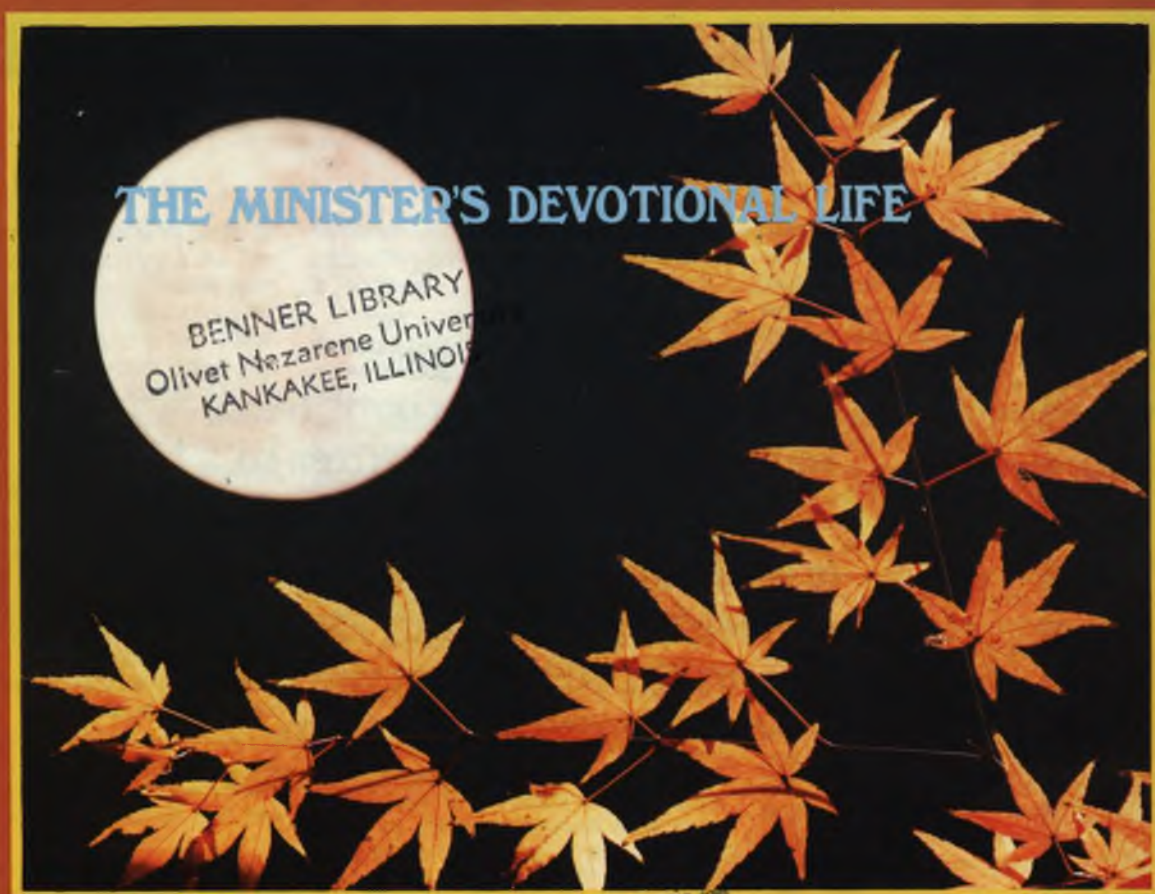


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How brittle are the piers
On which our faith doth tread;
No bridge below doth totter so,
Yet none hath such a crowd.

It is as old as God—
Indeed, 'twas built by Him.
He sent His Son to test the plank,
And He pronounced it firm.

—*Emily Dickinson*

MEDITATIONS DURING JURY DUTY

Well, here I am trying to write an editorial while on jury duty. Fortunately, jury service is punctuated liberally with lull times. The deck of cards, stacks of magazines, and a half-dozen table games in the jury room testify that these lull times are anticipated. But no gin rummy or back issues of *Reader's Digest* for me. So far, I have graded 10 student sermons and written the first paragraph of this editorial.

Sixty potential jurors have been summoned for this trial. Four suns have risen and set in the attempt to seat a jury. The case before us pits a patient against a medical doctor. The plaintiff, it seems, came to the troubled decision that he was really a woman trapped in a man's body. The miracle of modern medicine made transsexual surgery a reality. However, in the plaintiff's view, the surgery was more of a failure than a success. Thus a malpractice suit has eventuated.

But enough of that. I want to share with you patient readers some of my thoughts about the theme of this issue of our magazine—the minister's devotional life. Through the years some realities seem to have emerged regarding the nature and role of devotional practices.

1. You don't need much of a devotional life to be an ecclesiastical "success." Haven't the recent escapades of several TV evangelists proven that if you can master public relations, market analysis, the fake factor, fund-raising schemata, and develop an on-camera presence as smooth as olive oil on satin you can nab the two big success indicators—big numbers and big bucks.

On a lesser scale, you can treat your ministry assignment as if it were just another job—work hard, do the strategically correct things, be consumer sensitive, etc., etc. And you can do all this without praying much, without Bible study, meditation, or self-denial. If the church is a business and you are a busi-

nessman (or businesswoman), you can press the right buttons and be hailed as a "success."

Dennis Kinlaw tells in one of his sermons of a friend of his who said he discovered that he did not have to pray in order to be a successful pastor—and so he didn't. Of course, when he was hit by a withering temptation he, as he told Dr. Kinlaw, had no spiritual reserves and went down. I suppose that is a real hazard, but being forewarned, one could probably be smarter than that unhappy victim, right?

2. Not only is a deep devotional life not a prerequisite for professional success—it can be hazardous to your career. Should one develop a meaningful devotional life, for example, when a call to a bigger church comes one just might have to really pray about it. One just might have to meditate on such questions as, "Have I achieved what I said God called me to do when I accepted the church I now serve?" Hmm? You could end up, you know, like Donald Bastion of the Free Methodist church. They elected him bishop in 1960—but he turned the office down because he felt that God still had work for him to do in his pastorate. Look and learn—they did not ask him to become a bishop again until 14, count 'em, 14 years later! Go develop a deep devotional life and you too could be 14 years late for a promotion. Scary, isn't it?

3. Further, a regular devotional life may conspire against ministerial efficiency. What I mean is that a regular time for prayer, reading, self-examination and the like can gobble up the best hour(s) of the day and your best energies. Tell me, how can you be at your best with others when you have left your vim and vigor in the prayer closet?

Besides, getting hung up on devotions can eat away at the efficiency of boards and committees. You can get so

excited about the opening devotional exercises that before you know it, a big chunk of your board meeting time is frittered away on Scripture, prayer, testimonies, and the like. And has not experience shown that a quick, mechanical nod Godward in the form of a perfunctory prayer offered in a "let's get on with it" tone works better?

4. This praying business can also mess up your budget. Praying breeds love, compassion, and sympathy for people in need. And I don't have to tell you how such feelings can wreck your vacation savings account or drain your new car fund, to say nothing of what it does to the money stashed away for the new 45" television set.

5. In the end, a deep spirituality and serious devotional practice can make you lose control of your life. Look at Paul. He went into Arabia for a three-year meditation stint—and he got his head chopped off. Then there's Jesus, who had this habit of getting up "a great while before day" for prayer—He got crucified! What about Peter—I always said if he had stayed off of that Joppa rooftop he would have lived a lot longer. You remember, he went up on the rooftop to pray and had this vision. And to make a long story short, he got crucified upside down! Matthew, who operated the H & R Block tax service of his time, got serious about the spiritual life and decided God was calling him to preach the gospel to the Ethiopians. You're right. Those Africans killed him for his trouble! The list goes on and on. Beware.

6. Every minister of the gospel sooner or later, I suppose, has to choose between the ladder or the Cross. Frankly, those who choose the "ladder" theory have it the best. Those who make jobs, positions, and calls in the church into rungs on a career ladder don't have to worry too much about this devotional life business. They have other things to worry about. I talked

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THE PREACHER'S MAGAZINE

Proclaiming Christian Holiness

Volume 64, Number 1

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1988

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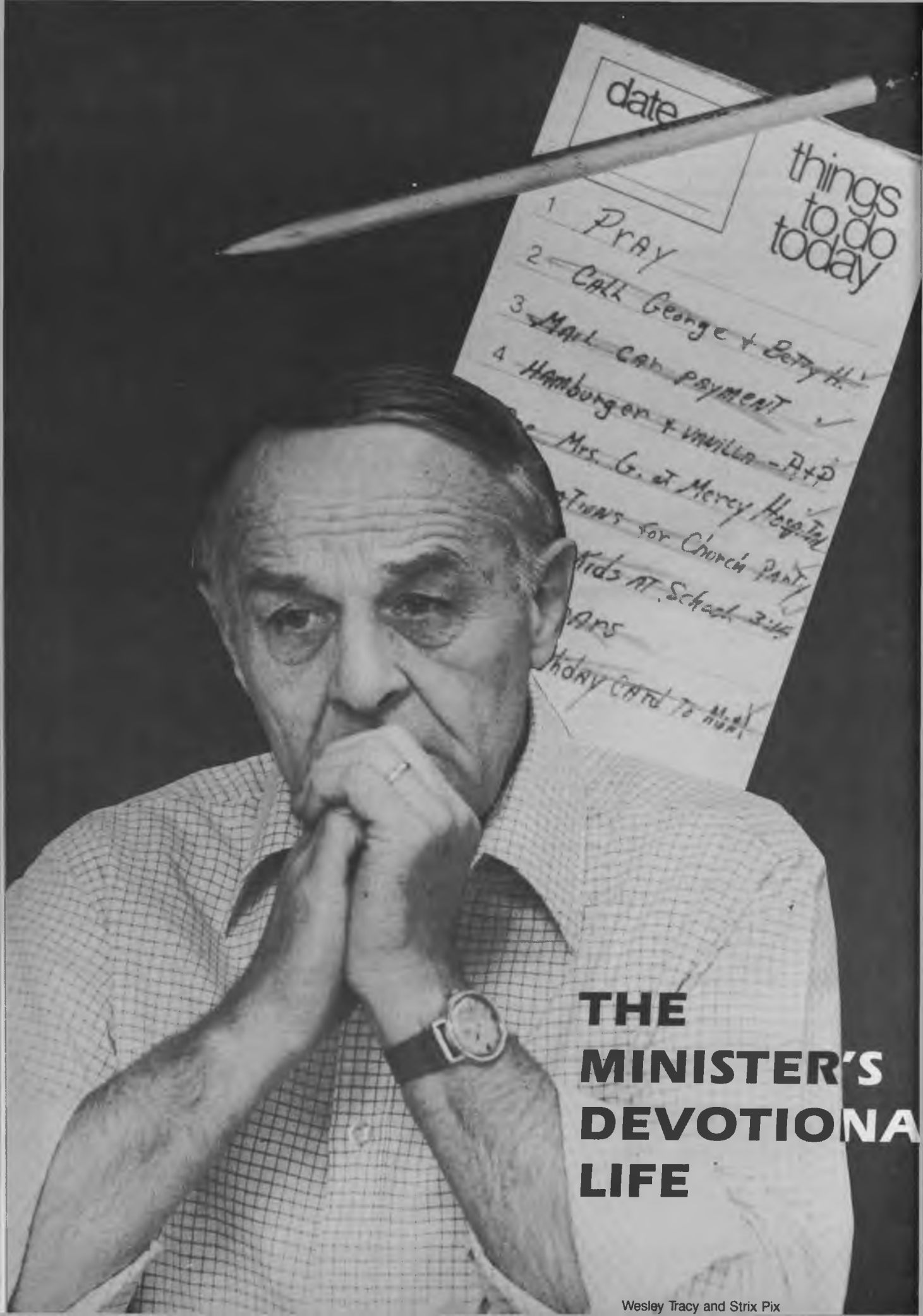
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Authors should address all articles and correspondence to Editor, *Preacher's Magazine*, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes should accompany all manuscripts.

PREACHER'S MAGAZINE (ISSN 0162-3982) is published quarterly by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2923 Troost Ave., Kansas City, MO 64109. Editorial offices at 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131. Address all correspondence concerning subscriptions to your denominational publishing house. Copyright 1988 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City. POSTMASTER: Please send change of address to the Preacher's Magazine, P.O. Box 419527, Kansas City, MO 64141. Subscription price: \$3.50 per year. Second-class postage paid in Kansas City, Mo. Litho in U.S.A.



date

things
to do
today

- 1 Pray
- 2 Call George + Betty H.
- 3 Mail car payment ✓
- 4 Hamburger + vanilla - A+P
- Mrs. G. at Mercy Hospital
- Kids at Church Party
- Kids at School 3:45
- Holiday card to Aunt

THE MINISTER'S DEVOTIONAL LIFE

CREATIVITY AND VARIETY IN DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES

by Morris A. Weigelt
Professor of New Testament
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A sign at the annual flower and garden show captured my attention: "\$25.00 worth of seeds will produce \$250 of produce." It was an intriguing poster, making great promises. But from the deep well of memories I quickly recalled all of the cultivation and nurture—and especially hoeing of weeds—necessary to move from the seeds to the harvest.

Nurturing spiritual development is an equally demanding task, calling for discipline and creativity. There is no shortcut to valuable results in spiritual formation.

The rhythms of the seasons of our spiritual lives are not always visible to us. We struggle and search, for there is a deep restlessness within, calling for newness and variety. One wise man remarked: "We grow steadily by jerks!"

Understanding the reasons for the necessity of such freshness and variety helps us design the necessary strategies to achieve a satisfying variety. Recognizing the valuable and valid methodologies for this specific season of our lives helps us satisfy that deep longing.

The solution is often found in unexpected places and manners. An anecdote from rabbinic Judaism illustrates this point well: A poor man was so weary of life as he knew it that he left his village to search for the perfect city. At the end of the first day of travel he sat down in a forest to eat his crust of bread, say his prayers, and prepare to sleep. Before retiring, he placed his shoes in the path to point the direction of his travel for the next day.

During the night a practical joker came along and reversed the direction of his shoes. In the morning the poor man said his prayers, ate his breakfast, put on his shoes, and continued his search. Toward evening he caught sight of the magical city. As he approached, it looked curiously familiar. He even found a street much like his own and a familiar-looking house. He knocked on the door, greeted the family there—and lived happily ever after in the magical city of his dreams.

Our spiritual lives are rooted in this world. There is no escape to utopia (the Greek word means "no place"). We must learn to live wisely and creatively on our own street. We must learn to nourish our spiritual lives in the settings in which we find ourselves.

THE CASE FOR VARIETY

Annie Dillard, in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, underlines the marvelously interesting variety God has designed into nature. She highlights the "pizzazz" of the Creator by reference to Jacob's cattle, which were speckled, spotted, and ring-streaked, according to the Genesis account.

The infinite variety in the world of nature is equally visible in human beings. A dazzling variety of personalities and preferences is only too evident. To assume that such a widely varied species would nurture spiritual life identically is absurd. The nurturing of the spiritual life calls for variety and creativity as well.

Some persons use their left brain in their thinking process. Psychologists point out that left-brain thinkers are best at analytical, logical thinking with emphasis upon cause and effect. Such persons excel in math, grammar, and engineering. Other persons prefer right-brain activities. They excel in the intuitive, the imaginative, and the creative.

The difference between these types of persons is especially visible in the world of music. The left-brained person plays an instrument with organized precision and skill. The right-brained person plays with innovation and creativity unavailable to the left-brained person.

Persons who prefer the right-brained approach will design activities of spiritual formation quite differently from those who prefer the opposite approach.

A number of other elements in our personalities contribute to this dynamic variety. Extroverts love the give-and-take of the crowd, while introverts thrive in qui-

etness and solitude. Their methods of nurturing a spiritual life-style reflect these preferences.

Some persons prefer harmony and happiness within their group settings to the values and rigors of analytical thinking. They would be willing to sacrifice logical validity in order to preserve harmony. On the other hand, the person who prefers the values of logic is often insensitive to the feelings of others in his environment. Patterns of spiritual development are clearly affected by these preferences.

About one-half of the persons in the U.S. prefer a carefully and clearly organized life-style. They are happiest when patterns and programs are highly predictable. In fact, they are upset when the standard operating procedure is violated.

The other half prefers flexibility and spontaneity. They feel trapped as soon as their surroundings become predictable. They are oblivious to deadlines and are always waiting for additional evidence before making decisions.

It is evident that the devotional pattern that pleases the highly organized person will produce crippling stagnation for the spontaneous person. The open-ended person's constant search for variety and creativity drives the more organized persons out of their minds.

The dazzling array of personality patterns is further extended by the differing stages of religious development. James W. Fowler has aided understanding at this point in a number of books, including *Stages of Faith*. One especially intriguing aspect of these stages is the type of imagery that is valuable to each stage.

In the earliest stage the child simply draws imagery and understanding from significant others. An example is the three-year-old who told me: "Sometimes my heart laughs." The second stage is the narrative stage in which stories provide a context to understand life. The third stage is dominated by drawing upon the imagery popular in one's peer group. The fourth stage is characterized by developing a conceptual system by which to evaluate the wide variety of faith-imageries we find in our environment.

Later stages recombine imagery and intellectual analysis into satisfying syntheses. The final stage is that in which the person is so convinced of a grasp of ultimate reality that he is willing to give his life that others may share in it.



Morris A. Weigelt

The patterns for nurturing and cultivating spiritual growth will be powerfully affected by the stage in which a person finds himself.

These combinations are further complicated by the chronological stages of our lives. Theorists have identified a number of major transition periods in our lives. There is the transition from adolescence to adulthood, which creates much stress for all of us. The transition of mid-life crisis has received great attention in the last decade. The transition into retirement is another period of significant proportions. A variety of tragedies and crises impinges upon our lives as well. The special care and concern for spiritual development in the midst of such traumas calls for creativity and flexibility.

Although there are broad principles and patterns that govern spiritual growth and development, it is clearly evident that one pattern will not be sufficient for the whole range of personalities, backgrounds, and transitions that make up our lives.

The old 80/20 formula applies in this field as well. Eighty percent of the materials in guidance of a personal devotional life-style are written by only 20 percent of the personality patterns. That means that the majority of us are limping along, trying to use an ill-fitting pattern—much like David trying to fight Goliath in Saul's armor.

The process of devising strategies in devotional exercises will need to consider personality patterns, stages of faith, transitions in life, and peculiar needs created by crises and/or tragedies.

THE NATURE OF VARIETY

The search for a creative variety must always be done in light of the overarching goal: to nurture our growing relationship with God. The most important question in selecting any aspect of devotional life-style is: How will this procedure contribute to my relationship with God? The second question is: How long can an involvement in this pattern reasonably indicate the value and contribution to my life with God?

It is always easier to prescribe a pattern for someone else than to carry out a pattern for yourself. Despite this obstacle, let me make some suggestions in several major areas from which you may select those that are most valuable to you.

There are several major elements in any devotional life-style that are potentially significant. I would like to explore each of these in light of the variety in personality and life situation.

Since the primary purpose of a devotional life-style is to nurture and develop a relationship with God, the Word of God must play a crucial role. Scripture is the basic food for every growing Christian. The methods of assimilation vary widely.

A. Bible Reading

The organized person who gathers information through the five senses will usually prefer a carefully organized pattern of Scripture reading. He will observe all elements of the text with great care. It is easy to imagine himself as an observer or participant in the parable or event about which he is reading. The lessons of the text are carefully recorded for implementation. Since this person loves order, he will usually follow some

prescribed pattern of Scripture reading. The patterns of the liturgical year or an organized devotional magazine provide excellent guidance.

An example of Bible study for this personality type is to read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). After carefully observing details, imagine yourself as each of the persons who avoided contact with the one who had been robbed. Then imagine yourself as the Good Samaritan and participate in aiding the person. Now move from the lesson to some contemporary situation in which you can be a Good Samaritan to someone.

Persons who gather information with their senses, but prefer to avoid organization and boring traps, read Scripture differently. The need for variety and spontaneity calls for changes in pattern. The surprises in the midst of the process are the food that nurtures their lives.

An example of this approach would be to read one of the nature psalms, such as 8 or 24, and then go for a meditative walk as the features of the Word enrich your contemplation of nature. Or combine the reading of Scripture with observation of a beautiful sunrise or sunset. Use your sensitivity to capture the beauty and joy in meditation. Often a musical setting for Bible reading is productive.

