher L. Tink

*Alhambra, Calif.*

**T**hat day, the fellow had the nerve to invade my hallowed space!

Everyone knows that I am cramped on time for doing office, bureaucratic-type things. And this intruder was here, discombobulating my whole office with a total rewiring of the church telephone service. As fate would have it, the phone system for the entire building worked out of a dispatch box right behind my desk chair. I had been told that the "inconvenience"—a kind euphemism for "displacement"—would last only one day.

After three days, I was getting tired of his interference and decided, in order to keep my cool, I would make the best of the situation.

"What's your name?" I inquired.

"Red," he responded. "But that's not my real name. I guess you can figure out why they call me 'Red,'" as he jerked his head unnecessarily as if to punctuate the fact that he indeed has red hair. Likewise, I introduced myself.

"Just what is it you're doing, Red?"

He described to me that the antiquated, snake-thick cable, packaging its dozens of tiny color-coded wires, needed to be replaced by a more efficient system. Becoming more curious, I watched him as he cut out bulky switching circuits, replacing them with new technologies based on solid-state circuitry and microchips. The new wiring was shorter, thinner, and less obtrusive. I watched, intrigued, as he proudly exhibited his technical expertise, tapping into wire after wire that he had reconnected, in order to confirm that each phone was on line again. With the steady hand of confidence, he took tiny little red wires and se-

cured them together. He did the same with the yellows, the blacks, the greens, the blues, and so forth.

As he worked, we talked about his Mormon background and his current disillusionment with his "family faith." He then hinted to me about the tragic state of his immediate family. I listened and empathized. But in a quick change of mood, he beamed as he told me how much he loved his job!

In a revelatory flash, a thought grabbed me. "Red," I said, "you and I are in the same business, you know!"

He was taken aback. "What do you mean?"

I explained: "Red, you've studied and trained to reconnect broken, worn-out, and obsolete wires. You know *what* is supposed to connect with *what*. You don't create the messages; you don't supply the electrical juice. You just quietly, persistently bring wires together so that the message gets through. I really admire that!"

And I continued: "But then, that's really all that I'm called to do. Somewhere along the line, God has called

me, too, to be a telephone technician. I am called to create connections so that the message comes out at the far end. God creates the hardware, Jesus is the essence of the message, the Holy Spirit is the electrical charge, and somewhere in the complex process, I am tutored by Him to help bring the wires together."

He smiled, thought it a novel idea, and then together we prayed—for him, for his family.

As he was leaving, I asked for a segment of the discarded cable. He happily offered a generous slice to me. "Just want it to remind me of what my ministry is all about," I told him.

Some weeks later I lost it. I phoned around on the new system, trying to get in touch with Red. He seemed genuinely pleased to hear from me. "Any possibility I can have another piece of your throwaway cable?" I hesitatingly asked.

"Sure thing," he chuckled back. "It might take a day or two. You know, I live 50 miles away."

"Aw, forget it, Red," I replied. "That's too much driving."

"No, I want you to have it. I know that it means something to you," he insisted. It appeared in my office shortly thereafter.

That was one of the best presents I received that year!

Ezekiel 37 talks about the resurrection of the dry, disconnected bones that miraculously reconnect. That same chapter describes broken sticks, broken relationships again being reunited. Apparently God wants us to be a part of a process of reattachment, of restoration, and of reconciliation.

A telephone repairman with the nickname "Red" taught me that one day!





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# WORSHIP

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# & PREACHING

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# HELPS

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Larry W. Leonard

## **March/April/May 1991**

Prepared by Larry W. Leonard

### **INTRODUCTION**

As winter concludes and spring proposes an increase in activities, many demands are placed upon your time. My hope is to give you some ideas that may assist you in a positive experience of sermon preparation.

To this end, sermons are presented here that are Bible-based and life-oriented with balancing elements of application and information. I pray that your life and that of your congregation may be enriched as the Holy Spirit uses these written words to produce a positive worship experience.

# CHOICES WITHIN A CHOICE

by Larry W. Leonard

Josh. 24:14-24

March 3, 1991

## INTRO

Most of the people in our churches have chosen to follow the Christian faith. More have chosen to associate themselves with the title "Christian" rather than to follow closely to its tenets of belief. In defining Christianity, love has been the single most dominant trait of its meaning. In that case many who call themselves Christian are defying their greatest attribute. Christians are fighting Muslims, Protestants are at war with Roman Catholics, and evangelicals ridicule mainliners.

To choose Christianity, we have a responsibility to emulate exactly the life of its Founder. Jesus was the Capstone of this building. He is life over death, love over hate, forgiveness over bitterness, light over darkness, and service over self.

**ILLUS.** The great Indian leader Gandhi once declared himself on a fast until the Hindus and Muslims stopped fighting. A Hindu leader came to the beloved Gandhi, pleading with him to cease his fast. Gandhi reiterated his resolve.

To the Hindu leader hatred defeats honor. He bitterly justified his fight by recounting the event of the Muslims grabbing his little boy and crushing his head. He in turn had captured a little Muslim boy and crushed his head. The leader then told Gandhi, "I have been living in hell ever since."

In gentle concern, Gandhi said, "I think I know a way out of hell for you. You should go find a boy similar to your son who was killed by the Muslims, take him into your home as your own son, and raise him as a Muslim." In other words, to choose life over death is a way of escaping hell.

The Christian life-style must be radical if lived as the Founder lived. Joshua sees a similar problem with the Jews who said they chose God. They chose Him on their own terms. However, Joshua describes the greatest beauty in the world—being what we say we are.

## I. To Be a True Christian Will Mean Taking Definite Directives (v. 15)

*A. There is only one standard for the Christian—that is to be HOLY.*

*B. We find ourselves in a society where gods have been set up on every TV station, every radio station, every department store, every school, and every job.*

*C. Everywhere there are standards for the "IN" and the "OUT." It is a system of personal gain. It has its roots in secular and carnal values.*

*D. We can be "in the world" and yet not "of the world." Jesus prayed to that end in John 17. There is a big difference.*

**ILLUS.** A young seminary graduate said to an older professor, "There are two sides to every question."

"Yes," replied the professor, "and there are two sides to flypaper, but it makes a difference to the fly which side it chooses."

**ILLUS.** I was told by an associate staff member in another city that there was a conflict between two factions in his church. In seeking advice from his pastor, he found that the pastor had taken a stand on both sides. "But both sides can't be right," the associate replied.

The pastor, who hated conflict, said, "And why not?"

*E. We do have to make a choice.* To live as Christ did is the only way to be like Christ.

## II. To Be a True Christian Will Mean Throwing Away Harmful Holdings (v. 14)

*A. Joshua was firm in his conviction that a choice had to be made.* It was not just a choice of preference of words but an action that supported it.

*B. Everything that we have against God's commandments, against Jesus' style, must be thrown away.*

*C. Jesus had a choice of holding on to His human will.* (Read John 12:27-28.)

*D. Everyone was holding on to associations with the people of the land in which they lived.* They wanted to be accepted.

**ILLUS.** I like the stories Dr. Richard Zanner tells, as director of world missions for the region of Africa in the Church of the Nazarene. He says that he had gone miles down the river in a little canoe to the village of a tribe who had become Christians and joined the Church of the Nazarene.

They invited him to join them for dinner as the guest of honor, a very high position. They began to prepare two very large rats for him and the 12 other guests. He planned how he would eat other things on the plate and avoid tasting the rat. However, to honor Dr. Zanner as their special guest, he received one entire rat for himself, while the other 12 shared the other rat. Unable to avoid the issue, he ate every bite, distracting himself with thoughts of Christmas, grandchildren, and other pleasantries. He just wouldn't offend them by not eating.

*E. As distasteful as that may be, the way we hold on to selfish gratification is worse.* Jesus said it best: "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

## III. To Be a True Christian Will Mean Turning to Single-Minded Service (v. 23b)

*A. Joshua said that they must yield their hearts to God.* Jesus restates the facts (Luke 9:23-25).

*B. Joshua was saying not only to throw away the symbol of evil but also to have your heart transformed.*

*C. Jesus told Nicodemus that a change of heart must take place. (Read John 3:1-3.) Paul told the Romans that all the yielding had to be done toward the life of Christ.*

*We must be transformed or we can't yield. (Read Rom. 12:1-2.)*

## CONCLUSION

Elijah reaffirms this position in 1 Kings 18:21. There is only one God. If we hold anything above the desires and rule of God as established in His Word, we have made a wrong choice. The choice is ours. Beauty is in making the right choice.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements

**WE PURPOSE IN OUR HEARTS TO WORSHIP**

Instrumental Call to Worship

Scriptural Call to Worship Ps. 91:1-2, 14-15

**WE PRAISE GOD WITH OUR VOICES IN SONG AND SCRIPTURE**

Congregational Hymn "A Charge to Keep I Have"

Responsive Reading Col. 1:9-18

Ministry in Music

**WE PETITION WITH THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE**

Congregational Prayer Song "Search Me, O God"

Pastoral Prayer

Congregational Hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

Reception of Tithes and Offerings

**WE PARTICIPATE IN WORSHIP**

Sanctuary Choir Ministry

The Morning Message "CHOICES WITHIN A CHOICE"

Josh. 24:14-24

Benediction

Closing Song "He Keeps Me Singing"

### Pastoral Prayer

Encourage attenders to come to an open altar of family prayer.

### Creative Worship Ideas

*Instrumental Call to Worship*

Use organ and piano or other instruments available to play a stirring call.

*Responsive Reading*

Print the scripture as it should be read responsively and insert it into your worship folder or use as a single handout.

# THE SECRET OF BRIDGE BUILDING

by Larry W. Leonard

John 14:1-14  
March 10, 1991

## INTRO

Jesus was a master bridge builder. He had a way of bridging all barriers, reaching out to attract all classes of people from the rich young ruler to the poor old beggar. His life was continually drawing all men to Him in worship.

Jesus taught the great value of relationships. His life-style demonstrated that the most effective way to reach people was to care for them—right where they were.

Jesus was far different than the world's understanding of humanity. They never could figure Him out. He loved them when they were unlovable. He loved them when they didn't deserve it. He loved them when they refused to love Him back. He was so committed to be God to the world that He was relentless in building bridges regardless of how people treated Him.

**ILLUS.** In "Peanuts" cartoon strip, Snoopy is the highest expression of dedication to his family. In one cartoon he is seen licking Lucy. She screams, "Hey, get away from me with your old wet tongue!" He tries to get close to her, but she refuses.

He then goes to Linus and nuzzles up to him, only to receive the same ungrateful response as Linus says, "Hey, cut it out!! Do you have to be licking people all the time? If you're not licking somebody's hands, your licking somebody's shoes! Stupid dog!"

Snoopy then turns, walks away, and says to himself, "They all resent me because I'm so devoted."

How many times must Jesus have felt that way. Yet He kept coming back to build bridges.

Jesus built bridges to everyone.

## I. Jesus Built Bridges to Sinners

*A. Jesus built bridges to all people when even His own crew didn't understand His purpose (v. 5).*

*B. Jesus said that He is the Way, the Bridge for life to all sinners (v. 6). (Read Matt. 9:9-13.)*

*C. The "righteous" became indignant that Jesus would lower himself to go out to the despised. They might have accepted His actions differently if the sinners had approached Him first. But He sought them out.*

*D. Jesus broke the rules of eternal engineering when He spoke with a person at the well who was a sinner, a woman, and a Samaritan. (Read John 4:7-26. Read also Luke 19:1-10.)*

*E. Those to whom Jesus reached out began building bridges to others to tell them about Him.*

*F. Jesus is reaching out to build a bridge to you if you have unconfessed sin.*

## II. Jesus Built Bridges to the Hurting

*A. Jesus built bridges from us to God (vv. 8-9).*

1. Jesus showed us by His life what God is really like.

2. Jesus showed the desire of God to save sinners.

3. Jesus showed us God's desire to reach out to the hurting.

*B. It was a way of life to Jesus.* He was always looking for someone who needed to be loved. (Read Matt. 19:13-15.) Those whom society had dubbed nonpersons, Jesus touched with compassion. (Read Matt. 4:23-25.)

*C. Jesus' touch earned Him a reputation as the Healer.* He continued this mission, even when there were objectors. (Read Matt. 12:22.)

*D. Do we gain a reputation as a lover of people, or do we let distractions stop us?* If we are known to be compassionate, it will be because we continue to reach out to others regardless of the circumstances or the barriers.

**ILLUS.** At a dinner party, a woman said to Lord Northcliffe, "It is really quite surprising—Thackeray awoke one morning and found himself famous!"

Lord Northcliffe answered, "When that morning dawned, Thackeray had been writing eight hours a day for 15 years. No, madam, the man who wakes up and finds himself a success hasn't been asleep."

*E. We must be like Jesus, always practicing the art of reaching out to all the hurting.*

## III. Jesus Built Bridges to Other Bridge Builders

*A. Jesus had chosen bridge builders to work with Him.* He knew that after His departure, bridges would continue to be built only if He found some who could carry on His work.

*B. Jesus' disciples felt inadequate, unsure, and afraid when He left them.* But He gave them the assurance they needed (v. 12) and the particulars of their assignment (Acts 1:4-5, 8).

*C. Jesus was so sure that bridge building must continue down through time that He took time to pray for you and me. (Read John 17:20-23.)*

*D. Many people are looking for a bridge to help them cross over the troubles of their times.* Some people always thought that they had the answers, only to find out that they are lost and need help.

**ILLUS.** A ranger on duty at Lassen Volcanic National Park in California was approached by a tourist who gave a brief description of an unusual bird he had just seen and asked whether the ranger could identify it.



"No, I don't recognize it either, but I can help you. I have here a copy of Roger Tory Peterson's definitive *Field Guide to Western Birds*."

The man replied, "That won't help; that bird's not in there. I'm Roger Tory Peterson."

Life deals new questions to all people. We can help point others to the True Answer.

*E. Jesus built a bridge to His disciples with the truth for all needs. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and spread the Word. (Read Acts 4:36-37.)*

#### **SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements

**WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP**

Celebration Choruses "Jesus Loves Me"

"Oh, How He Loves You and Me"

Scriptural Call to Worship Ps. 89:1-2, 8

**WE LIFT OUR VOICES IN PRAISE**

"And Can It Be?"

"Ring the Bells of Heaven"

**WE SHARE GOD'S LOVE**

Bringing His Tithes and Our Offerings

Sanctuary Choir Special

**WE EXPRESS OUR PETITIONS TO GOD**

Prayer Chorus "Be Glorified"

Pastoral Prayer

Prayer Response Chorus "Thank You, Lord"

**WE HEAR GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMED**

Ministry in Music

The Morning Message

"THE SECRET OF BRIDGE BUILDING"

John 14:1-14

Benediction

Closing Song

"Love Lifted Me"

#### **Creative Worship Ideas**

*Celebration Choruses*

Obtain permission to print choruses in your morning worship folder or project them onto a screen with an overhead projector.

*Offertory Sentence*

2 Cor. 9:6-8

*Prayer Response Chorus*

While people are returning to their seats from the open altar of prayer, begin singing "Thank You, Lord."

# LIFE IN THE DESERT OF DEATH

by Larry W. Leonard

John 12:20-28

March 17, 1991

## INTRO

Circumstances can make us resign from life, or they can resurrect us to new purpose. Jesus knew that His human popularity would soon end. He was very human. He had plans and hopes. However, the death of those dreams loomed like a desert before Him. He faced choices: He could resign from life in the face of death. Others have. Or He could recognize that the death of one dream can mean the life of another.

**ILLUS.** Pat Dixon resigned from life in 1955. Life had blown a desert of loss into her world. Her second son, David, had just died of polio. Although she had others to live for, Pat could only feel her grief. She closed the curtains to her house and to her hope. She watched sad shows on TV and drank herself into carelessness. Her husband and other son went on with life without her. Although she had a physical heartbeat for many years later, Pat Dixon died in the desert of death.

Have you had any dreams die recently? Have you seen the handwriting on the wall proclaiming trouble and uncharted trials? For the person who has surrendered his life to Jesus-style living under the direction of Almighty God, difficulties are merely a prediction of growing life in the middle of the desert of death. Jesus is our Role Model.

## I. Jesus Saw Hope in Hopelessness (v. 23)

*A. Our faith in the providence of God is greater than all the happiness of life.* Happiness has a way of evaporating in events.

*B. Jesus says that it is the death of a dream that often spawns streams of greater productivity.* Often the anticipation of seeking is greater than the joy of possession.

**ILLUS.** When Thomas Edison reached his 80th birthday, an interviewer approached him at his party. The interviewer asked him, "Mr. Edison, which, of all your inventions, was the greatest?"

Needing no pause at all to think further, Edison replied, "Without doubt, the research laboratory."

*C. In the death of the "known," life springs from our search for the future's hope.* When nothing seems to be happening, something is happening—that is, if we are dead to ourselves and alive to the process of God.

*D. Jesus said, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24).*

*E. Hope is faith in the processes of God.* Hope is not wishful thinking. Hope is a belief that if the seed of what exists falls into the ground and dies, God will spring it to life in abundance. (Read Rom. 4:18-22.)

## II. Jesus Saw Contradiction in Caution (v. 25)

*A. Constant protection is not necessarily always prudent.* Protection can sometimes impede progress.

*B. What does God want to do with your life?* We think He wants us to protect ourselves. Not so. Moving out of our comfort zone to do something big for Jesus can be the very thing that enhances life.

*C. We save our resources so that we can be more comfortable.* We save our time so that we can be more rested. We save our energy so that we can be more relaxed. Jesus said to one who wanted to do that, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Luke 12:20).

*D. Process is painful.* Process is work. Process is sacrifice. Process means waiting. But it is waiting in action. It is a willingness to be perfected. (Read James 1:2-4 and 1 Pet. 1:3-9.)

**ILLUS.** At the end of 1990 the newspaper *USA Today* reported that General Motors' Buick announced a little good news, bad news for the 1990 model year. The good news: It finally will build the convertible Regatta—that sporty car people have been waiting for. It will also offer a four-door Regal for those who like the Regal's trim size and crisper handling but wouldn't put up with the two-door coupe.

The bad news: You will have to wait for six months.

Buick is willing to delay its only truly new '90 models because it wants to protect the reputation for quality it has begun to build. Buick feels that rushing the new cars could jeopardize recent top 10 scores in quality surveys by J. D. Power and Associates.

Buick General Manager Ed Mertz, at a preview of the new models, said, "Buick is building more than automobiles; we're building a reputation."

*E. Something more valuable than a Buick is in process: you, a life for the cause of Christ.* Don't work to save yourself. Work to give yourself away.

## III. Jesus Saw Obedience in Obstacles (v. 27)

*A. What we should do about trouble and difficulty is not always apparent.*

**ILLUS.** Charlie Brown had been enjoying a sunny afternoon at the beach. He had meticulously constructed a superb sand castle. As he stood up to admire his completed endeavor, he was engulfed by a powerful incoming tide that flattened his masterpiece. Looking at the smooth sand of a once-elegant castle, he says, "There must be a lesson here, but I don't know what it is."

*B. We can pick up our empty bucket and go home, or we can find better territory and begin to carry on.*

*C. Jesus said, "Whoever is My servant must follow Me" (v. 26, paraphrase). That means we will follow His style. His style was to go forward into a week that He knew held pain in store. It meant to follow through in obedience, to grow in trouble, and to let God's purpose spring from the desert as a rose of beauty and delight.*

## CONCLUSION

Whatever your situation, you can have joy. With perseverance and patience, you will see your faith develop and grow into beauty you have no way of envisioning now.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements

#### PRAISING THE FATHER

Choral Call to Worship "Praise Him, Praise Him"

Scriptural Call to Worship Psalm 8

Congregational Hymn "How Great Thou Art"

Sanctuary Choir Special

#### GLORIFYING THE SON

Prayer Chorus "Let's Just Praise the Lord"

Pastoral Prayer

Congregational Song "Let All the People Praise Thee"

Presentation of His Tithes and Our Offerings

#### GROWING IN THE SPIRIT

Ministry in Music

The Morning Message

"LIFE IN THE DESERT OF DEATH"

John 12:20-28

Closing Hymn

"He Leadeth Me"

#### Pastoral Prayer

Remind everyone that the altar is available for prayer during the pastoral prayer.

#### Creative Worship Ideas

##### Welcome and Announcements

Have head greeter and pastor enter sanctuary five minutes before the service begins to recognize visitors and make announcements. Choir then enters at conclusion of announcements to begin service.

##### Offertory Sentence

Exod. 25:2

# WHEN LIFE ISN'T AS IT APPEARS

by Larry W. Leonard

Luke 19:28-48

March 24, 1991

## INTRO

They should have known; they had been told. They should have recognized; they had heard. They should have deciphered; it was clear. Yet what the disciples desired so outweighed what they needed that they were unable to comprehend what was really happening.

Jesus had told them that the moment at hand would come. Death was imminent. Peter had rebuked Jesus. Jesus had chastised Peter. And yet, Peter still could not see the necessity of death. Sacrifice was required then—the death of Jesus. Sacrifice is required now—the death of our willfulness.

Jesus had even contradicted the entry style of a human conqueror. Still their desires resisted His determination.

**ILLUS.** In the 19th century when Chancellor Bismarck of Prussia chose to make his grand entrance into Jerusalem, he did so on a white horse. He was accompanied by such a large army of officials that a section of the wall had to be removed. That was how a person of greatness was supposed to enter a city.

However, Jesus defied the traditions of man and introduced a higher order of living compatible with God's expectations.

In this Palm/Passion Week three dominant words sum up the climate: Cheers, Tears, and Fears.

## I. Listen to the Cheers of the Crowd

*A. The crowd cheered for Jesus because of the miracles He had done.* Though their cheers were from a misguided belief, their cheers were appropriate.

*B. They thought Jesus had come to save them from their most vivid enemy.* They were partly correct but perceptually wrong. They thought He would defeat Rome and restore their power. Instead He knew that by His death, they could reign with Him forever. (Read Isa. 55:6-9 and Rom. 5:12-19.)

**ILLUS.** In a Peanuts cartoon, Charlie Brown and Linus are standing next to each other, staring at a star-filled sky. Charlie Brown asks Linus, "Would you like to see a falling star?"

"Sure," Linus responds. "Then again, I don't know. I'd hate to have it fall just on my account."

Jesus did just that. For our sakes and for the sakes of those who did not understand, He willingly laid down His life.

*C. What appears to be our enemy is seldom the real villain.* What we see as the solution is rarely the best cure. (Read Eph. 6:10-18 and 2 Cor. 10:3-5.)

*D. Jesus came as a humble, obedient, and compassionate Savior so that He could defeat the real enemy.* He tolerated the cheers but refused to adopt the cheerers' methods.

## II. See the Tears of the Teacher

*A. As Jesus beheld the city of Jerusalem, He was overcome with an emotion that none of His future sorrows could evoke.*

*B. Jesus saw that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the unbelief and rebellion that would bring about His own crucifixion.* It was not the walls and streets that brought such sorrow. The people had rebelled against His own Father.

*C. Jesus shed tears for people of incorrect motivation.* They had religion. They even professed to protect the name of Jesus' Father. The problem lay in the motives for their actions of protection.

*D. They preferred personal position and praise over godly service and subordination.* (Read Luke 20:45-47.)

*E. They had God in their heads but not in their hearts.*

**ILLUS.** John Burroughs, one of America's great naturalists, was asked by a neighbor lady, "Why is it, Mr. Burroughs, that there are so many birds at your place? I have no birds at all in my yard."

At the very moment she phrased her question, John Burroughs in absorbed fascination was observing in the lady's own yard all sorts of birds, flitting amid shrubbery and darting among tree limbs. He replied, "Madam, you will not see birds in your yard until you have birds in your heart."

When we have Christ's motives in our hearts, we will understand better His role of servanthood and adopt it as a model for our own lives.

## III. Observe the Fears of the Followers

*A. Anytime we do not recognize Jesus for who He is and accept His way, we will be thrown into desperation.*

*B. Lying just ahead of the cheering followers were fears precipitated by the enemies of Jesus.*

*C. Jesus related to their fears.* He knew they would be scattered. Because He took on human form, He understands our fears.

**ILLUS.** My wife, Gay, has a large collection of Nativity scenes. Last Christmas, she noticed that the Baby Jesus was missing from the manger of one of her sets. In the

bedroom of our two-year-old daughter, Christina, she located the missing piece. Christina sat in her little rocking chair, cradling the two-inch Baby Jesus in the crook of her arm. As she rocked, she said, "Shh! I'm rocking Baby Jesus. He's crying. He's afraid of the thunder."

Why would a two-year-old think that Baby Jesus was afraid of the thunder? Because she was afraid of the thunder. And because He became human, He can understand and empathize with our every fear.

*D. Jesus acknowledged the reality of trouble and fear.* But He became triumphant so that God could be triumphant and so that we can join their celebration. (Read John 16:33.)

## CONCLUSION

Every day we can have with Jesus a triumphal entry into our world. He has come to enter our cities. He has come to cleanse all our iniquities. He has come to calm our fears. Our task requires that we discard our means and accept His methods.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Announcements

Sanctuary Choir Call to Worship

Scriptural Call to Worship

Responsive Reading

John 12:12-19

Children's Song and Palms

Congregational Hymn "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"

Reception of Tithes and Offerings

Congregational Hymn

"Rejoice, the Lord Is King"

Prayer Chorus

"Thank You, Lord"

Pastoral Prayer

Sanctuary Choir Special

The Morning Message

"WHEN LIFE ISN'T AS IT APPEARS"

Luke 19:28-48

Benediction

Closing Song

"Holiness unto the Lord"

### Creative Worship Ideas

#### Sanctuary Beautification

Several weeks in advance offer attenders the opportunity to place memorial lilies in the sanctuary. Print names of donors and of those memorialized in an insert in your worship folder or use as a single handout. These blooms should still be beautiful for your Easter Sunday as well.

#### Responsive Reading

Print the scripture as it should be read responsively and insert it into your worship folder or use as a single handout.

#### Moments with Children

Have children come down the aisles singing "Hosanna! Hosanna!" or "Praise Him, Praise Him, All Ye Little Children" while they wave palm branches. Children should come up to the platform and be seated on the floor. When they finish, the pastor should join them in an informal setting to explain the origin of Palm Sunday. Save the palm branches for use again on Easter Sunday.



# CHRIST'S RESURRECTION COMMITMENT

by Larry W. Leonard

Luke 24:1-12

March 31, 1991

## INTRO

Jesus exemplified commitment in His life. He proved it in His death. He perfected it in His resurrection. He will complete it in eternity. This one word has made the difference. The word *commitment* has brought hope in the place of despair, success instead of failure, and life over death.

One missing ingredient can cause a cake not to rise, a marriage not to succeed, and a plane not to land.

**ILLUS.** On January 25, 1990, Colombian airliner Avianca Flight 52 crashed into a hillside in Cove Neck, Long Island, N.Y., killing 73 of its 159 passengers. The aircraft had run out of fuel. The cause of the crash, however, was a matter of one word. In its communication with the control tower, the plane would have had clearance to land earlier had the copilot merely used the word "emergency." The tape of the conversation within the cockpit revealed that the pilot asked the copilot three times if he had told the tower that they had "an emergency." All three times he responded that he had "apprised them of the situation." One word would have made the difference in the lives of 73 people, including all three members of the cockpit crew.

Without "commitment" there would have been no Easter Sunday. Jesus was committed to the Resurrection. Commitment goes farther than we think.

## I. Commitment Sent Jesus to Earth—It Has the Element of Compassion

*A. God's commitment saved His creatures from themselves and the sin they had committed.*

*B. God had compassion on His creatures.* (Read Ps. 103:8-14.) God has a commitment to love. Love exists in the heart of God, not in the actions of mankind.

**ILLUS.** A couple wrote into their wedding vows these words: "I promise to be faithful as long as I feel love for her." It has been said that marriage may be made in heaven, but people are responsible for the maintenance work.

*C. Although Jesus was committed to us, His coming was a fulfillment of His commitment to His Father.* (Read John 17:1-5.) This meant that Jesus gave up His rights and privileges of being served in order to become a servant. We cannot call ourselves Christian until we are willing to serve—serving our spouses, our children, our parents, our brothers and sisters, and the thankless people of the world.

*D. We must take on the life-style of commitment that Jesus demonstrates.* (Read Phil. 2:5-11.)

## II. Commitment Sent Jesus to the Cross—It Has the Element of Obedience

*A. The Cross came as a result of involvement.*

**ILLUS.** A father gave this piece of advice to his son leaving for boot camp: "Be quiet—and get in the middle." It was obvious to the son what he meant: "Don't stick your neck out. Don't call attention to yourself."

*B. We have been faced with the question: "If I knew I had only one year to live, what would I do?"* The only logical answer is that we must be about our Father's business.

**ILLUS.** Recently a pastor arrived at the hospital to visit a critically ill patient. While nurses attended to his needs, the pastor was delayed in making his visit. So he sat down in the hallway to browse the daily newspaper. With serious illness and possible death of his parishioner crowding his mind, his thoughts were jolted as his eyes fell on a familiar name on the obituary page—his own! Quickly scanning the article, he discovered the obvious—that another person with the same name had died. But reevaluation of his own life was an immediate result. How would other people evaluate our lives if we were suddenly removed from this world? What would our commitment level have said to those around us?

*C. Jesus did not always "feel" like obeying His Father's plan.* (Read Luke 22:39-44.)

*D. Jesus did not commit for the purpose of death. He came to bring life.* (Read John 10:10-13.)

## III. Commitment Sent Jesus Back to the Father—It Has the Element of Provision

*A. Jesus loved His disciples and cared for them, as His prayer in John 17 confirms.* Jesus, however, had a higher commitment to the plan of the Father. (Read John 16:5-11.)

*B. Jesus has made a commitment to provide for us where He is.* (Read John 14:1-3.)

**ILLUS.** All of mankind has built within a hope of life forever. American Indians place arrowheads and earthen vessels by the side of their dead so that they might have weapons with which to hunt and utensils with which to cook in the happy hunting ground. Greeks put silver coins in the mouths of their corpses so that they might pay Charon, the ferryman, to carry them across the Styx River into eternal life. Egyptians placed in the coffins of their dead the Book of the Dead, which contained prayers the dead were to utter and a map to guide them through the unseen world. Laplanders buried flint and tinder with their dead so that they might have light for the dark jour-

ney. Norsemen buried a fallen warrior's horse and armor with him for the dead hero's triumphant ride into Valhalla. Greenlanders buried a dog with their boys so that they would have a guide and friend in death.

*C. We have a Guide who has gone before us to prepare a place for us. His commitment has made ours worthwhile.*

*D. Those who die in Christ are with Him today.*

**ILLUS.** George and Rosie were a very close, devoted husband and wife. Rosie went to church every Sunday of their 40 years of marriage. Although George refused to go in, he would drive Rosie and remain in the car reading the newspaper until the church service concluded.

When Rosie died, for many weeks the church attenders grieved not only for her empty spot in the pew but also for the empty parking spot of George's car. However, several months later George's car reappeared on Easter Sunday. This time, George not only parked in his familiar space but went inside.

The pastor delivered his victorious Easter sermon and offered the invitation. Suddenly George stood up. In an emotional voice, he announced, "Rosie lives." Then he began to sing, "My wild Irish Rose, / The sweetest flower that grows. . . ." Others began to join in until the entire congregation celebrated together in a song of triumph of life over death.

## CONCLUSION

Can we make a commitment today that is not determined by human need or desire or drive? Can we recognize that "commitment" is the one word that brought Jesus here and will ultimately take us to be with Him? Today is the day: "He is risen."

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements

WE EXPRESS JOY IN THE RESURRECTION

Congregational Song

"He Lives"

Responsive Reading

Matt. 28:1-10

Sanctuary Choir Special

WE EXPRESS PRAISE FOR THE RESURRECTION

"Christ Arose"

"Christ, the Lord, Is Risen Today"

WE EXPRESS THANKSGIVING FOR THE RESURRECTION

Reception of His Tithes and Our Offerings

Pastoral Prayer

WE LEARN TO LIVE IN THE RESURRECTION

Special Music

The Morning Message

"CHRIST'S RESURRECTION COMMITMENT"

Luke 24:1-12

Closing Hymn

"Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

### Creative Worship Ideas

#### Congregational Response

At the beginning of the service, the pastor will say, "He is risen," and will ask the congregation to respond, "He is risen indeed." Repeat at various times throughout the service.

#### Children's Participation

Have children sit beside a drawing or a prop of an open tomb holding palm branches from Palm Sunday while the congregation sings "He Lives." As they exit the platform, have them say, "Jesus is risen."

#### Responsive Reading

Print the scripture as it should be read responsively and insert it into your worship folder or use as a single handout.

# REUNION REVELATIONS

by Larry W. Leonard

Luke 24:36-49

April 7, 1991

## INTRO

In the passage of time, things can change. We can think we know all about certain things only to be surprised at new revelations.

**ILLUS.** At a recent high school reunion, as the group gathered after 15 years of separation, the realities of their lives began to unfold. Some stories were easy to believe; some were very difficult to comprehend. Four longtime sweethearts had married but were now divorced. Several of those who had lived the cleanest as high school students were now involved in addictive habits that were marring their health. One who had served a prison sentence for possession and distribution of drugs right out of high school had given his life to Christ and was now serving as a pastor and soul winner. All alumni told stories of how time and events had changed their lives forever.

In the grandest reunion known on earth, the Greatest ever to walk the earth revealed to His followers what should have been apparent all along.

Their preconception of Jesus' mission and their preoccupation with their self-concerns had disallowed a full knowledge of Jesus and His purpose. Now He was there once again. Beauty began to blossom like spring's first flowers.

## I. We See the Beauty of the Open Mind (v. 45)

*A. What Jesus had tried to tell them before was now bursting forth in understanding.* It was a light that had too long been unplugged.

**ILLUS.** We remember Helen Keller's limitations of sight and hearing. Although she could feel, her inabilities confused the other senses she possessed.

In caring for Helen, Anne Sullivan took her to the well house where water was being drawn. As Anne let the water run over Helen's hands, in sign language she spelled into the other hand, W-A-T-E-R. Suddenly something fantastic happened to young Helen. It was only one word, a short word at that, but for Helen Keller it was of gigantic proportions. She now had a name for a familiar experience. If there was a name for this sensation, there must be names for other objects and experiences also. In spite of her limitations, she now understood what she had never before known.

*B. It was similar with Jesus' disciples.* Such is the case for us who had only heard about Jesus but now can feel His touch and hear His call.

*C. Down in the spiritual valley, the clouds may obscure our vision of Jesus, and darkness surrounds.* However, in persistent seeking, the light suddenly comes, the clouds vanish, and we are aware of His presence.

*D. Doubts bring fear.* Jesus' disciples were behind locked doors. They had doubts of the future, fears from the past (v. 38).

*E. Doubt creates instability and disobedience.* (Read James 1:5-8.) Belief brings anticipation and possibilities.

**ILLUS.** A novice accompanied a group of experienced skiers on a snow ski trip. On the first day, while his friends navigated the increasingly advanced "green," "blue," and "black" slopes, the novice took his first skiing lessons and tried out his new skills on the "bunny" slope. On the second day, they convinced him to accompany them onto a "slightly" advanced slope. He was doing quite well, had made it successfully all the way down, and had returned to the top of the slope.

One-fourth of the way down on the second run, a friend said to him, "You're doing great. Not many people can navigate a 'blue' run on just his second day of skiing."

Realizing for the first time that he was on a more advanced slope than he had previously thought, he literally felt his balance go and fell. Although he had already made it down the slope successfully once, his knowledge of the difficulty and his awareness of his limitations brought instant doubts.

*F. It is amazing how belief and doubt affect our lives.* (Read Mark 9:17-24.)

## II. We See the Beauty of the Open Will (vv. 52-53)

*A. Although Jesus was gone again, this time things were different.* Belief had brought joy, praise, and surrender.

*B. Their belief had given them a purpose—to do the Father's will as they had witnessed the Savior do.*

*C. Their encounter with Jesus had changed not only their moods but their minds and motivations.*

*D. They went to the very place they had been afraid to go before.* They were no longer disciples in word only. Now they were ready to put their faith in action.

**ILLUS.** In the Peanuts cartoon, Lucy is always trying to entice Schroeder to recognize her romantic advances. Lucy asked him, "Schroeder, do you know what love is?"

Rather quickly Schroeder ceased his concerto and confidently said, "Love: noun, to be fond of, a strong affection for or an attachment or devotion to a person or persons." As quickly as he had stopped, he started playing again.

In rejected rhetoric Lucy stammered, "On paper he's great."

*E. When we become Christians in reality rather than in title only, when we open our will, God does wonderful things with us.*

### III. We See the Beauty of the Open Door

*A. The Book of Acts reveals that the open door was the Great Commission. (Read Acts 1:8.)*

*B. Jesus saw their willingness and forgave all their past failures. He saw them as His army of trusted disciples. They would carry on that for which He had died: hope for the world.*

*C. Yes, the disciples had failed. Yes, they had been afraid. But, yes, they were the reflection of Jesus' beauty because of their willingness, belief, and commitment.*

**ILLUS.** The newspapers carried the story of a misguided school bus driver, a 61-year-old grandmother from Massachusetts. On her first day of driving, she took some wrong turns, made some wrong route choices, and wound up in the state of Connecticut. To make matters worse, she had already picked up 10 students. The police issued an all-points bulletin for her arrest on the grounds of kidnapping. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was called in because she had "fled" to another state. After finding the lady, the school bus, and all 10 children safe, the authorities questioned her. Concluding that she had merely made some wrong choices, they let her go. She is now carrying out her duties in great fashion.

### CONCLUSION

We have all made wrong choices. We all have strayed too far from the belief that steadies us. But in reunion with Jesus we can have a revelation of His love and trust. We can go into all the world and make a difference for Jesus' sake.

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements	
Choral Call to Worship	Sanctuary Choir
Scriptural Call to Worship	Phil. 4:4-7
Ministry in Music	
Congregational Hymn	"O for a Thousand Tongues!"
Reception of Tithes and Offerings	
Congregational Hymn	"Lead On, O King Eternal"
Prayer Song	"Have Thine Own Way"
Pastoral Prayer	
Choir Special	
The Morning Message	"REUNION REVELATIONS"
	Luke 24:36-49
Closing Hymn	"All the Way My Savior Leads"

#### Creative Worship Ideas

##### *Open Altar of Prayer*

Have all who have felt separated in relationships with others or with God kneel in commitment to mending those relationships.

##### *Reception of Tithes and Offerings*

Have a layman testify to the faithfulness of God as he has given his tithe and offerings in joy to the Lord. Have him pray God's blessings on today's offering.

# HOPE FOR WEARY WARRIORS

by Larry W. Leonard

Gal. 6:1-10

April 14, 1991

## INTRO

The way you face your day is as important as the events of your day. Life has a way of bringing challenges that we would prefer to do without. However, if we have to be able to explain all the events of life, we will become exasperated and even cynical.

**ILLUS.** Nineteen-year-old Joey was dying of cancer at a Rhode Island hospital. When he was asked how he felt about his plight, he responded, "You could say it's God's fault. And when I get to heaven, I am going to ask God why He put me through this. If He doesn't have a good answer, I'm going to punch Him in the mouth."

Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Paul said, "Let us not become weary in doing good" (v. 9). Paul reminds us, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Our hope is that at the proper time we will reap a harvest of good. Our hope is in the integrity of the Word of God.

## I. Our Hope Is in the Power of God

*A. Often the power we need from God is not that we can be invincible in all circumstances, but rather that we will have the power to get back up.*

**ILLUS.** Walter Payton was a powerful runner in the National Football League. He ran hard into the record books as the all-time leading ground-gainer in the NFL. Analysts say that Walter Payton gained over 9 miles rushing in his career. However, he averaged only 4.6 yards carrying the ball each time. What that means is that while he ran for 9 miles, he was knocked down every 4.6 yards of the way. To his credit he got up every 4.6 yards and started again.

*B. God's power works in us if we are going to reap a harvest. (Read 2 Pet. 1:3.)*

*C. We will overcome, not by our power or desire, but by His mercy. (Read Rom. 9:16.)* God's mercy gives us His power. God displayed His power so that He could be glorified.

**ILLUS.** I talked to someone recently who is terminally ill. His comment was humanly remarkable. He said, "Our only purpose on earth is to glorify God. However He wants to get glory is what I want to do."

*D. We don't always get what we deserve, but we do always get what we sow.*

**ILLUS.** In accepting a major award, Jack Benny said, "I don't deserve this, but then I have arthritis, and I don't deserve that either."

*E. Paul said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13).* Paul also says, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). God's power must be in you if you are to have hope in a weary world.

## II. Our Hope Is in the Provision of God

*A. We are told what we must do.* We must not be weary in doing good. We are not saved by our works, but we are saved to do good works to bring glory to the Father. (Read Eph. 2:8-10.)

*B. God has promised to meet our needs in all things. (Read Phil. 4:19.)*

*C. The grace of God provides us the essential qualities in proper proportions for the task that we have to bear up under. (Read 2 Cor. 12:8-9.)*

**ILLUS.** In the entrance of the RCA Building on Fifth Avenue in New York City, there is a gigantic statue of Atlas, straining as he holds the world on his shoulders. Even with his unusual strength, he can barely hold his burden.

On the other side of Fifth Avenue is Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Located behind the high altar is a little shrine of the Boy Jesus. He is depicted as being approximately eight or nine years old. Without any apparent effort He is holding the whole world in one hand.

*D. God's provision is given to us.* We can choose today to carry the world with pain etched in our faces and with our muscles tearing from the disproportionate load. Or we can place the world of burden in the hands of the Savior and let Him carry it for us.

*E. When the weight of the world is on us, we can turn to the Word of Truth and rest in God's provision.*

*F. God's provision arrives in strange methods.* It may come in the form of a friend who reaches down to touch your tears or a companion sent to calm your fears. But it always comes.

*G. In worship we can experience the provision of God.* In worship we wait on the Lord's intervention.

**ILLUS.** Several years ago a professional speedboat driver was in a hydroplane race. At top speed his boat veered slightly and hit a wave at a dangerous angle. The combined force of his speed with the size and angle of the wave sent his boat spinning into the air. He was thrown from his seat and propelled deeply into the water. He went so deep, in fact, that he had no idea which direction was up. He had the composure to remain motionless and allow the buoyancy of his life vest to begin pulling him toward the surface. As soon as he could see which way was up, he began to swim toward the surface.



*H. That is like God's provision. If we will wait, we will sense the upward pull of God's provision until we can see the shore.*

### III. Our Hope Is in the Purpose of God

*A. God is eager that we become glorifying vessels for His purpose. Our hope is that He will reveal himself in our lives through the fulfillment of His will.*

*B. It is not in our time that our ship arrives at the port. It is in His time. He is still in charge of the timing.*

*C. We are in charge of sowing good seeds. We are responsible to repent and change where necessary. We are to keep plowing until time to plant. We are to weed out the entanglements. (Read Heb. 12:1-2.)*

*D. We may not know what God's exact purpose may be, but we can certainly follow the rules to its fulfillment. (Read James 1:2-7 and 1 Pet. 1:6-7.)*

*E. At the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

The Psalmist says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" (37:4).

**ILLUS.** The great colonial pastor, Cotton Mather, prayed for revival several hours each day for 20 years. The Great Awakening began the year he died.

For nearly 50 years William Wilberforce fought to abolish slavery in Great Britain. Not until he was lying on his deathbed did Great Britain free the slaves.

### CONCLUSION

This is the day for us to take heart and make the most of each opportunity. The Lord has something special just around the corner.

We can take the Latin phrase as our motto for each opportunity: "Carpe diem" ("Seize the day").

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements

WE JOIN IN WORSHIP

Choruses of Celebration

"To God Be the Glory"

"This Is the Day"

"Alleluia"

Scriptural Call to Worship

Isa. 40:28-31

Special Music

WE LIFT OUR VOICES IN PRAISE

"Amazing Grace"

"Holy, Holy, Holy"

WE EXPRESS OUR PETITIONS TO GOD

Prayer Chorus

"I Will Serve Thee"

Pastoral Prayer

WE SHARE GOD'S LOVE

Bringing His Tithes and Our Offerings

Choir Special

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMED

Sermon

"HOPE FOR WEARY WARRIORS"

Gal. 6:1-10

WE GO FORTH TO SERVE

Closing Song

"In My Heart There Rings a Melody"

Benediction

### Creative Worship Ideas

*Tithes and Offerings*

Have the ushers prepared to receive the offering from the rear of the church to the front. As they finish on the front pews, have them come forward with their plates and all kneel at the altar as you pray for the offering that has already been given.

*Benediction*

"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal" (Isa. 26:3-4).

# WHEN THE EMPTINESS ENDED

by Larry W. Leonard

Gen. 21:1-7  
April 21, 1991

## INTRO

God's promises of intervention always have a timetable—His timetable. The human eye cannot see the interacting that takes place to bring about God's perfect will. Human vision is often limited. We have a tendency to become very frustrated when our timing and God's do not coincide.

**ILLUS.** Someone said, "Let's face it, there are two kinds of reality in this world of ours. There are the things you have to work for, and there are the things you have to wait for."

Working for something makes time pass much easier than simply waiting. We have this built-in mechanism that tells us that we have to work for everything. Maybe God wants us to do His work. Let Him work out the details.

**ILLUS.** Joseph Haydn has written a musical piece that requires the flute player to sit quietly for 74 measures and then come in exactly on the upbeat of the 75th. Gerald Johnson, historian and writer, who plays the flute in the Baltimore Symphony, says that a composer who expects a man to wait that patiently and perform that precisely is looking for a rare individual.

God looks for rare individuals—those willing to wait. Abraham seemed to be more willing to wait than did Sarah. However, there are many lessons to be learned from Sarah's wait.

## I. Waiting Deals with Our Pride

*A. Sarah had problems waiting because of the cultural stigma against women who were childless.*

*B. Things that are out of our control force us to deal with the pride of making things happen according to what we want or need.*

*C. We have to deal with waiting for things to happen so that we can keep up with those who seem to be our competition.*

*D. Pride makes us get ahead of God and do things that prove destructive to us at a later time. (See Genesis 16.)*

*E. We must have a Spirit-bathed humility to withstand the temptation to take things into our own hands and manipulate events, people, and circumstances for our advantage.*

*F. Unfilled pride can make us cynical from our disappointments and can take away the gentle, trusting spirit that recognizes God's hand in intervention. (Read Gen. 18:1 and 10-14.)*

*G. Slow development of our desires is a playground for Satan to get our eyes on the world's ways of making things happen quickly. (Read 1 John 2:15.)*

**ILLUS.** Phillips Brooks, a great preacher of days gone by, knew the revealing of God's presence in his life. However, his humanity caused normal human impatience over a certain situation. As he was pacing back and forth in a terrible fit of agitation, a friend asked him what was wrong. "I'm in a hurry," he said, "but God is not."

*H. We resemble Phillips Brooks. We are in a hurry, but God is in control. With God, everything occurs at precisely the right time.*

*I. After her baby was born, Sarah shows us a little glimpse of human pride. (See v. 6.) Now she can see that everyone was laughing with her and not at her.*

## II. Waiting Either Develops Patience or Reveals a Bitter Spirit

*A. Abraham had a promise from God that he would be remembered throughout time. He would be the father of many nations.*

*B. That promise took longer than nine months.*

**ILLUS.** My wife and I had been married almost 10 years when our first child was born. When I found out that he would be born, I was in Japan and did not return home for another two weeks. That two weeks seemed more like two years. But after I got home we still had 6½ months to wait. Never mind that there were preparations to be made. We wanted those months to rush by like minutes.

*C. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years from the day God told Abraham that He would give them a son.*

*D. When Sarah laughed, back in Genesis 18, she was the reflection of a bitter, disappointed, dejected soul. It's hard to be critical of her because that is so human.*

*E. Patience has many virtues. It really is a chain reaction to other spiritual qualities that strengthen us for God's service. (Read James 1:2-6.)*

*F. Often a lack of patience makes us look immature. Children often do have more patience than we do.*

**ILLUS.** In a newspaper column, Don Edwards writes of the little boy standing at the bottom of a department store escalator. His eyes were fixed on the handrail as if he were daydreaming. A salesperson came to him and asked if he was lost. He replied, "Nope, I'm just waiting for my chewing gum to come back."

*G. If we wait long enough with patience, God will reveal himself.*

### III. Waiting Brings God's Plan of Perfection

A. *God did not want to propagate Abraham's name or His own name through Ishmael. That was Sarah's idea, not God's plan.*

B. *Sarah's intervention developed a nation for sure, but look at the heartache and disappointment through history that came from going ahead of God.*

C. *God had plans for a pure heritage.*

D. *The very nature of God's method proved that His plan was better than man's because He overcame human limitations to show that His will is never impossible.*

E. *Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me" (Gen. 21:6).*

F. *When we know that God is the Architect of intervention, we can rest assured that He will work through the difficulties of the days to come.*

### CONCLUSION

There were not always days of smooth sailing for Abraham and his clan. Sarah died before Isaac was married. Isaac went blind and was deceived by his own wife and son. Yet through it all, God's plan overcame every obstacle.

When we are in God's will, we can rest assured that He will intervene. (Read Isa. 40:29-31.)

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements	
Congregational Singing	"The Doxology"
Scriptural Call to Worship	Psalm 23
Responsive Praying	"The Lord's Prayer"
Congregational Hymn	"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"
Congregational Hymn	"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"
Prayer Chorus	"Spirit of the Living God"
Pastoral Prayer	
Ministry in Music	
Reception of His Tithes and Our Offerings	
Sanctuary Choir Special	
The Morning Message	
	"WHEN THE EMPTINESS ENDED"
	Gen. 21:1-7
Closing Hymn	"Jesus Is All the World to Me"

### Creative Worship Ideas

#### Welcome of Visitors

After all visitors' names have been read or visitors have been welcomed as a group, have all visitors remain seated and all the rest of the congregation stand to greet one another and especially those who are seated.

#### Open Altar of Prayer

Ask any who feel an emptiness inside to come and pray for the filling of His presence.

# BUT DO I LOVE GOD?

by Larry W. Leonard

Rev. 2:1-7  
April 28, 1991

## INTRO

It is a human goal to be successful at something. Some people want to be successful at building a business; some want to teach with great authority; others want to paint a beautiful, meaningful picture; many want to raise a loving, caring, responsible family. The forms of success are many. It is a high goal to decide to succeed in our chosen endeavors.

However, we all are aware that nothing is greater than to succeed as a Christian. Nothing else will last longer. Everything else is temporary. We all want the final result of successful Christianity—heaven. One question seems to stand out: “Why?” What is the motivation? Purpose and object are so important to the proposition. To decide, we must go back to God’s purpose for creation—that mankind should love Him. Love for God has been our ultimate purpose. Therefore, we must list in order the objects of our love and activity.

**ILLUS.** Mr. Charles Schwab, former president of Bethlehem Steel, wanted to know better ways to be successful. Ivy Lee, a self-styled management consultant, was brought in to enlighten Schwab on new avenues to success. Schwab said, “If you can show us a way to get more things done, I’ll be glad to listen; and if it works, I’ll pay you whatever you ask within reason.”

Lee gave him a blank piece of paper and said, “Write down the most important things you have to do tomorrow.” Mr. Schwab did. Lee then said, “Tomorrow morning start on number one, and stay with it until you have completed it. Then go on to number two and number three, etc. Don’t worry if you haven’t completed everything at the end of the day. At least you will have completed the most important. Do this every day. After you have been convinced of this value, have your men try it. Try it as long as you like, and then send me a check for whatever you think it is worth.”

A few weeks later Charles Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for \$25,000—an incredible amount in the 1930s.

It is good advice for us. Priority has a crucial importance in our walk with God.

What has God said that would prompt Jesus to warn the church of Ephesus, “I hold this against you” (Rev. 2:4)? (Read Deut. 6:4-5; 10:12; 11:1; 30:6; and Matt. 22:37.)

In Revelation 2, Jesus is correcting His people of their greatest error: They have gotten their priorities out of order.

## I. What Did Jesus Really Mean?

*A. Jesus took away their arguments of achievement when He acknowledged that what they had done was good.*

*B. However, Jesus went to the heart of it. What motivates our actions?*

*C. They did good things. They hated the evil of the Nicolaitans. But it is possible to hate what Christ hates without loving what Christ loves.*

*D. We can easily transfer our love for God to our zeal against a cause. If Satan can get us to commit ourselves to a cause rather than to God, he can deceive us into leaving our first love.*

**ILLUS.** It is possible to serve as pastor of a huge church and not love God. It is possible to design and preside over perfectly conceived and executed worship services and not love God. It is possible to preach insightful, biblical, Christ-exalting sermons and not love God. It is possible to write books that deepen others’ love for God and not love God. It is possible to teach a Sunday School class with expression and power and not love God. It is possible to teach your children Bible verses and not love God. It is possible to read the Bible daily and not love God. It is possible to have a routine prayer time and not love God.

*E. 1 Corinthians 13 shows that loving God is the highest priority.*

*F. Jesus is very jealous of our love. His is not a carnal, mean jealousy, but a high, noble jealousy because of His knowledge of our purpose. If we don’t love Him first, we cannot fulfill our intended purpose.*

## II. How Can I Know?

*A. You can know if you love Him by your devotion and thought patterns. (Read Phil. 2:1-11.)*

*B. The attitude of your mind will continually direct you. You can test your attitude and measure it against the question, “What would Jesus do?”*

**ILLUS.** Harry Emerson Fosdick once told how, as a child, his mother sent him to pick a quart of raspberries. Reluctantly he dragged himself to the berry patch. His afternoon was ruined for sure. Then a thought hit him. He would surprise his mother and pick two quarts of raspberries instead of one. Rather than drudgery, his work now became a challenge. He enjoyed picking those raspberries so much that 50 years later that incident was still fresh in his mind. The job hadn’t changed; his attitude had. And attitude is everything.

*C. You can measure your love by the Word of God. Do you serve God in order to save your soul? If we serve Him out of fear, then love for God is not our motivation. Our service is then only for our self-preservation. (Read 1 John 4:7-21.)*

*D. Matt. 10:37-39 shows that any love for self, however manifested, is still futile.*

### III. What Can I Do?

*A. Jesus knew that the pull of self and self-fulfillment would be a great ploy of Satan. He was aware that we would not be able to conquer all alone. He never intended this. That would have made the love theory invalid.*

*B. He told His disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless" (John 14:18, KJV). (Read John 14:15-21.)*

*C. Jesus told them how to have this relationship that makes a difference. (Read Acts 1:4-8.)*

*D. The Holy Spirit puts the focus in the proper place. Without Him, we will hate for hate's sake with a self-justification.*

The church in Ephesus hated, but their motivations departed from the purpose of love for God. (Read Phil. 3:8-11.)

*E. We must crucify our own striving and live for God. (Read Gal. 2:20.)*

### CONCLUSION

We need to wait before the Lord to receive His power to love. We are vessels for God's use. Let love rule in you.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements  
Instrumental Prelude of Praise  
Expressions of Joy and Love  
Congregational Hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"  
Sanctuary Choir Special  
Prayer Chorus "Lord, We Praise You"  
Congregational Hymn "O for a Heart to Praise My God"  
Reception of Tithes and Offerings  
Special Music  
Sermon "BUT DO I LOVE GOD?" Rev. 2:1-7  
Benediction  
Closing Song "Take the Name of Jesus with You"

### Creative Worship Ideas

#### *Expressions of Joy and Love*

Have a positive, bright Christian give a testimony of joy and love to God.

#### *Reception of Tithes and Offerings*

Have a layman lift the offering plates in prayerful presentation to God as you pray.

#### *Open Altar of Prayer*

Have church board members come to the open altar of prayer representing commitment in leadership.



# WALKING WITH A WINNER

by Larry W. Leonard

1 John 2:1-17

May 5, 1991

## INTRO

People want to think of themselves as winners. They want to associate with winners.

**ILLUS.** Rules have been created to change the reporting of the American presidential election because of the psychological effect it is having on the voting in the Pacific time zone of the United States. Studies have proven that people who have heard the projections of winners before they have cast their votes have in many cases changed their minds about for whom they would vote. They no longer voted because of conviction on the candidate's philosophy or goals. Instead they voted for whoever was projected to be the winner.

One of those interviewed said, "I didn't want to have to tell my husband that I voted for a loser again."

No one will be perfect all the time. "To err is human, to forgive divine." All of us will make mistakes and stumble on occasions. Our won/lost record does not tell the complete story about us.

**ILLUS.** Paul "Bear" Bryant was a legendary figure from the world of college football long considered sacred at Alabama. He said that it is unfair to have coaches judged on their won/lost record. What if doctors had to have their records listed in the Yellow Pages: 1,149 operations; 500 deaths, 500 recoveries, 149 still alive but barely kicking.

However, as John begins talking about the spiritual journey, he gives hope for those who have failed and gives direction for those who hope to succeed. Christians are winners.

## I. Christians Have a Commanding Code (v. 6)

*A. John says that those who call themselves Christians must walk as Jesus walked. That is a big order.*

*B. To keep the Lord's commandments, you must have the same focus that Jesus had.* When your goal gets fuzzy and your attention is distracted, then you begin to stray into the gray areas of spiritual conduct.

*C. Real winners can still hear the voice of the Spirit calling us back to the center.* We have One who wants us on the team. John says, "I write this to you so that you will not sin [fall away]. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense" (v. 1).

*D. Even before the Lamb was sent, we see a God of compassion eager to accept us.* (Read Mal. 3:6-7.)

*E. We know we are winners when we keep the commandments of Jesus (v. 3).* We have been given directions on how to fight the war. (Read Eph. 6:13-18.)

There is a necessary preparation.

**ILLUS.** Mike Tyson declared himself invincible. This heavyweight champion of the boxing world had never lost a fight. But on February 10, 1990, a little-known fighter, James Buster Douglas, knocked him out.

In the March 27, 1990, issue of the *Dallas Times Herald*, Mike Tyson is quoted as saying, "I was not prepared. I was out of shape, more or less. I never took the fight seriously."

*F. The best Christian must be aware of his adversary.* Preparation is the key to winning in this spiritual warfare. Forgiveness is great, but preparation through keeping the commandments is best.

## II. Christians Have a Certain Confidence (v. 2)

*A. Our confidence is not in our ability.* Our confidence is in Jesus, who can keep us in His love. No man has to rebel. The enemy is not more powerful than our Leader.

*B. "I write this to you so that you will not sin" (v. 1).* There is a way to win the battles you fight every day. The Holy Spirit has been given to complete the needs of mankind. (Read Rom. 8:5-11.)

*C. We must believe in God's ability to keep us.* What kind of confidence do you have in God?

**ILLUS.** Helen Hayes, the famous actress, said that she is renowned for her ineptness in the kitchen. Her family always ate other people's cooking. But, for this one Thanksgiving, she wanted to cook the traditional meal. She told her family they were not to make any negative remarks when she brought in the turkey. If it was not good, they would just go out to a restaurant, but at least she had tried.

Having said that, she went to the kitchen to get the bird. When she returned to the dining room, there sat both her husband and her son with their hats and coats on.

*D. What kind of confidence do you have in your God's ability?* Paul said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13).

## III. Christians Have a Compelling Compassion (v. 9)

*A. Winning Christians have a deep commitment to others.* They know that to walk as Jesus did they must have an uncommon love for their brothers.

*B. We cannot possibly conform to the style of Jesus and hold on to the conduct of the world at the same time.* The pattern of the One we are following is sacrifice. He sacrificed personal feelings. He had crucified His own prejudice long before He was lifted up on the

Cross. The style we die with will be the style we have lived with.

*C. Paul tells us that the only way to have compassion like Jesus is to be crucified in Christ daily. (Read Gal. 2:20 and 1 Cor. 15:31.)*

**ILLUS.** If you go to the famous Louvre Museum in Paris, you will see displayed in a strategic place a magnificent statue called *The Winged Victory*. Scholars believe it is a Greek statue dating from the second or third century B.C. It was discovered on a Greek island in the Aegean Sea in the mid-1800s. The problem is that it was in many small fragments. Archaeologists could tell it was a powerful figure but had no idea what it looked like because they had no pattern for reassembling it.

Years later, in another archaeological dig, a coin was found bearing the inscription of Nike, the personification of victory. Recognizing some of the features of the disassembled statue in this inscription, archaeologists used this coin as a pattern to reconstruct into a larger-than-life work of art what had lain in ruins for centuries.

## CONCLUSION

Until we construct ourselves by the pattern of the life of Jesus Christ, we are losers lying in ruin. There is a purpose and a place for us. It is a place of honor in the kingdom of God.

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements  
**WE PURPOSE IN OUR HEARTS TO WORSHIP**  
Choral Call to Worship                      Sanctuary Choir  
Scriptural Call to Worship                  Layman or Staff Person  
**WE PRAISE GOD WITH OUR VOICES IN SONG AND SCRIPTURE**  
"O Worship the King"  
Responsive Reading                                  Psalm 84  
"To God Be the Glory"  
**WE PETITION WITH THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE**  
Congregational Prayer Chorus                  "I Surrender All"  
Pastoral Prayer  
**WE PRESENT OUR GIFTS TO GOD**  
Call to Giving    1 Cor. 16:2  
**WE PARTICIPATE IN WORSHIP**  
In Meditation of Special Music  
In Consideration of God's Word  
"WALKING WITH A WINNER"  
1 John 2:1-17

#### Pastoral Prayer

Focus on God's direction, provision, and intervention for the last week of spring.

#### Creative Worship Ideas

##### Responsive Reading

Print the scripture as it should be read responsively, and insert it into your worship folder or use as a single handout.

##### Benediction

Congregation sing the "Doxology."

# CHARTING A FAMILY FUTURE

by Larry W. Leonard

Deut. 4:1-14

May 12, 1991

## INTRO

When children are born into a family, parents begin to think about providing the appropriate future. Many people set up college accounts, buy encyclopedias, prepare heirlooms to hand down, or plan businesses to pass on.

**ILLUS.** One new father wanted more than anything for his newborn son to grow up to become a football player. So the first thing to go in the crib was a football.

Mother's Day is an ideal day to think about the future of our families. What will our families be like in 10 years? What family traditions will be passed on? What family characteristic will be handed down?

The things we regard as important will be modeled to our children by our life-style and priorities. It will not escape their attention. Regardless of how we attempt to hide it, our children will break through our facades. They have an inquisitiveness that will break our secret code.

**ILLUS.** A report from a child safety organization declares that 65% of the child-proof containers tested by the American Association of Poison Control Centers were unable to withstand the attempts of children to open them.

That is frightening when we realize what those precious delights of ours may be able to put in their systems. What is more frightening is what children pour in their hearts and minds when they successfully open our vessels of values. What we really are and stand for has not gone unnoticed. (Read Gal. 6:7-10.)