Persons who gather information by intuitive processes and specialize in analytical thinking approach the Bible differently again. Bible study is carefully designed with a goal in mind. Questions such as what? why? how? who? where? when? with what? become tools to organize the meditation and study. Normally the period of Bible study will end with an analytical resolution and a plan for putting the resolution into action.

An example of this type of Bible study would be to carefully consider Phil. 2:4-8 with attention to the concept of the mind of Christ. The context would be used to identify the precise nature of this "mind." Then the plans to put the ideas into practice would be duly recorded.

Persons who normally gather information intuitively and specialize in group integration and harmony usually study in ways that particularly nourish personal relationships—with God and with others. It is not unusual for them to read a passage such as Isa. 43:1-5 and replace the names of "Jacob" and "Israel" with their own names. They carefully imagine the Lord speaking directly to them in the words spoken to Israel centuries ago: "I have called you by name, you are mine" (v. 1, RSV).

Each of these patterns is further colored by other elements in the personality, stages of faith, and specific crises of the transition in life through which the individual is going.

B. Prayer Patterns

Prayer patterns vary as widely as methods of Bible reading. Some persons pray highly organized and traditional types of prayers. My father belonged to this category. It was possible for us to predict the order of his prayer topics and the precise words that he would use in presenting those topics to the Lord. He normally prayed at the same time each day and for approximately equal lengths of time. Systematically consulted prayer lists are useful for such persons. One family of my acquaintance

carefully organizes daily prayers around the Christmas cards they received the year before and pray for a certain number of these friends each day.

Others pray in much less organized fashion. They are more likely to send prayers Godward at different moments in the day. When the Holy Spirit brings a particular person to mind, they stop and pray for that person at that moment. Since they live a free-flowing life pattern, their prayers are normally celebration and praise as they sense the Holy Spirit's guidance in their lives. Routine is deadly for them, and they will probably use a multitude of prayer patterns in a more or less organized sequence.

The analytical-intuitive type normally enters a relationship with God through some captivating concept. His prayer life will often consist of carefully constructed—and perhaps even written—prayers. Even his prayer life will be goal-oriented and eventuate in plans to accomplish that to which he feels called in the midst of his communion with the Lord. Rational and precise and logical are the adjectives that describe prayer for him. He is most likely to find deep joy in praying prayers written by others, for ideas propel him Godward.

The persons who thrive on relationship will pray in metaphorical language and enjoy the use of symbols. The great inspirations of these moments in relationship will motivate them for days. For them, prayer must be authentic and meaningful. When prayer loses authenticity, they find it difficult to pray for duty's sake alone.

While all persons can benefit from praying in small groups, the last group mentioned is most likely to participate in such a program. They gather strength and joy and insight and inspiration from other members of their group.

It has been my personal privilege to spend at least an hour in prayer with a small group each week for the past 20 years. How grateful I am for the gifts these differing personalities have extended to me as we prayed together!

C. Devotional Aids

One of the benefits of this period in history is the wide range of devotional aids available. Christian bookstores provide a veritable feast of choices. The Holy Spirit has a wonderful way of bringing the most useful devotional aid to our attention at the precise time it is most needed. Keep eyes and ears open for the type of devotional aid that is most suited to your particular need at this specific juncture in your life.

Many persons have discovered that the most significant devotional aid—apart from the Bible itself—is the spiritual journal. So many of the elements of spiritual development are so intangible that they often evade us. The journal provides a means to gather those elements into one cohesive and visible whole.

Each person has a unique life history—a unique combination of patterns, events, background, and interaction with persons and with God. To gather the data of that life history in a journal enables the journal-keeper to make discoveries that would otherwise be impossible.

Identification of life's turning points is crucial to designing a strategy for the future. Our lives turn on such fragile hinges that we are often unaware of the signifi-

cance of those moments. A clear understanding of heritage and history provides direction in setting goals for the future and making specific decisions at intermediate junctures.

Many persons use journals to record important insights gained in devotional study of Scripture and the reading of devotional aids. Others capture the creative ideas that flow in the midst of their devotional period. Some record conversations with the Lord over various problems and directions in their lives. To find and record moments of wisdom and insight is one of the wisest methods of conservation of spiritual direction.

The overall goal of keeping a spiritual journal is to gather the complex data of life en route to identifying the patterns of our spiritual lives. When the journal exposes destructive patterns and habits, the first step to the solution has already been accomplished. When constructive habits become visible, it is easy to reinforce and extend those patterns in order to enhance further spiritual growth.

The process of identifying patterns requires usually an extended period of reflection and reading. One spiritual friend takes several days in solitude each summer to read everything recorded in the journal in the previous 15 to 18 months. His goal is to identify patterns and clarify directions for the future. These days have become some of his most productive.

The methodology of journal keeping is incidental to the overall purpose of the search for patterns. One writer suggests that it is impossible to keep a journal improperly if it serves a useful function in your developing spiritual life. The methodology may change as a factor of your personality preferences, your stage of religious development, and your chronological stage of life.

One word of caution to those who choose to use a journal as a mirror of their ongoing personal development. The journal must always be a servant. Once it moves into the position of a master, exacting a daily duty, it becomes difficult to maintain the process and gain the full value from doing it.

One other devotional aid that deserves mention is the hymnal. There is a wonderful variety of useful materials in hymnals from any era. Incorporate music into your personal devotional life-style to provide creativity and variety. The use of a musical instrument to aid devotional exercise has great potential.

To nurture or not to nurture a growing relationship with God—that is the question! Our relationship with God is such an important and strategic element in our total life pattern that it calls for careful nourishment. Creativity and variety will enhance that process.

In the first chapter of John, the disciples of John the Baptist are intrigued with the patterns of Jesus' life. They ask Him, "Rabbi . . . where are you staying?" (v. 38).

"Come," He replied, "and you will see" (v. 39, both NIV). Jesus invited them to share His space, to see where and how He lived.

To develop our spiritual lives is to share the life of God. To participate in that relationship is transforming and motivating. Spend your best effort in nourishing a quality relationship with Him.

A D E V O T I O N A L Q U E S T

by Frank G. Carver

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Frank G. Carver

In the summer of 1980, while on a 7,000-mile drive, I became aware of an intense anger emerging from somewhere deep within me. I did not like what was happening to me; I didn't like the kind of person I was becoming. My first thought was to seek another environment for my ministry. But I knew that wherever I went, I would still have to deal with me. Change in itself would solve nothing.

So instead, I determined to work on the real problem—me, right where I was. Through the graciousness of God, the necessary task was clear—to redig the wells of my personal devotional life. The first decisive step was taken on that drive. In Port Huron, Mich., I purchased Richard Foster's newly published *Celebration of Discipline*. With my interest awakened in the spiritual disciplines, Bernhard Christensen's *Spiritual Classics from Augustine to Bonhoeffer* next caught my attention. I purchased it, and a journey into the spiritual classics began.

From the spiritual search that followed, two consequences stand out. First, I discovered Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection. His book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, had long been on my shelf, but it had never demanded to be read before. Nicholas Herman (1611-91), the lay brother known as Brother Lawrence, had joined the barefooted Carmelites past middle life after a military career. Assigned to the kitchen, he found his tasks distasteful at first. But he accepted them as God's will and gradually gained the insight that God is present even in the most commonplace of circumstances. The rest of his life was spent among the pots and kettles as "a servant of the servants of God." In that humble setting, he so "steadily grew in favor with God and man" that he became sought out for his spiritual counsel by many, including prominent churchmen.

Brother Lawrence, an elderly uneducated monk in a monastery kitchen in medieval France, convinced me as never before that the strength of my devotional discipline is the strength of my ministry.

The second consequence came as I was working through Kenneth Leech's *True Prayer*. I began to sense the need of a "rule for devotional discipline" to follow, one tailored for me. So I began to construct "Rule of Devotion" that consisted of an outline with each point illustrated by a quotation from Scripture or some classical Christian writer. My "Rule" has been a consistent part of my devotional experience to this day. As I share it, rather than going through it point by point with exposition and exhortation—this would necessarily demand confessions of frustration and weakness—I simply present it in its latest form for the Spirit to illumine as He wills.

A RULE OF DEVOTION

INTRODUCTION: Find a regular time and place of solitude.

"The sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room" (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*).¹

"Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life. Solitude begins with a time and place for God, and Him alone. If we really believe not only

that God exists but also that He is actively present in our lives—healing, teaching, and guiding—we need to set aside a time and space to give Him our undivided attention" (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Making All Things New*).²

I. FROM THE WORLD TO THE WORD

1. Relax in the realization of God's presence, one who is "more intimate to us than we are to ourselves" . . . "and from us you never depart, yet we with difficulty return to you" (Augustine, *Confessions*).
A psalm for the week read daily or a psalm for each day
2. Surrender to God and to His will for you this day: "The first movement in all prayer, together with faith in His presence, ought to be the *desire* to know His will and to abandon oneself entirely to all His dispositions and intentions for us" (Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*).
3. Apply the mind to the witness of Scripture and to other testimony of God: Luther's second of five suggestions for the quiet hour was a "thorough digestion of a scriptural or other passage of testimony," for "the Word of God speaks in, with, and under the words of the Bible" (John W. Doberstein, *The Minister's Prayer Book*).

II. FROM THE MIND TO THE HEART

1. Meditate on the truth of God as illuminated to your mind by the Holy Spirit:
"O how I love Thy law!
It is my meditation all the day. . . .
I have more insight than all my teachers,
For Thy testimonies are my meditation."
(Ps. 119:97, 99, NASB;
cf. Pss. 1:2; 19:14)
2. Reflect silently or in writing on your life, your attitudes and feelings:
"Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way."
(Ps. 139:23-24, NASB)
3. Contemplate God:
Contemplation is "the adoration and love of God above all, for his own sake, because he is God" (Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer*).
"Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42, NASB).

The prayer of the heart: "To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all seeing, within you" (Theophan the Recluse, a Russian mystic).

III. FROM THE INWARD TO THE OUTWARD JOURNEY

1. Receive the Spirit of Christ:
"How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke 11:13, NASB).

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THE PASTOR AT PRAYER

by Earl G. Lee
Wrightwood, Calif.

It's one thing to look over one's shoulder, quite another thing to look into one's heart! Had I taken time to think too much about the request to write this paper, I might have been tempted to respond, "No, please ask someone else." But upon reflection I realize it is one of the most important of the many duties and privileges a pastor has. Luke's Gospel gives us a vivid picture of our Master at prayer, and surely a servant is not above his master. It is the will as well as the deed that counts.

The pastor at prayer is first the *person* at prayer. Henri Nouwen says, "The great illusion of leadership is to think that a man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there." To be the pastor I need to be, I must first have a strong and regular devotional life. As E. Stanley Jones says, "Our growth is made or marred at the place of the devotional." With all the demands on the ministry, none can equal the need for the pastor to lead his people into a vibrant, meaningful prayer life, that his people may "know Jesus more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly," as Richard of Chichester puts it so graphically. Indeed, prayer is "the optic nerve of the soul."

I shall not try "to move outside myself," as the ballplayers say, as I share some thoughts with you about this pastor who has been at prayer for years and years. It has taken many of those years, and experiences, and searching for me to come to what I feel is a comfortable definition of prayer. As a young person, I went through all the agonizing aspects of what it meant to be a praying person. As Christians we come across the word "prayer" all the time. But to breathe life and warmth into that word requires plenty of "knee-work." I was influenced by speakers, books, and the example of godly people, but I had an uneasy feeling that I did not measure up very well. So if you get the idea I was in an inner uneasy struggle off and on through the years, you are quite right. Indeed, in many ways prayer is still a mysterious force, but the mightiest force in the world.

I have always felt the goal to enter into a life of prayer or even a way of prayer referred to as "practicing the presence of God" by Brother Lawrence. We are told in Eph. 6:18 to be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Jesus said, "When ye pray,

say, . . ." (Luke 11:2, italics added), and proceeded to give us a fine pattern for prayer. A follower of Christ was no doubt a praying person. But inside this ongoing relationship I struggled a bit with the idea of the when and how and where of a specific prayer time.

I have always tried to make prayer a goal in my life. In college I sought to be faithful in prayer. I remember with joy God's answers to many prayers in India where, as a rookie missionary struggling with the language, I felt I'd never climb the mountains of difficulties. His guidance in leading us there came through times of prayer. Early in the mornings I would walk the fields with our German shepherd, Flash. As I watched the sunrise over the fields, my heart was atune to prayer. I had seen a mighty revival come to India through the avenue of prayer and fasting. My children had been healed through prayer. My age in India was ripe for learning—28 to 42, and the language study was a most humbling experience. I also felt inadequate to be chairman of the mission my second term, and God used many experiences to keep me on my knees in supplication and prayer.

I was influenced by E. Stanley Jones and his writings, and I can see why he has been called Mr. India, especially in his book *The Christ of the Indian Road*. Mr. Jones wrote, "In the pure, strong hours of the morning when the soul of the day is at its best, lean upon the windowsill of God, look into His face and get the orders



Earl G. Lee

for the day. Then go out into the day with the sense of His hand on your shoulder and not a chip." Too often we start the day with a chip on our shoulder instead of a peaceful spirit. I also feel that morning is the prime time for prayer if at all possible. I like what Eugene Peterson said in *Leadership* magazine, that we step into the work for each day that God has been preparing for us through the night! In the morning "God calls us to enjoy and share and develop the work He initiated." Now that is an exciting concept!

Fellowship with God became meaningful to me in my earlier years. They were difficult years; I seemed to be always trudging up spiritual and emotional hills, often exhausted without and within. The moments and hours of my "quiet time" kept me from burnout long before the term became popular. God reminds us that "even the youths shall faint and be weary . . . but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. 40:30-31). How many times I realized the truth of that promise.

I should also add that during my childhood and early years I was deeply influenced by my local church, a praying church, in New Bedford, Mass. Our prayer meetings were alive and effective. I made them such a priority in my life that I gave up what my coach called a promising basketball career because practice came on prayer meeting nights. This decision put some fibre into my spirit and helped my personal discipline. Quite often prayer needs to "be a discipline before it becomes a joy."

A turning point in my prayer journey came while I was pastoring in Nampa, Idaho. One of the fine laymen in our church, Bob Moore, was testifying. He is one of those "quiet people," steady and sincere. There was nothing too earthshaking in his words, but for me that night they were about a 6.00 on the Richter scale! He began, "This morning as I was having my appointment with my Lord . . ." Then he proceeded to give his testimony. My attention was caught by his opening statement, and when he had finished, I asked him what he meant by the statement "appointment with God." Then, in characteristic humble response, he said, "Well, I have my own time to rise before the rest of the household is up. I plug in my coffeepot and go to the special corner in my home where I meet the Lord. With my coffee and my Bible and a good devotional book, I keep my appointment with the Lord. It is as real to me as any other appointment I have during the rest of the day. As I read my Bible, the Lord speaks to me, and I talk with Him. After our time together, we say to each other, 'All right, let's go into the day together!' And that's just what we do. I make no demands on Him as to feelings or answers; we have simply met, exchanged thoughts, and accepted each other's presence. My being there seems so small compared to the glory of His presence, which lingers through my day."

There is no way for me to express to you what this testimony meant to me in 1960. It made sense. The idea of a regular *place* is as important as a *time*. I like Ps. 91:1: "He that dwelleth in the secret *place* of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (italics added). What a definition of prayer!

Prayer is a resting in a loving God. The pastor at prayer needs to learn to be relaxed. My Master knows me personally and totally. He knows all my thoughts and

every prayer I wish to make. But I need to become dependent on Him and not lean on my own understanding. By prayer, I admit my own helplessness! He calls me, mystified as I am by this phenomenon of our need to pray, and He teaches me lessons in prayer until they become warp and woof of my inner being. My Nampa friend, humble man that he is, opened to me a new plateau of freedom in the life of prayer. As I have shared this thought with fellow pastors, they have also felt a fresh illumination in their own prayer journeys.

I would urge the younger pastor, the one groping for a satisfying, yet developing, prayer pattern, to be sure the chosen path is one that fits you, that makes you a "real" person in prayer. All of this will take time, even years. Yet the personal satisfaction, the "at homeness" in prayer, will come to you. Prayer will be the breath of your soul, whether alone in your quiet time, "where two or three are gathered in [Jesus'] name" (Matt. 18:20), or as you lift the congregation in pastoral prayer.

As of now we have talked of the *person* at prayer. The result must be the *pastor* at prayer. Only as the person at prayer feels comfortable can he develop as the pastor at prayer. Our people must have the security of feeling

"Prayer will become the breath of your soul."

that they have a *praying pastor*. This is not measured in volume, in minutes or hours, or in special meetings. It must be a spirit, an attitude. Our people must be comfortable with us in prayer. Our time of prayer with them must not be that of the "professional" who has just the right tone and personal know-how. It must be as one seeker with another. A memory I cherish was to be in prayer with Dr. Paul S. Rees when we were together in India. I was a young rookie missionary. We were in a mid-India spiritual life gathering, and we prayed together. I was not participating with a professional in prayer, but with a fellow seeker, yearning for God's will and presence. Together, we were in the spirit of thanksgiving as well. The pastor at prayer must begin with the person, namely the pastor, within himself, coming into and developing a way of life in prayer or a way of prayer in life. They are both heading in the same direction: the glory of God.

I am emerging from the *pastor* at prayer to the *unity* of prayer with others that fits into the promise freely given to all of us: "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:19-20, NIV).

One of the greatest privileges of the pastor, if not the greatest, is to be a part of others' lives in their journeys of prayer. Not as a teacher or as a professional, but as one of Christ's disciples in the school of prayer. What a glorious joy to see others in one's congregation deepening, becoming intimate with Jesus at the place of

prayer as a result of the pastor's being at prayer himself. In our teaching responsibilities we may be successful in developing churchmen, those who know how to operate the church, namely, committees, calling and teaching through the varied and interesting facets of church life. All of this we may see happen and feel a certain sense of satisfaction. Yet the highest joy must be that of being in partnership with those in our congregation as they develop and grow in the ways of prayer.

As we become partners in prayer, we experience what Ralph Sockman describes as "exposing the shores of our mind to the incoming tide of God." This is joyous adventure! The joy of praying with others, two or three gathering together in His name, became a vivid experience to me during our revival in India. I recall walking across the compound in the early predawn hours and hearing the murmur of prayer coming from the Dittmore Memorial Chapel. I would slip into the chapel and kneel beside those men talking to God in dim lantern light. Together we prayed. It was a special joy for me to join them in their own language of Marathi. Those times in prayer made the struggles to learn their language most worthwhile. What a heart-to-heart time of sharing it was.

It is the privilege and solemn duty of a pastor to call his people to prayer. In Nampa, Idaho, I again used the pattern we had in India of one full night of prayer. The people responded beautifully to this "heating system" of the church. I feel God's patterns fit the various situations comfortably. There need not be strained effort. Our people came all through the night, and the church was hal- lowed by their prayers. I shall never forget Dr. Fitz and his fervent prayers literally going around the world. It was a deep joy to hear my people pray.

I did not pressure the people but merely opened up the opportunity for those who cared to participate. During those nights of prayer I found it a personal joy to be at the place of prayer for several hours each time, yet it was not an obligation. I felt that I was a "pastor at prayer"—and even more than this, a pastor at prayer with my people as we developed together in this way of life, the school of prayer. The personal satisfaction from developing with my people at the place of prayer far exceeded that which derived from any committee meetings, seminars, or discussion groups (as excellent as these may be) in which I took part and even directed.

Pasadena was another chapter in "The Pastor at Prayer." Of course, as we came to a new people, it was a priority that my personal development continue at the place of prayer. Soon it was evident that the all-night of

prayer, a blessing in Idaho, did not fit the large-city situation of Pasadena. It was placed aside, forgotten, and my heart was open to the Holy Spirit's whisper. He is always kind, always directive, always personal. The whisper came, and the outcome was the beginning of what was called Early Christians each Friday morning at 6 to 7 A.M. We began with a simple, fluid form—scripture, prayer requests, and groups praying around each table, ending with public testimonies of praise, a story in itself. This method did fit us, mainly because it fit me. As pastor, if I find myself uncomfortable with an idea, my people will soon discern this, and little success will be realized. On the other hand, as I feel challenged at the place of prayer, and am personally and spiritually feeling growth and developing at the place of prayer, this of necessity does influence those with me.

The *pastor* at prayer becomes the *pastor and people* at prayer. Here we have one of the highest places of excitement that I can recall in all my 47 years of pastoral ministry. I wanted to use the word *fun* in place of *excitement*, so let me do so now. It is, rightly stated, *fun* to develop together in the spiritual exercise of prayer.

One other matter must be stated that may to some seem unnecessary. The pastor at prayer developing into the pastor and the people at prayer must never be allowed to be a personal checkup time as to who is "spir- itual" in the church and who is not. There is a real tempta- tion here to judge, and this thought must be truly cremated. In more detail, the temptation to check out the leaders of the church as to whether they are person- ally with the pastor at this specific time (Early Christians or any other such exercise) must be immediately elimi- nated. The pastor at prayer with his people must be free from all pharisaical "bookkeeping," must be lifted to high places in Christ Jesus. Only then will the Holy Spirit be at home in such a gathering. For we do remember the promise in Matt. 18:20—"in my name"—which says to me Jesus must feel at home in such a gathering. This atmosphere of a community of prayers brings an atmo- sphere of expectancy into Sunday services that is inde- scribable.

Wouldn't it be good if we could talk together on this subject? "The Pastor at Prayer" is more than an article in a preacher's magazine. It is much more than a period of time or an exercise that takes place in some room, as "upper" as that room might be. "The Pastor at Prayer" is a way of life that never ceases to bring forth dividends: new vistas, new creative ideas, and new blessings. This is true even after the blessed word *pastor* has to be offi- cially dropped and the all-inclusive *person* takes over. ✠

Pontius' Puddle



PRIVATE DEVOTIONS

by Donald Macleod
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No one can go on in the Christian ministry today without an ordered, disciplined prayer life. If a person has an iron nerve and guts and is able to survive the strain of work without a prayer life, that person may pat himself on the back, but inwardly that person is a fraud.

We have been talking about worship in its public dimensions, but what about the time when we are alone? What do we do—daydream or go to sleep? How worshipful are the prayers we offer in the silence of our room? When we thank God for His gifts of nature and of grace, when we confess in the silence our moral defeats and cry out for grace to supply our needs; when we intercede with God for other persons: Do these things seem real?

This kind of prayer and/or devotion must be taken seriously, especially in view of the constant drain upon our inner spiritual resources by the age and circumstances in which we move and live.

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury in the late 1930s and early 1940s, gave the Gifford Lectures in 1934, which he titled "Nature, Man, and God." In it he made reference to the strange title of a book he once ran across, *ODTAA*.^{*} Now today we are accustomed to all kinds of anagrams that encapsulate words and phrases (UN, AMA, CONRAIL, JAW, MTA, etc.). The word *ODTAA* was supposed to describe the character of our times. Life in our time is a succession of things; we are constantly going and coming, rushing from one thing to another. We are caught up in *ODTAA*. But more than this: *ODTAA* is a word of judgment; it implies the meaninglessness of it all. Read the morning papers and the press seems to make almost believable the cynical remark that Earth must have been set apart as the lunatic asylum of the solar system. Remember the lines in Wordsworth's sonnet:

*The world is too much with us; late and soon;
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers.*

Or as Emerson put it in his day: "Things are in the saddle, and they are riding us."

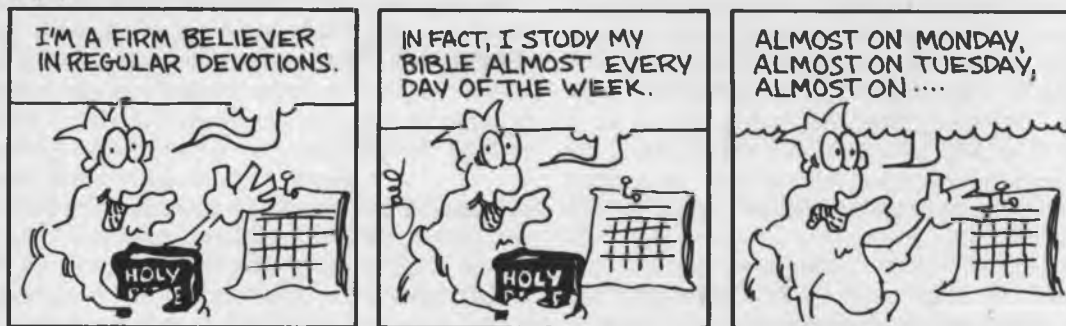
Over against the *ODTAA* of their times, the Psalmist wrote, "Be still, and know that I am God" (46:10). The prophet quoted God's words, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15). Jesus said, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (Mark 6:31).

It amazes you when you engage in pastoral visitation of the homes of your congregation how many hours the TV is on by day and night. This seems to imply we cannot stand our own company. Does it sound too pietistic to say we are in danger seemingly of losing our souls? We need time to renew and nourish and mature our souls; this can be done through times of solitariness. If such is neglected, the human soul takes its revenge upon us. J. S. Bonnell tells somewhere in one of his books of a brilliant man who took his own life and who left behind a letter that read in part: "I have had an exceptionally



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glamorous life, as life goes; and more of my share of affection and appreciation. I have run from wife to wife, from house to house, from country to country, in a ridiculous effort to escape from myself. . . . I did it because I am fed up with inventing devices for getting through 24 hours a day." He was victimized by ODTAA, and the sterility of his soul took its revenge upon him.

If ODTAA is the unpromising side of our contemporary life, there is a sign of promise: the number of books on prayer and the devotional life and the increasing number of books and pamphlets of prayers published today. The Methodist devotional booklet *The Upper Room* has a distribution of many millions. Some may say this is a reaction to our era of activism, and there may be some truth in it; but it would be too bad if that is all: our devotion and activism belong together, and a living religion should have a proper balance of emphasis. Probably it is due more to our common feeling that currently in this 20th-century world we appear impotent to save ourselves and our world, and we now find ourselves stumbling up "the altar stairs that slope through darkness up to God."

Prayer and devotion are a way of life, and the practice of them must be taken seriously. No one can plunge *de novo* into an act of prayer and/or devotion or begin a devotional period precipitously. The most serious and necessary step to take at the outset is a short span of recollection. Simply sit down alone and spend three to five minutes in thought, somehow changing gears from the busyness and systems and schedules of secular or professional or academic life. Moreover, there will be times when your mood or attitude is not conducive to prayer (you just had an argument with someone; some reverse has teed you off; a letter from your fiancée intimates she no longer thinks you are Sir Galahad; etc., etc.). Have on hand a book of good prayers and read a few, and it is amazing how the situation that was so badly out of focus begins to take on a fresh perspective. Now there are many modes and methods of private devotion, but the devotional systems of the great souls of the Middle Ages provide us here with some guidelines that are adaptable to our evangelical tradition today.

Let us look at what we may call the threefold approach to God:

1. The purgative way: self-examination and confession
2. The illuminative way: meditation
3. The unitive way: contemplation

These three steps are not separate but unfold in a sequence. For this, therefore, a time must be set aside and regularly and faithfully kept. If not, you need not expect fruitful or positive results. The quiet place must be such that your solitude remains undisturbed.

I. Purgative Stage or Self-examination and Confession

Some may say, this leads to morbid introversion. Certainly undue introversion is dangerous and can lead to unhealthy

living. But undue extroversion is equally dangerous. Sane balance is needed. Self-examination can end in a sick soul, and so can the utter lack of it. We must face up to the facts of our spiritual and moral health, but there is a time limit to the duration one spends doing so. If you give one half hour a day to private prayer, then self-examination should not be more than 10 minutes. And it should be confined to one matter.

However, the period, though brief, should not be spent wool-gathering. To be fruitful, it must be systematic. In all probability you will come to it without anything in mind. Take, therefore, a passage of Scripture that deals with some aspect of Christian character and examine yourself in the light of it; for example, Rom. 12:9—"Let love be genuine" (RSV). This raises questions: Do I really love Christ as much as I profess? Am I sincere in my affections for so-and-so? Do I have an ulterior motive in what I say? Other such passages: Matthew 5—7; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 6; Ephesians 4; Philippians 2; and so on. When this self-examination is ended, then you must present your findings to God. This is confession. Put it in God's hands and ask for mercy. Then determine that during the day you will do some definite act or thing bearing upon the new consciousness of your nature this period has shown you—an apology, an act of restitution, a kindness to a friend in need. Whatever it is, do not let the day end with it left undone.

II. The Illuminative Stage or Meditation

Self-examination is the business of your conscience; meditation is the business of your mind. And it must be as systematic as the former; yet no rigid rules! To begin: you must have a subject—a doctrine, a parable, a poem, a passage from one of the classic books of meditations, or best of all, the Bible. Pick it up and begin reading; soon a verse or line will arrest you and say something to you. Take this as your subject. What does it mean? Does it touch my life, and where? What can I do about it now? Here your imagination, your intellect, and your will are involved. You will feel its demand and urgency. You will ask God's help to make this truth become an active reality in your life.

Here your imagination, your intellect, and your will are involved.

Imagination: Try to shift the drama of the Scripture context to your own life. This can be done with a parable. Or a metaphor: Paul refers to hope as the "anchor of the soul." Ask yourself if you are a spiritual drifter in need of an anchor of some sort.

Intellect: Bring your seminary training into play.

—What does this or that word actually mean?

—What are the grounds for this particular statement? Does it say something rational to me and my situation?

Will: Here's the rub: what is the meaning of this for me here and now? Action is the word. The issue is clear: what you

should do—but you must resolve to do it. When, where, and how.

Suppose: Phil. 3:13-14: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Imagination: Paul sees himself as a runner on a racetrack, never looking back, every muscle into action, and trying to win the greatest prize in the world. A vision of the Christian life and its urgency.

Intellect: Just what does it mean? What must one forget and why? What are the things before? But chiefly: What does this say re the nature of the Christian life? I must not live in the past, but TODAY for the sake of the future. The Christian life is not something you achieve through a part-time investment of time or resources; it = the greatest enterprise in the world and calls for the investment of all your powers.

Will: If the Christian life is this: then I must put into it more than I have been doing and plead with God for grace to see it through.

III. Unitive Stage or Contemplation

This is a difficult stage. Psalmist: "Be still, and know that I am God" (46:10). Nothing is activated here; you now let things

happen to you. You must realize that quality, not quantity, is the nature of whatever action you project. Danger: wandering thoughts. Empty your mind of everything except God. Be receptive. Simply wait upon God.

What of it? Dividends?

In all likelihood in due time you will feel the impression and impact of two of God's gifts:

Light: Some truth has been clarified; some aspect of God's will for you or Christ's claim upon you will have been revealed. Some tiny illumination has disclosed some hidden aspect of the ways of God.

Grace: What is grace but the outgoing of God to His children in their need! It comes as consolation when you are in sorrow; it comes as healing when you are hurting; it comes as patience when you are all steamed up and want to punch someone in the nose or quit your job; it comes as deliverance when you are tempted to take the wrong road; it comes as peace when you are upset and edgy and abrasive and in a stormy frame of mind.

No one of us can define these gifts. They may come soon, or they may come late. But regardless, you and I know the gladness of having received.

*Perhaps you have seen this book too. If not, you will just have to figure it out for yourself. Editorial policy prevents us from explaining it.

A DEVOTIONAL QUEST

Continued from p. 9

2. Intercede for the church, for others, and for yourself, bringing all into the presence of God:

"So, after many years I can say that I have remained true to my vocation, and at the same time I am completely convinced that one never wastes one's time by praying; there is no more helpful way of helping those we love" (Carlo Carretto, *Letters from the Desert*).

"Our Father, we take our loved ones and all those who need us deeply into our hearts and there we give them completely to thee. May thy peace, the peace which passeth all understanding, rest on them, bringing thy perfect fulfillment to all their needs. Amen" (Glenn Clark, *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes*).

3. Give praise to God:

"It is good to praise the LORD
and make music to your name, O Most High,
to proclaim your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night."

(Ps. 92:1-2, NIV)

CONCLUSION: Go into the activities of the day with confidence in God's constant presence and help:

"Be gracious to me, O Lord,
For to Thee I cry all day long."
(Ps. 86:3, NASB)

"Love and pray. Feel often during the day the need for prayer, and take trouble to pray. Prayer enlarges the heart until it is capable of containing God's gift of himself. Ask and seek, and your heart will grow big

enough to receive him and keep him as your own" (Mother Teresa, *A Gift from God*).

I do not perceive my model as some kind of devotional straitjacket designed to suffocate the soul with a legalistic merit performance. My first motivation for it was that when I do get apart for my quiet hour and am perplexed as to how precisely to spend it, here is a guide that I do have the ability to work through. Here is something *I can do!* The nine points of the Rule are indelibly engraved on my memory; they are a part of me. I use them in two ways. Often I work through all nine points in order. At other moments I practice only those that best suit my time, concerns, and mood. The Rule is not my master but my servant. It is my personal means of grace.

If others are drawn to use the Rule, I do not expect or desire it to be used as is. But if it can provide motivation or function as a starting point for the formation of a devotional rule uniquely constructed by and for each individual, I am grateful. I am convinced of the need for every Christian, particularly ministers, to have a "rule" to follow in their devotional life.

One cannot go on a journey like the one described above without the temptation to feel some sense of satisfaction for progress made. Brother Aelred, guest-master at the Prince of Peace Abbey, once asked me how much time I spend in prayer each day. I did not hesitate to tell him, expecting his approving smile. But his response shook my smug complacency. With a disappointed look, he commented, "Is that all?"

NOTES

1. For a Christian use of the Psalms see Bernhard Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).
2. Quoted from Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 76.

THE INWARD JOURNEY:



H. Armstrong Roberts/Simonsen

THE MINISTER'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH

by Annette Brown
Kerrville, Tex.

I sometimes feel as though the only way to establish and maintain a devotional life is to leave the pastoral ministry." That is one pastor's response to *Leadership* magazine's survey on the devotional life of pastors. Some 500 other pastors agreed that it was next to impossible to maintain an adequate devotional life while working the typical 75-hour week that seems to be demanded these days.¹

The minister's personal spiritual growth does not seem to be a modern problem only. We find those who recognized their inadequacies in this area throughout the history of the church. One such person initially declined the church's highest office because of his understanding of the minister's awesome responsibility. In a "letter" written to express his views, he constantly exhorted his ministers to give attention to their spiritual growth. "The pastor must not be remiss in his care for the inner life by preoccupation with the external," he said.² "Let [the pastor] not, while helping his neighbor, neglect himself; let him not, while lifting up others, fall himself."³ His views were taken so seriously that after Gregory the Great was finally persuaded to accept the office of pope (590-604), they became the standard guidelines for pastors for the next 1,000 years.

"Well," you say, "I have no argument with the need to keep constantly working on my spiritual life. But how

exactly do I go about it?" Most of us have heard how John Wesley was up at 4 A.M. every morning for his personal devotions, but we realize that we'll probably never match his stamina. You may have even tried, like me, but without success and with much subsequent guilt.

While another person's methods are unlikely to fit your needs exactly, allow me to suggest three tools for growth that I, and others with whom I have talked, have found helpful in our continuing struggle for spiritual growth and development.

Many of us have, no doubt, followed Wesley's example of keeping a journal as a means of spiritual growth. Journaling is quite different from keeping a diary because it is used specifically as a means of recording one's spiritual walk with the Lord. For example, a person might dialogue with the Lord about an area where spiritual growth is needed. Another approach might be to record the promises and insights God gives in a particular situation. A powerful experience in my own journaling occurred using this latter method. For months I had been struggling with a personal issue. It was a dark time. Each time I talked with the Lord in my journaling, He seemed to be showing me clearly that the situation would move in a positive direction and reminded me to

keep trusting in Him. This seemed in such stark contrast to the present situation that the constant assurance from the Lord heard, recorded, and reheard as I read what had previously been written in my journal, constituted a source of great encouragement and a necessary basis for trust. The situation continued to become darker, but the Lord continued to give His assurances. One day, the dark became light as the situation reversed and became exactly as the Lord had shown me it would over several months of journaling.

I have found that journaling increases self-awareness—often a painful revelation—as our areas of needed growth and improvement are revealed in God's light. These are recorded and brought to the Lord for grace, for healing, and for strength.

Journaling is valuable in assessing one's present condition in privacy and honesty before God. It also enables us to have that same courage to be open and vulnerable in our relationships. As we look back over the years through the reading of our journals, it is valuable to be reminded of what God has done and is doing with "this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7) and how He is specifically enabling us to become more like Him.

The benefits of journaling are numerous, compelling one busy pastor to always carry his journal with him so that during the many times of waiting throughout the day he may dialogue with the Lord.

Another aid to spiritual growth in the life of the minister is spiritual guidance. Throughout the history of the church, not even the greatest saints attempted to sound the depths of the inward journey without the help of a spiritual director or guide. A spiritual director is one who, though farther on the journey, is nevertheless learning and growing with you in the Spirit, sharing his struggles, and guiding you in your spiritual formation.

Our tradition is rich in its heritage of spiritual guides. Wesley Tracy shows how John Wesley functioned as a spiritual guide through his letters.⁴ The class meetings were examples of corporate spiritual direction where accountability, self-examination, and guidance were inherent instruments of spiritual growth. Wesley himself submitted to spiritual guidance from various persons in informal ways.

I will have to admit that this area of growth is not an easy one. One minister of 25 years tells how, after making the decision to explore this area and after deciding on the person, he procrastinated 1 year before approaching his friend. In that time, he became aware of several factors contributing to his reluctance. He identified a desire for control, expressed in an unwillingness to share his inner life with another. A certain hesitancy to allow light to shine on some of his areas of misunderstanding also contributed. Ultimately, his reluctance had sprung from spiritual pride.

My experience has been similar to the one just described. It takes time

to find the right person and time to gain courage to approach that person about spiritual guidance. I would affirm, though, that the experience is most enlightening.

A person would normally approach a spiritual guide by sharing the things that the Lord has been saying—presumably one's journal will be helpful here. I have found that a spiritual guide has a unique way of interpreting and offering insights into all that God is doing in one's life. A book may tell me about the "dark night of the soul," but it is quite different to hear comments on my dark night from the lips of my spiritual director.

All of us, by the very nature of our tasks, are involved in some level of spiritual guidance with our people. If we recommend it to our people, shouldn't we be willing to submit to that same scrutiny, accountability, and guidance? In fact, to provide an adequate model, it would seem reasonable to ask that a pastor not direct others without having direction for himself.

As a third means of spiritual growth I would suggest times of spiritual retreat. By this I do not mean preaching, conventions, seminars, committee work, vacation time, or anything of that nature. Rather, I refer to solitude, quiet, and saturation in prayer and the Word. Some pastors have scheduled time every three to four months to be away for two to three days in spiritual retreat. Richard Foster believes that pastors should take spiritual retreats frequently and encourage their people in this area.⁵ Some pastors, sensitive to the value of retreats for spiritual growth and aware of the lack of Protestant retreat centers, are in the process of developing such centers for use by their people and others. In the meantime, many of my colleagues have found that abbeys and convents across the country provide, at minimal cost, a quiet place for guests who come for prayer and renewal. It has been my experience that the silent inspiration of the religious community provides a far greater atmosphere for worship and devotion than does a motel or hotel room.

Allow me to pass on a plan that was given to me and has been most beneficial. Timothy Kelly, in a pamphlet titled *Come Aside with Me Awhile*, urges retreatants to take only their Bibles and journals along so that distractions will not arise from other materials. Upon arrival

and settling in, a person might begin by unloading onto the Lord all of the cares and concerns that one has brought. Once this has happened, the time could be divided as follows: one hour of meditation, one hour of walking, and one hour of meditation and writing, repeating this cycle throughout the duration of one's stay. The hour of meditation should cover a selected passage of Scripture. A person might begin by being very still and quiet, opening one's heart and mind to the Lord. The passage may be read and reread, the scene visualized, and the mind given to concentration on personal application instead of sermon preparation. This same scripture would be



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used throughout the entire day. It has often been surprising to me to find what the Lord chooses to reveal in the last few moments of the hour.

The hour of walking would be a "praise walk," where a person celebrates the beauty of God's creation and the wonder of God's revelation of himself. Look around, "smell the roses," praise God, and be thankful as you walk—even in the rain!

The third hour in the cycle should be utilized by returning to the same scripture for further meditation and writing down some additional things that the Lord is revealing. Following the end of the cycle, the person on retreat would take time to eat and sleep before beginning again. Incidentally, should you find yourself falling asleep during your hour of meditation, allow it to occur without guilt. Pick up in the same place upon awakening.