The Old Testament has given us timeless directives for future reference in teaching our families what is really important. God speaks clearly concerning religious training.

## I. What We Teach Will Determine the Destiny of Their Knowledge

**A.** *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Prov. 22:6).* The language you speak will be the language of your children.

**B.** *What they view with your knowledge will be what they accept as appropriate.*

**ILLUS.** In the cartoon strip "Marvin," Marvin's mother is standing with hands on hips, telling her husband, "I told you it was a mistake." The next frame shows Marvin wearing a cowboy hat and having the family dog hog-tied. In the final frame the mother says, "But no, you said, 'What harm can it do to let him watch "Championship Rodeo" on cable?'"

**C.** *How much of the laws of God does your family know?* Compare their knowledge of social skills, English, math, science, and history with their knowledge of God's law.

**D.** *The Ten Commandments are as fresh today as the day they were burned on the tablets of stone.*

**E.** *We encounter many persons who think the Old Testament is passé, no longer applicable to our requirements.* After all, they say, the New Testament is the only book of relevance to us. Yet, if we really kept the commandments of the New Testament, we wouldn't have to be concerned about the Old Testament, for it's all wrapped together as fulfillment.

A young man came to Jesus in Matthew's book, in the New Testament, and asked what he had to do to have eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments (Matt. 19:16-21).

**F.** *Your children's knowledge of God's Word will be no greater than what you teach them.* Your teaching will be by word and example.

## II. What We Teach Will Determine the Destiny of Their Relationships

**A.** *How we treat others leaves an indelible impression that they will not live above.*

**B.** *God addressed the issue of how we treat others in the Old Testament.* He said that we are to honor our father and mother. If you do, your children will honor you. He taught that we shall not steal from other people, kill other people, or covet what another has.

**C.** *Jesus was even more pointed when He was asked what is the greatest commandment.* (Read Matt. 22:34-40.)

**D.** *We have the responsibility to teach that love is not limited to those who deserve it.* (Read Luke 6:27-31.)

**ILLUS.** Psychologists say that in homes where drinking of alcohol is prevalent, the children will likely become drinkers themselves. Children who were abused will likely grow up to be abusers. (Read Luke 6:43-45.)

## III. What We Teach Will Determine the Destiny of Their Souls

**A.** *God said that in order to enter the Promised Land, they had to keep the laws He had given.* (Read Deut. 4:1.) The truth for us and our children is the same. If we are to enter the eternal city, we must keep His directions and teach our children to keep them.

**B.** *We must teach our children the way of the Lord.* We cannot keep the rules for them. We must teach responsibility.

**C.** *The most practical way to show love is to teach them to be responsible to God by the way they live.*

**ILLUS.** In a "Dennis the Menace" cartoon strip, Dennis is talking to Margaret. "I wonder what my mother would like for Mother's Day?" he asked.

Margaret offered this bit of advice: "Why don't you promise to go to bed when she tells you to, keep your room cleaned up, eat all your vegetables at dinner, even brush your teeth after eating, and wash your hands before."

With a repulsed look, Dennis says, "No, I mean something practical."

## CONCLUSION

The most practical and responsible thing we can do today is to live the way Jesus did. We can live up to what we have learned from God's Word. We can live an example of Christian love so that our children can see that commitment goes farther than romance and that our Christianity is something we are, not something we wear on Sunday. We can teach that even in the hardest of circumstances, the way of Christ's love is better than man's system of enduring. Our homes can be havens of harmony rather than dens of deceit.

God has told us to uphold and teach the way of the Lord. We can do no less.

### **SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements

#### **JOY IN WORSHIP**

Instrumental Call to Worship

Responsive Reading

Prov. 31:10-12, 23-31

Congregational Song

"The Solid Rock"

Choir Special

#### **JOY IN PETITION**

Prayer Chorus

"He Never Has Failed Me Yet"

Pastoral Prayer

Congregational Hymn

"Take My Life, and Let It Be"

#### **JOY IN GIVING**

Reception of Tithes and Offerings

Ritual of Infant Dedication

#### **JOY IN LEARNING**

Special Music

Sermon

"CHARTING A FAMILY FUTURE"

Deut. 4:1-14

#### **JOY IN SERVICE**

Closing Song

"I Belong to the King"

Benediction

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Ask only mothers to stand during the prayer as recognition of their special status in the service today, and focus the prayer on them. If applicable, pray for your own mother and/or mother-in-law, thanking God for their influence in your family's life.

### **Creative Worship Ideas**

#### **Responsive Reading**

Print the scripture as it should be read responsively, and insert it into your worship folder or use as a single handout.

#### **Sanctuary Choir**

Have an all-women choir today. All women may participate, whether mothers or not.

#### **Baby Dedication**

Schedule baby dedications for today.

# PENTECOSTAL PRIORITIES

by Larry W. Leonard

Acts 2:42-47

May 19, 1991

## INTRO

The church today has greater opportunities to spread scriptural holiness than it ever has. We have better colleges and seminaries with better-educated professors than ever before. We have technological abilities that allow us to attain knowledge more readily. However, we must constantly remind ourselves that without the power of God in a penitent, praying heart, we have resources without any transformed response.

**ILLUS.** Leonard Ravenhill said, "The Church began with these men in the Upper Room agonizing, and today is ending with men in the supper room organizing. The Church began in revival; we are ending in ritual. We started virile; we are ending sterile. Charter members of the Church were men of heat and no degrees; today many hold degrees but have no heat!"

While that may be a negative view of the Church, we must remind ourselves of the priorities that first delivered God's power to the Church. There was a prescription for Pentecostal power that remains the key for success in today's Church. (Read Acts 1:4-5.)

Our scripture today gives at least three characteristics of the Pentecostal Church.

## I. Pentecostal Power Requires Devoted Discipleship

*A. The disciples had a deep desire to know more about the directives of the Lord.* They realized that following the Master was broader in scope than occasional gatherings. The letter of His teaching was to be their lifestyle, a movement of broader living than ever before.

**ILLUS.** Michelangelo walked into the studio of his pupil, Raffaello, and saw his work as being too narrow, too cramped. He took a piece of chalk, drew a line across it, and wrote at the foot of the canvas the word "*Amplius*," meaning "broader, fuller, wider."

*B. When the Holy Spirit cleanses our lives and moves in our desires, He broadens our perspective and horizon.* We have a desire to know more about the way of Jesus. (Read 2 Tim. 2:14-15.)

*C. There was a deep longing to be triumphant as Jesus had been.* To do so was to know and to emulate Him. The more they devoted themselves to the teachings of Christ, the more the Holy Spirit revealed to them the way of Christ.

*D. When our greatest desire is to be filled with Him, it shows in what we do and how we live.*

**ILLUS.** A gifted speaker was asked to describe his most difficult speaking assignment. He said that it was an address he gave to the National Conference of Undertakers titled, "How to Look Sad at a Ten-Thousand-Dollar Funeral."

*E. When Jesus lives in us and the Holy Spirit teaches us more about His style, we can't hide the reality.*

**ILLUS.** In the days of the great California gold rush, some prospectors discovered a very rich mine. "We've got it made," they said, "as long as we don't tell anybody else before we stake our claims." And they made a vow of secrecy.

As they were leaving town with a supply of provisions and tools, a great group of townspeople followed them. Although none of them had broken their vow of secrecy, the reality of their discovery was written all over their faces!

## II. Pentecostal Power Is Others-Oriented

*A. When we are truly filled with God's Spirit, we then respond like God responded.*

*B. God so loved that He gave.* (Read John 3:16.) The Spirit-filled disciples were devoted to others. They derived great strength from fellowship with like-minded believers.

*C. The Holy Spirit teaches that love overcomes selfishness.* (Read Rom. 12:9-13.)

*D. How much power will the Spirit give us to rise above self-centeredness?* He is adequate for each situation if we desire His way.

**ILLUS.** A very wealthy man went to buy a Rolls Royce. The salesman told him, "It's the most famous car in the world. Some Rolls are still running after 50 years." As the man was driving home in his new automobile, he realized that he had forgotten to find out how much horsepower the car had. When he went back to ask, the salesman couldn't find the answer anywhere in his materials, so he sent a wire to London, asking what the horsepower was.

The telegram reply had one word: "Adequate."

*E. God's love is adequate to make us willing to give to others.* (Read Acts 2:45.)

## III. Pentecostal Power Promotes Prayerful Planning

*A. All their activities were surrounded by prayer.* No one can think they have everything in common unless they are constantly in prayer.

*B. Prayer is the only way to establish and maintain direction that is holy.*



*C. There are plans that make us anxious and concerned.* The Bible says that we are to be anxious about nothing but pray and petition with thanksgiving about everything. (See Phil. 4:6.)

*D. Spirit-filled people recognize prayer as the catalyst for spiritual health.* James tells us, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

*E. Effective plans of the church must be mission-oriented and prayerfully planned.* The Holy Spirit chooses to glorify and exemplify God through our lives. He is not here to satisfy selfish intents of mankind.

*F. The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth, and the truth makes us free.*

**ILLUS.** François Fénelon, the 17th-century French mystic, said, "The wind of God is always blowing; but we must hoist our sails."

## CONCLUSION

The Church will never fulfill the Great Commission without the fullness of the Holy Spirit. When He has come upon us, the fulfillment of the Great Commission will be our greatest desire. When we have received the Holy Spirit, we will behave like the Pentecostal Church. We will demonstrate the evidence of the Spirit—love. Love will teach us, love will make us others-oriented, and love will keep us in communication with God.

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements	
Instrumental Call to Worship	
The March of the Graduates	
Scriptural Call to Worship	Ps. 37:3-6
Corporate Prayer	"The Lord's Prayer"
Congregational Greeting	
Ministry Through Special Song	
Congregational Song	"A Heart like Thine"
Reception of Tithes and Offerings	
Sanctuary Choir Special	
Congregational Hymn	"Fill Me Now"
Prayer Chorus	"I Need Thee Every Hour"
Pastoral Prayer	
Ministry Through Special Song	
The Morning Message	"PENTECOSTAL PRIORITIES"
	Acts 2:42-47
Benediction	
Closing Song	"The Comforter Has Come"

## Creative Worship Ideas

### March of Graduates

Have all graduating seniors wear their caps and gowns. They will enter the sanctuary together and be seated on the front pew.

### Congregational Greeting

Have the congregation stand and welcome one another in a moment of informal greeting.

### Offertory Sentence

Mai. 3:10

### Open Altar of Prayer

Have graduates come forward for special presentation and prayer.

# DO NICE GUYS FINISH LAST?

by Larry W. Leonard

Mark 10:17-31

May 26, 1991

## INTRO

Carlyle Marney said, "Herodotus claimed that the bitterest sorrow is to aspire to do much and achieve nothing." But Marney said, "Not so; the bitterest sorrow is to aspire to do much and to do it and then to discover it was not worth doing."

What do we really want to achieve through our lives? Have we considered the alternatives and what priorities are necessary to accomplish the greatest of goals? There is a price to be paid for all achievements, whether for good or ill.

Jesus was confronted by a well-meaning, eager young man who by all accounts was considered upstanding as a ruler of the people. His concern about the kingdom of God seems more curiosity than quest. Love for God was not the intent of his inquiry. His response to Jesus' explanation is proof enough. As Bernard of Clairvaux said, "What we love we shall grow to resemble."

He was like many of us. He was a nice fellow with good moral credentials to present to Jesus. We have been told that nice guys finish last. Of course, the saying is couched in the debate of whether one should attempt to win at any cost in contests of competition. But in spiritual searching, is simply being a nice guy a liability? We all need to look deeply into Jesus' response and discern what is most prudent for us. Do we see the big picture?

**ILLUS.** Thoreau said, "Great God, I ask Thee for no meaner pelf / Than that I may not disappoint myself, / That in my action I may soar as high / As I can now discern with this clear eye." May we too reach the heights that God reveals to us through this parable.

## I. Jesus Proclaims a Price to Be Paid

*A. We have all heard that it costs a little more to go first class.* We all want the benefits of blessings, but we have the tendency to count the cost before we determine the destination for which we will settle.

*B. It is a shame when the desire of our destination is not great enough to make secondary our concern for the cost.*

*C. First we must know where our decision is taking us.* We must have a clear knowledge of what is required. The young ruler came to ask that very question. He compared his present commitment to the required standards to discern the worth of the goal.

**ILLUS.** Mahatma Gandhi, the past spiritual leader of India, said, "There is more to life than increasing its speed. Without the right sense of direction, how quickly one arrives does not matter."

*D. We must know if our current direction is correct.* The ruler gave an accounting of how nice his direction had been. It really was impressive. He may have had more positive works to present than many modern-day Christians.

*E. The question really is, "What does it take to be pleasing to God?"* (Read Luke 15:25-30.)

*F. Jesus revealed this young man to himself.* He wanted to let him see the truth about his nature. He wants to do that for all of us. It is consistent with David's prayer in Ps. 139:23-24.

*G. Some things must be forfeited to find the greater gain.* Some things must be added to acquire the loftier goal.

**ILLUS.** George F. Will, writing for *Newsweek*, February 1986, addresses the advertisements for Michelob beer: "Who says you can't have it all?" Will answers, "Sadly, the answer is: Reality, that's who."

## II. Jesus Said There Is a Discipline to Practice

*A. The young ruler asked what had to be done to enter the Kingdom.* Jesus told him to keep the commandments. That requires a certain amount of discipline. The nature of man is to drift into easy ways of life and pleasure.

*B. Jesus was bringing him back to the main base of religious foundation.* When all else has been paid, we are constantly reminded that we need to have a consistent check on our self-desires. How disciplined are we?

*C. Keeping of the commandments really depends on who will rule.* Will it be our self-desires, or will it be the discipline of Holy Scripture? Will we give ourselves away? Will we hold on to us to save ourselves? (Read Luke 9:23-25.)

*D. We must discipline our self-appetite, or its voracious nature will eat away at the moorings of our lives until we are unwilling to release essentials that could make a difference.*

*E. It takes discipline to keep ourselves in balance.* We should give something of ourselves that will never be returned to us in any tangible way for the practice of discipline.

**ILLUS.** I was asked to go to the state prison to visit two Nazarene boys. As I began to visit and counsel, they referred other inmates to me in hopes they could find help for their spiritual needs. Soon it became very time-consuming. There were times I contemplated going less regularly.

In prayer it seemed that the Spirit was telling me that I needed to continue to go on a weekly basis. You see, it is the one place where your ministry is for ministry's sake only. Inmates can't help your Sunday School statistics. They will not be new members of your outreach team for visitation. They will not contribute to the budget of your church. It is the discipline of giving oneself away for no personal gain.

If we do not practice sacrificing self, we too could be among those who "went away sad" because we are too rich in ourselves.

### III. Jesus Said There Is Fruit to Be Produced

*A. One's love for the Kingdom will be evident by the fruit he produces.* Jesus was looking for the fruit of self-emptying so that others could be fed.

*B. For fruit to be produced, there must be a spiritual/physical balance.* We must have correct priorities, or we will drift into self-gratification that produces no fruit unto repentance.

**ILLUS.** Soon after baby crocodiles are born, they thrash around in the water doing the dog paddle to stay afloat. Only after they swallow some stones, which are used for digestion, do they gain the proper balance to swim horizontally.

*C. In our spiritual lives, if we do not get a balance on ourselves, we will go away from the center of spiritual production and simply thrash around trying to stay afloat.*

*D. It is easy to get tired of the battles with life and become lazy.* It is easy to let discipline slip so that the price isn't paid and production is at a low level. We get so accustomed to pleasing ourselves that we can't do without all of our own resources. We then go sadly away.

**ILLUS.** The late, great Vince Lombardi, National Foot-

ball League coach, said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all."

### CONCLUSION

How many of us are fatigued in discipline and labor? Do we need to come and let Jesus refill us until we are willing to let all go for His sake? Come to Jesus and cast all your care—and yourself—on Him.

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Welcome of Visitors and Presentation of Announcements  
**WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP**  
 Responsive Reading Rom. 8:28, 31-39  
 Prayerful Meditation  
**WE LIFT OUR VOICES IN PRAISE**  
 "How Firm a Foundation"  
 "Rise Up, O Men of God"  
**WE EXPRESS OUR PETITIONS TO GOD**  
 Congregational Chorus "Be Glorified"  
 Pastoral Prayer  
**WE RECEIVE INSPIRATION**  
 Sanctuary Choir Special  
**WE SHARE GOD'S LOVE**  
 Bringing His Tithe and Our Offering  
**WE HEAR GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMED**  
 Ministry in Music  
 Message "DO NICE GUYS FINISH LAST?"  
 Mark 10:17-31  
**WE ENTER THE WORLD WITH POWER**  
 Closing Song "Give Me Jesus"  
 Benediction

#### Creative Worship Ideas

##### Responsive Reading

Print the scripture as it should be read responsively, and insert it into your worship folder or use as a single handout. Have a layman come forward to lead the reading.

##### Reception of Tithes and Offerings

Have a member of the finance committee lead in receiving the offering and the prayer.

# The Grace of God shining through the lives of ordinary people....

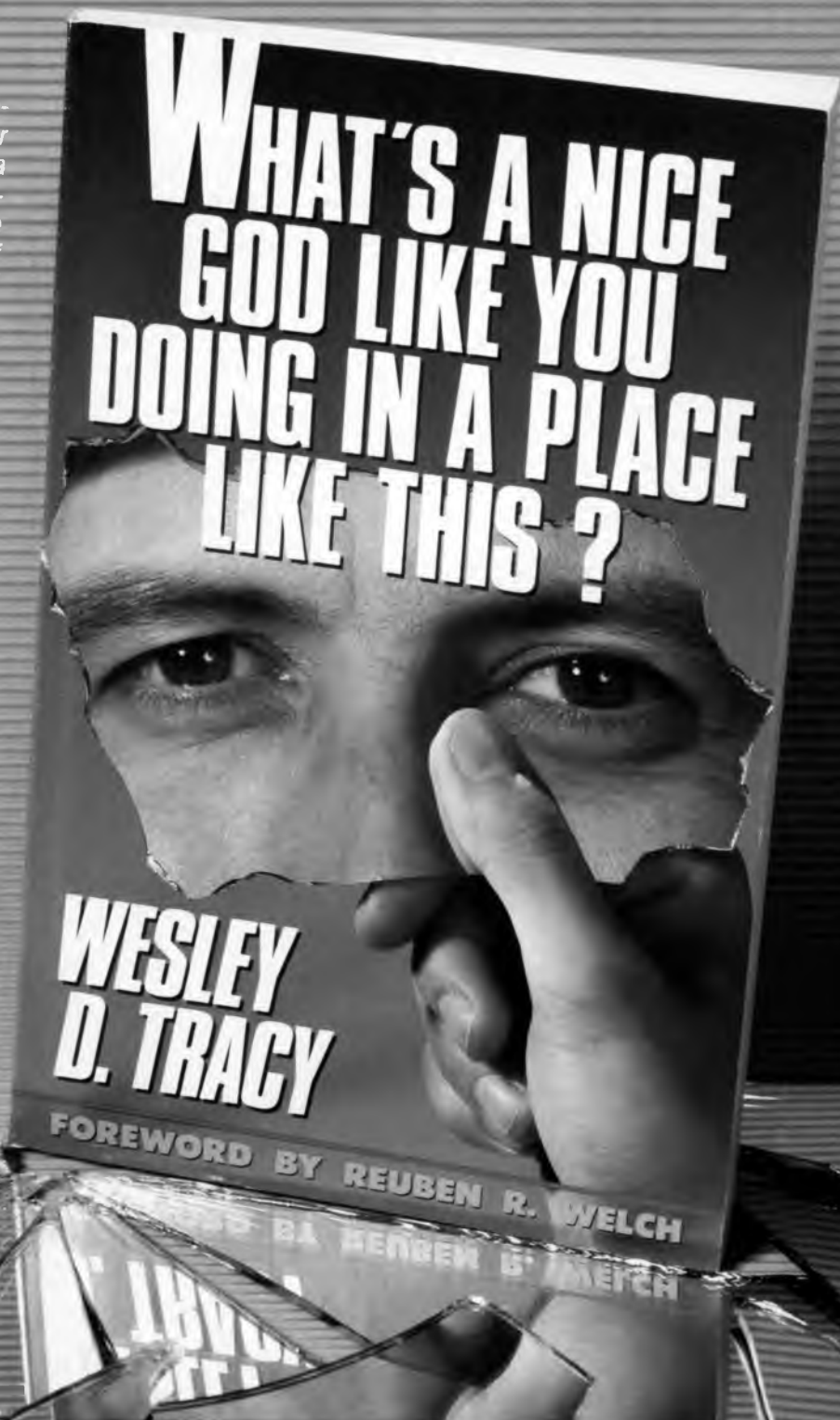
**W**hat kind of relevant lesson can an obscure Bible character like Rahab the harlot, or Jephthah the renegade teach us today? In a society oriented toward idolizing the successful superstar, this book demonstrates that the grace of God can shine through the lives of less than superstar quality people. In spite of facing adverse circumstances, the author points out how these (mostly) nameless nobodies made lasting contributions that inspire, encourage, and comfort us even today.

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## David, Hero for God!

## For Middlers

He asked and the mantle fell. He spoke and the axhead floated. He trusted and the oil overflowed. He prayed and the enemy was blinded. Devoted and steadfast, he was

## Elisha, Hero for God!

## For Juniors

Friends followed him. Kings trusted him. Lions ignored him. Enemies plotted against him. Dreams unfolded before him. He never wavered from what he believed, he was

## Daniel, Hero for God!



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# GROW

*A Journal of Church Growth, Evangelism and Discipleship*



God is at work in Toronto and Detroit



# HARVEST NOW

**"H**arvest" is a very descriptive analogy for evangelism. Fields represent places. Crops symbolize people. Harvest time is the day of salvation.

One comparison that is often overlooked in this analogy is the generational characteristic. The church has focused on geographical evangelism, but generational evangelism is also implied in the Great Commission. Among unevangelized peoples, generation after generation perishes until the good news of the gospel reaches them. Unfortunately, backslidden cultures also need to be evangelized again or future generations will perish without God and without hope.

The Easter '91 to Easter '92 "Harvest Now" theme combines the symbol of evangelism with the reality of time. The lost must be found now. The unbeliever must come to faith now. This worldwide generation must not be allowed to perish without having been confronted by the claims of Christ.

The twenty-first century just isn't soon enough. We must have a spiritual "Harvest Now."

*Bill M. Sullivan*

## Mission of Church Growth Division

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

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

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

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

# WAVEMAKERS AND WAVERUNNERS

## CHURCH GROWTH IN THE NINETIES AND BEYOND

by Bill M. Sullivan

I have in my library two invaluable resources. The first is the class notes of Dr. C. Peter Wagner's lectures on Church Growth. By all rights I should long ago have copied those lecture notes onto India paper and had them bound with a genuine leather cover — silk sewn, gold edging and all!

The second major resource is my personally marked copy of Dr. Donald McGavran's monumental work, *Understanding Church Growth*. Again and again I return to that book, so important in the annals of Church Growth.

Perhaps this is an appropriate time to return to that book again. There is a loneliness here tonight because of Dr. McGavran's absence. We know that if he had lived and had been able to be here tonight, he would have declared, "This is the most important meeting in America, for here are gathered professors, denominational executives, and pastors who can affect the growth of churches and the planting of churches in the entire cultural mosaic of this land."

I can also hear him quoting from Romans 16:26 "... by the command of the eternal God . . . that Panta ta ethne might believe."

For Dr. McGavran, "Panta ta ethne" was not an evangelistic novelty. It was an evangelistic necessity. How else could the lost be found?

I was always greatly moved by Dr. McGavran's emphatic insistence that "God wants the lost found!"

He declared that "the Finding God . . . is not pleased when many findable sheep remain straggling on the mountain, shivering in the bitter wind. The more found, the better pleased is God" (p. 24).

Dr. McGavran deplored the universal fog that clouds the ways by which the lost are most effectively

found. He challenged persons like us to discover the means by which the church grows.

He reminded us that it is sometimes necessary to sit in the promotional chair and at other times to sit in the diagnostic chair, that at times we should fire people's imaginations with what we confidently expect to happen. At other times we should give an accurate accounting of what has been accomplished and a realistic assessment of what we hope to achieve.

I suppose the question is, "In which

tonight we sit in the chair of the diagnostician.

This past spring, I rented a condo on the shore of The Lake of the Ozarks in southern Missouri. I had to have some extended privacy to complete a writing project. Well, it was a good excuse to go to the lake.

The Lake of the Ozarks was formed by flooding a winding river valley so that now there are hundreds of miles of shoreline. Boats of all description passed the condo where I was writing.

It was consoling to my jaded urban



**KEYNOTE:** Nazarene Church Growth Division Director Bill W. Sullivan gives presidential address to North American Society for Church Growth.

chair should we sit tonight?" There is so much to celebrate. Dr. McGavran's legacy is so richly decorated.

A compliment is surely in order for Kent Hunter, the editor of *Global Church Growth*, for the outstanding current issue featuring the life and legacy of Dr. McGavran. A beautiful issue, Kent.

But as we work through the loss of our founder, now is surely an appropriate time to think about the future. It may be eminently important that

nerves to hear the gentle purring of the engines as the boats passed and the subsequent waves that washed onto the shore 30 to 45 seconds later.

Now, we're not talking about ocean-going vessels here, but there were some pretty large boats passing by. They would create fairly large waves — or wakes, I guess I should call them.

I noticed an interesting situation a few hundred yards across the lake from me. A fellow over there had a little waverunner. It was kind of like a

# GROWTH IN THE NINETIES

skimobile on water.

I noticed that every time a large boat passed by, he would jump onto his waverunner and buzz out behind the passing boat. For a minute or two, he would maneuver back and forth across the wake created by the boat. The waverunner jumped and splashed over the waves a few times and then the fellow would head back for the shore.

I didn't think much about it at first, but after a while I began to wonder about this water toy that was so dependent on passing boats. It was like this fellow just sat over there on the shore all day long waiting for boats to pass so he could play for a few seconds in their wakes. That didn't seem like enough "bang for the buck" to me.

I did observe that once when he was out there in the middle of the lake, he made a few sharp turns with his waverunner as though he were trying to play independently of the passing boats.

That's when I discovered why he was playing on the waves created by the large boats. The waverunner created no waves of its own. I mean it was like those lanky water flies I used to see on the farm pond back in Arkansas. I never did figure out how they skimmed the top of the water so lightly that they didn't make any ripples.

That's the way that waverunner was. It didn't make any waves of its own. It was totally dependent on larger craft to create the environment in which it could function.

I began to wonder if that scenario was not being played out in a variety of settings. Could it be that I was riding a waverunner — jumping and splashing in the waves created by Donald McGavran, C. Peter Wagner, and others?

Was that phenomenon widespread? Were there many church growth advocates who weren't really making any waves — just jumping on the waves of others?

I began to realize that without the wavemakers, the waverunners would be out of business.

## Leadership

The Church Growth discipline is not mastered at a two-day seminar. Reading a few books scarcely makes one knowledgeable, much less competent.

I say it carefully and with great respect for those who have accomplished it, but even building a great church does not in and of itself make one an authority on Church Growth. People who live to be a hundred years old can't usually give you much of an idea about how they did it — or about how you could do it!

Of course, the academic pursuit of the discipline doesn't necessarily make one an authority, either. Gifts and skills must be blended with academic competence in a unique combination.

What I'm talking about here is the need to enlarge the corps of Church Growth authorities. The passing of Dr. McGavran should alert us to the reality that we don't have enough scholars to give leadership to the movement, especially on a national basis. We need a much larger cadre of leaders who will pay the price to give authentic leadership to this movement.

The Church Growth Movement has profited greatly from the support of Fuller Theological Seminary. I doubt if anyone would question that



leadership in the first fifteen years was provided principally by Donald McGavran, Peter Wagner, and also Win Arn.

The leadership of these persons and the role of Fuller Seminary represent a benchmark. The issue we will face in the decade of the nineties is not the replacement of primary leadership but the development of competent and committed secondary leaders.

The movement must develop secondary leaders at a more rapid rate than has occurred in the past few years.

As we sit in the diagnostic chair tonight, let us acknowledge that the most crucial issue facing the Church Growth Movement in the decade of the nineties is leadership — competent and committed Church Growth leadership — dispersed throughout America.

## Training

A second critical issue is training.

What we face today is a softening of the fascination with Church Growth. American Church Growth as a move-



**RESPONSE TO KEYNOTE:** David Slamp, Wilbur Brannon, Peter Wagner, and Doris Wagner discuss ideas from keynote address.

ment is approximately 15 years old. During that decade and a half, many denominations offered at least one round of Church Growth promotion. Specialty organizations have extensively provided both training and materials, but the old malaise expressed in the oft-repeated saying "that won't work either" is beginning to reappear.

It is important that the clergy receive training in the true nature of Church Growth. They may never become Church Growth scholars, but they need to develop an appreciation for the movement's scientific approach and critical methodology. They can then experience the failure of a particular program without losing confidence in the principles.

The question is: "How and when will the clergy receive this training?" One answer is that they should be taught it before they are biased against it. Old prejudices against numerical growth and the homogeneous unit principle continue to spawn aspersions against the Church Growth Movement.

## Church Growth is a perception not a product.

Careful thought needs to be given to correcting the errors and prejudices that have developed against the Church Growth Movement. Until people's minds are cleared of the rubbish, it will be difficult to gain acceptance of new Church Growth insights.



One of the biggest tasks of the stewards of the Church Growth Movement is building bridges to those persons responsible for clergy preparation. The assignment is not to displace them but to become partners with them in producing the kind of clergy-persons who are competent to lead a growing church today.

Dr. McGavran not only spoke about this, he even wrote a book about it. In *Effective Evangelism*, he called for the inclusion of six Church Growth courses in the seminary curriculum. He created quite a wave with that idea. We need someone to continue his emphasis on revising the curriculum for ministerial preparation.

Pastors also need to receive practical Church Growth training in the first year or two of their ministries. This requires the involvement of supervisors and specialty Church Growth organizations.

The size of this task is overwhelming. It is easier to ignore it and hope it will just go away, but unless we provide for the training of the persons who are ultimately responsible for the implementation of Church Growth, it is highly unlikely that we will ever reach our goal.

Also, training the laity must be given higher priority. While it was

correct to emphasize the essential role of the leader, it mitigated the findings of significant Church Growth research — that the laity play a vital role in the growth of the church.

Most attempts to train the laity in Church Growth principles have been token efforts in comparison to the energy expended in the training of the clergy. Greater attention to training the laity will be required.

In the nineties, we need someone to plow a "McGavran-size wave" of Church Growth training for both clergy and laity. The institutions exist. The facilities are adequate. Advanced technology is in place. Dr. McGavran has provided the idea, but a "wave-runner" can't get the job done. This task requires a really big ship — maybe a whole fleet!

## Credibility

Another critical issue facing the Church Growth Movement in this decade is credibility. Have we been able to make good on our claims? What are the reasons people should look to us for growth leadership in the nineties?

I asked a church leader a few weeks ago about his thoughts concerning the Church Growth Movement. You know what he said? "Has it really made any difference?" he asked. Is that fierce pragmatism or what?

Well, that wasn't the time to slouch down in the "diagnostic chair." That was a clear signal to get up, move over, and sit proudly in the "promotional chair."

The Church Growth Movement has made significant contributions to American Christianity. It has brought to light the crucial importance of church planting; the pervasiveness and extensiveness of web evangelism



THE NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR CHURCH GROWTH: leaders who attended November conference.