At least one hour should be reserved before packing up and checking out for writing down all that has happened on your retreat; all the insights you have gained, all the things you need to do, as well as a little time for praise to God for this wonderful time He has afforded. You will probably return a changed person. If all this sounds grueling, *it is!* But the results will most likely make you firmly believe in the value of such an experience on a regular basis.

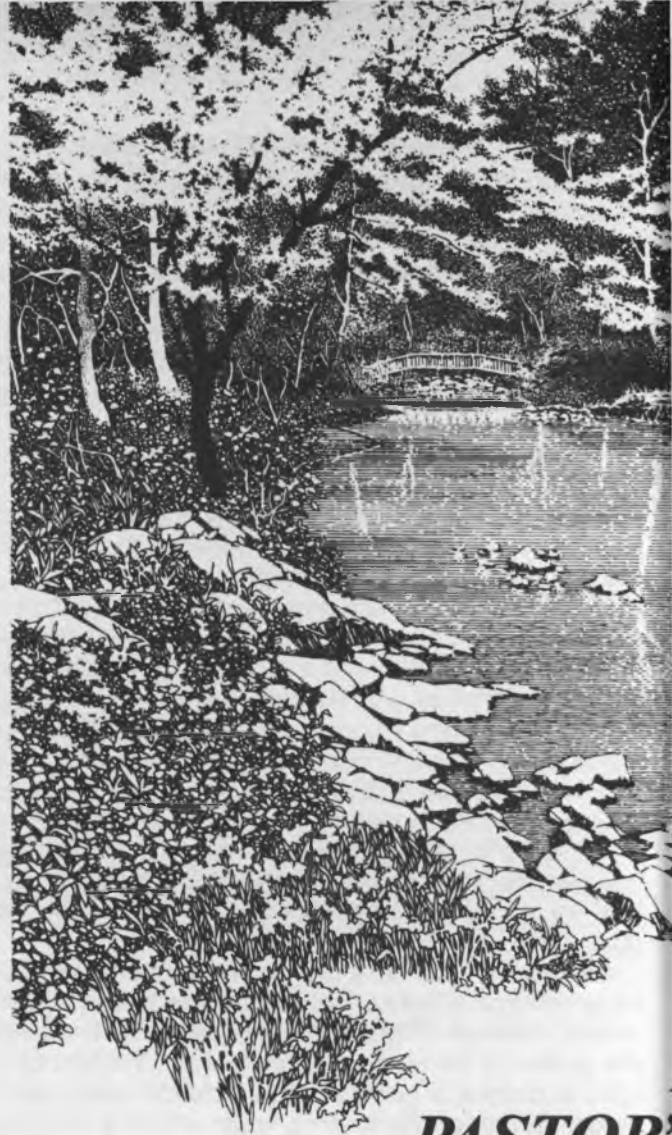
Sometimes the benefits of retreats are readily noticeable to our people. One of my colleagues spent a week of retreat in the mountains. On returning, he was so radiant and renewed that his board sent him for another week! Because the benefits of retreats are often observable only to the retreatant, however, it is sometimes difficult in our results-oriented society to keep retreats a priority. It seems also to be the case that retreats need to be deliberately built into one's schedule; otherwise the busyness of the ministry will not allow these times to occur.

Of course our time alone must drive us back to the Body of Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in a chapter from *Life Together* titled "The Day Alone," writes, "Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. Let him who is not in community beware of being alone."⁷ The fruit of solitude is increased sensitivity and compassion for others.

Songwriter Fanny Crosby echoes our constant need when she prays, "Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord." Frequent times of drawing away from a busy schedule in order to draw near to God are not, as some would suggest, the frosting on the cake of ministry. They are rather a necessity for effective ministry.

NOTES

1. Terry C. Much, "Ten Questions About the Devotional Life," *Leadership* 3 (Winter 1982): 31.
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4. Wesley Tracy, "A Survey of the Literature for the Wesleyan Way to Spiritual Formation: Christian Spirituality in the Letters of John Wesley" (S.T.D. diss., San Francisco University, 1986).
5. Dialogue between Richard Foster and Henri Nouwen, "Hearing God's Voice and Obeying His Word," *Leadership* 3 (Winter 1982): 22.
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PASTOR'S PRAYER RETREAT

by Keith A. Maule
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Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines a retreat as "an act of withdrawing from what is difficult, dangerous, or disagreeable." If you don't like that definition, it has also been described as "an asylum" for insane persons. But when we say "retreat" to our church, I don't *think* they consider either of those definitions. When we think of retreats today, we picture being laid back, sleeping in 'til noon, eating to our hearts' content, playing card games, watching television, and enjoying a life of ease and entertainment. That is why I hesitate using the term *prayer retreat* for setting aside days in the year when we specifically pray for the needs of our people. That is probably the reason more pastors do not ask for or take more prayer retreats. Maybe it would be best for us to specifically define what we mean when we say "prayer retreat."

WHAT IS A PRAYER RETREAT?

When we study the actual ministry of Jesus, we find that after He had spent much time with the people preaching, teaching, praying, and doing the miraculous works of God, He would leave the crowds and go to a solitary place to pray. These prayer retreats in Jesus' ministry were not times of rest and relaxation. Prayer retreats for Jesus meant withdrawing from the words of ministry to do the essential work of a minister. The Garden of Gethsemane was no picture of rest and relaxation, but it is the picture of a minister at work. You will also notice that the disciples with Jesus, although they loved doing the *works* of ministry, did not even make it one hour doing the *work* of a minister. A true prayer retreat is saturated, totally uninterrupted time with God. Jesus considered it essential for His ministry. That causes me to believe that it should be essential for our ministry.

When Moses was the Israelites' senior pastor, his people could always tell when he had been "in the mountains" with God. Whenever he came back from his prayer retreat, he was glowing with the glory of the Lord. Moses didn't have to tell them that he had been with God; they already knew. The people could also tell when it had been a long while since he had been on a prayer retreat. The longer Moses stayed out of the mountains, the less he glowed with the glory of the Lord. The same principle is true today. Our ministry in the church is weaker when we have not had those days of prayer set aside to intercede on behalf of the people for forgiveness of sin, for power, for sanctification, and for the growth of the church. A prayer retreat follows the example of Jesus' ministry in carrying out our calling.

WHAT WILL THE CHURCH BOARD THINK OF THIS IDEA?

Before Jim Bakker's fall, I listened to an interviewer ask him to what he attributed the tremendous growth of his ministry. His answer was shocking. He said, "I noticed that there was little or no time for praying for the people in the churches. So I went on television with the simple message that we would pray for them. Call day or night and we will pray for you. It was what the people were looking for."

People want and need us to pray for them! If we ask them about setting aside uninterrupted time away from the "stuff" and the phones to give ourselves totally to prayer, they will respond positively. Better they call us than a TV. We must fill that need.

WILL IT APPEAR AS THOUGH WE SIMPLY TOOK "A BREAK"?

When you've finished a year of work and you evaluate what days were the most demanding and exhausting, the answer will always be the days you set aside for prayer and fasting. I would challenge anyone who questions that to try it!

Nothing has been more exciting or exhausting than the days I've spent on prayer retreats. I usually drive out of town, getting away from my normal environment, and check into a nice out-of-the-way hotel. Any place is fine as long as it is somewhere you will not be disturbed and yet will be comfortable just spending time with God. There's nothing more fulfilling than being alone with God

and the needs of the people you love. At the end of each day, I am always exhausted, and I wish I had spent more days just like that one.

Suggestions as you pray for each person:

1. Spend time in praise and thanks for that person, recalling possible times when he was a blessing to you or to the church.
2. Pray for each of the needs he has shared.
3. Write a short note to that person, assuring him of your prayers and thanking him for allowing you to share his burdens.
4. Read through the scriptures that you highlighted before the retreat, until you come to one you believe would be a blessing or encouragement, and write that scripture on the note.
5. Write down any memorandum you may need so that you can continue to pray for the needs. You will probably want to keep the sheets, possibly highlighting the important sentences until you know the needs well or the prayer has been answered.

Don't become "big preacher" and say there are too many requests to handle individually; get used to doing work that counts.

FAST FROM THE WORLD

A prayer retreat is as important to us as it is to our people. We need to have our spirits cleansed. We must be not only on a fast from food but on a fast from the world as well. This is to abstain from those things in the world that feed our spirits, such as the newspaper, televisions, phones, magazines, entertainment, parties, and so on. This is a time of getting away from any source of spiritual food other than God and His Word. It is amazing how much time we have when we remove everything except God and His Word from our schedules. This also keeps us focused on our purpose! If Jesus were here today, He would still have days of prayer, and they would not include outside activities. There are times when it must be God and God alone. God wants it, and we need it! It is a time when God does not have to "share" us with anybody or anything. Instead, He has our undivided attention.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF A PRAYER RETREAT?

1. A prayer retreat changes the pastor. It renews our love for God. It gives us time to hear from Him. It realigns our priorities, gives us new vision and direction, improves our preaching, and increases our love for people. You'll know your people better, love them more, and preach to them with more compassion.
2. A prayer retreat changes lives! Prayer *does* make a difference. People will be saved, marriages strengthened, and the sick made well. Prayer gives us the opportunity to see God at work through direct answers to our prayers.
3. A prayer retreat pleases God. That's reason enough in itself! He looks forward to those times with us when He won't be interrupted by "stuff," even good stuff. It will please God if we set aside times just for Him.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN FELLOWSHIP

by Russell Metcalfe

Pastor, Wollaston Church of the Nazarene, Quincy, Mass.

Something is missing from the lives of many gifted men of God. This factor is missing even in many successful ministries. And the sad thing is that "it" could supply the qualities of hope and instruction, support and course correction that just might prevent burnout, discouragement, inappropriate expectations, or even worse.

This missing thing is not a program and cannot be successfully legislated or imposed. But it does have the weight of scriptural mandate. It cannot be added by simply attending another seminar. It is a simple thing, and yet its lack is often little short of tragic.

This "missing ingredient" is Christian fellowship, specifically that aspect of fellowship that makes Christians accountable to each other. Beyond immediate family, many faithful men and women of God have no friends with whom they regularly talk openly about their own spiritual conditions.

Sandy, a pastor, writes, "I feel terrific about the times I've succeeded in resisting temptation; I'm humbled by my failures. I want to fear God and do what's right, but I'm weary, alone, and not in a relationship of accountability with anyone."¹ Maybe Sandy is an exceptional case, but he is exceptional only in the fact that he's transparent enough to talk about the need for accountability.

Christian fellowship is far more than parties and church suppers. It is an essential function of the Body of Christ. Accountability is a deliberate choosing to live in community, to be to some extent answerable to another or others within the Body of Christ. In a practical sense, this usually means talking and praying with people in a small group on a more or less regular basis. Every Christian, including ministers, wants to find this kind of fellowship. Why?

Because *fellowship is a mirror.*

There is *insight* available in Christian fellowship that cannot be found anywhere else. R. Newton Flew wrote, "Indeed it is possible that our worst sins are those of which we are unconscious."² Just as no one has ever really seen the back of his own head, no one really knows his own likeness. It may be one reason why Reuben Welch is so often quoted: "We really do need each other!"

Fellowship is a source of healing. Misunderstandings, bad votes, unappreciative members—all of these

at one time or another cause every minister to bleed. Sometimes the wounded survive apart from any human care. But the Lord's brother commands: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). To be prayed for is a marvelous thing!

Christian fellowship is a prime source of strengthening. Paul writes: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). We aren't *supposed* to go

THE BROTHERS

I can't really remember the first time I met with "the brothers." It was during the whirl and rush of moving into a new pastoral assignment, and it was just another meeting of local clergy to which I was invited. That was in 1977. But during the years that have followed, this group—actually a prayer fellowship—has had a vital part in my personal spiritual growth and in my public ministry.

I'm a Nazarene by birth and by choice. All the rest of this fellowship are non-Nazarene. We are diverse in doctrinal background: Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Methodist, Nazarene, Congregational. If we majored on *what* we believe, we would be hopelessly divided on many issues, some of them far deeper than just semantics. We differ in doctrinal understanding, in the way we look at the sacraments, and in some of the solutions we would apply to the social ills of society. Yet somehow we have come to a genuine sense of community. We have come to a conviction that we all are part of the Church universal, and therefore of each other, because we belong to the same Lord and are partakers of His

life. Sharing in that life has lifted us above squabbling over members, or doctrine, or territory, while at the same time not compromising fidelity to our individual traditions and spiritual heritages.

Some of the fringe benefits of this fellowship have been somewhat spectacular. I probably would never have served on the executive committee of the Billy Graham Boston Crusade (or had Cliff Barrows and Beverly Shea in my church). I probably never would have visited the Holy Land (certainly not with a busload of evangelicals from Quincy churches); would not have had the incentive or expertise to initiate two pulpit exchanges with the pastor in Paisley, Scotland, or have met John R. W. Stott, or had Bishop Michael Baughan preach in my church. Nor would I have driven a U-Haul to Long Island for a Presbyterian minister! And yet as exciting as these extras may sound, the heart of the benefit has been the love, support, and fellowship of the men of God of this community, who have been knit into a brotherhood of faith.

The format is deceptively simple: We meet each Friday in one of the pas-

S A MEANS OF GRACE

it alone. We don't *have* to go it alone. And beyond the immediate crisis, fellowship helps build strength into character. Fellowship is a part of maturing in Christ. "Accountability," writes David Augsburger, "is the mark of maturity in discipleship. It is not optional, nor a mere by-product. It is essential, central, and definitive of life in the community of the Spirit."

So why do so many ministers consider Christian fellowship optional? Why don't they look for small-group accountability as a way

of life?

One reason is that *some ministers simply refuse to acknowledge their need*. Ministers in the Wesleyan-holiness lineage abhor anything that smacks of "sinning religion." The Scriptures demand a walk with God that gives complete "victory over sin." But all too often, "victory over sin" translates as "no faults to confess."

Another reason is that *some ministers may believe that accountability is not appropriate for Chris-*

tian leaders. They are used to holding others accountable; they are not used to being seen as having human needs.

But the reason most ministers don't participate in small-group fellowship is simply that *it isn't seen as practically available, and is excellent when needed*. Specific crises or projects can be helped by denominational leaders and experts. But in the stress of week-in, week-out front-line duty, there is no ongoing support group available. Is such support an impossible dream? How can ministers find this deeply needed insight and healing and strength?

They can find it *on purpose!* Accountability will never happen by itself. We can endeavor to pray *with* people wherever there is any kind of excuse. If there is a staff situation, the senior minister can encourage a regular time of "family style" prayer for the people with whom he works. A Saturday morning prayer at the church altar followed by breakfast at a pancake house has worked in some busy schedules.

And they will best find it *by some sort of scheduling*. A proposal to meet with other members of the local congregation for a limited number of sessions is nonthreatening and may bring a favorable response. One pastor expanded a personal time of early morning prayer by simply inviting from the pulpit any of the congregation who would care to join him. A loosely organized but effective "accountability group" of several years' standing is the result. Another pastor responded to an expressed personal desire on the part of one of his church leaders for "drawing closer to the Lord." He invited four men to share with him in a weekly early morning prayer and Bible study. As a result, Wednesday mornings from seven to eight o'clock for the past 12 months has

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by Russell Metcalfe

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tors' homes for lunch and fellowship, Bible study and prayer. One of us sees that the rest are called early Friday morning with a reminder of the day's meeting place. We meet in homes rather than in church parlors or offices, since the deliberate purpose of the meeting is fellowship and personal support, *not* church business. The host for the month usually furnishes hot and cold beverages, and the lunches are strictly brown-bag.

After we eat and talk (and laugh), usually in the kitchen or dining room, we go into the living room, where someone reads a passage from the book of the Bible we are currently studying. We take the time to share as much or as little as we see fit of our personal burdens, family concerns, or challenges from the churches. Then each pastor prays, taking special care to lift the requests of the one sitting to his right.

The size of the group changes a bit from year to year, and schedules are such that attendance varies from week to week. There are currently 15 or 16 who "belong" to the group, but 12 is a large meeting. Still, everyone is prayed for, present or absent.

This same kind of fellowship is repeated over and over again in many cities and towns all over Christendom. Throughout most of my pastoral ministry I have enjoyed real friendships with other evangelicals. But several things have made this particular group vital to me. There has been the growing persuasion that my role (and denomination's role) is to be a catalyst for spiritual renewal wherever in the Body of Christ I may be, and not automatically assume the role of critic. I have a deepening appreciation for the emphases of other traditions, along with a respect for the depths of personal commitment to Christ of men who may differ with me in any number of ways. I am grateful for what they add to the richness of my understanding of God's grace.

But perhaps the greatest single element in the vitality of our fellowship has been a personal sense of "belonging." I am not doing anything *less* as a Nazarene, endeavoring to help build a strong Nazarene church and get people saved and sanctified. But at the same time, I know and care that Richard Menees, rector at Braintree Emmanuel Episcopal, is taking a new

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The Spiritual Formation of the Minister: A Perspective on Sanctification

A synthetic-summary review of Maxie Dunnam's *Alive in Christ*

by Wilbur W. Brannon

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Maxie Dunnam works with a concept of radical devotion to Christ. A United Methodist clergyman, he offers a fresh way of looking at the sanctified life in a Wesleyan context.

Dunnam does not ignore the crisis of commitment, but his emphasis is on growth in holiness, or processive sanctification. This is highlighted in the subtitle: "The Dynamic Process of Spiritual Formation." Dunnam builds the foundation of his theme on the motif of death/resurrection in Christ. That metaphor is crisis language.

The concept of being "alive in Christ" expresses the dynamism of the phases and dimensions of Christian experience. It projects the essence of sanctifying energy (power). The most complete expression of holiness is the life of Christ. So by participating in His life, there emerges the likeness of His holiness.

TWO EXPERIENTIAL CONCEPTS

Two of Paul's experiential concepts are described as (1) justification by faith, and (2) the indwelling Christ. Included in the former is the moment "I am awakened in faith to discover that not only is my death sentence stayed, a new verdict is issued: *full pardon*" (p. 22).

As crucial as justification by faith is, it is not the whole gospel. The experience of the indwelling Christ is just as crucial. According to Dunnam, however, this second aspect of salvation has not been emphasized as much as the first. Certainly the fullness of His presence is "the heart and nerve of our Christian pilgrimage" (p. 23). Christ lives in us through the power of His Spirit, enabling

us to do and be all that God expects of us (p. 25).

The Church's most desperate need is to discover this powerful reality, "the astounding possibility of Christians being in Christ." Dunnam's grasp of the dynamic quality of this experience is biblical. He describes it as "the shaping power of our lives," which is the dynamic of spiritual formation (*ibid.*). This describes what we mean by the Spirit-filled life. Being conformed to the image of His Son is what Christian holiness is all about.

Spiritual formation is defined as "that dynamic process of receiving through faith and appropriating through commitment, discipline, and action, the living Christ into our own lives to the end that we will conform to, and manifest the reality of Christ's presence in the world" (p. 26).

Dunnam's "dynamic process" has the two critical points of both receiving the living Christ (regeneration) and appropriating Him into our lives (sanctification). The first has to do with being changed into a new person, being reconciled. The second is "the re-creation of the image of God in the life of the believer" (p. 29). John Wesley is referred to and accurately represented by saying, "Sanctifying grace is the work of Christ within us, his Spirit restoring the broken image, completing what has begun in justification" (*ibid.*).

Taking the risk of oversimplifying the notion of "second-blessing sanctification," Dunnam slips by the Wesleyan definition of sin and ignores the relational norms we hold. Then he charges the critics of the holiness movement for go-

ing too far in fleeing from self-righteousness by forgetting sanctification altogether. He calls for a new look at, and a new commitment to, sanctification (p. 30).

Paul's *being crucified with Christ* is taken seriously as an experiential reality. In fact, Dunnam concedes that the destruction of the carnal nature by sharing in Christ's death could communicate the notion of eradication. However, to understand Dunnam's view of the person who is "alive in Christ," it is important to remember that man's flawed nature prevents him from being faultless. In spite of these "sins improperly so-called" (Wesley), Dunnam affirms the present triumph of the person who shares in Christ's resurrection as stated in Rom. 6:8 (p. 36).