# GROWTH IN THE NINETIES



**ROBERT E. LOGAN, VICE PRESIDENT, NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT WITH CHURCH RESOURCE MINISTRIES:** *presents ideas from his new book, Beyond Church Growth.*

has been documented; the complexity of super church growth has been objectively studied; a new and powerful awareness of the Great Commission has been instilled in the hearts and minds of many people; and a new focus on the validity of church growth has been achieved.

I believe it would be correct to say that the Church Growth Movement has altered the way pastors think about congregational development and the expansion of Christianity, but strangely, the movement has not been credited with this accomplishment. We have not yet "won our wings" with the rank-and-file.

There are two factors in credibility to which we must give attention in the future: accuracy and emphasis.

Dr. McGavran's "wave" was powerful because his theory grew out of solid research. He was a strategist who forced himself to submit his theories to rigorous testing. He used research methods, apparently learned from Wascom Pickett, at whose fire McGavran said he lit his candle. He understood that untested theory is of limited value and actually tends to contribute to the "fog" that hinders Church Growth.

Sociologist Ken Crow, to whom I often turn for guidance, keeps cautioning me about "truncated" research — discovering "when, where, and how many" without discovering "why."

He also warns me against imprecision in interpretation — generalizing from case studies and assuming causation from correlations.

I recognize that some of our group are concerned that this movement not become overly involved in statistical comparisons and evaluations. The point is well taken. Statistical surveys and analyses should never be allowed to dictate what decisions must be made or what concepts articulated.

The purpose of research is to provide accurate information for theorists and strategists like Donald McGavran. The problem with most statistical analyses is not that they are overdone, but that they are incomplete. It is easy to jump to an exciting conclusion based on flimsy data. It happens all the time.

I believe the Church Growth Movement must be committed to a more precise methodology than anecdotal data provides. We need persons who will pay the price of toil in uncovering the real causes of church growth in contemporary America.

It is not just more research that we need in the nineties, it is better research. We must have some truly monumental research projects in the next few years.

## "God wants the lost found."

"Waverunning" across the waves of Dr. McGavran's research is not enough. We should follow his lead in using solid research to achieve balance between the promotional and the diagnostic elements of our task. If we fail to discipline ourselves here, we may contribute to the fog instead of dispelling it.

We should take advantage of the full range of social science research methods. Both anthropology and sociology provide methods with particular strengths and limitations. Rigorously applying the established methods will extend accuracy, precision and, therefore, credibility.

A second aspect of credibility is emphasis. We need to be talking about the issues with which pastors are concerned. We have said much



**MICHAEL R. ESTEP, NAZARENE CHURCH EXTENSION MINISTRIES DIRECTOR:** *Estep leads discussion, "Ten Things We Have Learned From Telemarketing."*

about church planting and ethnic evangelism. These are topics that are important to denominational home missions executives. They are not the top priorities for pastors. Pastors are concerned about insights that affect the evangelistic effectiveness of the local church.

Most pastors and lay leaders need help in the congregations where they serve. They need to know that Church Growth has important insights for small as well as large churches; for inner-city, suburban, and rural settings; for new churches and for 50-year-old congregations; in growing, declining, and stable populations.

The challenge we face is to find effective ways of getting resources to where the rubber really meets the road for the typical pastor or church.

We cannot abandon the emphasis on church planting as the most effective method of evangelism, especially on a regional basis, but to improve our credibility with pastors, we need to increase our emphasis on the value of Church Growth insights for their local churches.

Another facet of this same problem has been an inferred over-emphasis on the super church. I say "inferred" because it has been the pastors' inference, not the movement's intention, or even its implication. Nevertheless, pastors by the hundreds, possibly even thousands, have become disenchanted with the Church Growth Movement because they perceived it to be preoccupied with the growth of super churches.



**EDDIE GIBBS AND PETER WAGNER:** Gibbs, outgoing president of NASCG, presents Donald McGavran Church Growth Award to Peter Wagner.

As the movement continues its impact on this decade, it will do well to help pastors understand that Church Growth is comprehensive and can help all sizes and kinds of churches to discover the most effective ways to implement growth.

## Identity

Finally, I want to say something about the identity of the Church Growth Movement.

Is it appropriate to ask if Church Growth has a clear identity? Do those of us who view ourselves as its strong supporters perceive the movement in a unified way?

Increasingly these days, I find myself insisting — to people who should already know — that Church Growth is a perception, not a product.

While many pastors know some Church Growth principles and methods, they fail to understand the ongoing self-critical, self-perfecting nature of the Church Growth Movement.

"The Universal Fog" that Dr. McGavran wrote about just doesn't seem to go away.

Before dawn, one morning last month, I started driving from Denver, Colorado, to Cheyenne, Wyoming. There was a dense fog. At times, visibility was down to less than 100 feet. I kept anticipating the sunrise because I knew it would burn off the fog. Isn't it fascinating how quickly a fog can

disappear when the sun rises?

But this fog was persistent. It just wouldn't go away. Sometimes when I went over a hill, I would get above it momentarily, only to descend back into the fog as I went down the hill.

I began hoping the wind would blow it away, but alas, no such fortune. I continued to drive in the fog.

I knew that eventually the sun would dispel it — as indeed it did — for when I returned later in the day, the fog was gone and you could see "forever."

Donald McGavran believed that the light of empirical reality would

dispel the fog that obscures the vision of the church as to how God's kingdom grows. That is fundamental to the Church Growth Movement. We don't put much stock in wind. It may move the fog around, but it doesn't dispel it. Only the light of truth dissolves the fog.

This is the identity the Church Growth Movement must communicate as we move through this last decade of the twentieth century.

We are about truth — even if it shows us that we have been wrong in the past. We are so committed to the truth that we are glad when the empirical data leads us back to spiritual causation. And we are committed to the truth even when we stand bewildered in the mystery of divine sovereignty.

We gaze in awe at those ways of God beyond our comprehension, but we search with diligence to know those realities within our power to understand.

We have no easy answers — no simplistic solutions.

We have a critical methodology — sanctified by a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and obedience to the Great Commission.

Let others blow the fog around. Our task is to help the light of truth dissolve the fog. It is a larger assignment than any local situation. It is a national responsibility. It calls for the highest commitment of those who, like Donald A. McGavran, believe with all their hearts that "God wants the lost found!"



**GEORGE HUNTER, ASBURY SCHOOL OF WORLD MISSION, AND KENT HUNTER, CHURCH GROWTH CENTER IN CORUNNA, INDIANA:** discussing church growth ideas at NASCG Conference.

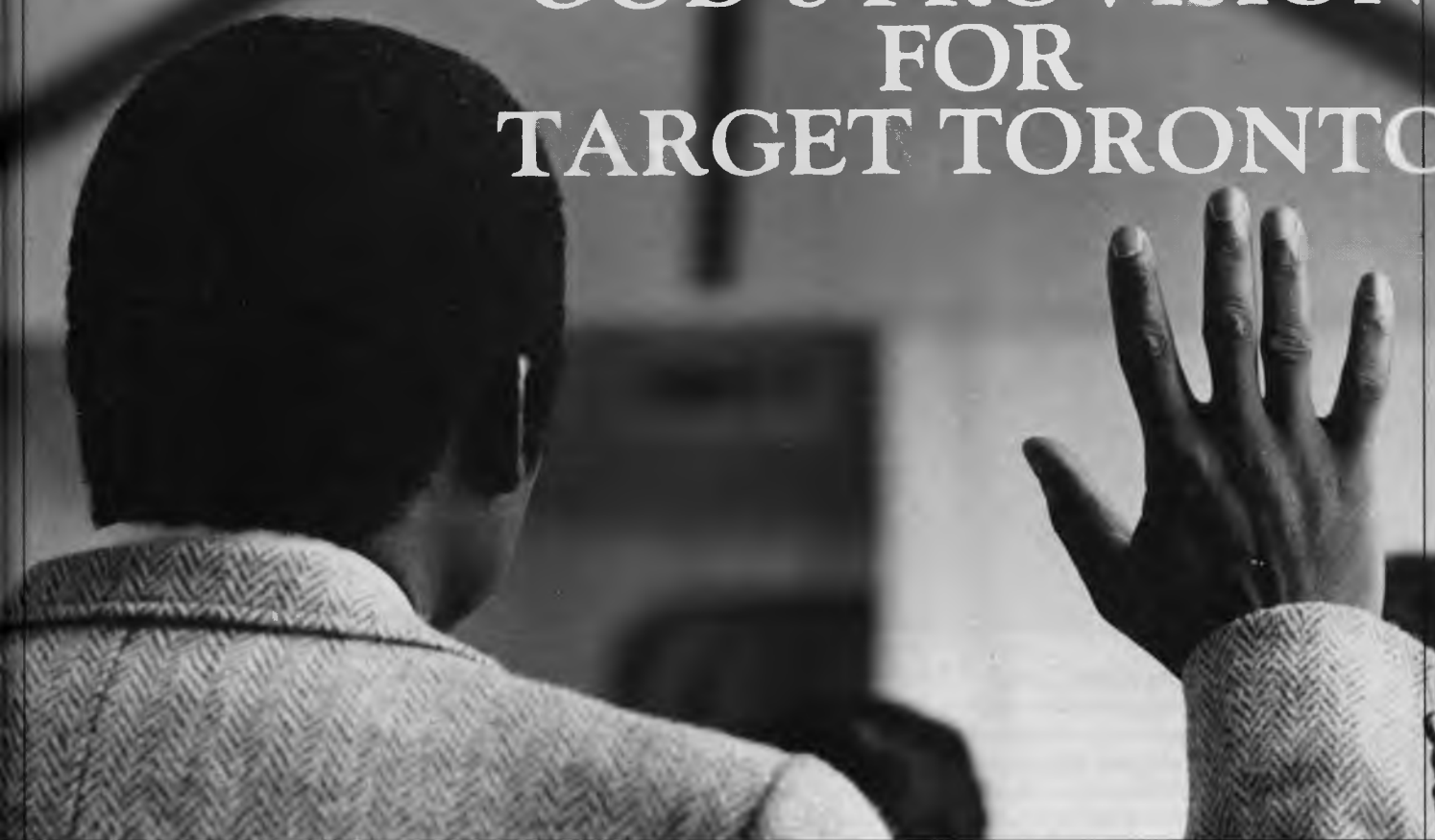
# GROW

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# GOD'S PROVISION FOR TARGET TORONTO



**P**astors' Retreat was on! Would I please hold the fort at the Sharing Place Thursday morning? I always enjoy spending time at the Sharing Place — TARGET TORONTO's ministry to those in need of emergency food, clothing, and counseling — but rarely do I have time to do so. For the first time in months, I knew I could.

**A new Spanish-speaking pastor.** The first family I talked with that morning was from Honduras — Spanish-speaking (a little English), new to the city, five children, ages 10 to 14. A quick check of their resources showed that they certainly needed food and clothing, but I definitely felt that I needed to find out more about these people. I asked if there were other needs — maybe something we could pray about together. Yes, there were. They needed work. If she could get a sewing machine, she could do alterations and keep an eye on the family. He would take anything, be-

cause he was studying to prepare for the ministry. Really? Yes, the Lord had brought him to Toronto to plant a church among the Spanish people. We talked about his preparations. He could not find a Spanish-speaking school, but he had books. To my surprise, he was using Nazarene materials. "Yes," he said, "our doctrine is Nazarene." I explained that counseling was not my real job. My real job was to get new churches started in the city and to find pastors for them. Would they be interested in talking about church planting? Through their tears, they said they would.

"Oh, Lord, You've done it again!" I thought, and added to my list another amazing incidence of God's meeting our need.

**THE LORD'S TIMING IS MIRACULOUS—  
"MY GOD WILL MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS."  
PHILIPPIANS 4:19**

When TARGET TORONTO began, I was only too aware of the great gap between our goals and the resources on hand. There were many people, some whom I respect very much, who said we would never make it. Our base was too small and our commitment was too weak. Where would the pastors come from? Where would the money come from? The people would not really care. They would not get involved.

I remember in the beginning days, I wondered how close faith was to foolishness. I remember that initially trusting God alone seemed to be such a risk. Now, He has shown me that trusting Him is our greatest security.

# GOD'S PROVISION FOR TORONTO



**Thornhill church plant.** Thornhill was another of our targeted areas. In fact, it was the next church-start on our list. Gordon Patton was a young man about to graduate from Canadian Theological Seminary, a school two thousand miles from Toronto. Gordon was called by God to urban church planting, but his denomination could only offer him a rural area.

Somehow, one of his professors had heard about TARGET TORONTO and suggested that Gordon talk to me. He was planning a visit to Toronto, and he called while he was here. During the conversation, it became more and more apparent that Gordon was just the kind of church planter we needed, and he had holiness theological beliefs.

I asked, "Is there some part of the city you are particularly interested in?"

"Yes," he replied. "My wife Carol and I were born and raised in Thornhill, and we really feel a burden for that area."

At the time of this writing, the birth of the Thornhill church is four days away. During the six weeks Gordon and Carol have been in Thornhill, they have gathered around them a nucleus of about thirty people. They have met together to establish a mission statement, set goals, knock on doors, deliver brochures, have some fellowship times, and pray for the new church. "Lord, I would not have known where to look for Gordon, but You did!"

**Training institute.** Pastors are in short supply in Canada, but the Lord has impressed upon us the need to be able to train people right in the cultures and lifestyles where they will minister. Toronto Nazarene Bible Institute began in October 1990 for this purpose. We felt if we had five students, it would be worth it, and ten would make it financially sound. Twenty-four enrolled. Some are already pastoring; some have a definite call; some are open to a call; some are church-planting laypeople who want to be better prepared; two are called to be missionaries.

Again the Lord has provided not only committed students but an excellent roster of teachers, an evangelism-oriented director, a visionary education board, a church willing to house TNBI, and the assistance of both Canadian Nazarene College and Nazarene Bible College.

**Lay leaders for church plants.** The Lord has also provided in every church-plant situation one or more laypersons who are models of vision, perseverance, commitment, encouragement, faith, adaptability, and creativity.

I think about Ian Wrong, right-hand man to Pastor John Anderson in the Oshawa Church. Ian found the school facility, did the initial advertising, preached at the first services, found a home for the pastor family, and continues to support with enthusiasm and exuberance. He talks about





the next plant a little to the east of Bomanville.

There's Ahamad Kahn. Ahamad arrived from Trinidad and began attending the Rosewood Church. He was keenly interested in the church-planting history of the Rosewood Church and looked forward to the day when he would have a part in a new church start. The opportunity came. Ahamad and his family left a church of about 300 to join Pastor Glenn MacLachlan and his family to launch Faith Nazarene Church. Ahamad is faithful. Everything he is and has is available to the Lord. He's a very excited man as he shares the ways the Lord just keeps on meeting the needs of this new congregation.

I think about Rev. Frank Seixas and his wife who came from Brazil to give an entire year to helping their son, Frank Seixas, Jr., establish the Toronto Portuguese Church.

I think about Barb and Dave Taylor, grandparents, but oh, so young at heart. They are eager to throw their energies into Thornhill. They bring years of good Christian experience, but also a ready willingness to adapt to new ways of doing things.

### **The Lord's timing is miraculous.**

In the early days of TARGET TORONTO, I was pianist at the Markham Village and the Rosewood Cantonese Churches. I needed to free up my Sundays to share the vision of TARGET TORONTO across the district. I came down to my last Sunday. "Lord, where are my replacements?" That day, in Markham Village, a lady approached me at the close of the service. She said she was nervous, but with God's help she would give it a try. That afternoon, there was a visitor in the Cantonese Church. She had arrived in Toronto that week. She had played the piano for the last time the previous Sunday in her Nazarene Church in Hong Kong. Yes, she would be happy to play. "Thank you, Lord. You are always on time. We're learning to count on that."

**\$18,000 offering.** I knew I had to raise \$18,000 to launch THE SHARING PLACE, our first compassionate ministry venture. With only two days left before District Assembly, the Lord gave me the idea of buying a



heavy chain with 180 links. I would drape it around my neck several times and explain to the people that it represented the burden I felt for the needy of Toronto. I would tell them that I would wear it all summer and each time someone gave me \$100, I would cut off one link. I was so afraid that someone would tell me it was a crazy idea that I never told a soul. I also never tried it on to see how heavy it was. As I got up to make the presentation, I lowered the coils over my head and started for the pulpit. One thought was in my mind: "Lord, did I

misunderstand You? I will be amazed if I can keep this thing on for ten minutes." What happened took me so by surprise that I was still in shock the next day.

I explained the plan. A pastor from out of town jumped up onto the platform and said, "Marjorie has carried this burden long enough. Let's take care of it right now." Twenty minutes later, \$18,000 lay in my lap, and the chain was gone. The church had just finished some construction and someone had left a pair of boltcutters behind. Happy Nazarenes took their



# GOD'S PROVISION FOR TORONTO

links home as a reminder of God's provision.

We have seen the goodness of God in supplying people, funds, even ideas when we needed them. At the same time, He has also supplied our spiritual needs individually and corporately.

Several years ago, when my two sons were going through some turbulent teen years, I remember saying to the Lord during an intense prayer time, "I could do so much to help them, but they won't let me." I felt that the Lord responded this way:

**The Lord  
has also provided  
in every  
church-plant  
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one or more  
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faith, adaptability,  
and creativity.**

"They're a lot like you. There is so much I want to give you, but you never ask." I began to realize that I was living like a spiritual pauper when the things I needed most were the things the King was most eager to give. This has radically changed the way I pray and live.

People who live and work on the growing edge of the church need His spiritual resources more than any

other kind of provision. He brings to the roller-coaster ride of joys and disappointments a strength and stability that keep us on course.

Objective No. 6 in the TARGET TORONTO proposal reads: "To Equip and Train People for Target Toronto Ministries. The greatest need will be for God to prepare our hearts, minds, wills, and energies for this task." We could provide opportunities for this to happen, but only God could make it happen. The words "Let it happen, O Lord" often appeared in our publicity. We needed

vision. We needed the vision to reach out. We needed a new spirit of caring, optimism, commitment, and cooperation. We needed flexibility, openness, and resilience. We needed to learn to celebrate — initially to celebrate what He would do, and then what He was actually doing. We are not the same church we were five years ago. God is letting it happen indeed!

"My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." For us in TARGET TORONTO, this has been a lesson to learn, a promise to trust, and a joy to experience.

—by Marjorie Osborne  
Coordinator, Target Toronto

**TARGET 1990  
TORONTO**

**OBJECTIVES**

- 1 To strengthen the Church of the Nazarene in Canada.
- 2 To plant 27 churches in the "Target Toronto" area — 10 of these among new cultural groups.
- 3 To organize and operate four Christian Counselling Centres in needy neighbourhoods.
- 4 To promote and co-ordinate the ministry of Christian Day Care in Nazarene churches.
- 5 To establish a government sponsored, church operated Seniors' Residence and seniors' day assistance programs.
- 6 To equip and train people for "Target Toronto" ministries.
- 7 To appoint appropriate "Target Toronto" committees to carry out the proposal.
- 8 To gain support for "Target Toronto" — 2,000 people pledged to pray daily and \$1,000,000 raised in finances.
- 9 To make full and appreciative use of all denominational resources.
- 10 Through "Target Toronto" to participate in the nationwide Vision 2000.

COVENANT FOR GROWING CHURCHES

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# THE BOTTOM LINE OF CHURCH PLANTING

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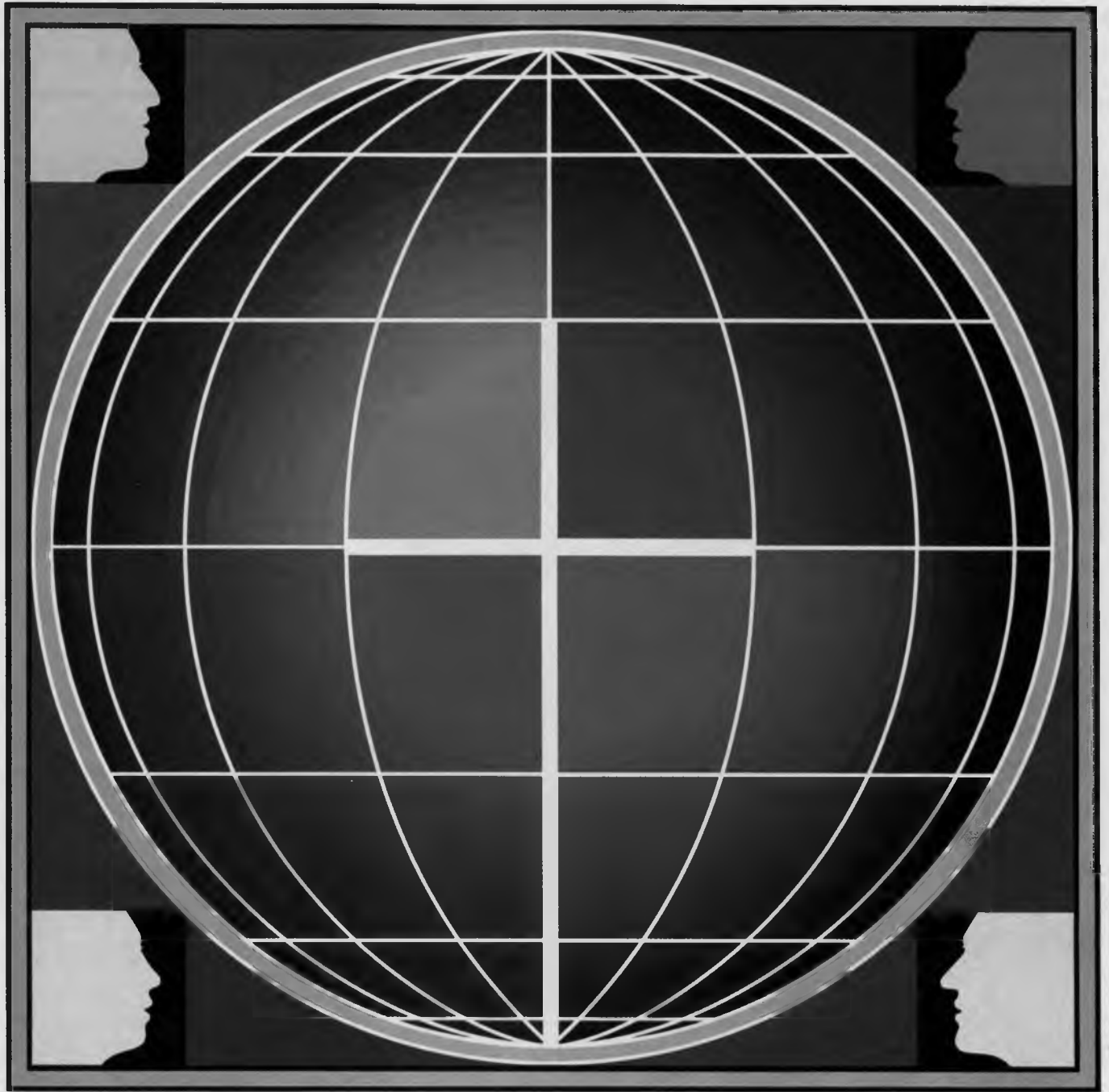
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## HOME MISSION SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 1991

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STEWARDSHIP  
SERVICES

THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW



CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
STEWARDSHIP SERVICES

# Easter

**OFFERING FOR WORLD EVANGELISM**

## Growth Markings & Main Points

**E**xplosive church growth, New Testament style, can only be accomplished by Christians who are endued with power from on high and are carrying out the Great Commission of the Lord.

F. J. May

**W**orship in dynamic congregations focuses on the presence of God and the living Word. Love for God is focused on and praise is an integral part of the worship. A spirit of freedom, spontaneity, and even exuberance is usually apparent in contrast to more formality in the nongrowing churches.

Medford H. Jones

**R**emember, you never have a second chance for a first impression! A church that recognizes this and organizes to overcome the tendency toward social discomfort of newcomers will be much more effective in seeing them eventually involved.

Bill M. Sullivan



**C**hurches concerned with reaching and keeping members must intentionally prioritize the development of loving, caring relationships.

Win Arn

**T**he initial factor in the conversion of many non-Christians was their perception of some action on the part of a Christian which presented itself as radically different from the kind of action which would have been taken by a non-Christian in similar circumstances.

Stephen Neill

**I**f all we can offer to people is the opportunity to do our ecclesiastical chores, we had better not bother. If we withhold from people the Bread of Life for which they hunger, we betray our calling.

George G. Hunter



**C**hrist died to escape power. Muhammed lived to wield it. Power is the greatest snare of all. How terrible is power in all its manifestations—the voice raised to command, the hand stretched out to seize, the eyes burning with appetite.

Malcolm Muggeridge

**G**rant us, Lord, Thy compassion, that we too may see the great masses of mankind as Thy lost children, and like Thee spend ourselves for them.

Donald McGavran

**T**here should be at least seven groups in your church for every 100 members. Creating an effective group life is a fundamental building block upon which growth and incorporation depend. The consequence of too few groups for members to build meaningful relationships is a high rate of inactives exiting through the back door.

Win Arn

**O**n a global basis, the one-third of the world that is most affluent consumes 87 percent of global production, leaving only 13 percent for the remaining two-thirds.

C. Peter Wagner







*Pastor James Mellish  
Leads Church Plant to 601 Members*

## **26-Year Growth Record at Warren Woods Church**

**L**ots of excitement and anticipation can be felt on Sunday mornings at Warren Woods Church, near Detroit, as more than 700 people gather to worship God. Though the buildings are well designed and comfortable, glitter and glamor are not the attraction here. The old-fashioned, ever-new magnetism of affirmation, fellowship in the gospel, and a powerful challenge to live the holy life draws people week after week to this place.

In a recent morning worship service, the congregation sang old hymns, new praise choruses, and Scripture texts set to music; babies were dedicated; sick people were anointed; joyous giving was apparent; inspiring intercession took place at the open altar; the gospel was preached; and the people rejoiced. The spirit of the church consists of an interesting blend of down-home closeness and a vision for the world, both around the corner and across the globe.

Pastor James Mellish, the only senior pastor in the church's history, has been the spiritual sparkplug for 26 years of continuous growth. The amazing record shows Warren Woods Church has increased in membership, Sunday school attendance, and stewardship each year of its history. Mellish is a quiet man, a loving pastor to his people, well trained in Nazarene educational institutions, deeply committed to holiness doctrine, and a product of a family of Michigan

## "My family is the strength of my ministry."



Nazarene preachers. He says, "My family is the strength of my ministry." Mellish has invested his entire ministry in this church except for two years when he planted a church in Marshfield, Wisconsin.

Warren Woods Church started with 20 adults in May of 1964. Membership has grown to 601, Sunday school attendance has increased to 514, and worship attendance averaged 729 last year. The church received 242 new Nazarenes into church membership in the last six years. Beginning in a rented school building, the church now owns 18 acres, has constructed 11

buildings including parsonages, and recently purchased a 30,000-square-foot public school building. Present property evaluation totals \$5 million.

Warren Woods Church presents Christ to every age group. Their week-day school serves 200 students with educational programs from preschool through sixth grade. Week-night ministries include recovery programs for alcoholics, drug users, and victims of family abuse. JOY (Just Older Youth) provides 197 senior citizens with opportunities for spiritual growth and outreach. And many children who grew up in the church are now taking

leadership in the various ministries.

To express concerns for others outside their own church family, the Warren Woods congregation has sponsored 15 work and witness projects to world mission areas. It has also contributed funds and labor to four urban work and witness projects on the Eastern Michigan District since 1984.

GROW salutes the fine growth record of Pastor James Mellish and the faithful Nazarenes who serve Christ through the Warren Woods Church on the Eastern Michigan District.

# Why is Warren Woods Church Special to You?



"The powerful effect of our church starts with our pastor, who is blessed with a tremendous ability to love and it filters down to all of us. This kind of love is contagious; it is not phony but absolutely sincere." —**Judy Lupu**, junior high public school teacher, music director for children and teens.



"No matter how large our church gets, it has a loving spirit. I like to think of it as a bunch of small churches that meet together. For those who are looking for a well-rounded life, this is a good place to grow." —**Dennis Wegner**, milk supplier to public schools, minister of music.



"Our pastor has straightforward ways of showing us how we can apply Scripture to real-life application. And I am comfortable asking someone from work to our church because the people are friendly and fun to be with." —**Ed Ruddle**, business analyst for Electronic Data Systems, church board member, and head usher.



"I have been here from the beginning — 26 years . . . loved every minute of it . . . taught Sunday school for 23 years. The warmth of our church and the pastor is what makes this such a special place. I rejoice in our growth — we have always prayed to reach out to this area of Detroit." —**Rosie Luchtman**, homemaker, and nursery director for 23 years.



"I sold bricks to the church for this building. Since the church we attended was in serious spiritual decline, we had to make a change. The first time we came here, we felt the presence of God. It was just wonderful. We have been here ever since." —**Marvin Valade**, retired owner of Suburban Brick Company.



"A friend who did coke with me found Christ and told me about the Lord and this church. I thought all churches only wanted money. I had lots of hang-ups, knew how to bust heads, and was tough. Here I found peace, joy, and freedom from a 15-year drug addiction. This place is a sanctuary of peace — a refuge like a fortress. In this church, we are all in the will of God before the cross." —**Phil Carbone**, foreman for Ulrich Lumber Company.



"I started here when I was six. My parents looked for a church by driving through parking lots on Sunday and Wednesday nights saying, 'If a church has a good enough ministry to attract people on those nights, they obviously have something good going on.' Through the youth ministry, along with lots of my peers, I became spiritually established." —**Brian Banning**, assistant branch manager for National Bank of Detroit, and university student.



"The church means encouragement for me. Our marriage was on the rocks when I finally came to Christ as a result of the ministry of this church. These people offered me encouragement; no matter what life has dealt you in the past, this congregation is here to help you." —**Chuck Arnold**, supervisor for Michigan Bell, co-director with his wife of Marriage Enrichment, and church board member.

## God Grows a Church at Warren Woods



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**The old-fashioned,  
ever-new magnetism  
of affirmation,  
fellowship in the gospel,  
and a powerful challenge  
to live the holy life  
draws people week after week  
to this place.**

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# Do You Hold the Key to His Future?

Chaplain Charles Riggs of the Federal Bureau of Prisons has indicated that there are a number of openings available for clergy to serve as chaplains in the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The position is classified as that of Staff Chaplain. Duties are those analogous to those performed by a military chaplain or local pastor tailored, of course, to the prison system. They include worship leadership, counseling, spiritual direction, crisis intervention with the staff, coordination of community volunteers, and ecumenical team-building. The requirements include a graduate degree from a resident accredited seminary, ordination, and a current endorsement plus certifiable pastoral experience. The age limitation is under 35; however, there is some possibility to seek a waiver up to age 40. The salary offered is \$30,000 or compensatory with prior experience.

Interested clergy may inquire about these positions from Chaplain Charles Riggs or Robert Schulze; 320 First St. NW; NALC-Building, Room 301; Washington, DC 20534; Phone (202) 633-2214.