There are two kinds of death. One is our plight! We are dead in sin. Then comes a choice to die so that "life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). This is a voluntary death to the "old nature" so we may *come alive* to God in Jesus Christ. Just as we share in Christ's death, we also share in His resurrection. This powerful relationship with Christ shapes our relationships with others and manifests itself in the world (p. 49).

The Wesleyan view of "entire sanctification" has never meant a static experience or a "finished" product. The crisis of faith is always followed by the process of growth in grace. Dunnam expands on this dynamic element of sanctification when writing of "the process of interiorizing the Incarnation" (p. 43). We are to be "filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19) (*ibid.*).

THE SHAPING POWER OF CHRIST

Facing us is the issue of experiential reality in the present tense. Without depreciating the important crisis experiences of the past, including being filled with the Spirit, the question remains: "What about now?" Paul sighed, "I am in travail with you over again until you take the shape of Christ" (Gal. 4:19, NEB). Is Christ being formed in me? That question of spiritual dynamics cannot be ignored. It is a matter of spiritual formation, that is, the sanctified life (p. 42).

An Affirming Presence

Dunnam describes Christ's indwelling as an "affirming presence." Christ provides forgiveness, deliverance from sin, freedom from the bondage of the flesh, empowerment to life with Him, shaping us into His likeness, restoring us into God's image, enabling us to know "fullness of being, the fullness of God himself" (Eph. 3:19, NEB) (pp. 52-53).

Inevitably the time comes when we have to take off our masks and look at ourselves as we really are. When we look and dislike what we see, the indwelling Christ reminds us that we are loved (cf. Eph. 3:17, NEB). Each of us is special to God, a miracle of existence (pp. 58-59). The key is "when we accept the fact that God knows us thoroughly and loves us thoroughly. Knowing that we are pardoned, accepted, and affirmed by God is the dynamic that makes possible our acceptance of ourselves" (p. 60).

A Forgiving and Healing Presence

We not only need God's forgiveness to be saved; we need it to remain sanctified. In fact, the need for forgiveness is heightened by a conscience sensitized by the sanctifying Spirit.

John Wesley defined "Christian perfection" as "loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength." Yet he saw no contradiction in admitting that such a person may "still be liable to mistake" (*The Works of John Wesley*, 11:394).

He went further to express the collective thinking of the Bristol Conference in August 1758:

- (1) Every one may mistake as long as he lives. (2) A mistake in opinion may occasion a mistake in practice. (3) Every such mistake is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore, (4) Every such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation. (5) It follows, that the most perfect have continual need of the merits of Christ, even for their actual transgressions, and may say

for themselves, as well as for their brethren, "Forgive us our trespasses" (11:395).

Wesley went on to say, "The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office, to atone for their omissions, their short-comings, (as some not improperly speak,) their mistakes in judgment and practice, and . . . all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement" (11:396). This is part of the reason Wesley chose not to use "sinless perfection" as a phrase.

Closely related to Christ's forgiving presence is His healing presence. When the paralytic was brought to Him for healing, Jesus forgave his sins! (Cf. Mark 2:1-5.) Responding to His critics, Jesus made a connection between the two. Dunnam is right: "Our response to God's love is always a healing experience." The indwelling Christ moves into every area of our lives to bring transformation and healing (pp. 76, 78).

A Guiding and Creating Presence

Forgiveness brings us to the port of entry and to the Ruler of a new existence in which we can enjoy growing. He will shape us into His own likeness as we submit to be guided and empowered by Him. Guidance is "an ongoing dynamic which shapes our beings and thus determines decisions and directions" (p. 84).

Guidance comes when we are aware of the inner presence of Christ and communicate with Him. Prayer then is pivotal in spiritual formation (pp. 84-85). My will is transformed and aligned with God's will by the Spirit of the indwelling Christ. A will that is thus purified of self-sovereignty is one of the clearest confirmations of entire sanctification.

We understand entire sanctification to be the result of preferring the will of God supremely. This supreme preference penetrates throughout, becoming the determining factor in the whole being. For the love of God is the dominant motive of the life.

As a "creating presence," Christ "stimulates, empowers, even directs the creative thrust of my spirit" (p. 89). Herein lies the energy for personal and corporate renewal. The Church is in desperate need of revitalization. The indwelling Christ "loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy" (Eph. 5:25-26, NIV). He is still her empowering Sanctifier.

A Converting Presence

Dunnam understands the twofold nature of sin but describes it differently than we normally do. One is *estrangement*, or being separated from God by acts of sins; two, a *broken image* of God within, which describes the sinful nature or condition of sin.

This dual nature of sin means that

two different things happen in salvation. First, we are reconciled to God by justification. Second, there is the re-creation of the image of God in the life of the believer. This is the grace of being entirely sanctified and processively growing in that grace.

Dunnam does not address the critical moment at which that second work begins, but makes it a continuing *process of new birth*. As Wesleyans, we believe "initial sanctification" to be inherent in the new birth (a crisis), and "entire sanctification" the result of a total consecration to the will of God (a crisis). Both works of grace are by faith, involving forgiveness of sins and purifying the nature from the corruption of sin.

Christ's "converting presence" is used by Dunnam in a specialized sense that would be confusing to some. His phrase is equivalent to Paul's "perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Cor. 7:1, NIV). It is the dynamic process that results from our so yielding ourselves to Christ's shaping power that it brings wholeness and a reflection of His likeness.

This process, according to Dunnam, includes "yielding every aspect of our lives, every drive, feeling, passion, and instinct, to the indwelling Christ every day" (p. 106). This means that consecration must be not only an act but an attitude. Without denying or reducing the value of the crisis experiences of grace, a balanced emphasis must be given to the processive and developmental aspects of sanctification.

We must faithfully frame "Christian perfection" in relative terms and be open to new self-disclosures requiring honesty, humility, and renewed obedience. This treasure of His is in earthen vessels. How earthy we sometimes are!

STAYING ALIVE

It is one thing to *come* alive, and it is another thing to *stay* alive. It is the difference between *following* Jesus and being *in* Christ. To make Jesus merely an example to follow is to reduce Christianity to a religion of morals without power.

The uniqueness of Christianity, according to Dunnam, is in the experience of *being in Christ*. This makes Him more than an example. He becomes an enabler of a new quality of life (p. 111).

The results of such a relationship include incorporating the devotional principles that give vitality to faith and action, responsibility to the Christian community, manifesting Christ to the world, and living as a servant after the style of Jesus.

Christ *in you* bringing the hope of all glorious things to come. That is holiness personified!

MONDAY MORNING DEVOTIONS

by Reuben Welch

Associate Professor of Religion
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For Monday, September 5

REASON FOR CONFIDENCE

If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless (Phil. 3:4-6, RSV).

Well, what are you going to do this Monday? For Americans, it is a day to celebrate the dignity of work and to praise the accomplishments of hard-working, self-reliant people, though these things are talked about mostly by politicians campaigning for labor's vote in November. Most of us use the day as a summer's end holiday before the fall rush. Not a bad idea!

But the holiday's theme and Paul's words come together at the point where we consider the reasons for our confidence. Do we actually assume that if we work hard and keep smart we can achieve our goals for life and ministry? Hard work and self-reliance is the good old American way!

I think Paul would say that the problem is not the hard work part but the self-reliance part! And his word for it is "flesh." There was a time when the meaning and worth of his whole life was tied to who he was and what he accomplished. And he gave it all up for Jesus!

We all have something we have or can do that gives us our sense of worth. "My thing is study and preaching." "Personal relationships make it or break it with pastors." "If you don't administer the program, nothing will really be done." "Evangelism is the bottom line."

These phrases sound suspiciously like "As to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless." It is a good day to let the searching Spirit probe and cleanse our "reason for confidence."

For Monday, September 12

GAIN AND LOSS

If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ (Phil. 3:4-7, RSV).

I am amazed at these impeccable credentials of Paul. All of them are so right, so proper! He was circumcised on the right day, belonged to the covenant community, the right tribe of the right race in the right family tree. What a heritage! And he had made the most of it, both in righteousness and in zeal.

But when he came to know Jesus, he

gave it all up. Or did he? His conversion didn't change his circumcision day, nor his race, nor his party, nor his family tree. He was still a righteous man full of zeal. What changed was neither his heritage nor his achievements, but his perspective. And that was fundamental.

"Whatever gain I had"—that phrase reveals the value his heritage and achievements had for him. They were his assets, his profits, his advantages. And his ledger looked good. But he met Christ and discovered that what he had been putting on the credit side was actually a loss, and in his delusion, he was rushing on to ruin.

We need to think about such things today. What is gain for us? Can we really know that, apart from Christ, it is really loss? It is only in Him that we can discern what is gain and what is loss. We had better be sure we know what our securities are. They will control us, mold us, manipulate us, and destroy our freedom—apart from Christ.

For Monday, September 19

LOSS AND GAIN

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ (Phil. 3:7, RSV).

Paul's talk of confidence and gain and loss, to my mind, expresses a fundamental need we all share: the need to be religiously secure. We want to know we

are all right in relation to God. My neighbor said to me the other day from his hospital bed, "I've been looking back over my life to see if everything is paid up, and I am all right with my Maker." Basically, he was in the process of doing what we all are tempted to do: add up our moral pluses and hope they cover our losses. And all the while we say we trust in Christ for our salvation!

It is an awesome thing to trust in Christ alone. It cuts to the heart of our need to be secure in something we ourselves may have or may do. We can be led into a subtle legalism that puts morality, or the good things we do, or a certain life-style, or worship practice, alongside the grace of God. How many of our prayers for health or deliverance begin with "O God, You know I have always gone to church and tried to do the right thing"? "O Lord, You know how Your servant has been faithful down through the years in service and giving to Your cause"? These are honest feelings we express to God, but they can also express attitudes that are destructive to total trust in Christ.

It's a heavy issue, isn't it? Our self-generated gains are loss. Our only gain, our only security is Christ.

For Monday, September 26

KNOWING JESUS

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Phil. 3:8, RSV).

What language did you use yesterday to talk about our relationship with God through Christ? What metaphors, analogies, illustrations, and mental pictures expressed the message? Paul used lots of them: justification, adoption, children of God, in Christ, reconciliation. The simple phrase here in Philippians is "knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Knowing Jesus. It seems like a simple thing, and it is. Yet for Paul it is such a deep and wonderful thing that all he had ever counted valuable was now counted as trash in comparison. It would seem that just knowing Him was the supreme value and the supreme reality of his whole life.

I read this beautiful passage and am left feeling that we make Christian experience and life too complicated. We say we want an experience, a feeling, a doctrine, or a system. What if what we really want is a Friend? Paul had talked about his heritage and his achievements

—things. What was really *gain* in his life was a personal relationship with Christ Jesus.

Eric Frost wrote that real Christian experience comes through the meeting of our souls with Christ; not just a brief encounter, but the coming alive of a lasting relationship, personal and unique. Is it all right on this Monday for us preachers to let everything else go and rejoice in the simple wonder of knowing Jesus? I hope so.

For Monday, October 3

KNOWING CHRIST JESUS MY LORD

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Phil. 3:8, RSV).

The wonder of yesterday's worldwide Communion experience is that in the bread and the cup Jesus gives himself. And as we partake of His broken body and shed blood, we enter into personal relationship with Him. The heart of our faith is not something we do, but Someone we know because He has come to us as one of us.

Let's go back to the words of Eric Frost. "Real Christian experience comes through the meeting of our souls with Christ, not just a brief encounter, but the coming alive of a lasting relationship, personal and unique." I love the words, "lasting relationship, personal and unique."

How does a lasting relationship between persons develop? Jesus is a person, and I am a person. We get to know each other the way all persons do. It isn't magic, it isn't only for the religiously inclined, it isn't anything hidden. It takes some time, and some trust, and some talk, and some honesty, and some more talk. That may not be in just the right order. But I think they are the right words for getting to know someone.

The wonder of the gospel is that our personal God comes to us in the person of Jesus and calls us into conversation, into personal relationship with himself. And what a Friend we have in Jesus! Today is a good day to take some time for some talk and some honesty and some trust and some more talk with a Friend.

For Monday, October 10

CHRIST JESUS MY LORD

Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of know-

ing Christ Jesus my Lord (Phil. 3:8, RSV).

It seems to me that a large part of Paul's joyful assurance, and a large measure of his authority in the Early Church, was the confidence he had in his own personal and unique relationship with Christ. He didn't get it from someone else, nor was it patterned after anyone else's.

Preachers like us begin half our sentences saying, "Paul knew this or that," or "Paul believed that," or "The prophets were saying . . ." I wonder if we can end up declaring *only* Paul's experience or Peter's revelations and lose the joy and confidence that come from the cultivation of our own unique relationship with Christ?

That uniqueness is a precious gift. My relationship with Christ is mine, and yours is yours. Mine isn't all I want it to be, but such as it is, it is real, and therefore authentic. And so with you. My experience doesn't quite fit the mold, but it fits me! You don't have to conform to my experience, and I don't have to conform to yours. Our conformities are not to each other but to Christ. There is great freedom in the ordinary, simple, wonderful phrase, "knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Let's celebrate and cultivate that precious, unique relationship we have with Him.

For Monday, October 17

"NOT MY OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT CHRIST WITHIN"

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (Phil. 3:9, RSV).

The wonderful thing about knowing Jesus and sharing His life is that we don't have to earn it, or work for it, or be worthy of it. It is a right relationship based on trust and not on performance.

During a very busy time—exams to read, grades to get in, deadlines to meet—a student came in unannounced and wanted an hour or so just to talk. When I asked to meet another time, anger flushed. "You don't care about me, or you would have time for me now!" Maybe it was the truth. There are laymen who must be endlessly affirmed and cared for, or you are not a caring pastor. Surely district superintendents don't have any pastors like that!

Chuck Higgins told me the other day about a man who had one time been un-

faithful to his wife. She would not forgive him, no matter how honest or sorry or repentant he continued to be. After a time she had an illness and became an invalid. For years he tenderly cared for her. Finally she said to him, "You have been so loving and faithful to care for me, I want you to know that I do forgive you for what you did"

He answered, "I wondered when the debt would ever be paid." And he left.

Based on merit, or works, or law, relationships—no matter how outwardly right—are never permanent, never truly secure because they are not truly personal. They are behavioral. That is why Jesus is such a wonderful Friend. He, in fact, comes to us who have been unfaithful, and invites us into a relationship of forgiveness and trust and love. And He is faithful to us forever.

For Monday, October 24

KNOWING JESUS IN POWER

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11, RSV).

Why are you a minister? It is probably related to the influence of some person you have known. Our lives are affected by the persons we know. I came to teach at the college with the hope of being to others what Prof. Joe Mayfield, my teacher and friend, has been to me. Knowing him has affected my whole life. There are persons like that in your life, too.

Behind the persons we know is the Person we know, and we are influenced by Him. I like to think about it this way: I am affected by the persons I know, and I know someone who rose from the dead! We are surrounded by destruction, decay, and death. We dedicate babies and marry the young, but finally there is an inevitable funeral. There will be one for you; there will be one for me.

But we know Someone who rose from the dead, and that changes our whole perspective. The word Paul uses in connection with Christ's resurrection is "power." The power of the Father that raised Jesus from the dead is the power at work in our lives because we know Him. Resurrection life does not emerge in an evolutionary or developmental way out of death, it is the power of new creation. Our sharing of the power of the Resurrection, then, is not divine help to

do what we do better or more effectively. It is the kind of power that creates new realities, calls into being new hopes, and out of the despair and darkness of death, brings new life.

Need that word today? Think about it. We know a Friend who rose from the dead!

For Monday, October 31

SHARING HIS SUFFERINGS

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11, RSV).

This week has a significant beginning. Yesterday was Reformation Sunday, and today, Halloween, is the eve of All Saints' Day. These times let us know again that all we saints are in fact saved by grace through faith in the One who suffered and died for us.

We are affected by the persons we know, and we know Someone who suffers. Who were the fools and deceivers who told us that to trust Jesus would mean the end of suffering and hurt and disappointment and pain? Where did we learn that? The truth is, Jesus still suffers, and so do we. We know He suffered and He bled and died on the Cross for us. His atoning work is finished, accomplished once and for all. But He still suffers with us and for us in our sins and guilts and hurts and pains. The finished Atonement meets us at the point of our unfinished redemption, and there is suffering.

In "The Everlasting Mercy," Masefield expresses this through the lips of a Quaker lass:

*"Saul Kane," she said, "when next you drink,
Do me the gentleness to think
That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon His way,
Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross,
All that you are is that Christ's loss."*

Weatherhead, who quotes this in *A Plain Man Looks at the Cross*, goes on to say, "No wonder there is joy in heaven over every sinner who repents!"

Jesus suffers; and the word Paul uses in connection with it is "share." I know it is Monday, but it is probably as good a day as any to say yes again to

the life path we have taken with our Friend who suffers. If we love, we suffer; if we care, we hurt. So does He, and we are not alone.

For Monday, November 7

LIKE HIM IN HIS DEATH

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11, RSV).

At the heart of our relationship with God is a cross on which His Son, our Savior, died for our sins. Thank God, we are saved by faith in that atoning death and not by merit or works of ourselves or anyone else but Jesus. We know Someone who died, who came all the way to us and has gone all the way for us.

But His death is not just something "out there," done for us. It is also something in which we ourselves must participate. The phrase Paul uses in connection with Christ's death is "like him." That sounds rather like Rom. 6:5, "united with him in a death like his" (RSV). We are affected by the persons we know. This Jesus we know has died; and He calls us to go to the Cross and die with Him, to submit our own sick and disordered selves to Him at the Cross. He calls us to so identify with Him in His death that our old carnal, fleshly self is crucified.

And the Cross where we die is the Cross where we live in continual surrender of ourselves, our people, and our ministry to Him in His dying. "I take, O Cross, thy shadow / For my abiding place." I think I understand now why Paul began these verses with the experience of the power of the Resurrection. We cannot, of ourselves, enter into His ministry of suffering; nor can we, of our own strength, take ourselves to His cross to identify with Him in His death. It is Resurrection power that brings us to Jesus, and in our suffering and dying with Him, Resurrection power is released in our lives and through our ministry.

For Monday, November 14

ATTAINING THE RESURRECTION

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the

resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11, RSV).

These verses both begin and end with resurrection. The first is the resurrection power of Jesus, which we share in our suffering and dying with Him. The second is the wondrous promise of triumph of the final resurrection, of which the Christian's own resurrection is a sign and a pledge.

The battle is long from over, but our faith is that the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is ultimately triumphant. Do we believe that? I partially remember some words by James S. Stewart: "Let no one, listening to your preaching, have any doubt that when we Christians declare that God raised Jesus from the dead, we really mean it—just as early Christians meant it when they declared that God raised the dark, demonic realms of evil and raised Jesus to His right hand in power and glory."

I sense among us a loss of hope, which, I think, underlies our loss of energy and passion in ministry. It is behind our destructive preoccupation with fulfillment and success in the present, defined by our consumer society. We must have it all now and have it here! Hope is not the word by which we live and by which we define our ministry.

On this Monday, we can let the Spirit teach us again that the suffering, dying, saving ministry in which we are engaged is set in the context of our participation in the power of Christ's resurrection on the one hand, and the final triumph of that power at the final resurrection on the other? Living in the mix of those two great realities, we can keep on going.

For Monday, November 21

HOW DO WE KEEP GOING?

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own (Phil. 3:12, RSV).

Well, yesterday, for the U.S. church, was Thanksgiving Sunday. Gratitude was expressed for all God's good bounty. But today's verse well fits a Monday morning. For all the good we have received, we haven't attained and we aren't perfect. The great consummation toward which we look has not been attained, and our in-between-time lives are filled with imperfection. Actually, Phil. 3:12 is a remarkable public expression of our most secret and hidden thoughts. I'm glad Paul comes right out

and says it: We aren't perfect, we are still here in all our inglorious imperfections.

But we manage to keep pressing on—sometimes in spite of ourselves. How can this be? Whatever our feelings, good or awful, whatever victories or failures in our performance or our encounters, a great reality sustains us. Christ Jesus has made us His own!

I think of Jesus' words to His disciples in John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (RSV). The good word, the source of profound thanksgiving, is that we don't have to keep ourselves going. We have been "apprehended" (KJV), "laid hold on" (ASV), "appropriated" (Moffatt), "captured" (Goodspeed). Christ Jesus "took hold" (NIV) of us; He is the One who keeps us going.