## **Chaplaincy Ministries**

6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131







# HARVEST

## REPORTS



### THIRTY-SIX CHURCHES GAIN 50 OR MORE MEMBERS

During the 1990 church year, the following churches gained 50 or more members:

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>GAIN</u>	<u>PASTOR</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>
Pasadena First	140	H. B. London, Jr.	Los Angeles
Metroplex Chapel	134	James Garlow	West Texas
Denver First	130	James Diehl	Colorado
Long Beach First	127	John Calhoun	Anaheim
Bethany First	107	Melvin McCullough	Northwest Oklahoma
Olathe College	100	Paul Cunningham	Kansas City
Salem First	84	Richard Parrott	Oregon Pacific
Malden Haitian*	74	Daniel Marechal	New England
Temecula Valley	73	Kenn Coil	Southern California
Colorado Springs Crossroads	73	Matthew Kindler	Colorado
Brentwood Trinity*	71	David Erickson	Tennessee
New Hope Community	71	G. Thomas Wilson	Arizona
Cincinnati Springdale	71	Stephen Green	Southwestern Ohio
Redding First	70	Ronald Greeno	Sacramento
Stuart	68	Gary Durham	Southern Florida
Clarksville First	67	Walter Crow	Tennessee
Tualatin Fellowship*	65	P. David White	Oregon Pacific
Oklahoma City First	65	Stanley Toler	Northwest Oklahoma
Spokane First	64	Kent Conrad	Northwest
Living Word	62	Frank Belella	New York
Roswell New Life*	61	Michael Jackson	Georgia
Lakeland Highland Park	60	W. Donald Wellman	Central Florida
Orlando Metro West	59	David Vaughn	Central Florida
New York Korean	57	James Lee	New York
West Melbourne	56	Allen Frank	Florida Space Coast
Immanuel	55	Keith Raney	Eastern Kentucky
Yuma First	55	Doyle Williams	Arizona
Gloryland	52	Charles Williams	Central Ohio
Lakeland Lake Gibson	52	Robert Cook	Central Florida
Seattle Aurora	52	Tharon Daniels	Washington Pacific
Kokomo First	51	Verdean Owens	Northwest Indiana
Clovis First	51	Daniel Lapaglia	New Mexico
North Hollywood Armenian*	50	Yeghia Babikian	Los Angeles
Montreal Grace*	50	Carlton Harvey	Canada Quebec
Grove City	50	Bob Huffaker	Central Ohio
Nashville Grace	50	David Graves	Tennessee

\*Church newly organized

NAZARENE  
BIBLE COLLEGE

Someone  
in your  
church  
is only  
a few months  
away from  
entering  
the ministry



Please send application materials to \_\_\_\_\_  
(name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(street address) (city) (state) (zip)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor

Mail to: President Jerry D. Lambert, Nazarene Bible College, P.O. Box 15947, Colorado Springs, CO 80935



# Target Toronto — A Living Example of "By All Means Save Some"

**T**arget Toronto, the 1990 Thrust to the City for the Nazarene denomination, is part of a longer church growth strategy reaching to 1995. The goals are 20,000 Canadian Nazarenes, 50-percent growth in each of the 147 existing churches, 40 churches planted by the five districts, 40 local churches planting another church, and 110 youth and/or second career people training for full-time ministry. The results from 1990 are amazing and glorious — 18 churches have been planted!

But Target Toronto means more than goals. It is people won, ministry offered in the name of Jesus by serious disciples, human misery eliminated, and hundreds of faithful people productively engaged in Kingdom efforts. Let's meet some of the people.



**Peter Thompson**, tribal chief and golf pro from Ghana, West Africa, found Christ through the witness of The Sharing Place at Grace Church.



**The Koson Ceung family**, raised in Buddhist homes in Cambodia, came to know Christ and were baptized through witness of The Sharing Place at Grace Church. He translates the services for his people.



**Gordon Patton** returns to his home area — Thornhill, a Toronto suburb — to plant a church after completing ministerial preparation at the Canadian Theological Seminary. Thirty-five people attended the first service on October 22, 1990, held in a school.



**Brenda Webb**, called to ministry at the 1985 General Assembly, gave up two careers — full-time nursing and ownership of a day-care center in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, to study for a religion degree at Canadian Nazarene College. Following graduation last year, she started a compassionate person-to-person ministry with single mothers in Gilder and McCown Complexes, where 6,000 persons live in public assistance housing. She has two thriving Sunday schools started and is laying plans for Bible studies for adults and teens, plus a mother-and-tot parenting program. She started a church in a high-rise building in the housing project on the first Sunday in November 1990.

# A Living Example of "By All Means, Save Some"



**Raphael Moreno**, lay preacher from Ecuador, came out of retirement to start the Toronto Spanish Church, which meets in facilities of the Emmanuel Church. This new church, organized in March 1989, now has a weekly attendance of 70. On October 22, 1990, this congregation started a second church, using the facilities of Grace Church and gaining prospects from the Spanish-speaking people who seek help at The Sharing Place.



**The Samraj Barran family**, raised in the Hindu religious tradition, are refugees from Trinidad who were helped with food and clothing at The Sharing Place at Grace Church. They have accepted Christ as Savior.



**Youth in Mission**, a summer college ministry group sponsored by the general church, ministered to children at Emmanuel Church and the new Lawrence Avenue Church for seven weeks last summer.



**Frank Seixas** leads the first Portuguese Church in Toronto, which he started in October 1989. God used Pastor Ian Fitzpatrick to challenge this former layman to begin this new work. Seixas makes unique contact with Portuguese people for his church near the subway station by wearing a shirt that says "Jesus Loves You" in his native language. Then, as immigrants from Brazil, Portugal, and the Cape Verde Islands stop for conversation in their mother tongue, he shares his witness for Christ and extends an invitation to church.



**Andrew Reynard** serves a new church in upscale Markham Village, which meets in a school. Rosewood Church — mother congregation for Markham — led by Pastor Nick Stavropoulos has pledged and raised \$275,000 to purchase a one-and-one-half-acre building site for the beginning church. A teen work-and-witness team from Webster Grove (St. Louis, Missouri) Church located new families through children's ministries last summer and left a contribution for the building. Pastor Reynard also serves as fire department chaplain, which provides opportunities for crises ministry and high visibility in the community.



**George Small**, Kennedy Road Church, leads his congregation to follow up ministry to 300 children who were contacted through Sunshine Clubs held in four public parks last summer. A youth group from Atlanta (Georgia) First Church and Doug Ruest, Canadian Nazarene College student, were prime helpers in this effort.



**Atlanta (Georgia) First Church** sent a 32-member teen work and witness team to help Kennedy Road Church touch its changing neighborhood during the summer of 1990. They also helped with construction renovation on the church building.



**Frank Klassen**, Grace Church co-pastor with Floyd Perras, a recent Canadian Nazarene College grad, loves the city, especially urban and compassionate ministries. The Sharing Place, along with layman Bill Middlebrook's personal tract ministry, has helped these beginning pastors revitalize this declining city church. They often have 90 in worship services, and 80 people sometimes come to the Thursday service at The Sharing Place.



**Sonny Acocoro** leads a Filipino congregation that meets in Parkdale Collegiate Institute. He often has an attendance of 30 or more. An evangelical missionary church planting society based in the Philippines pays his salary, and Target Toronto provides rent for the school and helps with housing costs for the pastor and his family.



**Floyd Perras**, Grace Church co-pastor with Frank Klassen, believes culture or skin color do not matter when it comes to worship — 15 different nationalities in their church. He says, "I love the city; I like the speed. It fits my energy level." Several work-and-witness teams from the United States have done much needed renovation on their building.



**John Anderson**, 1990 Nazarene Bible College graduate, serves the Oshawa Church, which meets for services in a Christian school. The church now has an average attendance of 30. A goal of reaching one new family each month keeps this growing congregation focused on outreach and soul winning.



EVANGELISM  
MINISTRIES

"Look at the fields!  
They are  
ripe for harvest."

*John 4:35b, NIV*



E A S T E R 1 9 9 1

E A S T E R 1 9 9 2

That the World May Know — GO!

THE YEAR OF THE HARVEST

This is a campaign to concentrate our energies in evangelism for one full year. These are the accepted goals: US/Canada—39,610; World Regions—54,452.

# BLEDSAW'S URBAN JOURNAL

## MISSION WORK IN THE CITY



**J**ames Bledsaw, Eastern Michigan District urban ministries director, invests his ministry mostly in Detroit, Flint, and Pontiac. His efforts focus on four goals: 1) to strengthen existing urban/ethnic churches, 2) to plant new urban/ethnic churches, 3) to supervise the training of Christian workers at Detroit Nazarene Bible College Extension (DNBCE), and 4) to establish a district expression of compassionate ministries. His work is accomplished primarily by serving pastors and lay leaders in the urban churches as advisor, enabler, and encourager.

As with all urban service for Christ, Bledsaw feels overcome with the needs, but, at the same time, he is overjoyed with the commitments of the people and amazed at the provisions God gives to move the work forward.

To allow *GROW* readers to see into his passion to impact a broken, decaying American city, I asked Pastor Jim to share entries from his datebook journal — and he did.

—The editor



# BLEDSAW'S JOURNAL



**Friday:** *A mechanic found a bullet hole in the headlamp of my car.*

**Monday:** *As I think about the good start at Chandler Park Church, I recall the help Adrian First Church gave in renovating the building. Rev. Al Dicer and his people read about the need in the district paper and gave several Saturdays; now the building looks so good the sellers want it back.*

**Friday:** *A word of witness has amazing power. Today I thought with thanks about the time Pastor James Mellish met Ron Chappel at a racquetball court in Warren. Though Ron never attended the Warren Church, he remembered the name "Nazarene" and later attended one of our churches. He finished his master's degree about the time I was praying for a church planter in Flint. He's there now and doing well.*

**Thursday:** *In the midst of brokenness, there is healing — healing of minds, bodies, and spirits. Today the Lord brought Ramona Chappel's healing from lupus to my mind. The doctors reported, "We can't understand it. The lupus was there, and now it's gone."*

**Monday:** *After a walk through a dangerous area with one of our pastors, I began to think and pray. I believe God gave me this conclusion: "If the whole earth is full of the glory of God, that includes my city — and I claim every street and alley, every tavern and crackhouse for His glory!"*

**Sunday:** *Here in the city, I worship, sing, cry, rejoice, and pray with some of the most precious saints I have ever known. When their pockets are empty, they give. When they are rejected, they remain tenderhearted. And what holiness preachers they make when God calls them.*





**Monday:** *There is so much unplowed ground in my heart. Lord, help me to slow down and see people the way You do.*

**Thursday:** *Met Mark Wagner, who writes promotional material to help us tell the story of the city.*

**Friday:** *Met with Pastor Ron Chappel, who is planting Flint Grace Church; he inspires me. He was called to preach out of Detroit Grace Church.*

**Saturday:** *Spent time with Robert Hunter, pastor of Detroit Grace Church. He started with no members in 1979 and now averages 125.*

**Tuesday:** *Rosa Hunter amazes me with her vision to lead Detroit Faith Church to renewed growth and new facilities — she pioneered our Detroit black work in the '50s. Good to have her back from Des Moines after all these years.*

**Friday:** *Met with John Wright, our bivocational pastor at New Hope Church. He was called to preach while serving as a layman in the Plymouth Church.*

**Wednesday:** *Worked out in a suburban gym. Fell into a discussion about a news article that stated homicide is the leading cause of death of Detroit's children. One guy responded, "Good; I hope they all kill one another off." The other man agreed. I went to my car to cry — will these wounds ever be healed?*



**Monday:** *New quarter started at Detroit Bible College Extension with 17 students and three instructors. They are the harvest hands of the future.*

**Tuesday:** *Went to buy a soda near New Hope Church. The merchant, seated behind a bulletproof glass, greeted me with a .44 Magnum on the counter and an M16 on a shelf behind him.*

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### A Personal Call on Mike and Janet

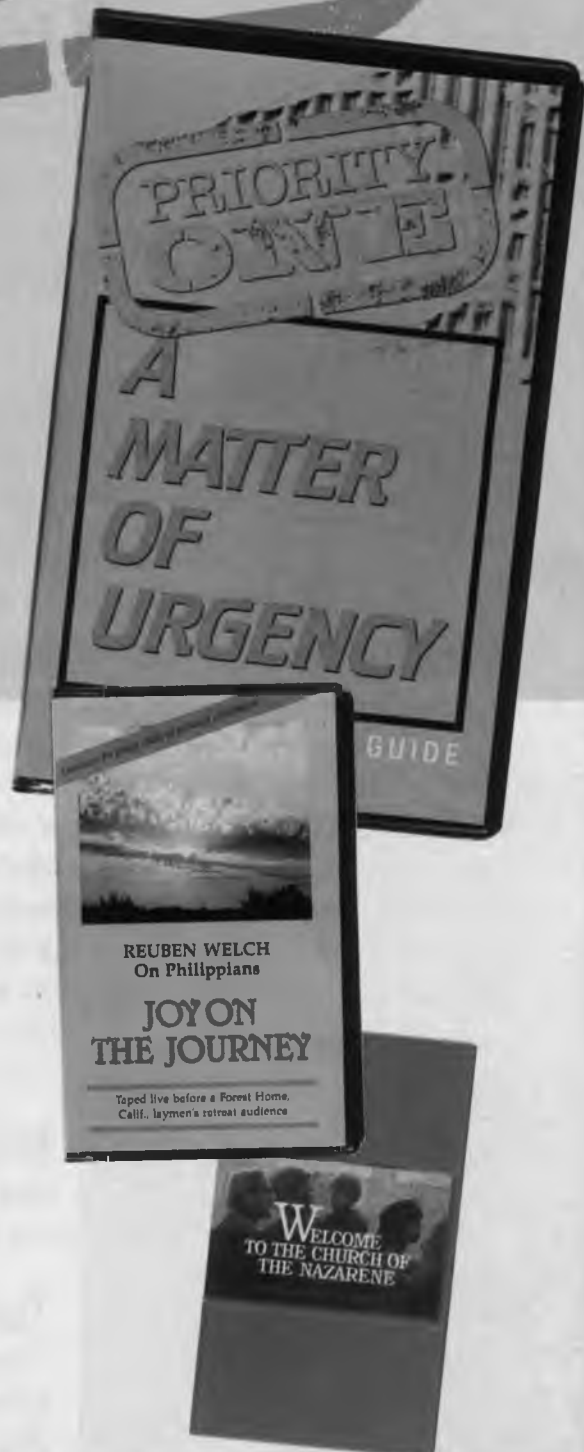
This video provides valuable gospel sharing techniques as Chic Shaver presents the gospel to Mike and Janet in a home setting. Ideally suited for personal evangelism or outreach training workshops.

GMVA-1701

**\$19.95**

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*Plus postage.*







# ROOTED IN CHRIST

— Personal Growth Helps for Leaders —

## ASCENDING THE HEIGHTS

### WEEK ONE

#### ENCOUNTER WITH GLORY

*"Then Moses said, 'I pray thee, show me Thy glory!'" (Exodus 33:18)*

**Glory** is a word used over 500 times in the Bible. Among its synonyms in the Scriptures are brightness, effulgence, heavenly light, divine power, weighty, honor, majesty, purity, magnificence, consuming fire, dazzling luster, radiant splendor. In both Testaments, **glory** describes that special aura which emanates from the presence of the living God. Whatever it is, everybody wants it.

Like the great golden eagle, we are not content to spend all our days chained to the earth, grubbing about for sustenance. There is something within us, created by God, that longs to spread its wings and soar into the heights, that hungers for the experience of the spiritual and transcendent. We see this in the very language of, for instance, the drug culture in their quest to **live it up**, to get **high**, to experience a sensation of being **spaced out** or **far out**. Unfortunately, instead of rising higher, they sink lower; instead of becoming more divine, they become more beastly —

even demonic; instead of finding life in a higher key, they consume the bitter fruit of death. It is also interesting to see the words used to describe what happens when people "load up" on chemical means of transcendence: they become **smashed, bombed, blasted, stoned**.

Moses yearned for transcendence. He had it right. He knew where to go: the Mountain of God. He knew what to do: pray. And he knew how to pray: **"I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!"** And He did, for "the Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him . . ." (Exodus 34:5).

### WEEK TWO

#### A TOUCH OF TRANSCENDENCE

*"And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he [Moses] called upon the name of the Lord" (Exodus 34:5)*

It was the eleventh day of the longest backpacking trip we had ever taken. We had already walked over 100 miles along the John Muir Trail, which winds through the California High Sierras. Just as the first rays of the rising sun began to chase away the shades of night, we broke camp at Granite Lake and began our final ascent to the summit of Mt. Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48 states.

Finally, at mid-morning, we made

the top. It was a perfect day: not a cloud in the sky, scarcely a breath of wind. The nearby jagged peaks and distant desert dropped away from us. Dean fished a Frisbee from his pack. He gave it a mighty toss. We watched it sail over the precipice of the mountain's sheer face. Dwayne coaxed a bird to eat trail mix out of his hand. Debbie, perched cross-legged on a flat rock jutting over the edge, began to quietly sing, "To God be the glory, Great things He hath done." We gathered and joined in. We read Scripture. We prayed. And the Lord descended upon that mountain that day.

We need, from time to time, to climb the mountain of God. We need to ascend to the heights. We need to be bathed and enveloped in His glory. We need our vision clarified, our spirits refreshed, and our resolve renewed. Then we are ready to descend into the valleys where the people are, to pour out our lives in self-giving service as did Moses.

### WEEK THREE

#### EXPLOSION OF LIGHT

*"... the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain . . ." (Exodus 34:29)*

Etched on stone tablets by the finger of God was a blueprint for the

## ROOTED IN CHRIST

and blocks was exceeded only by our joy in watching him. And he had a great time playing with them — for about sixteen seconds. He would soon become bored and turn his attention to another present, or to one of ours.

All of a sudden he dropped his last package, unopened, and began to crawl across the family room floor toward the fireplace. We could see that he had his eye on a candle that was burning brightly on the mantel. He maneuvered under it and began reaching up, with his little hand open, as if to seize the light!

Our whole family stopped to marvel at what we were witnessing. No matter how many glittering toys we gave him, there was something in him that yearned for the light. God's first creative word was, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (John 12:32).

### WEEK ELEVEN

#### A FADING GLORY

**"...and are not as Moses, who used to put a veil over his face that the sons of Israel might not look intently at the end of what was fading away" (II Corinthians 3:13)**

Paul makes a striking observation. The veil that originally shielded the eyes of the Israelites from the glory of God emanating from Moses' face (Exodus 34:29-35) became, in time, a religious mask veiling the fact that the glory had faded. How could Paul have made this judgment, since it is not mentioned in the Old Testament? Undoubtedly he observed, as we do when we read the account, that there was a gradual loss of the compassionate spirit that so characterized Moses after his encounter with God on Mt. Sinai. Early on, when the children of Israel sinned, he interceded for them, but later, he seemed to lose patience.

For instance, a man was brought to him who had been caught gathering wood on the Sabbath. No inquiry was

made as to why the man had broken the Sabbath law. Perhaps he needed to warm milk for a sick child or knock the chill in an elderly neighbor's tent. Moses' judgment was swift: "Stone him to death." At another time, some of the sons of Israel "played the harlot" with the daughters of Moab. Again, no intercession: only "Kill them all."

The sign of fading glory is when love becomes legalism and holiness degenerates into harshness. And the cure? **"But we all, with unveiled face beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (II Corinthians 3:18).**

### WEEK TWELVE

#### ENDUED WITH POWER

**"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8)**

Dr. Lloyd Ogilvie, pastor of Hollywood Presbyterian Church, tells about his personal Pentecost. It was his first pastorate. The church was growing. Money was pouring in. His popularity was soaring. Everything was going great — except within his own soul. He sensed that the church's prosperity was superficial and his ministry shallow. He longed for some evidence of the supernatural.

He went to the seacoast for a personal prayer retreat and determined not to come back until he had been "endued with power from on high." One afternoon he found himself walking along the beach when the tide was out. He took a long stick and began to scratch in the sand his sins, faults, weaknesses, and frustrations as they came to mind. The list extended far down the beach. Then he fell to his knees. All of the deep yearning of the weeks and months came to a head as he prayed the most humbling and yet important prayer of his life: **"Lord, help me!"**

He felt a burning flame touch him on the top of his head. It coursed down his neck, his spine, his legs, to the soles of his feet, enveloping his whole being in a

cleansing, healing, integrating divine presence such as he had never known. He laughed. He cried. He sang praises to God. After a long while, he felt the surf lapping at his knees. He looked down the beach. Not a trace of his list could be seen. Like the corruption in his heart, it too had been washed away in the cleansing, empowering floodtide of the Spirit. He testifies that his ministry has not been the same since.

### WEEK THIRTEEN

#### COMING TO THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

**"Now Moses . . . came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire . . ." (Exodus 3:1-2)**

Mountains play a signal role in the Bible. They stand as powerful symbols of the divine-human encounter that convicts, cleanses, and calls us to holy lives of servant ministry in a darkened world. Mountaintop experiences lift us above the smog and din of daily life. They serve as guiding stars, as light-houses during a stormy night, as a breath of fresh, spiritual air. Even though we cannot retain the ecstasy and excitement of these occasional peak experiences, they renew our spirits, sharpen our vision, and deepen our resolve for life in the trenches. I can do no better than conclude this series with a quotation from my backpacking journal:

"Tuesday, 6 a.m. I am looking out across Dusy Lake at 11,200 feet, watching the mountain peaks catch the fire of the rising sun. Sea gulls float lazily over the water. Fish are jumping, sending out circles of ripples.

"We enjoyed an especially tender moment last night while having devotions high on a rock bluff overlooking the lake. While drinking in the artistry of the setting sun as it painted clouds and mountains in brilliant yellow, orange, and red, and then suffused them with soft purple and deep blue-gray, we sang "How Great Thou Art" and read Romans 8. Emotions erupted. No biblical Mount of Transfiguration could have surpassed the quality of our experience in this isolated and holy place. Fire! Joy! Tears! Praise! Glory!"

—by C. S. Cowles



# WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

INTRODUCING OUR FAMILY

*Welcome to the Church of the Nazarene: Introducing Our Family* is an outreach tool scripted by Dr. Richard Parrott. It is designed for use in membership preparation classes and to inform potential church members about the Church of the Nazarene. It is available for purchase on videocassette (GMVA-5995) for \$29.95 or can be rented on 16-mm film for \$7.50 (GMFR-5995).

This valuable tool for pastors projects a positive yet realistic image of the Church of the Nazarene and will help incorporate new people into the life of the church.

A companion book (GM083-411-2566, \$4.95) and leader's guide (GM083-411-2558, \$2.50), both titled *Welcome to the Church of the Nazarene: An Introduction to Membership*, are also available for use in membership preparation classes.

To order write your Nazarene Publishing House, P.O. Box 419527, Kansas City, MO 64141, or call the U.S. toll-free order number 1-800-877-0700.



# Mission Achievement in Detroit and Beyond



**PASTOR ALLEN DICER AND PASTOR NATHANIEL WOMACK ADMIRE SIGN ANNOUNCING OPENING OF DETROIT CHANDLER PARK CHURCH:** Dicer (left) led Work and Witness Team, 30 persons from Adrian First Church, who renovated the building in preparation for the church's first service on July 22, 1990.







**PASTOR ED TRUE OF TROY, MICHIGAN, LED HIS CHURCH TO WELCOME VINCE EDRALENE TO PLANT A PHILIPPINE CHURCH IN THEIR FACILITY:** *True and Edralene met at the Church Management School at Olivet Nazarene University. The city of Troy is near a cluster of 25,000 Filipino people who live and work in the Detroit area. Edralene, an experienced church planter, has started three churches in the United States and five in the Philippines.*



**PASTOR RONALD CHAPPELL, RETIRED ARMY OFFICER, IS PLANTING GRACE CHURCH IN FLINT:** *The congregation of 30 meets in a day care center and was organized at the 1989 Eastern Michigan District Assembly. Chappell was introduced to the Nazarenes by Pastor James Mellish of the Warren Woods Church and began attending Detroit Grace Church. In addition to his masters in counseling, Chappell is training for the ministry through the Detroit Nazarene Bible College Extension.*





# FOR THE PASTOR



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# CHURCH PLANTING NEED NOT BE AS EXPENSIVE AS YOU THINK

**B**ecause of our Toronto experience, I approach this subject with a practical mindset. I believe God has given us all we ever need to reach our world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I remember the simplicity of the New Testament approach to planting churches, and while this is another era, we need to consider their basic strategies, which had little to do with church buildings.

In a world like ours, where people have given up on the church, the last thing people seeking God want is to take part in an expensive building program. They are not interested in the burden of a great debt, even if the facility is beautiful. Neither do they want to look around and see worry-worn Christians wondering where the next church mortgage payment is coming from. I believe the trend toward expensive facilities is leading the mission of the church into greater and greater despair.

This is where church planting enters the scene. In Toronto, we have the goal of planting 27 new churches in three years. By May of 1992, the job will be done, but in a city where real estate prices soar almost daily, we have to plant churches in existing buildings.

While this has been forced upon us, it strikes me that it is something we should be considering, even if we do not live in high-priced real estate markets.

# CHURCH PLANTING

**Church planting need not be expensive.** Truer words were never spoken, if we approach it right. I have found that in the churches we have planted already, mostly in school auditoriums, there has been a great response from new people. After all, the priority in the mission of planting a new church is to win the lost and set them to serving Christ, not to tie them to long-term obligations to pay for a building.

I want to make it perfectly clear that our efforts to teach our people to tithe must never be diminished, but what we do with what we have must always be examined.

This issue might also apply to building expansion efforts by established churches. There is a great temptation today to build additions in preparation for the multitudes who are about to come through our doors. Could it be true that if the crowds have not been coming through our doors on the merits of the gospel appeal, then no amount of building expansion will attract them?

Then the money that has been invested becomes a threat to the church rather than a blessing. Funds to support ministry are locked up for years into the future, and finances that might have been invested in new churches must service the mortgage payments.

Perhaps it makes more sense to take a percentage of what one would spend in these efforts and invest in the starting of a new congregation in a rented facility. In every city, small town, and hamlet, there are many places that could house a new church — schools, community halls, empty office space, deserted churches, existing church buildings within and without our denomination, recreation rooms in condominiums, and hotel banquet rooms. All provide adequate space at minimum cost.

Let us consider the church planting package that has worked wonderfully well in Toronto, but is not limited to Toronto.

**What do we need to plant a new church in any location?**

1. We need an existing church that sees church planting as vital in reaching the lost for Christ.

2. We need an existing church to become a "mother" to the "baby" church. This could mean an investment of funds, but this commitment will be limited in both amount and duration.

3. We need to locate a suitable facility to house the new congregation.

4. We need to find a church, or perhaps a number of churches pooling resources, to provide salary and housing for a pastoral family. This seems like an enormous task for one congregation, but if two or three churches in a zone or city come together on such a project, it is amazing how little it costs.

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Let us be  
opportunistic  
when it comes  
to extending the  
Kingdom of God.

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5. We need to find a pastor to lead a new congregation in rented facilities. In my experience, I can tell you there are plenty of serious servants of Christ out there who are willing to accept such a challenge.

6. We will need faith to believe that financial obligations to this new congregation will not last forever. As new people come in and as they identify with the purpose of the new church, they will begin to carry many of the responsibilities themselves. This is a certain fact. In Toronto, we have found that within a few months many new congregations pay their rental costs and contribute to the pastor's salary. In fact, some of them are already contributing to the "Target Toronto" financial pool so that other new churches can be started.

7. We will need to expect the miraculous. One major problem in all of life is that we are a little afraid to see what isn't here yet. Over and over again, there has been provision after provision that has enabled us to rejoice in the dream becoming the reality.

**Church planting need not be expensive — we only think it is.** I have given a list of seven things that work for us in Toronto. When you take a closer look at these ideas, you discover how attainable they are in most places.

Let me share the story of the Lawrence Avenue Church of the Nazarene — called Fred's Church elsewhere in this issue of GROW. Four years ago, we started Bible studies in the neighborhood once a month on Thursday evenings. This then became once every two weeks. The natural direction was to plant a new church. We started services on October 8, 1989, with 129 people in attendance. We have recently celebrated our first birthday, averaging 60 each Sunday for the first year.

The attendance figures are not the most amazing statistic; the decisions for Christ are. In the last year, we have seen 16 people come to know Christ. Yes, in a school cafeteria, where we carry in a portable altar and pulpit, people are responding to the gospel, people are tithing, people are working, the Kingdom of God is being enlarged, and Satan has lost ground. The testimony that rings loud and clear around our "sanctuary" is that God is here to bless us.

Has the time come to reexamine the reasons for our existence? Maybe the time has come to launch out into the deep, remembering that we do not always need a church building in order to start a new church.

**Let us be opportunistic when it comes to extending the Kingdom of God.** Let us use what we have to provide a rescue mission a yard away from hell.

Remember — church planting need not be expensive. Whether it is or not depends on you.

—by Ian Fitzpatrick  
director of Church Extension,  
Target Toronto; pastor, Lawrence  
Avenue Church; director, Toronto  
Nazarene Bible Institute.

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 CHASE, FRANK. (R) Lake Country, Box 25, Mannford, OK 74044  
 •CHEATWOOD, HENRY & PHYLLIS. (C) Rte. 4, Box 96, Kisse Mills, MO 65680  
 CHENAULT, WILLIAM D. (R) 6980 Woodcrest Dr., Greenfield, IL 61450  
 •CHILDS, WAYNE & CHERI. (R) 244 Buddy Ln., Camby, IN 46113  
 CHIPP, VERLIN E. (C) 127 S. State St., Indianapolis, IN 46201  
 •CHIZUM, DENNIS. (R) 53569 C.R. 7 N., Elkhart, IN 46514  
 CHOATE, KIRBY. (R) 201 S. Reagan St., San Benito, TX 78586-3880  
 CHRISTNER, JACK. (R) 1560 Newark Rd., Mount Vernon, OH 43050

▽CHRISTOPHER, CHRIS C. 2251 29th St. S.W., No. 8, Wyoming, MI 49509-2562  
 CLACK, ROBERT J. (R) 10584 Caminito Glenellen, San Diego, CA 92126  
 CLARK, RON. (R) 916 N. First St., Boonville, IN 47601  
 ▽CLAY, D. E. 400 S. Edgewood Rd., Mount Vernon, OH 43050  
 ▽CLAY, M. E. P.O. Box 526, St. Marys, OH 45885  
 ▽CLIFT, NORVIE O. 25440 Guitta Ct., Hemet, CA 92344  
 •COBB, BILL & TERRI. (R) P.O. Box 761, Bethany, OK 73008  
 •COFFEY, REV. & MRS. RUSSELL E. (C) 1841 128th Ave., Hopkins, MI 49328  
 CONDRIY, CONNIE. (R) 1732 Fish Hatchery Rd., West Columbia, SC 29169  
 CONGER, DELOSS. (R) 4737 Dresden Ct., Jacksonville, FL 32257  
 CONRAD, BYRON. (R) 7151 Franusch Ave., Sacramento, CA 95828  
 COOK, DANNY. (R) 506 N. 6th St., Weatherford, OK 73096-4710  
 COOK, DAVID. (C) 757 S. Bosart St., Indianapolis, IN 46203  
 •COOK, JAMES. (R) 418 West Ridge Dr., Fostoria, OH 44830  
 ▽COOK, LEON G. 2418 Maple, Wichita, KS 67213  
 COOPER, DALLAS. (R) Rte. 1, Box 57, Okemah, OK 74859  
 •COOPER, DONALD & DOLORES. (R) 905 State St., Pekin, IL 61554  
 CORESON, KEN & PATTI'S MINISTRIES. (R) HCR 62, Box 26A, Enterprise, OR 97828  
 ▽COTAM, T. W. 2011 Palm Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80918  
 COVINGTON, NATHAN. (C) 724 W. Knollwood, Broken Arrow, OK 74011  
 ▽CRABTREE, JAMES C. 3438 Cambridge Dr., Springfield, OH 45503  
 CRANDALL, V. E. & BARBARA. (C) 11177 S. Indian Lake Dr. E., Vicksburg, MI 49097  
 •CRANE, BILLY D. (C) Rte. 5, Box 447, Parkersburg, WV 26101  
 ▽CREWS, H. F. Box 180302, Dallas, TX 75218  
 •CRIDER, JAMES & JANET. (R) P.O. Box 284, Shirley, IN 47384  
 •CROFFORD, DON. (R) 151 Pond Rd., Honeoye Falls, NY 14472  
 •CROFFORD, TODD. (R) Crofford/Parker Ministries, c/o Sarah Parker, Box 42, Bath, NY 14810  
 •CROSWAIT, WILDA. (R) 33 Edgecombe Dr., Milford, OH 45150  
 ▽CURTIS, H. M. 1709 E. 17th, Ada, OK 74820

## D

▽DABNEY FRANK. 1890 17th St. N.E., Salem, OR 97303-1110  
 •DAFOE, RAY. (R) 7873 Hickory, Vicksburg, MI 49097  
 ▽DAGGETT, TROY J. 189 Edgewood Dr., Hendersonville, TN 37075  
 ▽DALE, BENNIE. 717 Proctor Pl., Midwest City, OK 73110  
 ♦DALE, TOM. (C) 911 Florence, Nampa, ID 83586  
 ▽DANIELS, DR. M. BERT. P.O. Box 75412, Oklahoma City, OK 73147  
 ▽DANIELS, M. HAROLD. P.O. Box 470, Littleton, CO 80120  
 ▽DARNELL, H. E. P.O. Box 929, Vivian, LA 71082  
 ▽DAVIS, HAROLD C. P.O. Box 189, Choctaw, OK 73020  
 DAWSON, JAMES A. (R) R.R. 1, Box 189, Wapakoneta, OH 45895  
 ▽DAYTON, WEBSTER. 704 Lafayette Ave., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
 ▽DEBOLT, TED & DOROTHY. 203 Swan Lake Dr., North Fort Myers, FL 33917  
 •DECKARD, KENNETH. (R) Gloryroad Quartet, 3229 Washington Ave., Bedford, IN 47421  
 DELBRIDGE, GENE. (R) 3340 A St., Washougal, WA 98671  
 •DELL, JIMMY. (C) 4802 E. Mitchell Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85018  
 DENNIS, JAMES A. (JAMIE). (R) 166 N. Sugar St., Chillicothe, OH 45601  
 ♦DENNISON, MARVIN E. (C) 1208 S.E. Green Rd., Tecumseh, KS 66542  
 ▽DEPASQUALE, JAMES. P.O. Box 5462, Bellingham, WA 98227  
 DESKINS, GROVER C. (R) 35 Gill Dr., Newark, DE 19713  
 DEWEY, KENNETH. (R) Box 636, Rte. 2, Spring Hill, TN 37174  
 •DICKSON, RICHARD J. (R) Living Way Gospel Team, 821 Lonsdale Dr., Anderson, IN 46013  
 ▽DISHON, CLARENCE. 2555 Carmine Rd., Venice, FL 34293  
 ▽DISHON, MELVIN. 935 Shive Ln., Lot 184, Bowling Green, KY 42101  
 ▽DIXON, GEORGE & CHARLOTTE. c/o Evangelism Ministries  
 DOCTORIAN, SAMUEL. (R) 2020 Kinclair Dr., Pasadena, CA 91107  
 DODDS, JOHN. (R) 272 Jack Oak Rd., St. Marys, OH 45885  
 •DODDS, LARRY W. (R) Rte. 5, Box 385, Burlington, IA 52601  
 DODGE, KENNETH L. (C) 1150 W. Winton Ave., No. 221, Hayward, CA 94545  
 •DOLE, VERA. (R) 22210 Salt Fork Rd., Lawrenceburg, IN 47025  
 •DOOLITTLE, KEVIN. (C) 886 N. Main St. Ext., Meadville, PA 16335  
 DOROUGH, WILLIAM M. (R) 219 Oak Hills Dr., Mabank, TX 75147  
 •DOWNING, ANN. (C) Box 767, Hendersonville, TN 37075  
 DOWTY, PAUL. (R) Rte. 3, Box 741, Broken Bow, OK 74728  
 DRESSLER, R. H. (C) Box 750177, Duncan, OK 73573  
 DRYE, J. T. (C) 5130 Trinity Church Rd., Kannapolis, NC 28081  
 DUNCAN, HERSCHEL. (R) 350 Birch Dr., Charlestown, IN 47111  
 DUNLAP, BARRY L. (R) 5742 Pennock Pt. Rd., Jupiter, FL 33458  
 •DUNMIRE, RALPH & JOANN. (C) 202 Garwood Dr., Nashville, TN 37210  
 DUNN, DON. (C) P.O. Box 132, Bartlett, OH 45713  
 DUTTON, BARRY & TAVIA. (C) P.O. Box 119, Clarksburg, MD 20871

## E

•EBY, PAUL & MARTHA. (R) P.O. Box 100924, Nashville, TN 37224  
 •EDWARDS, BOBBY. (R) 1080 Jameson Ct., New Castle, IN 47362  
 EDWARDS, CHARLES. (C) 19924 Teresa Way, Cerritos, CA 90701  
 •EDWARDS, TERRY & JANICE. (R) P.O. Box 1393, Bethany, OK 73008

(C) Commissioned (R) Registered ♦Preacher & Song Evangelist •Song Evangelist  
 ▽Retired Elders in Evangelism

\*Evangelism Ministries, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131

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

•EIFERT, FRANK & JO. (R) 18424 Dakota Rd., Odessa, FL 33556  
 ▽ELLER, OSCAR H. 1400 Bill Carroll Dr. Norman, OK 73071  
 ▽ELLIOTT, CLELL B. Rte. 2, Box 90A, Franklin Furnace, OH 45629  
 ▽EMRICK, C. ROSS. 8000 M-68, Alanson, MI 49706  
 •ESSELBURN, A. C. BUD. (C) The King's Messengers, 28241 S.R. 60 N., Warsaw, OH 43844  
 EVERMAN, WAYNE. (R) 109 Cox St., Box 377, Stanton, KY 40380

## F

♦FADER, WES & MARY. (C) Rte. 17, Box 310, Quail Ridge Dr., Salisbury, MD 21801  
 ▽FARLOW, T. J. Box 1145, Robertsdale, AL 36567  
 ▽FARRIS, A. A. 1503 Orchard Ct., Science Hill, KY 42553  
 ▽FARRIS, GARY E. (R) 113 Christian Ave., Corbin, KY 40701  
 ▽FAULK, A. RAY. (C) HC 67, Box 872, Many, LA 71449  
 •FELKNER, MR. & MRS. BUTCH. (R) 173 Hartz, Coppell, TX 75019  
 •FIGHTMASTER, ANTHONY. (R) 198 Convent, Bourbonnais, IL 60914  
 ▽FILES, GLORIA R. 1102 N. Peniel Ave., Avon Park, FL 33825  
 FINCHUM, JAMES. (R) 155 Hillside Ave., Lake Placid, FL 33852  
 ▽FISHER, C. WILLIAM. No. 1, Antigua Ct., Coronado, CA 92118  
 ▽FISHER, CLAIR H. RD 1, 103 Valley View Rd., Phoenixville, PA 19460  
 FLEMMING, FLOYD O. (R) 1192 Roosevelt Dr., Sherrodsville, OH 44675  
 FLETCHER, RAY. (R) Box 6225, Elgin, OK 73538  
 FLINT, ROBERT. (R) 11388 Rte. 36, Marysville, OH 43040  
 FOSTER, A. D. (R) 1017 N. 20th St., St. Joseph, MO 64501  
 ▽FOSTER, HALLIE & MARTHA. P.O. Box 375, Stonington, IL 62567  
 ▽FOSTER, J. R. 1805 N. Union, Decatur, IL 62526  
 •FOSTER, MARY. (R) 1805 N. Union, Decatur, IL 62526  
 FOSTER, STEVEN C. (R) P.O. Box 11, Troy, OH 45373  
 ▽FOWLER, IRA E. Rte. 3, Box 345, Hollywood, MD 20636  
 FRANK, RICHARD A. (C) c/o Evangelism Ministries\*  
 •FRASER, WILMA. (R) 305 High St., Brilliant, OH 43913  
 FREEMAN, MARY ANN. (R) P.O. Box 129, Gas City, IN 46933  
 •FREY, DONALD. (R) The Frey Family, 509 Sturgis Ave., Sturgis, MI 49091  
 ▽FRODGE, HAROLD. Rte. 1, Geff, IL 62842  
 FULKS, DAVID, JR. (R) 9430 Cleveland, No. 124, Kansas City, MO 64132  
 ▽FULTON, CECIL. 6413 Gateridge Cir., Garland, TX 75043

## G

•GABEL, JIM. (R) 5028 Burma Rd. W., Mobile, AL 36609  
 ▽GADBOW, CLINTON. 1207 S. 2nd St., Marshalltown, IA 50158  
 GADBOW, DONALD C. (R) 49 Julie Ln., St. Peters, MO 63376  
 GALVEZ, MARCO. (R) 316 N. Lincoln (Rear), Barnesville, OH 43713  
 GAMBLIN, C. LEE & WILMA. (R) P.O. Box 1245, Ottumwa, IA 52501  
 GARDNER, JOHN M. (C) 4102 Carlisle Rd., Lakeland, FL 33813  
 GAWTHORP, WAYLAND. (C) Rte. 1, Box 97AA, Crowley, LA 70526  
 ▽GERBIG, BERNICE ROEDEL. 315 N. 8th St., Boonville, IN 47601  
 •GESSNER, DON & SHIRL. (C) 103 N. 8th St., Sunbury, PA 17801  
 ▽GHOLSON, LAWRENCE. 2918 Berkshire Dr., Mesquite, TX 75150  
 GOLAY, GEORGE. (R) 4450 Midway Dr. N.W., Cedar Rapids, IA 52405  
 ▽GOODLETT, NELSON C. Rte. 2, Box 400, Sallis, MS 39160  
 GOODWIN, LESLIE. (R) 12181 Rich, Loveland, OH 45140  
 •GORDON, BOB. (C) 1628 Rutland Dr., No. 21, Austin, TX 78758-6003  
 •GORMAN, CHARLES AND ANN. (R) 12104 Linkwood Ct., Louisville, KY 40229  
 GOULD, LOREN W. (C) 4479 Hialeah Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23464  
 •GRABKE, RONALD & MARTHA. (C) 225 Pleasantview Dr., Braintree, MA 02184  
 ▽GRANT, COOLIDGE. P.O. Box 31, Glens Fork, KY 42741  
 ▽GRAY, C. PAUL. 4016 Riverside Dr., Bethany, OK 73008  
 •GREEN, JIM & ROSEMARY. (C) Box 385, Canton, IL 61520  
 GREEN, KYLE L. (R) 2838 Pennsylvania St., Evansville, IN 47712  
 •GREEN, SHARON. (R) The Gospel Sounds, P.O. Box 66, Lithopolis, OH 43136-0066  
 GRIBBEN, GEORGE. (R) 1 Parkview Dr., Mount Vernon, OH 43050-1972  
 GRIMES, ANDY. (C) Andrew Evangelistic Ministries, 110 Copperfield Dr., Chillicothe, OH 45601  
 GRIMM, HUGH. (R) 5845 Kentview Ave. N.W., North Canton, OH 44720  
 •GRINDLEY, GERALD & JANICE. (R) 414 W. Oliver, Owosso, MI 48867  
 GRINDLEY, RONALD E. (R) 1910 Trailwinds Ct., Grove City, OH 43123  
 GROVES, C. WILLIAM. (C) 3986 Cypress Ave., Grove City, OH 43123  
 GUNTER, WILLIAM. (R) 12609 29th Pl. W., Everett, WA 98204

## H

•HAAS, MR. & MRS. V. WAYNE. (C) 3508 S. 10th St., New Castle, IN 47362  
 ♦HAINES, GARY. (C) c/o Evangelism Ministries\*  
 HALL, CARL N. (R) 2009 Cindy Cir., Palm Harbor, FL 34683  
 HALL, DAVID. (R) 3220 N. Wildan, Springfield, MO 65803  
 ▽HALL, HADLEY A. 2105 Juniper Dr., Plant City, FL 33566  
 HANCE, LAWRENCE R. (R) RR 1, Box 182, Lewistown, IL 61542  
 HANCOCK, TIM. (R) 416 S. Edgewood Rd., Mount Vernon, OH 43050  
 •HANKINS, GEORGE W. (C) 3 E. Buttonwood St., Wenonah, NJ 08090  
 ▽HARCOURT, HAROLD C. 1301 Newbury Dr., Norman, OK 73071

HARRINGTON, MILTON. (R) 4005 Little Rock Dr., North Highlands, CA 95660  
 ▽HARRISON, JOHN L. P.O. Box 135, Wister, OH 74966  
 HARRISON, ROBERT. (R) 7215 Acacia, Leander, TX 78641  
 ▽HAWKINS, RAY. 1615 Kickapoo, Pueblo, CO 81001  
 HAYES, ALVIN B. (R) 15812 W. 129th St., Olathe, KS 66062  
 HAYNES, CHARLES & MYRT. (C) P.O. Box 3563, Cleveland, TN 37320-3563  
 HEATON, K. D. (C) 14 Martinsburg Rd., Apt. A, Mount Vernon, OH 43050  
 HECKATHORN, JIM. (C) 713 Lake Lowell Ave., Nampa, ID 83686  
 ♦HELMS, MIKE & GLORIA. (C) c/o Evangelism Ministries\*  
 ▽HENDERSHOT, HARVEY. Rte. 4, Lakeview Dr., Mount Juliet, TN 37122  
 ▽HERMON, THOMAS M. 936 Ave. T S.E., Winter Haven, FL 33880  
 ▽HESTER, JAMES C. 1 Red Oak Ct., Mansfield, TX 76063  
 ▽HICKE, S. F. 4923 Forest Ct., Oak Forest, IL 60452  
 HICKS, JOHN DAVID. (C) 240 Daniels St., McMinnville, OR 97128  
 ♦HIGGINS, CHUCK & MARGE. (C) 8471 N. 54th Ln., Glendale, AZ 85302  
 ▽HILDIE, DWAYNE W. 3323 Belaire, Cheyenne, WY 82001  
 ▽HILL, WILLIAM G. & KATHRYN. 6600 Hitler Rd., No. 2, Circleville, OH 43113  
 HINES, RAYMOND L. (R) Box 114, Nocatee, FL 33864  
 ▽HINKLE, FRED C. Rte. 1, Box 102, Tishomingo, OK 73460  
 •HISE, RON. (R) 2035 Hancock, Demotte, IN 46310  
 HOECKLE, WESLEY W. (R) 642 Vaky, Corpus Christi, TX 78404  
 HOLDER, SYBIL. (R) 249 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, NY 11225  
 HOLLOWELL, JERRY. (R) P.O. Box 2, Paris, TX 75460  
 ▽HOLLOWAY, WARREN O. 1712 Furman Dr., Florence, SC 29501  
 HOLSINGER, MARK. (C) 9231 E. Aero Dr., Pico Rivera, CA 90660  
 ▽HOLSTEIN, J. TED. 11619 Hanover Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45240  
 HOOTS, BOB. (C) 309 Adair St., Columbia, KY 42728  
 •HORNE, ROGER & BECKY. (R) P.O. Box 17496, Nashville, TN 37217  
 ▽HOUSE, JOHN W. 2503 Division St., No. 200, North Little Rock, AR 72114  
 ▽HOWARD, DICK. 7901 N.W. 28th Terr., Bethany, OK 73008  
 ▽HUBARTT, LEONARD. 8612 Timbermill Pl., Fort Wayne, IN 46804  
 HUBBARD, JEFFIE. (R) 3213 W. Ave. T, Temple, TX 76504  
 HUGHES, JOYCE. (C) 4524 Ashland City Hwy., Clarksville, TN 37043  
 HUNDLEY, JOHN D. (C) P.O. Box 764, Nashville, GA 31639  
 ▽HURRY, CECIL P. P.O. Box 667, Lynn, IN 47355  
 HUXMAN, MILTON. (R) 215 Iris St., Broomfield, CO 80020

## I

▽ICE, CHARLES & BETTY. 702 S. Malcolm, Chanute, KS 66720  
 ▽IDE, CHARLES. 4925 Cypress Gardens, No. 123, Winter Haven, FL 33884  
 INGLAND, WILMA JEAN. (C) 1170 Princeton Rd., Monroeville, PA 15146

## J

JACK, GLORIA JEANNE. (R) 2009 Fort Harrod's Dr., Lexington, KY 40513  
 •JACKSON, PAUL & TRISH. (C) Jetstream Ministries, Box 739, Meade, KS 67864  
 JACKSON, THOMAS. (R) Rte. 1, Box 242, Flemingsburg, KY 41041  
 JAGGER, MARVIN W. 29446 Country Rd. P5, Deloris, CO 81323  
 ▽JAMES, R. ODIS. 323 Winter St., St. James, MO 65559  
 JANTZ, ORLANDO. (R) HCR1, Box 185, Minneola, KS 67865  
 ♦JANTZ-OWENS, MARJORIE. (C) P.O. Box 6864, Kokomo, IN 46904-6864  
 JAYMES, RICHARD W. (R) 617 W. Gambier, Mount Vernon, OH 43050  
 •JEFFRIES, JEFF & JAN. (R) 21308 120th St. E., Apt. B, Bonney Lake, WA 98390  
 ▽JENNINGS, LEON. 7107 N.W. 30th Terr., Bethany, OK 73008  
 ▽JENNINGS, PAUL R. 722 N.W. 32nd, Lawton, OK 73505  
 •JEWETT, LARRY & PATRICIA. (R) 1441 Robin Hood Dr., Seymour, IN 47274-1949  
 JOHNSON, ALBERT. (R) Rte. 2, Box 217, Kenbridge, VA 23944  
 JOHNSON, BOB. (R) 3135 Oro Blanco, Colorado Springs, CO 80917  
 ▽JOHNSON, COMER. P.O. Box 668, Excel, AL 36439  
 JOHNSON, DONALD EUGENE. (R) Box 196, Ogden, IL 61859  
 ▽JOHNSON, EVERETTE A. 410 Pargoud Dr., Monroe, LA 71202  
 ♦JOHNSON, RON. (C) 3208 Eighth St. E., Lewiston, ID 83501  
 ▽JONES, BERT. 1926 Lakeside Dr., Erie, PA 16511  
 JONES, GRACE L. (C) 7626 Callaghan Rd., No. 701, San Antonio, TX 78228-2709  
 ♦JONES, TERRY & LAQUITA. (C) 2002 Judy Ln., Pasadena, TX 77502  
 •JONTE, JOHN. (R) 3905 N.W. 56th Pl., Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
 JORDAN, JOSEPH R. (C) 42 W. Hunter St., Logan, OH 43138  
 ♦JUSTICE, MEL & DONNA. (C) 2253 Bristol Rd., Columbus, OH 43221-1203

## K

KEENA, EARL. (C) 2160 D St., Oroville, CA 95966  
 KEETO, MARSHALL. (R) P.O. Box 158, Mentmore, NM 87319  
 KELLER, GREGORY. (R) 9 Canyon MHP, Morgantown, WV 26505  
 ▽KELLY, R. B. 4706 N. Donald, Bethany, OK 73008  
 •KIDDER, KERMIT. (R) 516 Flamingo Dr., Lakeland, FL 33803  
 ▽KING, J. HARMON. 3001 24th Ave., Valley, AL 36854  
 ♦KIZZEE, JOHN. (R) Rte. 2, Box 65-C, Junction City, KS 66441

▽KNIGHT, JOHN L. 4000 N. Thompkins, Bethany, OK 73008  
 KOHR, CHARLES A. (C) Rte. 2, Box 360, Brookville, PA 15825  
 KONKLE, MICHAEL C. (R) 2576 E. 200 S., Anderson, IN 46017  
 ▽KRATZER, RAYMOND C. 4305 Snow Mountain Rd., Yakima, WA 98908

## L

LAING, GERALD & MARCINE. (C) 11436 East St., Vicksburg, MI 49097  
 ▽LAMBERT, J. WILMER. 710 Chaffin Ridge, Columbus, OH 43214  
 LAWSON, WAYNE. (C) c/o Evangelism Ministries\*  
 LAXSON, KIP. (C) 675 Harding Pl., G-6, Nashville, TN 37211  
 •LAXSON, WALLY & GINGER. (C) Rte. 3, Box 118, Athens, AL 35611  
 LEAF, JOHN D. (R) Rte. 1, Box 300, Dover, OH 44622  
 ♦LECKRONE, LARRY. (C) 403 E. Main, Morenci, MI 49256  
 LEIDY, ARNOLD G. (C) P.O. Box 124, Moriarty, NM 87035  
 ▽LEMASTER, BENJAMIN D. 9545 W. Powers Cir., Littleton, CO 80123  
 ▽LEONARD, J. C. 1410 Army, Chariton, IA 50049  
 LEONARD, LARRY L. (R) 6910 Interbay Blvd., No. 2, Tampa, FL 33616-2637  
 ▽LESTER, FRED R. 7404 Ed Rice, Mesa, AZ 85208  
 ♦LIDDELL, P. L. (C) 3530 W. Allen Rd., Howell, MI 48843  
 ▽LISTON, CLARENCE D. P.O. Box 23576, Tucson, AZ 85734  
 ▽LITTLE, HAROLD N. 7045 S.W. Hyland Way, Beaverton, OR 97005  
 ▽LIVINGSTON, W. B. P.O. Box 1177, Bristow, OK 74010-1177  
 ▽LOCKARD, W. DAYTON. Rte. 2, Box 250, Charleston, WV 25314  
 LOHR, DONALD. (C) P.O. Box 7056, Charleston, WV 25356  
 LOMAN, LANE. (C) 137 Timber Ridge Dr., Nashville, TN 37217  
 •LORENZEN, LINDA. (C) Rte. 3, Box 231A, Manchester, OH 45107  
 LOUGHRIDGE, WILLIAM. (R) Rte. 2, Box 38, Wister, OK 74966  
 LOVE, ROBERT. (R) 6425 Nanette, Colorado Springs, CO 80907  
 •LOVING, BECKY. (R) 1101 S. Park Rd., Texarkana, TX 75503  
 ▽LOWN, ALBERT J. c/o General Secretary's Office  
 LYBARGER, EVERETT. (C) P.O. Box 1534, Conway, AR 72032

## M

MACK, WILLIAM M. (C) 106 Youpon Dr., Hubert, NC 28539  
 MADDEN, JOSEPH. (R) 704 Golden Arrow Dr., Miamisburg, OH 45342  
 •MADDOX, HOMER & MARTHA. (R) 1917 Wilkens St., Indianapolis, IN 46221  
 •MAHANEY, PATRICIA. (R) 624 Mertz Ct., Patterson, CA 95363  
 ▽MANGUM, PAUL D. 416 Ivy St., Nampa, ID 83686  
 MANLEY, STEPHEN & DELPHINE. (C) Box 522, Upland, IN 46989  
 ♦MANN, THURL & MARY KAY. (C) 90 Sycamore Ln., Route 24, Fort Myers, FL 33908  
 ▽MARLIN, BENJAMIN F. P.O. Box 5572, Deltona, FL 32728  
 ▽MARSH, A. MILTON. 11089 Ancient Tr., Brookville, FL 34601  
 ▽MARTIN, LEON. Rte. 3, Box 242A, Bonham, TX 75418  
 MARTINEZ, JOSE M. (R) 4794 Poseidon Pl., Lake Worth, FL 33463  
 MATTER, DAN & ANN. (R) 2617 Carew St., Fort Wayne, IN 46805  
 ▽MAX, HOMER L. Rte. 3, Box 217, Knoxville, IA 50138  
 ▽MAY, JOHN. Rte. 1, Box 17-SG, Colliers, WV 26035  
 MAYO, CLIFFORD. (C) P.O. Box 345, Dickens, TX 79229  
 ▽MAZE, KENNETH. Rte. 9, Box 102, Parkersburg, WV 26101  
 MCADAMS, DOUGLAS D. (R) Box 40, Box 140-D, Huntsville, AR 72740  
 ♦MCALLIE, JAMES. (R) HC 80, Box 184, Helton, KY 40840  
 MCCANDLESS, MARION L. (C) P.O. Box 97, Midway City, CA 92655  
 McDONALD, CHARLIE E. (C) 920 W. Olive St., West Monroe, LA 71291  
 ▽McDONALD, G. RAY. 720 Carroll Wood Village, Apt. 305, Gretna, LA 70056  
 ▽McDOWELL, DORIS M. 540 Sierra Madre Blvd., No. 6, Sierra Madre, CA 91024  
 McELFRESH, RONALD. (C) 1964 Osage Cir., Olathe, KS 66062  
 ▽McELVEEN, ROLAND T. 667 Powell St., Rock Hill, SC 29730  
 McGUFFEY, JAMES. (R) 1580 Cape Charles Ct., Cicero, IN 46034  
 •McKINNON, JUANITA. (C) Box 126, Institute, WV 25112  
 •McNISH, PHYLLIS. (R) 4527 N.W. Geronimo Tr., Topeka, KS 66618  
 ▽McVEY, V. L. 173 E. 2nd St., Fond du Lac, WI 54935-4463  
 McWHIRTER, STUART. (C) P.O. Box 458, Corydon, IN 47112  
 ▽MEADOWS, NAOMI C. 2626 Washington Ave., Lot 65, Vincennes, IN 47591  
 ▽MEEK, WESLEY E. 5713 S. Shartel, Oklahoma City, OK 73109  
 MEENACH, CHRIS. (R) Rte. 2, Box 80A, Franklin Furnace, OH 45629  
 •MEHR, BETHANY. (R) Box 37, South Lyon, MI 48178  
 •MELICK, RANDY. (R) 8705 Countryside, No. 1, Kansas City, MO 64138  
 MELVIN, DOLORES. (C) HC 60, Box 224, Greenup, KY 41144  
 •MEREDITH, DWIGHT & NORMA JEAN. (C) 315 E. 8th St., Box 1, Harper, KS 67058  
 ▽MEYER, VIRGIL & DOROTHY. 3112 Willow Oak Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46809  
 ♦MICKEY, BOB. (C) 504 N. Sixth, Lamar, CO 81052  
 MILBURN, GARY. (R) P.O. Box 475, Braddock Heights, MD 21714  
 MILEY, TROY J. (R) 102 Nazarene Dr., South Charleston, WV 25309  
 ▽MILLER, BERNARD F. 514 E. Crawford St., Van Wert, OH 45891  
 ▽MILLER, NETTIE A. 1313 14th St., Apt. 801, Columbus, GA 31994  
 ▽MILLER, PAULINE O. 307 S. Delaware St., Mount Gilead, OH 43338  
 MILLER, RICHARD S. (R) 2727 Sugar Tree Rd., Bethel, OH 45106  
 MILLHUFF, CHUCK. (C) Box 160, Olathe, KS 66061  
 MILLS, CARLTON A. (C) P.O. Box 260728, Tampa, FL 33685-0728  
 MITCHELL, MARCIA L. (R) 835 Valencia, Walla Walla, WA 99362



▽MITCHUM, C. R. 1225 Rockport Rd., Apt. 342B, Boonville, IN 47601  
 •MOATS, MARILYN. (R) 617 W. Oak St., Carmi, IL 62821  
 •MONCK, JIM. (C) 971 Madrone Ave., Chico, CA 95926  
 •MOORE, GARY H. (R) 14915 Quivira Rd., Olathe, KS 66062  
 •MOORE, NORMAN. (C) Box 1630, Chandler, AZ 85244  
 •MOORE, RUDOLPH. (C) P.O. Box 56, Fortville, IN 46040  
 ▽MORGAN, EARL L. 494 Meadows Rd. S., Bourbonnais, IL 60914  
 MORGAN, GERALD L. (R) P.O. Box 495, Eaton, OH 45320  
 MORLEY, FRANK. (C) 4080 Pedley Rd., No. 151, Riverside, CA 92509  
 ▽MORRIS, CLYDE. P.O. Box 938, Eleanor, WV 25070  
 MORRIS, JAMES. (R) 141 Dutch Rd., Charleston, WV 25302  
 MORSCH, J. V. (R) 9924 Bay Vista Ets. Blvd., Orlando, FL 32819  
 MOSER, THOMAS W. (R) 555 Barts Church Rd., Hanover, PA 17331  
 •MURPHY, MARK. (R) 410 S. Clay St., Sturgis, MI 49091  
 ▽MURROW, ROBERT L. 1901 Janeen, Yukon, OK 73099  
 •MYERS, HAROLD & MRS. (C) 575 Ferris N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504

**N**  
 ▽NAJARIAN, BERGE & DORIS. P.O. Box 50904, Fort Myers, FL 33905-0904  
 ▽NASH, FORREST. 725 W. Cedar, Olathe, KS 66061  
 NASH, JACK W. (R) 8840 Oakdale Ave., Northridge, CA 91324  
 •NAYLOR, EDWARD. (R) 6 Rubydale Gardens, Weston, ON M9L 1B3 CANADA  
 ▽NEES, L. GUY. 181 Lawrence Ln., Kalispell, MT 59901  
 •NEFF, LARRY & PAT. (C) 4294 E. Amherst, Hernando Beach, FL 32642  
 NEWTON, DANIEL. (R) P.O. Box 323, Fairland, IN 46126  
 •NICKELS, PENNIE. (R) World Ministries, 4755 County Rd. 27, Monte Vista, CO 81144  
 •NORMAN, DAVID. (R) 12206 Chicot Rd., Mabelvale, AR 72103-2813

**O**  
 ▽OLIVER, L. S. 5115 N. Carefree Cir., Colorado Springs, CO 80917  
 ▽OLIVER, W. CHARLES. P.O. Box 5655, Lakeland, FL 33807-5655  
 ONEY, ROBERT. (R) 3832 Chah Dr., Zephyrhills, FL 33541  
 OVERTON, BILL & DOT. (C) Family Evangelists and Chalk Artist, c/o Evangelism Ministries\*  
 OWENS, DENNY G. (C) 6802 N.W. 45th, Bethany, OK 73008  
 •OYLER, CALVIN & VIRGINIA. (C) P.O. Box 727, Wellsville, KS 66092