For Monday, November 28

THE GRACE OF FORGETTING

Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).

The beginning of Advent opens us up

to the promise of God that He would come to us in His Son, our Messiah. He is the One who, as Barclay says, "is the answer to our prayers, the fulfillment of our hopes, who will untangle our messed up lives and bring in the better day of God."

God does a new thing in Jesus. And part of that new thing is full, free release from our old thing. It is grace to forget because we are forgiven. We can let go of the past. Any pastor who has been around the church very long has picked up his share of hurts, disappointments, misunderstandings, disillusion, and perceived betrayals. Unfortunately, we have also made our own small contribution to the hurts and disappointments of others.

But Advent is the promise of a new thing. "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old" (Isa. 43:18). We can bring all the accumulated load of the past, release it to Christ at His cross, and forget it.

Of course, "forgetting what lies behind" does not mean an erasure of our memory bank. It means that what is past is released, let go. It is no longer brought into the present to affect personal relationships or destroy future hopes. Are you carrying around in the present the burden of what really lies behind? Release it to God, whose coming to do a new thing we celebrate this season.



THE PREACHER'S EXCHANGE

WANTED: Used set of *Pulpit Commentaries*. Contact Harry O. Wachsmuth, 12324 Catocin View Dr., Mount Airy, MD 21771; 301-865-5380.

WANTED: *Wells of Living Water*, by Neighbor; *The Expositor's Bible*, six-volume edition; *Gill's Commentary*, six-volume edition; *Greater Men and Women of the Bible*, by Hastings. Contact Andy Raines, Rte. 2, Box 711, Bessemer City, NC 28016; 704-435-5516.

WANTED: Copies of the following journals: *Pioneer Holiness Echoes*, *The Christian Holiness Pulpit Digest*, and *American Holiness Journal*. Also, books on holiness and the history of the holiness movement. Will pay top dollar. Contact Larry P. Sto-

ver, P.O. Box 302, St. Bernice, IN 47875; 317-832-3113.

WANTED: A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Arndt & Gingrich, translators and editors; *The Concordance to the Greek New Testament*, W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, editors (new edition with Strong's numbering system); *New Englishman's Hebrew/Chald. Concordance of the Old Testament* (keyed to Strong's numbering system); Old Testament volumes of *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, Charles W. Carter, editor. Will exchange 52-volume set of the *Pulpit Commentary* for the above (older set, in good shape), or will negotiate. Contact Bernard M. Roof, Sr., 9323 Waterman Rd., Angola, NY 14006.

THE ENIGMA OF ECCLESIASTES

by Carl Schultz ·

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The Book of Ecclesiastes is an enigma. It is avoided by many, tolerated by some, and devoured by others. Consider your own devotional reading and preaching pattern. If your Sunday School offers electives, has one of them been Ecclesiastes? Probably not. This is unfortunate. Ecclesiastes deserves to be read regularly. More attention needs to be given to this book in preaching, teaching, and meditation.

The ambivalence toward Ecclesiastes is due, at least in part, to its difficulty, its pertinence, and its canonical role.

The Difficulty of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is a difficult book. There is no other book of the Bible whose introduction is as critical as Ecclesiastes. Practically every aspect of this book, including date, authorship, and interpretation is subject to a multiplicity of views. Reading it without an awareness of its purpose and format can be disturbing, resulting in further neglect. It is always dangerous to dabble with any biblical book, but even more so with Ecclesiastes. This book demands to be read carefully.

One should not be misled by its title. The English title comes from the Greek word for church. But the writer, whom we will call by his own chosen Hebrew name, Qoheleth (sometimes spelled Koheleth), is not very ecclesiastical. He not only charges, "Do not be overworked," but surprisingly urges, "Do not be overrighteous" (7:17, 16, NIV). He has been correctly viewed as an iconoclast, one who destroys gods—the gods of wealth, power, pride, fame, even religion.

He rejects the easy answers about the purpose of life,

even religious answers. He warns that "the words of the wise are like goads" (12:11, NIV), a sharp, pointed stake used to prod an animal. No wonder then that the reader has the impression that Qoheleth is poking him, nudging him on. As Kidner observes, "Wisdom—quite practical and orthodox—is his base camp; but he is an explorer. His concern is with the boundaries of life, and especially with the questions most of us would hesitate to push too far. His probing is so relentless that he can easily be taken for a skeptic or pessimist" (*The Message of Ecclesiastes*, 13).

Not only Qoheleth's approach but also the format of this book makes it difficult. Qoheleth was no systematic theologian. There are so many shifts in mood and posi-



Carl Schultz

tion that the formation of the book is uncertain and much debated. Is this book the product of one mind or of an academy of sages? It has been suggested that two, or three, or even as many as nine different minds are at work in this book. Or is it the notebook of a man who mixes his thoughts with those of others without carefully labeling them? Or is it the diary, in which the writer recorded his thoughts without reference to time or setting? The author has been seen as a sensitive person addressing complex issues. If this is the case, then the alleged self-corrections or self-contradictions are due not to a plurality of minds but to the oscillation of a single mind grappling with the complexities of life.

But the difficulty of this book is not limited to its approach or format. Compounding this difficulty are the conclusions at which the writer seems to arrive. "Meaningless! Meaningless! Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!" (1:2, NIV). Terms such as *fatalism*, *pes-simism*, *skepticism*, even *nihilism* seem appropriate for this book—so much so, its acceptance into the canon was seriously challenged.

Struggling as he did (and here, he is like Job) with traditional wisdom (teaching that reward and punishment are somehow commensurate to the good or bad actions of man) while observing otherwise, Qoheleth asserts:

I have seen . . . a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness (7:15, NIV).

Righteous men . . . get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men . . . get what the righteous deserve (8:14, NIV).

All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not (9:2, NIV).

The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all (9:11, NIV).

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless (3:19, NIV).

With such statements we are not surprised with Qoheleth's assessment:

The day of death [is] better than the day of birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting . . . Sorrow is better than laughter (7:1-3, NIV).

While these words may seem strange for the Bible, that is exactly where they are found. Rather than avoid them, we must seek to understand them.

The Pertinence of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is a captivating book, commanding great interest. Gordis notes: "Koheleth . . . speaks to the modern age . . . with the immediacy of contact of a contemporary" (*Koheleth, the Man and His World*, 7). It is this pertinence that makes this book so intriguing.

There are perhaps four reasons for our fascination with this book:

1. The climate out of which it grew is present with us today—so much so that it has been called the most modern book of the Bible. Boredom, surfeit, disillusionment, and world weariness characterize our times as it did Qoheleth's. Older certainties and values have crumbled, and new purposes to life are sought now as then.

The society Qoheleth addressed was an earthly one, a secular one, one imprisoned by this world. Its view was bounded by the horizons of this world. Even its religion had become secularized as much of our religion has today. Such a condition accounts for the frequent reoccurrence of the phrase "under the sun." This was the area of concern for Qoheleth's audience (as it is today), and he chose to meet his audience on their own ground to reveal the vanity of a self-contained world of a purely secular order.

The society was also a commercial one. Certainly Qoheleth was affluent, and probably, so were the people being addressed. This provides another point of contact with our time. This book is filled with commercial language, using such terms as "advantage," "profit," "toil," "occupation," "position," "success," "money," "wealth," "owner," "lack," and "deficit." The familiar verse, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again" (11:1, NIV), suggests trade and investment. "Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land" (v. 2, NIV) seems to suggest an uncertain future and is perhaps calling for diversifica-

Beyond Relief



tion. It would seem that Qoheleth is musing here upon a society dominated by commerce, an acquisitive society. He frequently seems to take aim at these commonly held commercial values:

What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? (1:3, NIV).

Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun (2:11, NIV).

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income (5:10, NIV).

2. The questions the book raises are the very questions we raise. We are not only *acquisitive*, we are *inquisitive*. Qoheleth raised questions about meaning (1:3), monotony (1:10), destiny (3:21), justice (5:8), nostalgia (7:10), and the future (8:7). He has the ability to give utterance to a deep and universal need, a need to know the meaning of life, that makes this book enduringly attractive.

It is possible that Ecclesiastes was one of the last books of the Old Testament written, because the writer seems to remain open in his assessment. His penetrating questions point clearly in the direction of the answer of the New Testament.

3. The methods used by the writer to collect his data are amazingly up to date. As with all wisdom literature (of which Ecclesiastes is a vital part), there is an absence of "Thus saith the Lord." Data is gathered from observations. The writer is a man of his eyes. This is not to challenge the inspiration or authority of his words, but simply to recognize that revelation can reach us horizontally as well as vertically. The material in this book could be called "the confessions/reflections" of Qoheleth. Consider his own words (NIV):

"I have seen" (1:14).

"I thought to myself" (1:16).

"I applied myself" (1:17).

"I learned" (1:17).

"I will test" (2:1).

"I tried" (2:3).

"I surveyed" (2:11).

"I turned my thoughts" (2:12).

Qoheleth chose to view the world from a natural perspective ("under the sun"), to meet his audience on its own ground in order to show them the utter futility of a godless world.

Modern man is also a man of sight, his conclusions about life being based on what he can see with his own eyes. But he has become so dependent upon his eyes that he is trapped. He can only perceive that which is seen. Failing to see God and detect His purposes, modern man becomes weary and even disgusted, concurring with Qoheleth's worldly finding: all is vanity.

4. The conclusion that Qoheleth arrives at is the same one that modern man reaches today: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (1:2). The Hebrew literary form "X of X" indicates the superlative and adds to the intensity of the statement (cf. King of Kings, Song of Songs, holy of holies). Not only vanity but *utter* vanity.

The phrase emphasizes not only intensity but also comprehensiveness: *All* is vanity. This included deeds (1:17); pleasure (2:1); wisdom (2:13-15); wealth (5:9); injustice (8:14); and old age (11:8-10).

Canonical Role of Ecclesiastes

In meeting man on his own ground, Qoheleth is devastating. He demolishes everything in sight. He destroys the gods of things, time, and self. He will not tolerate self-deification. He will not permit any illusion of human control over God. He dethrones autonomous wisdom.

Ecclesiastes may be one of the last books of the Hebrew Bible. As Short observes, "Nowhere is the Old Testament as 'old' as it is in this book which forms the doorway to the New" (*A Time to Be Born: A Time to Die*, p. 100). The *Jerusalem Bible* concurs: "By underlining the inadequacies of earlier notions and by compelling reconsideration of the human enigma, Ecclesiastes exposes the need of a new revelation" (p. 979). In the words of Short, "Ecclesiastes is the Bible's night before Christmas" (p. 100). Qoheleth's purpose seems to be to raise the basic questions of life, which only find answers in Christ. While he correctly observes that there is nothing new under the sun (1:9), we as Christians affirm that through Christ there is newness. "A new commandment I give unto you" (John 13:34). "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV). "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).

MEDITATIONS

Continued from p. 1

with one of those ladder types the other day who had just received a call to pastor a strong church. When I commended him on such an invitation he told me he was turning it down.

"Why?" I asked unceremoniously.

"Because," he said, "there is a bigger holiness church in that area."

"So?" I asked unceremoniously.

"Well, you see, Wes, pastor ——— of that other big church in that city takes up the whole stage. With him around

there is no spotlight for me—and I want a spotlight. I want to shine."

"Oh," I said unceremoniously.

Life seems so simple for the *ladder* types. But I do have this problem. I can't get away from what I heard Bishop Leontine Kelly say in a sermon. "The career ladder theory of ministry came crashing down forever," she said, "when Jesus staggered and fell under the Cross on the *via dolorosa*." Who can follow Him in ministry without a deep devotional life?

What's that? Oh, the clerk has just summoned me and my fellow prospective jury members into the courtroom.

The 12 jury members are about to be chosen. The first juror chosen is the semiliterate man who works in the junkyard. The second one seated is the bartender, a veteran of several knife fights with the scars to prove it. The next to be selected is the twitchy blonde air-head in tight blue jeans who gives a whole new meaning to John Wesley's phrase "invincible ignorance."

Me, I was not selected. It seems that the lawyers for both the transsexual plaintiff and the fee-happy defendant objected to my presence on the jury. Oh well, it gives me time to rush this to the typist.

—Wesley Tracy

PURITAN INFLUENCES ON WESLEY'S COVENANT THEOLOGY

by Donald D. Wood

Dean of Students, Central Wesleyan College, Central, S.C.

From the earliest biblical records until now, God has established covenants with persons. For Adam and Abraham, for Moses and David, for Israel and the Church, these promises have both sustained God's people with hope and challenged them toward moral excellence. These covenants set the paths of life and death, of blessing and cursing before all those who are party to such agreements.

While the reality of the covenants has always been the background of God's dealings with mankind, theological emphasis placed upon the concept has ebbed and flowed. Little attention was paid to the covenant idea in church history until about the time of the Reformation. Zwingli and Bucer, among others, reintroduced the idea of the covenant as an agreement between the Sovereign and His subject, stipulating the rights and responsibilities of each at a time when the contract theory of government was assuming political significance. In the next century, Cocceius developed the covenant theology more fully. It was adopted by the Puritan movement both theologically and, to some degree, politically. From the Puritan movement in England, the covenant concept was passed on to John Wesley, who, while seeking its significance, did not adopt it uncritically. He modified the Reformed Puritan understanding and adapted it for his followers' theological and practical benefit.

In keeping with the Reformation emphasis on salvation by grace rather than merit, covenant theology is based on the sovereignty of God and His predestination of selected individuals to salvation. While acknowledging a covenant of works with Adam and in the moral law given to Moses, which said, "Do this and live," Puritan theology's major covenantal emphasis was on the covenant of grace given in Christ, which said, "Believe in Christ's sacrifice for you and live." The covenant of works required perfect obedience. It was broken by Adam and all others except Christ. The covenant of grace depends on Christ's perfect obedience and sacrifice for sin.

Wesley accepted the two covenants, as is clear from his 1742 sermon "The Righteousness of Faith." There Wesley preaches,

The covenant of works . . . required of perfect man a perfect and uninterrupted obedience to every point of the law of God. Whereas, the covenant of grace . . .

requires only faith; living faith in Him who, through God, justifies him that obeyed not (*Works* 5:70).

From this message it is clear that Wesley accepted not only the two covenants but also the Christocentricity of the covenant of grace; that is, the second covenant revolves altogether around Christ's fulfillment of both covenants.

However, Wesley did not follow the Puritan insistence on total dependence on God's grace to the extent of embracing predestination to salvation of an "elect" few only. Wesley did believe that only God through the convicting power of the Holy Spirit could engender saving faith, but he believed that the Holy Spirit by prevenient grace was given to all men, not just a predetermined few. Through this grace man was restored enough free will to be morally responsible. Not only does such an understanding counter strict predestinationism, but also it counters the antinomian tendencies of some developments of Calvinism.

Wesley followed Puritans such as Richard Baxter in asserting that the covenant of grace was conditional, not irresistible. He may also be echoing Baxter on prevenient grace. Baxter rejected the restriction of God's grace to only the elect. His belief was in the universality of "common grace," which gave all persons the opportunity to respond to the covenant of grace. (Cf. Robert Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*, p. 103.) With this concept Baxter broke with most Puritan thinkers of his day, but Wesley found this idea to be both biblical and reasonable and called it prevenient grace.

Though the Puritans made the covenant of grace central, they did not thereby mean to neglect the moral law and obedience to the commandments. The content of the covenant of works now became a natural consequence of the spiritual life of Christ in the believer. While not meritorious for salvation, covenants to perform certain duties were important signs of faith and edifying for the individual's relationship with God and with other believers. In Wesley's notes on 2 Chron. 15:12 he writes, "The matter of this covenant was nothing but what they were before they were obliged to . . . yet it would help increase their sense of obligation, and arm them against temptations. And by joining all together in this, they strengthened the hands of each other" (*Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* 2:1372. Quoted also in Monk, p. 105).

This appreciation for the power of covenants was in-

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"PASTOR, I HAVE AIDS"

by a Holiness Pastor

AIDS. What are its personal and professional implications for pastors? If the projections are correct, AIDS will spread until it touches every city, congregation, and family in the country. Most of us will deal with the problem when we have to—not a minute sooner. We will learn by trial and error. We must operate that way because most problems come upon us without warning. We react because that is how we must live with most crises. Even when danger is predicated to hit us, we tend to deny it. After all, prophets of doom are often wrong, so why face the problem needlessly?

The impending problems related to AIDS have been announced far in advance. True to our human tendency, we refuse to believe it's coming. Or if it does come, it won't affect us. At least that's how I thought and acted. I live in a conservative town of about 60,000 people, 50 miles from a metropolitan area and about the same distance from a university town with a large gay population. I had no reason to think I would deal with any AIDS-related problems any time in the near future. I assumed it might be a decade or more before I had to deal with it.

I was wrong. AIDS has already come to my congregation. It came in a way I wasn't prepared for. A "Christian" man visited my office. He and his family are actively involved in our church. He told me that his story had to be kept secret, but that it might soon break into public.

"Jess" is a businessman who travels a great deal. A

couple of years ago he began visiting prostitutes while on the road. He thought of these visits as "relief," not relationships. His only *relationship* was with his wife. He felt some guilt at first but eventually saw these visits as no more significant than eating in restaurants. And they became almost as frequent as eating in restaurants. But he was discreet. His wife, family, and church suspected nothing. The issue of AIDS had not bothered him at first. Then, with all the information on television, radio, and in newspapers, he began to think about it more. Many of his trips took him to San Francisco and New York. The media pointed out that those were two centers where the disease was rampant. He suspected he might have contracted the virus. He needed to talk to someone; I was a friend he could trust.

The most immediate problem I faced was the shock of his confession. He had sung in the choir, sponsored teen activities, and attended most services. His family was "up to their ears" in the church. My mind whirled when he confessed his sins. He added that he had sought and found forgiveness at the altar the previous Sunday. Stalling to regain composure, I asked him to begin at the point he was first unfaithful to his wife and give me an overview. As he shared the details, I prayed that God would help me love and help the man. At first I could do neither. The Lord answered my prayer, and I

Nazarene

Update

UPDATE EDITOR, MARK D. MARVIN, PASTORAL MINISTRIES

FRUIT THAT WILL LAST

In John 15:16, Christ summarizes His teaching about vines and branches by pointing out that He had chosen us to "bear fruit—fruit that will last" (NIV). The relationship of vine to branch is especially true of preachers, for lasting work is their goal.

Since we do not belong to the world, we can expect to be hated by Satan and the worldly life (15:19). Our call is from God. We expect to draw the fire of the devil, so we must especially be on our guard. Our best defense is our relationship to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the power in us. The final, strong admonition of Jesus to His disci-

ples related to this: "Stay . . . until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49, NIV).

The minister's devotional life is not somehow a separate compartment of living, separate from all of the things he may do. The key element is what we actually *are*. The *being* supersedes the doing and the going. Any effort to separate spirituality from ministry is artificial. What matters most is what we are rather than what techniques or ministry we employ. Manipulation's trap is open when we cease working from the inner being outward.

Whether taking charge in a new pastorate or holding on in an old one, the power of the Holy Spirit in us is our great strength. We are at our best when people are encouraged by simply observing us. Spending mornings in devotion, prayer, and study is a good general rule. The diverse work of ministering, leading, and evangelizing is productive and meaningful as we are connected to Christ and His eternal purposes.



by General Superintendent
Raymond W. Hurn

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"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV

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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.

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YOU are important to NWMS!



Yes, You!

Pastors are an integral part of NWMS. Whether or not your church achieves **Mission Award** status has much to do with you. Your local NWMS president can encourage your congregation only so much. **Your** support (and, yes, **enthusiasm**) can be a boost.

How can you encourage your church to be a **Mission Award** church?

1. Have a Mission Prayer Ministry

- Encourage family prayer time, with prayers for missions included.
- Present requests from the NWMS Prayer Mobilization Line (816-444-0588), *World Mission* magazine, etc.
- Pray in worship services for your LINKS missionaries.
- Pray with your congregation for world evangelism.

2. Participate in the Mission Education Program

- See to it that your church uses the resource (study) pockets for all age levels.
- Check your church's progression toward its reading book goal (1½ times your church membership). **Be sure you read, too.**
- Promote subscriptions to and reading of *World Mission* magazine. It provides "up-close and personal" stories—the results of your church's General Budget giving.