**P**  
 PALMER, NORMAN. (C) 200 W. Branigan Rd., Franklin, IN 46131  
 ▽PARIS, WENDELL O. P.O. Box 159, Henryetta, OK 74437  
 ▽PARSONS, T. O. 1025 Gossett Dr., Wichita Falls, TX 76308  
 ▽PASSMORE, A. A. Passmore Evangelistic Party, P.O. Box 202, Snyder, PA 17877  
 •PASSMORE, DOROTHY. (C) P.O. Box 202, Snyder, PA 17877  
 PATTISON, ROBERT & FRANCES. (R) 373 Richlandtown Pk., Quakertown, PA 18951  
 PEAL, DONALD. (C) P.O. Box 518, Rowlett, TX 75088  
 •PENDLETON, JOHN. (R) 1116 S.W. 72nd, Oklahoma City, OK 73139  
 PERDUE, NELSON. (C) 1559 Grimes Ave., Urbana, OH 43078  
 PFEIFER, DON. (C) Evangelistic Team, 661 S.R. 220, Piketon, OH 45661  
 PFEIFER, MARK. (C) 910 Briar Ave., Washington Court House, OH 43160  
 ▽PHILLIPS, JACK. P.O. Box 18083, Little Rock, AR 72219  
 PHILPOT, LARRY. (R) 117 Kay Dr., Middletown, OH 45042  
 PHIPPS, TILLIE. (R) 301 S. Lamar Blvd., Oxford, MS 38655  
 •PICKERING, ROLAND. (R) Box 160102, Altamonte Springs, FL 32716-0102  
 •PIERCE, CATHERINE. (C) 1427 Meitzler St., Danville, IL 61832  
 ▽PITTINGER, CLAUDE E. 2027 Woodhew Dr., Spring, TX 77386  
 PITTINGER, TWYLA. (R) 413 N. Bowman St., Mansfield, OH 44903  
 POSEY, WARREN. (C) 433 Monroe St., Fortville, IN 46040  
 ▽POTTER, HAROLD J. 2926 Randa Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34235  
 •POWELL, FRANK. (R) 13579 Colter Rd., Caldwell, ID 83605  
 ▽PRICE, JACK L. P.O. Box 395, Waxhaw, NC 28173  
 ▽PRICE, ROSS E. 1540 Hiawatha Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80915  
 •PRINTUP, JUANITA. (R) 1207 Scott Ave., Fort Wayne, IN 46807  
 PURSLEY, PHILIP. (R) 334 S. Fork Terrace Rd., Glasgow, KY 42141  
 ▽PUTNAM, ROBERT E. 319 Humphrey St., Dracut, MA 01826

**Q**  
 •QUALLS, MAE. (R) 5441 Lake Jessamine Dr., Orlando, FL 32809

**R**  
 ▽RAKER, W. C. 714 E. Avenue L, Lewistown, IL 61542  
 ▽REAZIN, LAURENCE & LEONE. P.O. Box 130162, Tyler, TX 74713  
 REED, DOROTHY. (C) P.O. Box 814, Hannibal, MO 63401  
 REED, SHERMAN R. (C) 1232 Oakwood Trail, Indianapolis, IN 46260  
 REID, JR., DOUG. (R) 15453 Landon Rd., Gulfport, MS 39503  
 REID, WILLIAM D. (R) 1531 12th St., Tell City, IN 47586  
 •REISS, MARK. (R) 2000 NSR 23, No. 60, Delaware, OH 43015  
 •RICHARDS, LARRY & PHYLLIS. (C) 2310 Appleton Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46227  
 RICKY, HOWARD. (C) 1827 Stone Rd., Xenia, OH 45385  
 ▽RIFLE, BRADY Q. 4154 Bowman Hill Rd., Huntington, WV 25701  
 RIGNER, SUSAN L. (R) 6610 Brooklyn, Kansas City, MO 64132  
 ▽ROBERTS, S. J. 2118 Choctaw Tr., Fort Wayne, IN 46808  
 ROBERTSON, IAN. (R) 236 E. Walnut, No. H, Monrovia, CA 91016

▽ROBERTSON, JAMES H. 2014 Green Apple Ln., Arlington, TX 76014  
 ROBISON, ROBERT. (R) Heaters, WV 26627  
 ▽ROEBUCK, L. H. 1280 Lakeview Rd., Lot 241, Clearwater, FL 33616  
 ▽ROGERS, WARREN A. c/o Josephine Dukes, 3215 Adeline, Oakland, CA 94608  
 ROSE, WAYNE. (C) 705 S. Mahaffie, Olathe, KS 66061  
 ROSSITER, LARRY. (R) 9867 Shellbark Ln., Cincinnati, OH 45231  
 ROWE, GENE. (C) P.O. Box 1022, Cherokee, NC 28719  
 •ROYSE, C. E. (R) 2105 Taylor Ave., Racine, WI 53403  
 RUARK, JAMES. (R) 2014 Northcliff Dr. N., Columbus, OH 43229  
 RUNYAN, DAVID W. (C) 419 Butcher, Bethalto, IL 62010  
 RUSSELL, DOUGLAS J. (R) 3644 116th Ave., Edmonton, AB T5W 0W6 CANADA  
 ▽RUSSELL, J. REYNALD. 3809 San Ramon Dr., Arlington, TX 76013

**S**  
 SCHMELZENBACH, DENNIS R. (R) 1713 N. Glade Ave., Bethany, OK 73008  
 SCOTT, SR., DR. WILLIS R. (C) 1926 Tindaro Dr., Apopka, FL 32703  
 •SCRIVNER, VICKIE. (R) 6527 Garfield Dr., Kansas City, KS 66102-1036  
 ▽SELF, ERWIN. 11397 Main St., Vicksburg, MI 49097  
 SEXTON, JACK A. (R) 2615 Ontario St., Cincinnati, OH 45231  
 •SEYMOUR, KERRY. (R) 5916 Spring Run Dr., Columbus, OH 43229  
 •SHADE, HAZEL. (R) P.O. Box 24368, Huber Heights, OH 45424  
 •SHARP, ALBERT. (C) 8760 W. Adams Rd., Elwell, MI 48832  
 •SHEPHERD, WILEY. (R) 1324 Gen. MacArthur Dr., Brentwood, TN 37027

•SHIREY, DWIGHT. (C) 38092 Butcher Rd., Leetonia, OH 44431  
 SICKENBERGER, ARDEN. (R) 3803 W. Walnut, Yakima, WA 98902  
 •SIMMONS, IRVIN. (R) 3216 N. Peniel, Bethany, OK 73008  
 SIMPSON, EDWIN C. (R) 5 Mallard Dr., Vincentown, NJ 08088-8570  
 SIRES, M. DEAN. (R) 1213 S. 7th St., Oskaloosa, IA 52577  
 ▽SISK, IVAN L. 4327 Moraga Ave., San Diego, CA 92117  
 ▽SKILLERN, R. FRANK. (R) 8300 N.W. 10th, No. 40, Oklahoma City, OK 73127  
 ▽SLATER, HUGH L. 1120 Cedarcliff Dr., Glen Burnie, MD 21061  
 ▽SMITH, C. HASTINGS. Box 937, Bethany, OK 73008  
 ▽SMITH, DOYLE. Rte. 2, Box 1050, Wrightsville, GA 31096  
 •SMITH, DUANE. (C) c/o Evangelism Ministries\*  
 SMITH, GEORGE E. (R) 9378 Watson Rd., Wolverine, MI 49799  
 ▽SMITH, HAROLD & ORPHA. 3711 Germania Rd., Snover, MI 48472

•SMITH, JERRY & BETH. (R) c/o Trevecca Nazarene College, Box 199, Nashville, TN 37210-2877  
 •SMITH, LARRY. (C) 547 Kiely Blvd., No. 4, San Jose, CA 95117  
 ▽SMITH, EUGENE & LANORA. The Singing Smiths, 205 Drayton St., Winnsboro, SC 29180  
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 •SMITH, RICKY STERLING & JOANN. (R) Rte. 2, Box 786, Hawkins, TX 75765  
 SNELLGROVE, HENRY G. (R) P.O. Box 713, Lake City, FL 32056-0713  
 SNYDER, BILL G. (R) 9935 Columbus-Cincinnati Rd., South Charleston, OH 45368  
 SOMMER, MICHAEL. (R) Mesa Ministries, 6416 Harris, Raytown, MO 64133  
 SOUTHERLAND, SAMUEL. (R) 4404 Clinton Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32207-6657  
 •SPEARS, DAN. (C) Visual Ministries, 111 Maple St., Clarksville, AR 72830  
 •SPEER, BROCK. (C) The Speer Family, 5318 Anchorage Dr., Nashville, TN 37204

▽SPORTS, LALA L. 314 E. Jackson, Douglas, GA 31533  
 SPRAGUE, VERNON F. (R) c/o Evangelism Ministries\*  
 SPURLOCK, W. EARL. (R) 511 W. Palmetto St., Wauchula, FL 33873  
 STANFORTH, KEN. (C) 44566 3rd St. East, Lancaster, CA 93535  
 ▽STANLEY, HARRY T. 1111 Highgate St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007  
 •STANTON, TED & DONNA. (R) P.O. Box 722, Sarasota, FL 34230  
 STARK, EDDIE. (C) 6906 N.W. 36th, Bethany, OK 73008  
 STEENSLAND, JUDITH. (R) 1608 Clark, Ames, IA 50010  
 STEVENSON, GEORGE. (C) 4021 Pebble Dr. S.E., Roanoke, VA 24014  
 STEWART, ORVILLE. (R) R.R. 2, Box 658A, Hawesville, KY 42348  
 •STONE, LOIS. (R) 10510 Southwest Hwy., Worth, IL 60482  
 •STONE, PAUL. (R) Lakeland Manor, Shell Lake, WI 54871  
 STREET, DAVID. (C) Rte. 1, Ramsey, IN 47166  
 STRICKLAND, DICK. (C) 1141 Woodhaven Ct., Springfield, OH 45503  
 STROUD, GLENDON D. (R) P.O. Box 638, Auburndale, FL 33823  
 SULLIVAN, DAVID R. (R) 3712 Blackburn Ave., Ashland, KY 41105  
 ▽SUMNER, ROBERT L. 3005 St. Charles Dr., Tampa, FL 33618  
 •SUMWALT, JOSEPH & VIRGINIA. (R) Box 8, Warren, IN 46792  
 ▽SWANSON, ROBERT L. 1102 Glenwood Dr., Yukon, OK 73099

**T**  
 TAYLOR, BOB. (C) Box 293038, Dayton, OH 45429-9038  
 TAYLOR, BOBBY L. (R) Evangelistic Team, Rte. 1, Box 477-B32, South Shore, KY 41175  
 TAYLOR, CLIFF. (C) Family Evangelist, E. 619 32nd Ave., Spokane, WA 99203  
 ▽TAYLOR, EMMETT. 7621 N.W. 25th, Bethany, OK 73008  
 ▽TAYLOR, MEDELLE. 1716 N. Glade, Bethany, OK 73008  
 TAYLOR, RON. (C) Rte. 1, Box 265, Johnson Rd., Chickamauga, GA 30707

▽THOMAS, HOYLE C. P.O. Box 72, Nampa, ID 83653-0072  
 ▽THOMAS, J. MELTON. 3619 Skyline Dr., Nampa, ID 83686  
 THOMPSON, L. DEAN. (R) 508 Timberlane, Carl Junction, MO 64834  
 •THOMPSON, ROBERT & TERESA. (R) P.O. Box 21467, Chattanooga, TN 37421  
 ♦THORNTON, REV. & MRS. WALLACE. (C) 1200 Grundy Rd., Somerset, KY 42501  
 ▽THRASHER, OREN D. 2414 High Pine Dr., Louisville, KY 40214  
 ▽TOLBERT, WILLIAM A. P.O. Box 85-7935, Port St. Lucie, FL 34985  
 TOLER, WARREN E. (C) 99 Old Richmond Rd., Irvine, KY 40336  
 ♦TOOLEY, JIM. (C) 2108 Burlington Rd., Rte. 4, Oskaloosa, IA 52577  
 •TRAMMEL, JERRY. (R) 21 Stanwood Loop, North Little Rock, AR 72118  
 ▽TRUE, IRA L. 500 W. Santa Maria, No. 77, Santa Paula, CA 93060  
 TSO, ALVIN. (C) P.O. Box 1541, Page, AZ 86040-1541  
 TUCKER, RALPH WILLIAM. (R) R.R. 1, Box 55, Woodbine, IA 51579  
 TURNER, BEVERLY. (R) 709 Holbrook, Lebanon, OH 45036  
 ♦TURNOCK, J. JAMES. (R) Rte. 2, Box 365, A-1, Williamsport, MD 21795

**U**  
 ▽ULMET, ALECK. 63 Hope Dr., Bella Vista, AR 72714  
 UMSTEAD, CLAIR E. (R) P.O. Box 7, East Charleston, VT 05833

**V**  
 ▽VARCE, PAUL H. 621 2nd Ave. N.W., Waverly, IA 50677  
 VAUGHT, DARRYLE L. (R) 205 Country Club Ln., Smer, TN 38375  
 •VERTREES, MARK S. (R) Rte. 1, Box 152, Cunningham, TN 37052  
 VIARS, V. DALE. (R) 5896 Karen Ave., Largo, FL 34644

**W**  
 •WADE, E. BRUCE. (R) 3029 Sharpview Ln., Dallas, TX 75228  
 •WALKER, BRIAN & DEBI. (R) P.O. Box 25964, Colorado Springs, CO 80936  
 •WALKER, GENEVA A. (R) 3650 Roswell Dr., Columbus, OH 43227  
 ▽WALKER, LAWRENCE & LAVONNA. Rte. 1, Box 368 B, Interlachen, FL 32148  
 ▽WALLACE, J. C. P.O. Box 2183, Plant City, FL 33566  
 WALTON, JAMES. (R) 203 E. Bond, Patoka, IL 62875  
 WARNER, C. LEROY. (R) 926 Summit Ridge Dr., Brandon, FL 33511  
 ▽WARNOW, ROBERT E. 3800 W. Michigan St., No. 2107, Indianapolis, IN 46222-3370  
 ▽WATKINS, FRANK. P.O. Box 715, Banning, CA 92220  
 ▽WATSON, LOY. 3412 N. Flamingo Ave., Bethany, OK 73008  
 WEBB, SHARON. (R) P.O. Box 61, Waco, KY 40385  
 WEBSTER, KENNETH. (R) 5608 G. Villas Cir., Montgomery, AL 36116  
 •WELCH, MRS. DARLENE. (R) 8302 Laverne Dr., Louisville, KY 40299  
 ▽WELCH, FRANCES M. 10338 Carreta Ct., Santee, CA 92071  
 WELCH, WILLIAM B. (R) 5328 Edith St., Charleston Heights, SC 29418  
 •WELLS, GENE & NANCY. (C) Rte. 1, Box 174B, Thompsonville, IL 62890  
 WELLS, LINARD. (C) P.O. Box 531527, Grand Prairie, TX 75053-1527  
 WESLEY, E. RUTH. (R) Rte. 1, Box 143, Springfield, IN 47386  
 ▽WEST, EDNA M. 130 S. Front St., No. 1512, Sunbury, PA 17801  
 •WHITE, JANIE. (C) Rte. 2, Box 775, Hawick, TX 75765  
 •WHITWORTH, ARTIE H. P.O. Box 38, Albany, OK 74721  
 •WHITWORTH, MARCUS & DONNA. (C) 1513 W. Santa Fe, Olathe, KS 66061

WILCOX, WALTER. (C) Rte. 2, O'Leary, P.E.I. COB 1V0 CANADA  
 WILDER, EDD. (R) 3859 Hazelwood, Muskegon, MI 49444  
 ▽WILKINSON, LLOYD. 2840 18th St., Columbus, IN 47201  
 •WILKINSON, MARGARET. (R) 2840 18th St., Columbus, IN 47201  
 WILLIAMS, C. PHILIP. (R) 259 W. 5th St., Winona, MN 55987  
 ▽WILLIAMS, E. VERBAL. 39 Bay Crest Dr., Brampton, ON L6T 1H5 CANADA  
 •WILLIAMS, EILEEN. (R) 21 Robert E. Lee Ln., West Chester, OH 45069  
 ▽WILLIAMS JANET O. 1308 Wooten Rd., Colorado Springs, CO 80915  
 WILLIAMS, LAWRENCE. (C) 6715 N.W. 30th Terr., Bethany, OK 73008  
 WILLIAMS, R. T., JR. (C) 326 Elmington Ave., Nashville, TN 37205  
 WILSON, ARNO. (R) Higher Ground Retreat Center, 3918 State Rte. 46, West Harrison, IN 47060  
 •WILSON, CHARLES. (R) 909 S.W. 45th, Oklahoma City, OK 73109  
 •WILSON, J. BARRY. (R) Rte. 1, Box 182R, Temple, TX 76501  
 WILSON, RONALD. (R) 421 College Hill Ave., Oskaloosa, IA 52577  
 ▽WITHROW, JAMES. P.O. Box 4424, Charleston, WV 25364  
 WOLFGANG, DONALD D. (R) 1266 Greenwood Rd., Alger, MI 48610  
 ▽WOLFORD, JAMES E. 3660 Grace Dr., St. Mary's OH 45885  
 WOMACK, PAUL W. (R) 2831 Harrison, Quincy, IL 62301  
 WOMACK, ROBERT. (R) 14 Dunham, Texarkana, TX 75503  
 ▽WOOD, DENVER. 3 E. 41st St., Tuscaloosa, AL 35405  
 ▽WOOLMAN, J. L. P.O. Box 616, Tuttle, OK 73089  
 WOOTEN, D. J. (R) P.O. Box 262, Cambridge, MD 21613  
 ▽WRIGHT, AUSTIN, 1198 Jamaica Rd., Venice, FL 34293  
 WRIGHT, E. GUY & LIL. (C) 1531 Cranbrook Dr., Charleston, WV 25311  
 ▽WYRICK, DENNIS. 603 Reed Dr., Frankfort, KY 40601

**Y**  
 YOUNG, DALE H. (R) 30 Cain Rd., Chelsea, AL 35043

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**PASTOR DARREL K. WISEMAN**, Upland, California, First Church: "The small support groups have been extremely important to my ministry. All the benefits of the small group have been experienced, and I remain indebted to my group for their care and concern as they continue to pray for me. For me, the commitment to becoming a student of church growth has been significant. I have read 15 books on leadership/management, 6 books on prayer, 5 books on motivational recruitment/training. I've read 35 books this calendar year — all directly resulting from the challenges in the K-Church Schools."

**PASTOR BOB HUFFAKER**, Grove City, Ohio: "All the K-Church Schools have challenged me to think bigger and to accept the challenge and believe God can help our church go over 1,000 in worship. We have increased 200 in worship in one year. To God be the glory! We are excited!"

**PASTOR DANIEL A. KELLOGG**, Concord, California: "The K-Church Schools have had a huge impact on my life. Perhaps the most important is the perspective the K-Church Project has given me. Perspective of ministry through friends who really care about what's happening in my ministry. Perspective through support that comes from the resource people. And perspective of affirmation as we see things that work. There is a sense of rejoicing when one succeeds — everyone succeeds with us."

**PASTOR MARK FULLER**, Dobson Ranch at Chandler, Arizona: "The K-Church Conferences have been the most useful resource the Church of the Nazarene has provided for this pastor. My formal education and experience have taught me how to preach and pastor. But no one ever showed me how to lead an ever-enlarging local church ministry . . . Networking with other pastors at similar stages in ministry makes the application process easier. This has been the conference to put all the pieces together to lead and manage the local church ministry."

**PASTOR MICHAEL PALMER**, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, First Church: "I enjoy the camaraderie of my fellow pastors. I receive encouragement and support from them. These conferences have helped to build a 'team' mentality among us."

**PASTOR D. GEOFFREY KUNSELMAN**, Whitehall Church at Columbus, Ohio: "The most important impact the K-Church Project is having on my ministry is through the regional meetings. Quarterly, pastors from the East Central Region meet for a day and a half. The sessions are wide open and discussion moves naturally from one topic to another. Support for one another is offered as members of the group share challenges they presently face. Dr. John Howald, Canton First Church, is our leader and does a tremendous job in facilitating discussion. These quarterly meetings are the best thing that I have ever been a part of in the Church of the Nazarene."

**Pastor T. Daniel Casey**, Atlanta First Church, Georgia: "The K-Church Conferences have had a definite impact upon my life and my ministry. The conferences have brought me a lot of personal affirmation. I discovered that many of the things I was doing were correct and would bear results. Of course, I have been given many new ideas about how to refine and enhance these special ministries. I now have new resources designed to help me with the problems I face almost daily."

I can identify two major areas that I believe will have a lasting effect. One is the area of conscious change. Most of us spend a lot of time reacting to what is happening. We should be taking the necessary steps, however, to cause change that we know needs to happen. We can't just assume that it will happen, nor can we spot the area of need without doing something to correct it. Of course, change has to occur cautiously and prayerfully, but it has to occur. Since we are change-agents, we must cause change to happen.

I also feel strengthened by the strong assurance that growth will occur when barriers are removed. Many of us blame ourselves for a lack of growth when the problem may not be in us at all. Very real barriers may be preventing that growth. If we work to remove the barriers, the growth will occur. That's refreshing. It also encourages me to look for the barriers and design a plan to remove them instead of always looking inward.

# FROM TEXT TO SERMON

## BIBLICAL RESOURCES FOR HOLINESS PREACHING FROM TEXT TO SERMON

EDITED BY  
H. RAY DUNNING & NEIL B. WISEMAN

### Biblical Resources for Holiness Preaching

Editors H. Ray Dunning and Neil B. Wiseman provide a comprehensive collection of holiness sermon resources. Drawing from the experiences of 28 esteemed theologians and preachers, *Biblical Resources for Holiness Preaching* presents a contemporary expositional focus on various holiness scripture passages. Each chapter is complete with exegesis and practical applications.

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## Obedience to Outreach Challenge

# LAYWOMAN IMPACTS CANADA

## "I'LL BE AS OLD AS MOSES WHEN THE CALL COMES."

Something happened seventeen years ago. It did not seem momentous at the time — only quietly conclusive. It was late in the evening. Everyone else had gone to bed. I was reading *Jungle Pilot, the Life and Witness of Nate Saint*. Nate was the Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilot for the fatal mission to the Aucas. I had reached the chapter where he discusses his call. One line arrested me: "Now we rejoice in God's

gracious care for our lives even before they were entirely His — preparing us specifically and without wasted motion for the job He had for us to do."

I remember asking the Lord, "Are you preparing me for anything? Will I ever be called to do a special task for You?" Even as I asked, His response came. "You will, in My time, you will."

Month's passed; then, years. Sometimes I would feel an excitement about an opportunity and pray, "Is this it? Should I get involved in this?" I always expected an unequivocal 'yes' or 'no,' but strangely enough the answer time after time seemed to be 'optional.' I continued to work at the several responsibilities I had in my local church, waiting, wondering — sometimes thinking I'd be as old as Moses was when that call came.

Then, suddenly, eleven years after *Jungle Pilot*, the Lord interrupted the routine of my relatively ordered life. I was doing the dishes — looking out at the brown shingles of my neighbor's roof when He impressed me with the message, "There's going to be a change in your life." That was a bombshell! Nothing changes in my life — same husband, neighborhood, house, friends, church, and lifestyle for thirty years. But the message was clear and I shared it with my two closest friends that day. They were curious! So was I!

Seven months passed. I was watching, waiting. Then, again at the kitchen sink, His unmistakable guidance, "You will need to change churches."

"But, Lord, I've been there for thirty years. They won't be able to get along without me."

Then gently He reminded me, "Marjorie, the whole world can get along without you. It's Me they really need."

Humbled, I responded, "You are Lord; just lead me."

In a few short weeks I was at General Assembly in Anaheim. What a great experience it was to represent my district. I enjoyed every aspect of those days. I was challenged by the International Church working together, but regardless of what was happening or who was speaking, God kept saying over and over again, "Marjorie, 10,000 Canadian Nazarenes

are not enough." Sunday morning, just before the Communion service began in the stadium, I knew I had to respond. "Lord, I'll give the rest of my life to changing that, if You will show me how."

"Agreed," He seemed to say.

Two days after I returned from General Assembly, I was invited by the pastor and board of the Rosewood Church of the Nazarene to become their Church Planting Director. During my first meeting with them, I realized they had begun considering me at the same time as the Lord had spoken

to me about the change that was coming. It was the first of many doors that God has opened since then: the invitation from the Canadian National Board to lead the committee in proposing Toronto as Thrust City; subsequently being appointed coordinator for that Thrust; being elected to the District Advisory Board; and being appointed to the District Church Growth and District Church Extension Boards. He has opened the way for me to share the vision He has placed in my heart for Toronto and Canada to all our district assemblies and many churches across Canada. He has opened the way for me to chair the Church Growth Committee of the Nazarene National Board of Canada. This committee is now making plans to simultaneously promote a Target City in each of our five Canadian districts. People with a vision for their cities will be coming to Toronto to catch the spirit and pick up some practical ideas that might work in their situations.

God is good! Ten thousand Canadian Nazarenes are not enough, but He's changing that!

I think about Nate Saint's comment that "He prepares us specifically and without wasted motion," and I realize that the years before He called were so significant — especially the quiet days I spent with Him. I think about the day at the kitchen sink when He said, "A change is coming!" Thank You, Lord. I sure needed that warning! I think about 'call.' I wanted so much for Him to call me. I am surprised and joyful that He did. I was well aware that He called pastors and missionaries, but I had never realized that He would call a layperson to lay ministry.

I think again about the 'call' and what it means to me today. It is the anchor of my life. It holds me to the task. It keeps me on track. In the most exhilarating moments, I rejoice in it! In the most despairing, it keeps me from running! I stand amazed at what He is doing in my life and even more amazed at the churches, ministries, and changed lives evolving from what was initially a timid but obedient step.

You are so faithful, Lord! Lead on, and I will be faithful too.

—Marjorie Osborne



# CHURCH PLANTING IN THE 1980's

Church of the Nazarene  
Canada and the United States



In the decade of the eighties, church planting among Nazarenes increased in Canada and the United States from the levels of the seventies. One way of seeing the new levels is to compare the number of new churches on each district with the number of churches the district had at the beginning of the decade. Overall, churches planted in these countries equaled 13% of the total churches existing in 1979.

Both Florida Space Coast and Canada Quebec planted more churches in the eighties than they had at the end of the seventies. (Many of Florida Space Coast's churches were begun while the area was still part of Central Florida, just as most of Northern Michigan's were begun while that district was still part of

Michigan.)

Central Florida, New York, and Oregon Pacific planted half again as many churches as their end-of-decade total.

While percentage gains tend to favor districts with fewer churches, several large districts planted at a better-than-average pace. Central Ohio and Georgia began the decade with 84 churches, and Los Angeles and Washington Pacific both had 70 or more churches in 1979.

The Church Growth Research Center exists to help Nazarenes better understand their challenges and accomplishments.

How may we serve you?



**Church Growth Research Center**

6401 The Paseo  
Kansas City, MO 64131

# RESEARCH AND TRENDS



**Provided by Church Growth Research Center  
Dale E. Jones, Manager**

## **Urban Membership Growth**

Many large cities are complaining about recent census results . . . fewer people than expected. But many large cities are showing more Nazarenes than ever before.

**New York City now has largest number of Nazarene churches of any incorporated city in Canada or USA**, and has the fifth largest Nazarene membership among big cities . . . over 3,000 in its 34 churches. Chicago and Los Angeles also show gains in central city.

**"Thrust to the Cities"** program partially responsible . . . 11 of our largest 14 cities have more churches now than 10 years ago. 10 of 14 top cities have membership gains as well . . . with New York, Montreal, and San Francisco more than doubling Nazarenes during the decade.

## **Decade Growth for North America**

Nazarenes traditionally do well in population growth areas throughout Canada and the United States . . . 1980s showed that we do well in slow-growth areas, too.

During the decade, Sunbelt states grew well in Nazarene membership . . . **California and Florida gained 9,000 Nazarenes each . . . Texas over 6,000**. But "Frost-belt" Ohio had fourth largest gain . . . over 5,000.

Other Southern and Western states to gain at least 1,500 during the decade were Washington, Oregon, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Northern states to do as well were New York, Kansas, Indiana, and Missouri.

**Shows that a large Nazarene base helps in growth** . . . where lots of people are already Nazarenes, prospects are more likely to have had previous contact . . . one less barrier to overcome in bringing them into the church.

## **67 New Churches in 1990**

**67 new churches in Canada and USA in 1990 assembly year** . . . more than half (37) in metro areas of half-a-million or more . . . and nearly a third (21) in metros of at least 2 million people. Los Angeles metro area organized 7 . . . New York area 3 . . . Montreal, Toronto, and Houston 2 each . . . 1 each for Detroit, Seattle, Baltimore, Boston, and Tampa.

Most new churches predominantly White-Anglo . . . 40 of the 67. But 7 serve Spanish-speaking congregations and 6 serve Haitians . . . 3 each Korean and American Black . . . 2 each among Chinese, Filipino, Armenian, and American Indian groups.

39 Canada/USA districts began at least one new church during the year . . . about the same as last year's involvement by 42 districts. Los Angeles district started 5 . . . 4 each in Houston, New York, New England.

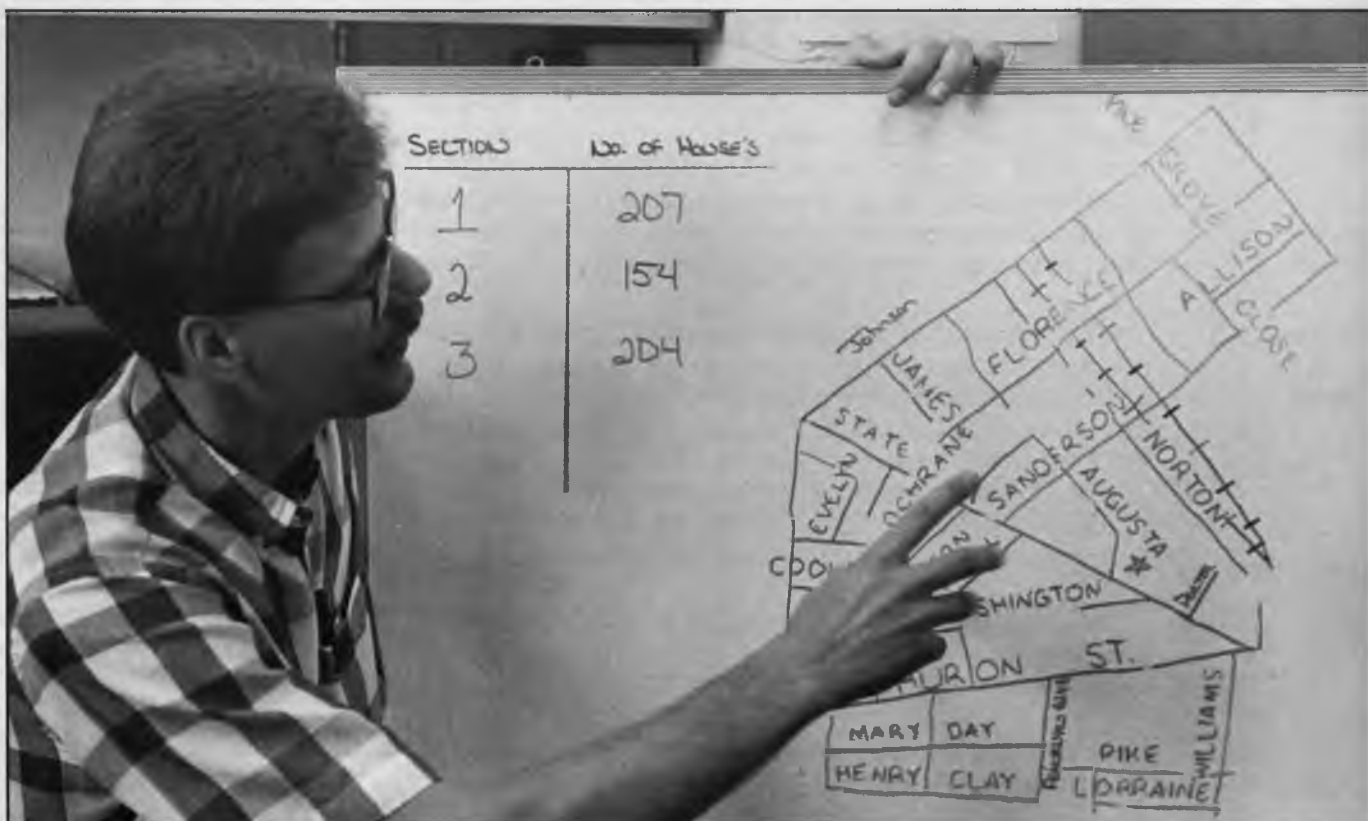
## **160 Churches Received 50 or More Members**

**160 Nazarene churches worldwide took in 50 or more new Nazarenes during 1990 assembly year** . . . professions of faith or transfers from other denominations. 34 of the churches were in Canada/USA. Central Florida reported 4 such churches . . . New York district 3 . . . four districts in Ohio reported a total of 5 churches with 50 or more . . . 24 districts had at least one church gaining 50 or more new Nazarenes.