3. Place Importance on Mission Stewardship

- Pay your General Budget in full.
- Overpay as God blesses your church with His resources.

4. Provide Mission Involvement for Youth and Children

- Are the study packets for both the youth and children utilized? They need a special time of mission education geared toward their age level.
- Take personal interest in youth and children's mission education. Ask the directors about their group's progression rather than relying on reports from others.
- Do your youth and children participate in the district project and activities for their age level?
- Allow the young people to help in adult mission studies.



BOARD OF PENSIONS AND BENEFITS USA

*Take one of life's unique and
probing moments to thank God
for a church that cares.*



WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

OUR CHURCH CAN BE YOUR HOME

How *Your* CHURCH Can Be *Their* HOME

The massive advertising campaign being conducted by the Church of the Nazarene announces, "Our church can be your home." Your church can be **THEIR HOME** if you will provide:



A WARM FAMILY FEELING. Get ready for company! People can only feel comfortable in a home with an atmosphere of mutual respect and love. Revivals, scheduled periodically, will help to ensure that the beauty of Christ's love is flowing, in abundant measure, through a fellowship that is "perfected in unity, that the world may know" (John 17:23, NASB).



AN ENFOLDING FAMILY FELLOWSHIP. Open the doors! People who visit churches will stay in those that provide intimacy and acceptance. The formation of new entry-opportunity groups within your church will provide avenues for intimacy development and fruitful tools for process evangelism. Jesus said, "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd" (John 10:16, NASB).



AN EMBRACING FAMILY FOCUS. Look for the homeless! Most first-time visitors are brought to the church through contact with someone on the inside. The family can turn its focus to look with loving eyes upon those who are lost and homeless, and personal evangelism training can provide preparation to bring them home to Jesus. He instructed, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35, NASB).



*Give thanks
unto the Lord, for he is
good: for his mercy
endureth for ever.*

PSALM 107:1

THANKSGIVING OFFERING FOR WORLD EVANGELISM

Church of the Nazarene



THE SHEPHERD'S

LIFE

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

LEADERSHIP



INSPIRATION



FULFILLMENT



ENRICHMENT

FASHIONED BY A VISION

The church's work has been dramatically affected by scientific methodology. Never have so many useful, sophisticated tools been available to accomplish her mission. Sociology and demographic studies help us to see which fields are most ready for harvest. Technology and organizational models help in developing strategies for church growth. We can learn how to use leadership tools and management principles for improved organization.

Tools alone, however, do not guarantee a good product, even in the hands of experienced users. The church could rely on these secular methods, become statistically larger, and still not grow as a church! It takes more than numbers to verify church "growth." Lost people must be converted to Christ and made His disciples if the church is to grow. Conversion is the work of God.

Therefore, we must rely primarily on the power of His Spirit and only secondarily on tools we can derive from science, technology, and corporate models. There is danger in becoming enamored with the tangible and transient, ignoring the priority of the spiritual and eternal.

We must always remember we are the church! The church cannot be described simply in organizational terms, even though organized structure gives it visibility. The church is the extension of Christ's life in the world. We are members of His body! As such, we are to extend that life as far as possible.

The church can legitimately use the available tools for real growth only as Christians are energized and directed by the Holy Spirit. We are engaged in a spiritual conflict. Therefore, the first principle of prayer cannot be ignored! If this is not God's work, our labors are in vain.



Before getting serious about stating our mission, setting goals, and working plans for church growth, we must pray. We have no right to presume what our unique mission is unless we have a corporate understanding of God's will! We cannot afford to take for granted that we know His will if our conversations with Him have been casual or superficial!

I am convinced that Christ will build His church through a people who truly respond to Him. He wants to capture us with a vision. It is His vision; a vision that will give direction to effective planning and inspiration for new achievements. Therefore, it is not to be controlled by one person, but shaped and shared by the whole body, the Church.

The vision may be conceived in private, but it must be given birth in open dialogue. It will grow and take shape as each member becomes involved with one another in response to the vision. Gradually, a miracle can be seen. Each participant is fashioned by the very vision he is helping to shape!

If the vision is to come from God, it must be born of prayer. There are no short-cuts or cheap substitutes here. The price is total commitment, but the rewards are extraordinary. The vision will give purpose to all we do in the church. It will serve to consolidate our energies and coordinate our efforts. We will feel a new level of motivation and a high sense of fulfillment. This is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

God will reveal himself as you open yourself to Him. There is an adventure into a new level of spiritual guidance where He will "show you things to come."

Note: If you would like to know how this concept is being implemented, write Pastoral Ministries about the FLAME project.

Wilbur W. Brannon
Pastoral Ministries Director



COURSE OF STUDY UPDATE

Preaching Biblically, by Don M. Wardlaw, is the replacement required reading book for *A Guide to Biblical Preaching*, Elder, Level II, No. 124a.

General Psychology for Christian Counselors, by Ronald L. Koteskey, is the replacement required reading book for *Psychology*, Elder, Level III, No. 136a; Deacon—Christian Education, Level III, No. 236a; Deacon—Compassionate Ministries, Level III, No. 336a; Deacon—Music Ministries, Level III, No. 436a.

Christian Counseling, by Gary Collins, is the replacement text for *The Ministry of Pastoral Counseling*, Elder, Level IV, No. 145.

The Pair in Your Parsonage, by James Hamilton, and *Clergy Couples in Crisis*, by Dean Merrill, are the replacement optional reading books for *What's Happening to Clergy Marriages*, Elder, Level IV, Nos. 145b and 145c.

Teaching to Change Lives, by Howard Hendricks, is the replacement optional reading book for *Teaching for Results*, Deacon—Christian Education, Level II, No. 224d.

The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ, by James S. Stewart, Elder, Level I, No. 111c; Deacon—Christian Education, Level I, No. 211c; Deacon—Compassionate Ministries, Level I, No. 311c; Deacon—Music Ministries, Level I, No. 411c is out of print. *Adventures in Appreciation*, Classic Edition, Perrine et al., Elder, Level II, No. 126; Deacon—Christian Education, Level II, No. 226; Deacon—Compassionate Ministries, Level II, No. 326; Deacon—Music Ministries, Level II, No. 426 is out of print. *Creative Preaching: Finding the Words*, by Elizabeth Achtemeier, Elder, Level III, No. 134d is out of print. Contact Pastoral Ministries for information on their replacements.

Editor's note: Since press time, eight other textbooks have gone out of print. For a detailed list of replacements, contact Pastoral Ministries.

STEPS TO A LOCAL MINISTER'S LICENSE

The licenses are now obtained through Pastoral Ministries by following these simple steps:

1. Request a Local Minister's License Packet from Pastoral Ministries. The packet contains:
 - a. Procedures for Issuing a Local Minister's License
 - b. Application for Local Minister's License
 - c. Interview Guidelines: Candidate for Local Minister's License
 - d. Renewing the Local Minister's License
 - e. Local Minister's License Information Card
2. Review the procedures and have the candidate fill out the application.
3. Schedule an interview with the church board using the Interview Guidelines.
4. After the local church board approves the granting of the license (and approved by the district superintendent when necessary) fill out the Local Minister's License Information Card and send it to Pastoral Ministries. A license will be sent as soon as the card is received.
5. Enroll the licensee with the District Ministerial Studies Board.



ARE YOU SHEPHERDING TIRED OF WITH- OUT A STAFF?

PASTORAL MINISTRIES' PLACEMENT SERVICE

can help you find just the right support staff for your flock out of its bank of qualified personnel. If we can help you, contact Pastoral Ministries, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131. Phone: 813-333-7000.

PASTORAL MINISTRIES PRESENTS ...



WELCOME TO THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

INTRODUCING OUR FAMILY

"Welcome to the Church of the Nazarene: Introducing Our Family" is a 30-minute film designed for use in membership preparation classes and to inform potential members about the Church of the Nazarene. It premiered at PALCON III and is available on videocassette (PAVA-5995) for \$29.95.

A companion book (PA083-411-2566, \$4.95) and leader's guide (PA083-411-2558, \$2.50) both titled *Welcome to the Church of the Nazarene: An Introduction to Membership*, are also available for use in membership preparation classes.

Be sure and order your copies through Nazarene Publishing House today!

Picture Your Opportunities

Where are the receptive people in our ministry area? What needs exist in our neighborhood? Where are the people who are like our congregation?

One district wanted the answers to these questions for its most populous county. Contacting the Church Growth Research Center, they not only found the data but also were able to see it in easy-to-read maps.

Have many Nazarenes on the district been to college? The western part of the county is similarly educated.

New residents are especially likely to respond to the gospel; the southwest part of the county should be targeted for growth strategies.

Jesus said He came to minister to the poor; there is obvious need for such ministry in the eastern part of the county.

Help your people see the opportunities for ministry. Contact the Church Growth Research Center for assistance.

College Graduates

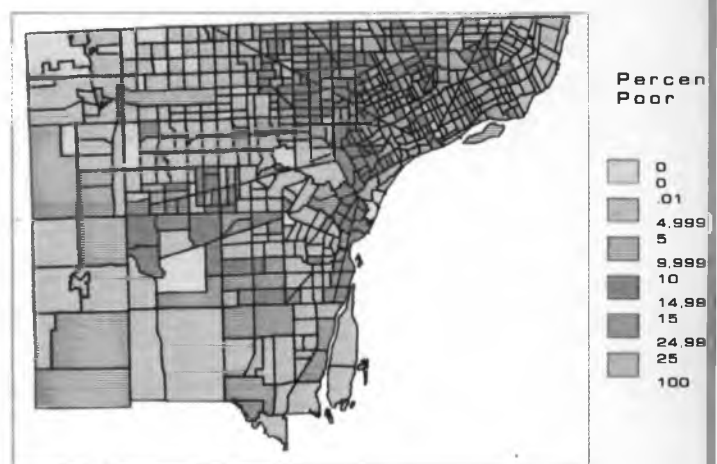


New Residents



New to County Since 1975

Families in Poverty



Families Below Poverty Level



Church Growth Research Center
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City, MO 64131

AT THE 1989 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CHURCH GROWTH CONFERENCE

June 21-22

(Wednesday evening and during the day on Thursday)

Indianapolis, Indiana

- **Plenary Sessions Featuring Inspiring Speakers**
- **Small-Group Consultations by Church Size**
With Advance Analysis Preparation
by the Church Growth Research
Center (if requested)

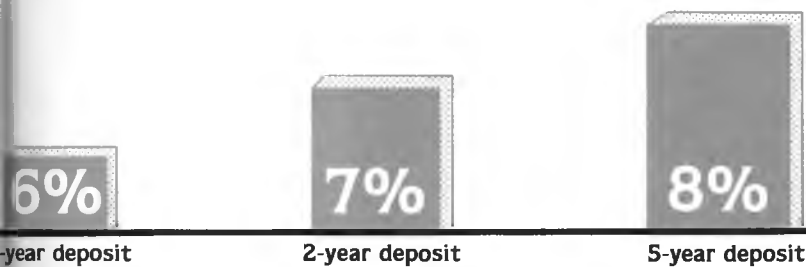
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The General Church Loan Fund
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City, MO 64131



GCLF DEPOSIT FORM

Yes, I want to help build new churches to reach the lost while at the same time exercising sound stewardship by investing in the General Church Loan Fund—U.S.A.

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SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

DISTRICT

CHURCH

I am enclosing a check for \$_____

____ Send interest semiannually

____ Hold interest to accumulate

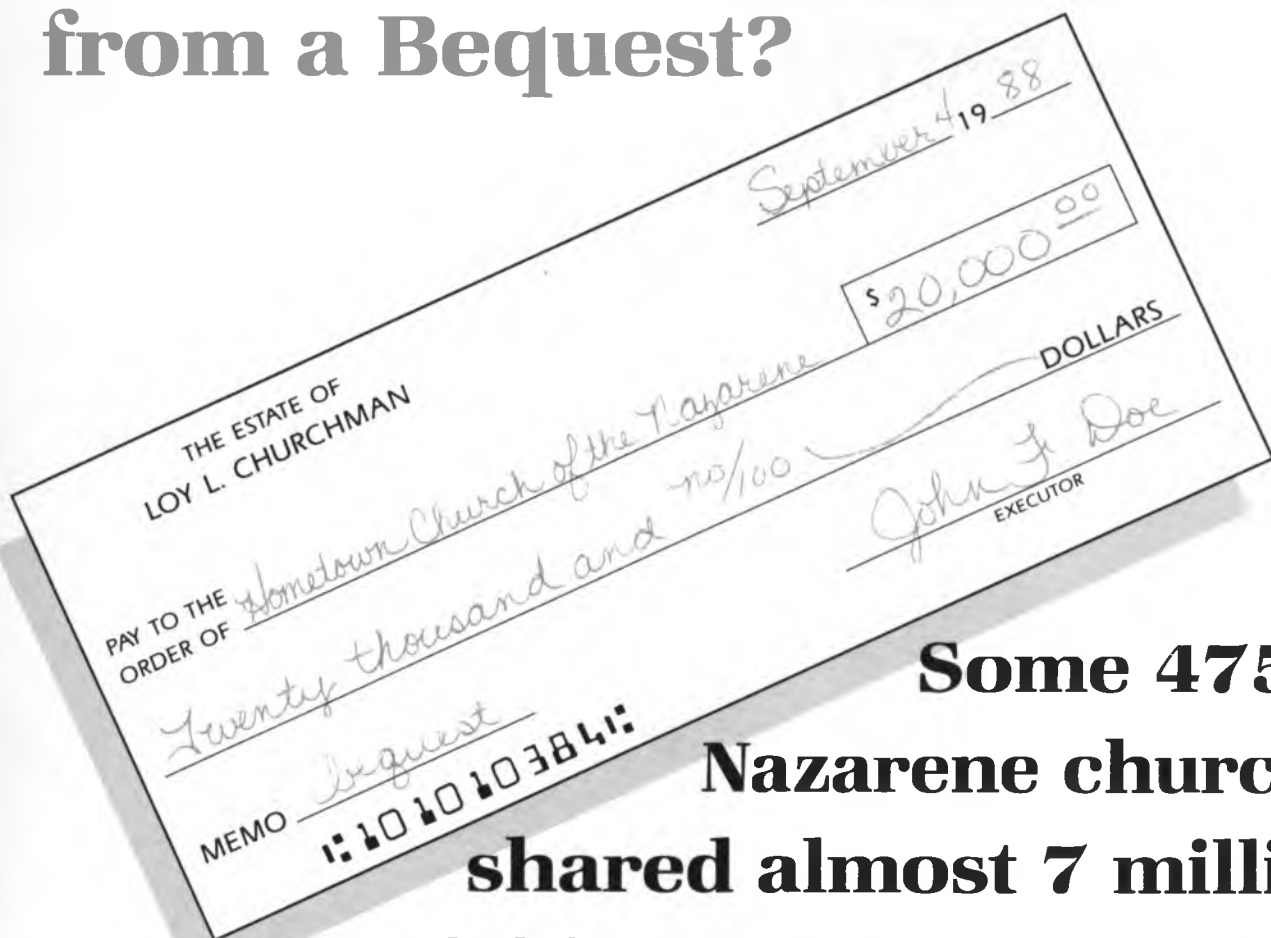
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*Penalties for early withdrawal: All notes will be adjusted to 5%.

(Please indicate desired interest rate with your deposit.)

Could Your Church Benefit from a Bequest?



**Some 475
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shared almost 7 million
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Life Income Gifts Services can help your church be among the growing number of churches whose members are making carefully laid estate plans, having accepted their accountability to their families and to God. Contact:

Life Income Gifts Services
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Attn: Robert D. Hempel

In Canada,
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Box 30080, Station B
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Name _____

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☐ Please send the brochure "Answers to All the Questions You Have Wanted to Ask About LIFE INCOME GIFTS SERVICES."

☐ Contact me about scheduling a Wills Service at our church.

*The time is coming
when the memory of
our people will be only
as good as our
historical record.*

NAZARENE ARCHIVES

ANNOUNCES TWO SPECIAL EMPHASES IN 1988-89

AFRICAN MISSIONS MATERIALS

Missions materials include valuable insights into the transmission of the faith and the interaction of cultures. We are especially looking for original materials on African missions, including missionary correspondence, diaries, and photographs. Donated materials will be shared with the archives and information center of the Africa Region of the Church of the Nazarene.



Zimbabwe Missionaries, 1930s (Schmelzenbach Collection)



The People's Evangelical Church, Providence, R.I., est. 1887 (Local Churches Collection)

CONGREGATIONAL RECORDS MICROFILM PROJECT

The archives is establishing a permanent program of microfilming the records of our oldest churches. If your church was founded before 1925, we would like the opportunity to film your church minutes and other permanent records. Insure that the history of your congregation is preserved and available to future generations. Inquire for details.

CONTACT:

Stan Ingersol, Archivist
Nazarene Archives
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City, MO 64131



*You Can't
Thank Them
Too Much;
but You Can
Thank Them
Too Late*



If you can read this magazine openly, without fear of reprisals, first thank God.
Then express your appreciation to a Nazarene servicemember.

Military Personnel Appreciation Day (MILPAD)

Sunday, November 13

Now Available

Two New Ways to Help You Serve Your Service Personnel

Start Your Servicemember's Basic Training before He or She Leaves Home with the

SERVICEMEMBERS' READINESS PACKET

Each clear vinyl packet contains materials especially selected to help young servicemembers stand firm in their faith while in the service. Included are:

Camouflage Pocket New Testament (NIV)
NOW THAT YOU'RE IN THE MILITARY SERVICE

by Chaplain David Grosse

FORWARD EDGE OF THE BATTLE AREA

by Chaplain Curt Bowers

THE MASTER'S PLAN FOR MAKING DISCIPLES

by Win Arn and Charles Arn

FAMILY WHEREVER YOU GO: A Directory of Nazarene Churches near military installations around the world.



Don't Know Where or How to Start? Let us give you some ideas with

MINISTRY TO THE MILITARY

Compiled by Curt Bowers and Mark Marvin, this practical guide will help you maintain or establish your ministry to service personnel.

We'll help you minister to your church members who are stationed elsewhere, as well as to servicemembers stationed near your church.

Also included are ideas for MILPAD and a sample order of worship for MILPAD Sunday.

For your free copy of **MINISTRY TO THE MILITARY**, contact Chaplaincy Ministries, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131.



Available for only \$9.95 from
 Nazarene Publishing House



THE EDITORIAL BOARD



The most important aspect of the ministry is the pastor's personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Yet sometimes, amid the pull to *do ministry*, this vital area gets only token attention. This issue was planned to help you in your effort to give top priority to THE MINISTER'S DEVOTIONAL LIFE.

Pictured (l. to r.) are the people who served, without pay, to plan this important issue: **Morris A. Weigelt**, professor of New Testament, Nazarene Theological Seminary; **Wesley Tracy**, editor, *The PREACHER'S MAGAZINE*; **Wilbur W. Brannon**, Pastoral Ministries director; **Mark D. Marvin**, assistant editor, *The PREACHER'S MAGAZINE*; **Dee Freeborn**, associate professor of Pastoral Theology, NTS; **Russell Metcalfe**, pastor, Wollaston Church of the Nazarene, Quincy, Mass.; **Keith A. Maule**, pastor, South Florida Heights Church of the Nazarene, Lakeland, Fla.; and **Annette Taft Brown**, Nazarene elder and pastor's wife, Kerrville, Tex.



"I helped him understand that his sex life was an addiction."



received the strength to be a friend to him. That was the most crucial issue of all. I knew I had to deal with myself before I could help him or be used by God to help him. I did that. Within 10 minutes I was at peace inside. Through personal experience I discovered that there was grace available to me in my moment of unbelievable anguish. The man was suffering so much himself that he never noticed my struggle.

Feelings about AIDS run deep within us. I consider myself fairly astute in facing tacky counseling/spiritual issues, but this threw me. Therefore, I feel it is urgent that pastors work out *now* how they will face the problem when it surfaces in someone close to the church.

AIDS is like no other issue we have faced. It brings issues on issues that contradict each other. Too many facets are involved in a case to make a decision or take a stand in the heat of a confession session. We must work out ahead of time what we think and feel is the Christian attitude. We must also work out what the consequences of those thoughts and feelings will bring.

As Jess talked, I prayed that God would neutralize my feelings and block my mind. He did that. To me it was a miracle. I was then able to concentrate on his confession. I would have done more damage than good had I not been able to get my personal feelings out of the situation.