Church prepares for concert on the lawn; truck flatbed used for stage.

## DREAMS TO RECONNECT WITH COMMUNITY



Darrell Blank, associate pastor, describes the community near the church.

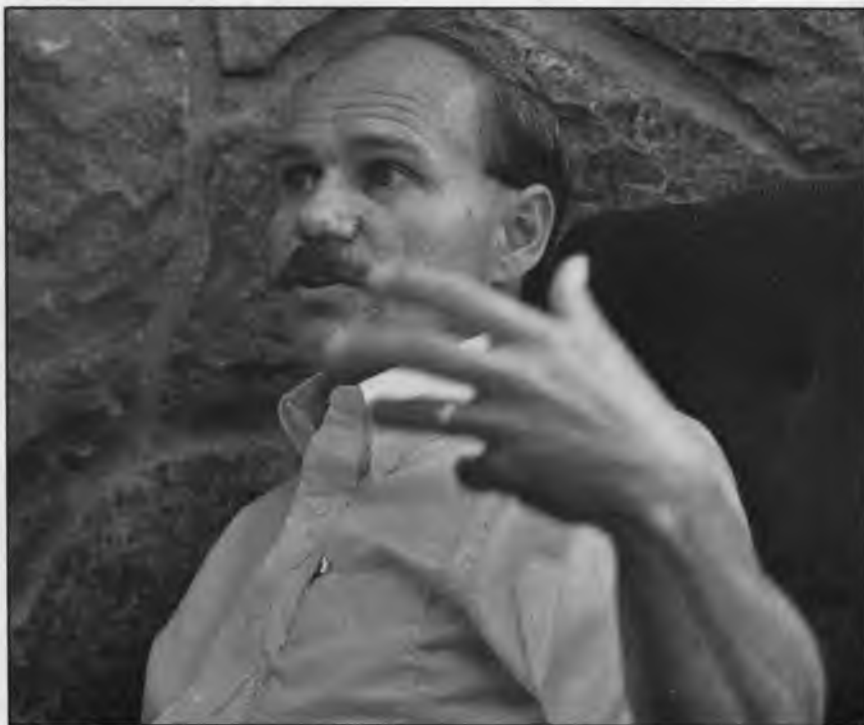


**What's been missing? Our neighborhood is changing, and so are we. This realization has come slowly — almost imperceptibly — over a long period of time. The good news is that we realize it now and are beginning to understand that change is inevitable, but manageable.**

**F**irst Church is located in an urban residential section of Pontiac, Michigan, a few blocks from the central business district. For years, we were one of the largest churches on the district, but then changes began to take place: Families started to prosper and move to affluent suburbs, new churches were started in the suburbs from the core of our congregation, other members aged and moved south to a better climate, and the racial unrest in Detroit in the late '60s directly affected our city, our church, and our ability to relate to a community.

The physical and numerical changes were obvious, but the changes that were slowly taking place in the hearts and minds of the people were much less recognizable. As they began to move, one by one, to surrounding suburbs, they found themselves surrounded by new communities. Though they were comfortable living on the outskirts and commuting to church, when they began to reach out to their neighbors, they found them interested in the gospel but not in driving to the city to attend church. Why would they want to do that when there were fine churches a few blocks down the street?

**A new attitude began to develop.** It found its form in the questions: "What's wrong with us?" and "Why don't people want to come to our church where God is moving and wonderful things are happening?" The congregation began to develop a survival mentality. While on the surface there seemed to be a healthy desire to reach out, the underlying motive revealed the problem. Rather than being motivated by a burden for lost souls, the overriding urgency was "reach new people for our church, or die!" This mentality actually worked against the church and caused it to lose its identity with the community. People were finding it rather difficult to have a burden for the community around the church when their real community was actually miles away, in a nicer neighborhood.



**Pastor Steven West describes the dream;** reconnect with neighborhood is the goal.

There we were — a lighthouse in a dark community — shedding no light on the darkness around. The church tried all kinds of creative ways to get neighborhood people inside the doors of our lighthouse, but no one in the community could see any relevance in the presence of that church down the street. The church was so concerned about keeping the members it did have that there was not any concentrated effort to meet the needs of people in the community.

**Realization of the real problem became the most important stepping stone** toward developing a ministry that once again pleased God. The congregation has made a commitment to reconnect with the community surrounding the church. Though this decision is not unanimously supported, it is the commitment of a large majority of the church.

We do not feel that we have latitude in what we must do. There is no substitute for obedience to the Lord's plans for His church. We are to find every available means for getting the

gospel to our neighbors in need. In order to accomplish this, there had to be some changes in our thinking and attitudes. We had to understand that the decision to reconnect and tell our neighborhood that we care does not necessarily mean that they will start beating down our doors on Sunday mornings. We also had to realize that ministry does not happen only during specific hours on Sundays and Wednesdays and only inside the walls of the church. If we are faithful, we feel confident that growth will happen. We have been limiting our ministry to doing only those things that will give us a return on our investment. That is not being faithful to the gospel. That is not what Jesus taught or what He did. Our mission is the salvation of people in our community. Our goals to reach that objective are to show people our sincere love for them and to offer our help in meeting their day-to-day needs, whether they are spiritual, mental, social, or physical. We can do that.

# DREAMS TO RECONNECT

**We call this our dream to reconnect** because we are in the early stages of the process. It has taken three years for us to change, and though our change is still going on, it is time now for us to act.

With the aid of our Mission Action Committee, we simply got a map of our location in the city and broke our neighborhood down into three areas, with a priority being placed on the area closest to the church. These are the ones who consider us a part of their community. We counted every home in these areas, though we found that with multiple-family dwellings we had many more families than homes. So far, we have done most of our saturation in Area One and, for special events, we move to the other two areas.

We began with a simple hand-delivered letter to every family in Area One. It was a personal letter from me, the pastor. I simply introduced myself, told a little bit about our church, and let them know that if they had a need, we were there to help. I was careful to note that though we are not a rich church, we are aware of many resources that are available in our city, and we would be glad to help.

Within a month of that letter, we planned an outdoor gospel concert on the front lawn of the church featuring two groups from Detroit. This was at no charge to the community, and refreshments were served. We had more than 170 in attendance that Friday evening in July, with many others stopping in the street and in our parking lot. We had 50 from our church, including every one of our board members. There was a table with information about our church and also helpful brochures from social agencies of our city.

We followed up the concert with an open house at the church the following Sunday afternoon. Although this was poorly attended, one family became regular attenders as a result of the open house alone. Apparently, most of those we met were not yet ready to come inside.

Our most recent venture was an outdoor film in October. We had a beautiful night, with more than 50

neighborhood people viewing *The Cross and the Switchblade*, complete with popcorn and punch.

In the past three-and-one-half years, we had not had one community person become a regular attendee at our church. In July, we officially began our "reconnecting" process. We stopped trying to get people to attend and started showing them our love and concern. At last count, on October 15, we have 25 people attending services as a direct result of our new efforts.

We are not trying to build our church on big events alone. They are simply opportunities to meet the people of our community in less threatening situations. It gives us a chance to offer them something without asking for anything in return. We feel the most effective method so far has been simply walking around in the community as often as time permits. We have talked with the owners of the local convenience store that is a center of activity. We have followed up personally on those who show any interest. Now, our neighbors know we want them to attend our church, but they also know that they are not thought of any less if they don't attend. Our love is unconditional.

We have beautiful church facilities and a large educational unit housing

our day care. Our future plans are centered around better use of our facilities while meeting needs represented in our community. A few of our plans are as follows:

- Free tutoring for school children
- Offering use of our facilities to community groups
- A resume service and further help securing jobs
- A literacy class for adults
- A clothing pantry
- A small-scale food pantry for local emergencies
- Basketball and other recreational activities

There are so many things we can do that only cost time and energy. I am not sure what the results will be from each of these ministries, but I do know that our new focus has already been a blessing to our church.

I wish we had a more impressive success story to share, but we have just begun. Our hope today lies in the fact that God has promised to be faithful to us as we are faithful to our calling and His commission.

—by Steven West, Pastor  
Pontiac First Church  
Pontiac, Michigan



**Church members welcome community residents before the concert on the lawn.**

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# DEFINING AN ASSIMILATED MEMBER

**IT IS WELL WORTH THE EFFORT TO WORK AT BUILDING THE QUALITIES OF AN ASSIMILATED MEMBER EARLY RATHER THAN GO SEARCHING FOR "LOST SHEEP," HOPING THAT IT'S NOT TOO LATE**

**S**o, what is an assimilated church member, anyway? How does one act? What does one look like? How could you tell if you saw one?

Interestingly, throughout American churches, there isn't a commonly accepted definition of an assimilated, or even an "active," church member. I discovered a few years ago in my own church that a member is considered "active" if he/she has either: 1) given financially to the church once in the past year, or 2) attended worship once in the past year, or 3) indicated a desire to be removed from membership. In other churches, it's easier to remain an active member. You just don't die. According to John Savage, 33% of the members in the average American church are inactive.<sup>1</sup> In many churches, the number is considerably higher.

## **Two Wrong Assumptions**

In my experience as a church consultant, I find two common reasons for the unnecessarily high number of inactive members on church rolls. The reasons are actually assumptions held in many churches; often unspoken, but clearly believed. Assumptions . . . that are wrong!

### **Wrong Assumption #1: New member assimilation happens automatically.**

I frequently ask long-time members to list the strengths of their church. Invariably, one of the responses is, "We're a friendly church." And this conviction is genuine. But, as a result, these long-established members often assume that the love and caring they experience is also felt by newcomers. By and large, it isn't.

In fact, it is during these early months of the new member's life in the church — when they need the most care and at-



tention — that they get the least. Of all church members who are today inactive, 75% became inactive in their first year of membership.

## **Of all church members who are today inactive, 75% became inactive in their first year of membership.**

New-member assimilation doesn't just happen, yet most churches seem to believe it does. In a survey conducted by Church Growth, Inc. (Monrovia, California), it was found that for every ten evangelism committees in churches across America, there was only one assimilation committee or group specifically responsible for seeing newcomers integrated into active church life.

### **Wrong Assumption #2: Newcomers are primarily responsible for their own assimilation.**

The thinking goes as follows: "Our groups and classes are open . . . our

people friendly . . . when visitors and newcomers attend our classes, they will be genuinely welcomed." But new members seldom take the initiative. And older members seldom notice that they don't.

As we have conducted focus groups to interview persons who have joined a church and then become inactive, we find a universal phenomenon: People don't join a church intending to drop out. They expect and want to participate in the body of Christ. Yet, despite these good intentions, new members do drop out. Thus, when a new member becomes inactive . . . I have found that the responsibility can usually be traced back to the church rather than the new member.

## **Defining an Assimilated Member**

So what does that elusive assimilated member look like? Or act like?

The question is important, because if an answer can be found, then a strategy can be defined that moves toward creating those qualities in more new and even long-time members.

Here are ten characteristics I believe should define an assimilated member. I have also suggested several action steps your church can take to improve in each area:

### **1. An assimilated member has developed friends in the church.**

A doctoral dissertation at the University of Illinois<sup>2</sup> uncovered the startling fact upon comparing a group of 50 active members with a similar number of drop-outs. The question was asked to both groups, "How many friends did you make in the church in the first six months after you joined?" Here are the findings:



# Defining an Assimilated Member

Number of New Friends After 6 Months

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9+
Active Members	0	0	0	1	2	2	8	13	12	12
Drop-Outs	8	13	14	8	4	2	1	0	0	0

On average, active church members had made more than seven new friends in the church during the six months following their membership; drop-outs had made only two.

In another study, Warren Hartman interviewed persons who had become inactive in United Methodist churches and asked them, "Why?" Over 75% of those who responded said they left because they did not feel a sense of belonging in that church; they did not feel needed, wanted, cared for, or loved.<sup>3</sup>

The friendship factor is one of the most important ingredients in seeing newcomers remain active and involved in your church.

**Action Steps:** Plan at least one social event per month that new members attend for each of the first six months of their membership. Encourage your classes and small groups to have at least one social event every quarter, and intentionally invite newcomers/visitors to participate.

## 2. An assimilated member has a ministry role in the church appropriate to his/her spiritual gift.

A ministry role is an elected, appointed, or voluntary church activity in which a person contributes at least once a month (i.e., serving on a committee, welcoming visitors, teaching a class, etc.).

A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability, given by the Holy Spirit, to do Christ-honoring service in a particular area with greater ability than Christians without the gift.

Four important requirements are necessary for a church member to find a ministry role that builds on his/her spiritual gift(s): (1) an adequate number of ministry opportunities in the church

(growing churches average 55 roles for every 100 members, declining churches average only 27 per 100); (2) a definition of all ministry roles in the church, including the appropriate spiritual gift(s) for each role; (3) an identification process by which members can discover their spiritual gifts; and (4) a matching process whereby members can find those ministry roles in the church that complement their spiritual gifts.

In most churches, 10% of the members are doing 90% of the work. Yet a number of churches, often with a seemingly unmanageable number of members, are smashing the lay unemployment barrier. Lake Avenue Congregational Church in California, for example, has written into its philosophy of ministry statement the goal that 70% of its members (over 4,000)

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**All groups have  
a saturation point —  
a numerical level at which  
no additional persons  
can be assimilated  
into that group.**

---

will be involved in a ministry activity. St. Paul Lutheran Church in Michigan requires all new members to participate in a spiritual gifts discovery/deployment course. The Richland Hills Church of Christ in Texas has 85% of its 2,000+ members involved in a ministry role, with only volunteers overseeing the process.

**Action Steps:** List the ministry opportunities that currently exist in your church, and identify the spiritual gifts appropriate for each role. Develop a spiritual gifts discovery course that includes a matching process with church roles.

## 3. An assimilated member is actively involved in a small group.

Some of the greatest personal and spiritual benefits to your church members will come in a small group. It is here that the caring, loving fellowship of the Body is best experienced. Seeing newcomers involved in a small group should be one of the first priorities of church leaders.

A problem arises, however, that frequently keeps newcomers out of such small groups. It revolves around the fact that all groups have a saturation point — a numerical level at which no additional persons can be assimilated into that group.

A group can become saturated for a number of reasons. The most common is the length of time the group has been together. Once a small group (or an adult Sunday school class, for that matter) has been together for two years or longer, there is a 95% chance that the group is saturated and will not grow beyond that point. History, tradition, relationships are so strong in the group that the outsider is inadvertently kept as an outsider.

The solution is simple: Regularly start new classes and groups. This allows for newcomers to find a group that is still open in which they create the tradition, rather than try to break into it.

**Action Steps:** Determine whether you have an adequate number of small groups/classes that provide meaningful relationships (you should have seven for every 100 members). Evaluate whether you have enough new groups/classes (20% of your groups and classes should have been started in the last two years). Begin reading/learning how to successfully start and manage a small group network in your church, and implement as soon as possible.<sup>4</sup>

## 4. An assimilated member understands and identifies with the goals of the church.

When I visit churches with a high percentage of active members and ask these members about their churches' short- and long-range goals, they can almost always tell me. In contrast, when the same question is posed in churches with a large percentage of inactives, I see many more quizzical and puzzled expressions.

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## Churches with specific and visible goals tend to focus on the *possibilities of tomorrow*, and involve both new and older members together.

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A clear statement of what your church plans to accomplish in the coming year(s) provides an important way for your newcomers to get involved. Sharing in the pursuit of these goals is one of the best ways for newcomers and older members to build common bonds and history together.

**Action Steps:** Develop a set of clear and specific church goals, 70% of which should be short term (3 to 4 months), 25% mid term (1 year), 5% long term (over 1 year). Clearly specify how and where members can participate in these goals. Communicate these goals and opportunities to your newcomers.

### **5. An assimilated member is an active steward in the work of the church.**

An assimilated member is giving to the church. Christ spoke more about money than about heaven or hell. He knew that "where your treasure is, there is your heart also." Regular stewardship should be stressed as a part of commitment to Christ and His Church.

Of course, the responsibility of stewardship is not limited to finances. There is stewardship of time. Stewardship of priorities. Stewardship of spiritual gifts. But dollars and cents are often a window through which other priorities in life can be seen. Stewardship education should be a key part of any new member's training.

**Action Steps:** Be sure you have a philosophy of stewardship clear in your own mind. Set aside one month each year in which stewardship is taught and commitments are made. Include a stewardship education module in your new members' orientation.

### **6. An assimilated member is regular in worship attendance.**

Fluctuation in worship attendance is the first indicator of a person beginning to drop out. If he/she misses three Sundays in succession for no apparent reason, it is frequently the early warn-

ing sign of future inactivity. And research indicates that it takes only six months for a person (new member or old) to go out that back door and reallocate his/her time in other areas.

A number of churches are seeing an increase in the percentage of their members at worship simply by having them set personal goals for the number of services they plan to attend in the coming year. Rev. Steve Wagner at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Texas contends that this strategy has been a key part of their church's 322% decadal growth. Lyle Schaller, church planning authority, suggests that such a strategy will increase worship attendance in most churches by at least five to ten percent.

**Action Steps:** Ask members to set goals for their worship attendance in the coming year, and send them quarterly updates.<sup>5</sup> Monitor the worship attendance of all church members (new and old) and, when they are gone, let them know they were missed.

### **7. An assimilated member has a sense of spiritual growth.**

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## The dynamics of assimilation into active church membership have very little to do with theological issues.

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The average church loses one to three percent of its membership each year when persons move from one church to another but don't change their addresses. If you are losing more than this, it may be an indication that members are not finding the spiritual nourishment they desire.

But, while leaders should certainly concern themselves with new members'

spiritual growth, some mistakenly assume that this should be the content of their new members' class. Not true. The dynamics of assimilation into active church membership have very little to do with theological issues. Rather, a new members' class should focus primarily on *relational* issues of involvement and belonging. An ideal approach is to offer two distinct classes — a *new believers' class* and a *new members' class*.

One of the best ways to find out whether your members feel they are growing spiritually is to ask them. Most people are pleased to tell you. And, not surprisingly, you will find that those persons who are regular in worship, involved in a ministry role, and participating in a small group are the ones who feel they are growing spiritually.

**Action Steps:** Survey your members to determine their sense of spiritual growth and development in the past year. Plan a class for new believers, separate from your class for new members.

### **8. An assimilated member has taken a public step of affiliation with the church.**

Different churches have different ways to officially welcome new members. For some, it is baptism. For others, a special service. In some churches, it is a personal testimony to the congregation. Whatever that formal step, newcomers should be encouraged to take it as soon as appropriate. Such a step gives the new Christian a sense of beginning. It gives the new member a sense of identity. And it gives the church body formal notice that a new member is in their presence and should be welcomed into the family.

Many churches, such as Central United Protestant Church in Richland, Washington, offer an inquirers' class for those interested in learning more about membership but who are not quite ready to join. In the film *But I'm Just a Layman*, Pastor Joe Harding observes, "After such persons have completed our class, over 90% decide to join the church."

**Action Steps:** Offer a regular class for those interested in learning more about your church. Make your new-member welcome a big event in the life of the church.

# Defining an Assimilated Member

## 9. An assimilated member has endorsed the values of your church.

Whether or not a newcomer remains active often depends on whether he/she shares the values of that church. Interestingly, the values-congruity issue is frequently not theological. For example, a new member of a Seventh-day Adventist church would either come to share the lifestyle values of health and wellness of the church or feel uncomfortable and leave. Theological values are generally important only to long-time Christians joining a church by transfer, not to new Christians joining by way of conversion.

In the study of "values clarification," we find common patterns when a person has endorsed a new set of values:

- The value was selected from alternatives;
- The value change was considered a free choice;
- The value is now prized and cherished;
- The value has been publicly affirmed;
- The value is consistent with other values and self-image;
- The value-holder is willing to take the consequences of his/her choice.

**Action Steps:** Clarify your church's own distinctives and develop an effective means of communicating what you believe and why. Include this study in your new members' orientation. Develop a quiz on these distinctives for your entire church body, and those who don't pass (even older members) should be encouraged to take the class.

## 10. An assimilated member is reproducing himself/herself through new believers.

An assimilated member is one who is participating in Christ's great commission to "go and make disciples." Every Christian is called to proclaim the good news, and new members should be sharing their faith with others. This doesn't mean every new member must serve on

the calling team or evangelism committee. But every member has unchurched friends and family and should be able to, as Peter says, "give witness to the hope that is within you."

A Southern Baptist study a few years ago found that only 5% of church members have ever led another person to faith in Christ. In my own experience, I have found that a minimum of 20% of a church's active membership must be trained in lifestyle evangelism before significant conversion growth will be seen.<sup>6</sup>

**Action Steps:** Set a goal and plan for 20% of your active membership to complete an evangelism training course

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in the next two years. Include a simple training process in evangelism in every new members' class.

### Now What?

It is important to realize that these characteristics don't just happen. So, what can you do to see these qualities become typical of more and more of your new members? Here are four suggestions:

1. **Develop** a working definition of an assimilated member for your own church. The above list might help you get started, but work with your leadership and specifically define the characteristics you desire among your new and older members.

2. **Restructure** your new members' class around this definition. Intentionally include activities, teaching, and models that move new members toward these qualities. Your goal should be to see measurable progress in each area within three months.

3. **Compare** your entire membership against this definition. Develop a grid with each characteristic (i.e., worship, group involvement, ministry role, etc.) in a separate column along the top of the grid and the name of each of your members in a separate row down the left side. Then put a check-mark in each box where the member meets your minimum criteria for that characteristic. You will quickly see which areas your church is strong in and which areas need more work.

4. **Begin** with the two or three most important characteristics. Assign a task force to define specific strategies for developing these "assimilated member qualities" in your congregation. Set a target date (two to three months is sufficient) to receive their completed recommendations.

Christ seemed to place a high priority on "shepherding" our flocks. When one was discovered missing, the shepherd left the 99 to search for the single lost sheep. What would our Lord say to us, today, if we counted our flocks and observed that 30, 40, perhaps even 50 of every 100 sheep had drifted away?

—Charles Arn

Charles Arn is Vice-President of Church Growth, Inc., in Monrovia, California.

<sup>1</sup> John Savage, "The Apathetic & Bored Church Member," *Church Growth: America*, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 6

<sup>2</sup> *Persuasion in Religious Influence*, Flavil R. Yeakley, University of Illinois, 1979

<sup>3</sup> *A Study of Decline and Growth in the United Methodist Church*, Warren Hartman, Nashville: Board of Discipleship, p. 54

<sup>4</sup> A helpful beginning guide is *How to Start & Grow Small Groups* by Jeanne Hipp (available from Church Growth, Inc., 2670 S. Myrtle Ave. #201, Monrovia, CA)

<sup>5</sup> A book by Rev. Steve Wagner explains how their church uses the process of goal-setting in a stewardship education program (*Help Your People Discover Great Commission Stewardship*), available from Church Growth, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> "The Master's Plan for Making Disciples" is a helpful lifestyle evangelism training course, available from Church Growth, Inc.

## **PENSIONS: WHOSE JOB IS IT?**

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done—that of providing retirement income for ministers. Everybody was needed to do it.

Everybody was sure Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got concerned about that, because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody

was unhappy with Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.



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**PS. Your Board of Pensions and Benefits USA and the General Assembly have provided the tools for Everybody, Anybody, and Somebody to provide a sound retirement income for ministers. But if Nobody uses them, somebody could be disappointed.**





## VICTORY HILLS CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Joseph D. Biscoe, Jr., D. Min.  
Pastor

February 1991

Dr. Nina G. Gunter  
General NWMS Office  
6401 The Paseo  
Kansas City, MO 64131

Dear Dr. Gunter:

It is a sad reality that some missionary meetings are poorly attended and create little excitement, even though there is promotion, planning, training, and abundant resource material. One church took a drastic step that pumped new life into the mission emphasis, increased attendance, and caused an attitude of joy toward missions.

Victory Hills Church of the Nazarene in Kansas City, Kansas, made a change and now does the following:

1. Men, youth, and children each have their own group.
2. Ladies of the church are assigned to mission cell groups (chapters) by the local NWMS council. Each chapter has approximately 20 members.
3. Cell groups are named for a missionary or member of the church—giving a personal identity.
4. Each cell group elects its own officers. (See *NWMS Handbook and Constitution*.)
5. Cell groups meet monthly in a home or at the church fellowship hall.
6. Meetings begin with a potluck dinner—the hostess usually provides meat, beverage, and bread.
7. Following dinner, missionary meeting is held.
8. Every five years, cell groups are reassigned.
9. A combined meeting of all cell groups is held annually.

The benefits of this approach for Victory Hills are:

1. Attendance and interest remain high.
2. Each cell group develops its own style of program.
3. The emphasis varies:
  - a. Prayer partners within the cell group
  - b. Concern for others in the cell group
  - c. Expressions of appreciation on special occasions
4. Informal setting allows for fellowship, plus the mission emphasis and study.
5. Leadership responsibilities and involvement are increased.
6. Time limits are never suggested, but meetings conclude at a consistent time.
7. Missionary president communicates regularly with cell group chairpersons.

Drawbacks are minimal:

1. There is a time of adjustment when members are reassigned. However, the newly formed cell group soon becomes a cohesive unit.
2. Geographical distance, lack of transportation, etc., can cause problems. Members are allowed to transfer to another cell group.
3. The men's cell group, although operating separately, has a stable attendance and is a functioning unit.

Missionary cell groups may not work in every church, but it is an option to try if others have not succeeded. Consistently Victory Hills Church has been a 10 percent church. One of the reasons is the interest and involvement created within the cell groups.

As a result of the plan, one night a month is firmly calendared as the night when missionary cell groups meet. That attitude is a welcome improvement to "Is it missionary meeting night . . . again?"

Sincerely,

Joseph D. Biscoe  
Pastor

6200 Parallel Parkway, Kansas City, Kansas 66102 -- (913) 299-4662



# FRED'S CHURCH



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## **WHY PLANT CHURCHES? BECAUSE PEOPLE LIKE FRED MOORHEAD WILL NEVER FIND THE LORD UNLESS WE DO**

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**F**red Moorhead first heard of the Church of the Nazarene when he and his wife, Mary, attended the funeral of a friend, Joan Bradley, who had died with cancer. What Fred couldn't understand was the peace experienced by Joan in the days before her death or the victory in the funeral message. Joan had begun attending a Bible study in her apartment building a few months earlier and accepted Christ soon after she was hospitalized. This Bible study would develop to become the Lawrence Avenue Church of the Nazarene, a TARGET TORONTO church.

At the funeral, Fred Moorhead asked Pastor Ian Fitzpatrick if there was a Church of the Nazarene nearby. Pastor Fitzpatrick assured him the Lawrence Avenue church would soon begin and Fred promised to be a part of it. True to his word, Fred came right from the start, faithfully bringing Mary and several other people from the circle of family and friends with him.

Fred himself had fought a battle with cancer and apparently won. On Sunday, March 11, 1990, Fred offered to help with the ushering. He was eager to take part now that he no

longer needed to feel self-conscious about his hair slowly growing back after chemotherapy. That night, Fred Moorhead accepted the Lord as his Savior. Tuesday, March 13, two days later, Fred, in his fiftieth year, died of a massive heart attack.

The new church reeled with the shock. Hadn't Fred suffered enough? Why now? Wasn't he just starting to make plans for a new and cancer-free future? At the funeral, Pastor Fitzpatrick shared with the people the only thing he knew to say: "God knows better than we do. He makes no mistakes."



**"We must awaken to the fact  
that the Gospel-neglected of North America  
are frequently to be found in the shadows  
of Gospel-preaching churches."**

**—Earl Parvin**

## **GROW — A JOURNAL OF CHURCH GROWTH, EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP**

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**Bill M. Sullivan**, Director, Church Growth Division, International Church of the Nazarene • **Neil B. Wiseman**, Editor

### **Contributing Editors:**

**Curt Bowers**, Chaplaincy Ministries Director • **M. V. Scott**, Evangelism Ministries Director

**Michael R. Estep**, Church Extension Ministries Director • **Wilbur W. Brannon**, Pastoral Ministries Director

—Cover and inside photography by **Michael Lewis**.

—Graphic and page design by **Bill Gray**, art director, Wellspring. • Composition by **Ada Fae Nichols**, typographer, Wellspring.

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# The Spirit Enables Our Weaknesses

**C**hurch growth, evangelism, church planting, witnessing, urban outreach, revivals, neighborhood Bible studies, soul winning, multicultural ministries, and everything else on the long mission strategies list probably overwhelmed those whom Jesus called and trained during His earthly ministry. It sounded like too much, too soon.

Our Lord's charge to impact the world, starting at home and moving to new cities, strange countries, and foreign continents, went well beyond their most optimistic imaginations. And at least one in the group likely said, "It will take everything He can possibly do for us—knowing this crowd and myself like I do" when He promised, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you . . ." (Acts 1:8).

How could twelve—really eleven after Judas defected—do so much and go so far?

The present situation sounds a lot like theirs even though world population is larger and the number of serious disciples has increased. The task still sounds entirely too massive for the available people and our limited resources. The call to win strangers still boggles our minds. The inner compulsion still perplexes us.

So what can be done?

**We can exploit weaknesses so we see nothing else.** If given enough attention, inadequacies become the central focus of discipleship. A weakness can be exploited so it becomes a place to hide, a place of defeat, or a place of destructive self-pity. As a result, we try little and accomplish nothing.

**We can hide weaknesses so no one will notice.** Confusion about lack of commitment and laziness is evident in lots of places. But much that is called

apathy is really lack of skill and downright fear. Think of the misunderstanding on everyone's part when a leader preaches on apathy in relationship to the Kingdom of God but the person in the pew does not respond to an outreach challenge because he is afraid or he does not know how. The problem—if I do not admit my fear, no one can help me overcome it; if I do not admit my lack of skill, no one can show me how.

**We can admit weaknesses so someone can help us.** Paul's admission of weakness was a giant step toward strength; every lion-hearted servant of the Lord Jesus started out as an apprehensive beginner, and even the strongest at times feel frightened. God wants us to give Him our inadequacies so He can send someone to

train us, to inspire us, to help us try new things for His kingdom. The Father empowers incompleteness so we can be effective soul winners, church planters, evangelists, and disciples.

Right now, some faithful servant of the Lord waits to teach you some learnable outreach skill. Right now, some spiritually confused secularist is waiting for your call, your visit, and your friendship. And right now, the Lord Himself reminds you, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me . . . And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

**This is the way of God with us.** The Lord's challenge, authority, and promised presence is your sufficiency. The evidence is everywhere. Back of every conversion, church plant, genuine revival, effective witness, neighborhood Bible study there was a terror-stricken someone like you who dared to believe, "The Spirit helps in our weakness" (Romans 8:26). He has and He always will.

—Neil B. Wiseman  
Editor, GROW





*Church growth starts with a personal passion to share the gospel with responsive people.*