His story was frightening. Jess had been unfaithful to his wife for over two years. He rarely slept with the same woman twice. He figures he had at least 200 different partners during those years. At least 50 of them were in the San Francisco area. He was scared.

"Does 'Jane' [his wife] know of your fears?" I asked him.

"No; I have told no one but you."

"Have you had sex with your wife lately?"

"Every week. We had it last night."

"Jess, I think the very first thing you need to do is to get tested."

"Where and how?"

"The next time you're in San Francisco, go to a clinic. Don't have sex with your wife again until you know the results of the test!"

"I'll be in San Francisco this week."

"Now, Jess, we need to talk about three things. First, your responsibility to your wife and family. Second, your fears of the disease and what may be ahead. Third, your addiction to sex."

All three of these issues are tough. I also needed to explore any potential he had for suicide or any plans for simply disappearing. We had to talk about insurance and what financial options he and his family had. I had to face him squarely with his physical relationships with his

daughters. We discussed relationships with other men. I even had to ask him if he had ever been intimate with anyone in the church besides his wife. I have rarely dealt with a person's personal life in such detail.

Counseling a potential AIDS patient is different from virtually all other counseling in these areas:

1. Some states have laws that put stringent legal responsibilities on the counselor. (As far as I know, child abuse and AIDS are the only two things in my state about which information obtained from counseling is mandated by law to be passed on to the authorities.) If the pastor is unwilling to cooperate with the laws, he must either refrain from hearing confessions, or he must be willing to go to jail for breaking the law.

2. Once the confessor's disease is confirmed, the pastor has a larger obligation than the one with the disease. If the one who is ill will not share the information with his wife, will the pastor? What if there are children in the home? What if the man is a greeter in the church? Or a salad server in the kitchen? What if he helps in a scout program, takes teens camping, or drives the church van?

3. How do I deal with the man in the future? I will never be able to shake his hand without thinking about my hangnails. How many people in the church have hangnails? I'd never thought of it before! What are the rights of those I know he will be close to? What are *his* rights?

4. How much do I tell my wife?

My conclusion in this situation was to tell no one. I decided the testing agency would need to deal with the legal ramifications. The man would have to deal with his wife and family. As for the church, I began a quiet education program on AIDS, including developing the habit of washing hands after church. I have always washed my hands after visiting a patient in the hospital. Now I wash my hands after every service. I have begun speaking openly about the need for extra caution around blood or saliva and special care of any open wounds or sores. I spoke out on nurses wearing gloves, masks, and goggles when treating patients where blood or saliva are present. My reasoning here is that Christian nurses may feel it is unchristlike to do that. I began teaching a lifestyle that assumes everyone you meet is a carrier. It has given my preaching on the biblical approach to sex more authority.

I have talked openly of the fact that with up to 3 million people carrying the virus in the U.S.A., it is highly likely that someone among us has it. Since I have gone public on the subject, four others have revealed fears of having contracted the virus.

The issue of Jess telling his wife was equally sensitive. If he told everything, I felt sure his marriage would end immediately. He talked of simply disappearing to save her embarrassment. He had plans to kill himself rather than face her with the trouble. I encouraged him to tell her enough to warn her, but including as few details about his unfaithfulness as possible. If he was clean, there would be no need to test her. If not, she needed to be tested, too. Marriage counseling would be necessary either way.

As for Jess' promiscuous life-style, it had to stop. If he was clean, he needed to thank God and take no more

risks. If he had contracted the virus, any more contacts would spread the disease. I asked him to report back to me on a regular schedule about his sex life. I helped him understand that his sex life was an addiction. It had to be stopped just the same as tobacco, alcohol, or drug addictions. He would not stop without help. I agreed to be his confidential help.

I prepared myself for another broken marriage. Jane came to see me. She was nervous but in control. We talked awhile, moving toward the problems. When we got there, she reported the information of Jess's infidelity and his testing positive for the HIV virus in a detached manner. She did not believe the story. Not one bit. Jess was, according to Jane, an adoring husband and father in the highest traditions of the Church. His escapades were mere fantasies. He needed help to clean up his mind, but what man didn't? She was going to do more to fulfill those fantasies at home. She had heard on a TV program that most AIDS tests were wrong. Jess did not have HIV, ARC, or AIDS, she insisted. He would not be tested again, and she certainly would not. We then discussed Jess's addiction to sex and her role in the cure.

When Jess returned for his next session, he echoed his wife's feelings about his not having the disease and his unwillingness to be retested. He thought she understood his infidelity and was relieved at how well she accepted it. In fact, he had never had it so good at home. As for his old habits, the verdict is not in yet. His interest in my help is waning. Habits die slowly. Probably nothing has changed.

What went wrong with my help? The issues Jess and Jane have to face are too big, too powerful, too much for them to handle. They've managed them in the only way they know how. They have denied they have problems. One of these days the harsh reality will crash down on them, and I will be praying for another miracle of wisdom. They continue to function as though nothing has changed. I am praying that gradually they will be able to deal with their problems. My schedule has prevented me from doing much with them. Maybe I'm avoiding them because I don't know what to do.

It is this shadowy area of having the disease yet denying its presence that pastors are most likely to confront AIDS. Yet it is in this realm of reality denial that we are least equipped to work. Ours is a world of honesty. We struggle to bring honesty to all situations, yet here are people facing problems too monstrous for them to admit having because their whole world will collapse. By the time it is full-blown and they must accept reality, it is too late to deal with life. Then we must prepare them to die, not live.

My personal, selfish prayer keeps being, "Lord, protect me from ever having to deal with the AIDS-related problems again." But the Lord keeps reminding me that there are at least seven people sitting in church, listening to me preach every week, who are living in that world of reality denial, a world so scary that they refuse to acknowledge that it exists. Most of their energy is used up making sure they never even glance toward that awful world. And somehow I'm supposed to minister to these people, to be a healing agent of God's grace. *God, help me.*

DOES THE PASTOR HAVE A PASTOR?

by Keith A. Maule

Pastor, South Florida Heights Church of the Nazarene, Lakeland, Fla.

An interview with six district superintendents of the Church of the Nazarene: Bill E. Burch, Arizona; Arnold R. Carlson, Jr., Rocky Mountain; Russell C. Human, Minnesota; Jesse C. Middendorf, Northwest Oklahoma; Hugh L. Smith, Washington Pacific; and Wil M. Spaite, Central California

A new concept of ministry in the office of district superintendent seems to be spreading in our church. It is the concept of the district superintendent being a pastor to pastors. It's an exciting concept, but can that actually happen? We have interviewed six district superintendents to find out their successes and failures in striving to be a shepherd to the shepherds.

MAULE: *What do you think a pastor wants from a district superintendent?*

MIDDENDORF: My memory is probably more effective right now than my experience. I think that what I looked for as a pastor was support for my ministry—encouragement, educational opportunity or training, and nurture for the family. The pastor needs a sense of care for his family from the district superintendent. He also needs a sense of mission from the district, so that there's a sense of vision and direction.

SMITH: Most pastors would like to have someone who would listen to them without passing judgement. In other words they don't want a giver of advice, but rather someone who will pray with them through any problems they might have.

SPAITE: I have a new Pastor's Orientation Day every year. We come together and eat and have an afternoon of sharing and praying. Basically, I share what they can expect of me and what I expect of them. I share with them that I see myself as having four roles:

1. *I am their friend.* As Christ was a friend to the disciples, I want to be their friend. My wife and I will pray for them and their families; we get to know their children by name. Our pastors are very important to us. We want to know what's happening in their lives and their children's lives.

2. *I am an equipper.* I provide them with resources that they may adapt to their own situations.
3. *I am an administrator* in the sense that they need accurate information in order to more effectively carry out their commitments.
4. *I am a reflector.* By this, I mean one available for counsel. Proverbs says a wise man has wise counselors. I believe in preventive medicine. As a pastor, when I was in a situation where I needed to talk and know the right approach, I could call someone in confidence. I encourage them, if they have a nearby pastor, to do this. If they need to talk to me, I want them to know I'm available.

MAULE: *One of the pastor's responsibilities is to equip the saints for service. As a pastor to the pastors, what*



Keith A. Maule

are some of the things that you do to equip equip-
pers?

BURCH: I want, when possible, to transfer to them all of the things that I have learned in 25 years of pastoral ministry. First, I want to give myself to them in training. Second, we reach out and try to bring in the very best resource persons to equip them. For example, we have brought in the president of the Princeton Management Association for a 2-day, 16-hour seminar on planning management decisions. We have brought in people in conflict management, some who are experts on motivation, and others who know how to preach holiness in the 20th century. I try to provide three seminars a year. I personally just finished a tour across the district, meeting with all of the pastors and their associates on leading and managing the local church. Soon I will mail each pastor a 75-page manual titled *Managing Your Ministry* that gives handles on the kind of things that we shared in that seminar.

MAULE: I seem to recall that you have a resource library of cassettes and videos and books.

BURCH: We have a lot of the videotapes available through our denomination. We also have a lot of Chuck Swindoll, Lloyd Ogilvie, John MacArthur, and other "hot personalities" in strong biblical preaching. It's up to our guys to put our holiness interpretation to it. If a guy is working on a particular topic and wants to know what some of the leading preachers in America have to say, we have something in our library.

HUMAN: We have annual leadership tours. We bring in someone who can model what we're trying to get across. The leadership tour is for all the pastors and their wives, board members, and the leaders in the various areas of the church. The resource person speaks to the entire group about equipping for growth and outreach. We feel that it's creating a climate of growth for the district's future plans.

I also try to pass on a lot of the things that I used as a pastor: bulletin samples, organization charts, and different seminars on the practices of ministry. For those who have been pastoring for five years or less, I have practices seminars such as "How to Have a Membership Class." In these classes, I share some of the ministries and ideas that were successful for me. The responses to these classes has been outstanding.

Even though I believe in sharing things from my experience, I hope I don't speak down to them. I usu-

ally try to listen to them and talk with them. I ask them if they have ever tried this or that. If they haven't, then I say, "Well, you might want to try doing this." Then I offer them ideas or a good book that deals with this certain subject. I try to find where the guy is and what his needs are and try to address that, perhaps out of my own experience as a pastor.

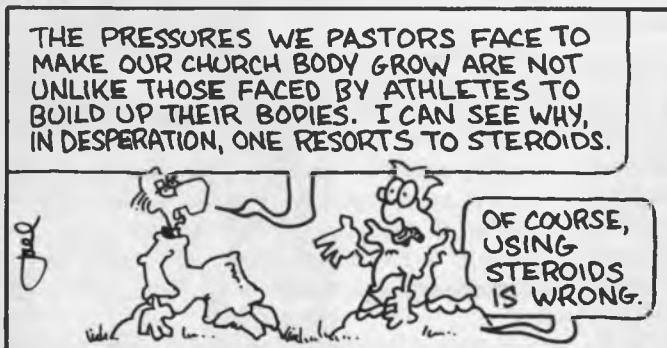
SMITH: Four to six times a year we have Pastor Enrichment times. Some of these are for one day, and some of them are overnights. We stress being informal so that the walls can come down and they can ask questions and respond to whomever we have as the resource person.

CARLSON: The first year after I was elected to this position, I started the Rocky Mountain Pastoral Institute. We've met every January for four years now. Going in on a Monday night, we're there through breakfast on Thursday morning. During that time, we spend somewhere between 14 and 20 hours in a sort of classroom. That's our major thrust. It's one big event that just brings our men together for fellowship, support, and instruction.

MIDDENDORF: We try to have at least one major seminar a year. We bring someone from off the district who can give pastors input in terms of management style, preaching organization, and so on. We try to make our Pastors' Retreat something positive and special. We had Lloyd Ogilvie here to speak to pastors and their wives. That had a massive impact that was life changing for a lot of our guys because it was such an infusion of magnificent concepts and practical management ideas as well as powerful preaching resources.

I also try to take a trip around the district at least once a quarter, meeting with pastors on each zone. We share sermon ideas and book titles. On my last tour, I had the book *To Spread the Power* synopsized and shared some overheads on that. We talked about some of the things that are involved in church growth. From time to time, I try to send them our district publications as well as individual memos and notes about thoughts and ideas. I've tried to encourage as many as possible to take classes part-time. I try to inform them about seminars that are being given in their areas. Nobody can take advantage of everything, but something will strike somebody's interest every time. I try to keep fresh in reading myself so that I can be aware of things they need or that may be of interest to

Pontius' Puddle



them. The hardest job I have is to try and stay fresh. There's so much going on, it's hard to keep up.

MAULE: *As a pastor to pastors, do you believe that you can have an impact on local church growth?*

SMITH: I want to believe that. My first year as superintendent, all we talked about was intercessory prayer. One of my projects for our district was to establish an intercessory prayer network. Maybe I'll have coffee with a pastor. But the main time is spent at the altar, praying and asking God to give the things that are necessary to make this man's life worthwhile. If there have been some instances of growth, it's because the person has focused on what God wants him to do.

We are fortunate to have some pastors who are bound together for the purpose of prayer. It's something that's coming from the pastors themselves. Maybe it flows from the pastoral enrichment times. We have one group that involves 5 pastors and their churches. Theirs is a corporate goal. They don't talk about attendance so much as they talk about their corporate goal. Five churches combined, all of them working together. Three of the guys were very depressed about their churches. Now you'll find them in the top 10. Most of them have been a percentage gain and some of them a numerical gain. We're talking about 1 church that was doing well to average 50 two years ago. Last Sunday they had 162! Another church that had terrible financial problems was doing well to get 60. They had 105 last Sunday. I attribute these to those guys' bond of prayer. That's something I can't legislate, but you try. You put guys together who you think will work well together in prayer teams, but you really can't legislate it. It's something that has to come from desire. We have three or four groups where that is happening.

CARLSON: I had a church planting situation that the Lord helped us with. They were to the point of frustration. They had been praying for two years that God would send them another couple to help them. God did send a couple to their town in a miraculous way, yet different than they anticipated. A Nazarene was hired as their superintendent of schools. That couple moved in and fit right into the church. Of course, he has the gift of administration, so I suggested to the pastor that it could be that this man was waiting for him to come and say, "I could really use your help in the area of administration." The pastor met with him and that was indeed the case. Since the pastor is bivocational, this layman lifted a tremendous load from his shoulders in getting that church really organized. That one thing that came out of our conversation was inspired of God.

HUMAN: One of the things I've tried to do is to create a climate of positive optimism among the pastors and the people. I try to help them to develop a mind-set that God really does want to help their church grow. We try to eliminate negative thinking and feelings about that and help them realize that God really is with them and for them in providing an attitude of church growth. This is helping us create that kind of climate for people to schedule themselves and have spiritual objectives that would honor God and result in growth.

MIDDENDORF: It was easier to affect direct church growth in a local church. It's harder here. I have to do it by remote control or secondhand. I'm finding that the pastors and these churches do respond to motivational input, particularly if it is connected to an overarching vision. My vision is the fulfillment of the Great Commission in Northwest Oklahoma. Though we're doing a good job, we have a long way to go.

MAULE: *You affect church growth by raising vision?*

MIDDENDORF: That's the only way it can be done. It's long-term. It's not the kind of thing we'll see an immediate response to everywhere, but if you keep it up, if you keep positive, action-oriented motivation before them, it will help.

MAULE: *What do you do as a pastor to the pastor's family?*

BURCH: We sent the pastors' wives a Howard Henry tape, "Understanding Your Pastor's Wife," for their birthdays. I sent the pastors tapes on burnout, and how to be successful through those stages. On anniversaries, I sent them the tape "How to Keep Your Wife Turned On," by Charlie Shedd. I write each church board when it's the pastor's wedding anniversary time and suggest that the church will probably want to do something. I write the Christian Life chairman about the pastor's birthday, and the missionary president or women's ministries director about the wife's birthday. We've gone as far as to tell about the kids, but it gets where you overwork a board.

SPAITE: I send the pastor and his wife cards every anniversary, and I print their anniversaries in the district paper. My wife keeps in touch from time to time with notes or cards, especially when there is a problem that they are going through. We are interested in their families. Success is living the life at home and having your children follow you in the Lord's work, whatever and wherever that may be. We enjoy being with the pastors' families. Once we had a particular area where there were a number of pastors with young children. We had an ice-cream party for all the kids. We took about 30 kids to an ice-cream parlor and had some games for them; and it was fun.

MAULE: *One of the pastor's major responsibilities is counseling. As a pastor to pastors, can we come to you as a layman would his pastor and not be afraid of hurting ourselves and our future?*

SMITH: I have tried to break down that barrier by being vulnerable to pastors myself. As in any kind of relationship, respect has to be earned. I make myself as vulnerable as anyone can, and, hopefully, that becomes contagious. I really doubt that a pastor could counsel with a superintendent the way a layman can with a pastor, but I still feel that to listen and leave all the judgments to God is an attribute that I can have. That's what I try to do.

BURCH: There are lots of guys smarter than I who say it can't be. My personal experience says that it can. One of the objectives in that particular area of pastoral care, being a shepherd to the shepherds, is to develop and maintain an integrity and trust with my "parishioners." I want them to feel they can share their hurts, needs, dreams, and failures with their pastor without fear of the confidence being betrayed or that it will be

used against them when it is time to make a move. If there is a deep character flaw or a moral break, then that's different. But men who have just had problems in their marriages or personal lives, I have moved them. I can point to four or five parsonage marriages that God somehow helped us to save because they felt they could trust us and that what they shared would be kept in strict confidence. It would never be used as an illustration from the pulpit. Out of that, we moved three of those couples to other churches while we were there.

I think our system works against this, though, because of the power of influence that the district superintendent has. It's kind of an awesome thing to be vulnerable to a guy who holds your career in his hand. I can't be a pastor to pastors and a shepherd to shepherds unless the guys let me be one. If across time, and it does take time, they experience an integrity in relationships where they begin to feel, "Yes, I really can trust you," then yes. The thing that helps is for the district superintendent to be vulnerable also. Jan and I have found great experience in sharing with the guys on the district, not only here but also in pastors' and wives' retreats, out of our own life, our hurts, our weaknesses in places where we didn't make it. I admire a guy who knocks home runs all the time, but I can't relate to it. If someone says, "Let me tell you where I hurt and how I found God's help there," then I say, "OK if you're going to be that honest with me, then I'm going to be honest with you." So there has to be that mutual vulnerability to develop an integrity in relationship.

CARLSON: The district superintendent has to earn that right. If it doesn't come automatically, it will come through a process of time and demonstration of concern and love. It's not an easy barrier to overcome. If they run into a serious problem, I try to sit down and talk with them. If a problem arises between a pastor and his church, I try to sit down with him and listen to what he has to say. I also meet with the church board. Then, when it's needful, I bring the two together, and we sit there and talk about it. I had one pastor who was voted out a couple of years ago. So I met with him and his family, and then I met with the church board. There were some feelings that the vote might have been a fluke. So they renominated him as pastor, and he was recalled. I just met with his board last week, because his recall was coming up. They are not only going to vote on a two-year call, but they are

recommending him an extended call. It may be one of those exceptions, but it's still exciting!

SPAITE: In this area of advisor, I specifically tell them that what they share with me will be kept in confidence. I have high regard for my Advisory Board, however; and should there be a moral problem, that would obviously need to be taken on to them. As a pastor, I appreciated my district superintendent, knowing that what I shared with him was kept in confidence. I assure my pastors of confidentiality, unless a moral problem requires me, by the *Manual*, to take some steps. Pastors' wives have learned that my wife also keeps confidences, and we have been very sensitive to select leaders in whom we can confide. We have sought to be that kind of leader as well.

MAULE: Thank you, gentlemen.



PURITAN INFLUENCES

Continued from p. 31

fluent in Wesley's adaptation of the Alleines' covenant service during the period of 1748 to 1755. Wesley promoted the use of such a covenant service from 1755 on as a "means of increasing serious religion . . . practised by our forefathers" (*Works* 2:338-39). In his journal he repeatedly mentions the renewal that occurs when Christians enter into such a service. The promise of God met by the promises of person was considered to be the biblical pattern and therefore powerful.

Covenant theology appears to be a significant concept in attempting to harmonize Reformed and Wesleyan theology as a whole. There is obvious agreement on the two covenants of works and grace respectively. There is also consensus on the need to prevent antinomian tendencies while maintaining the absolute centrality of God's grace. There is further appreciation of the power of covenants for practical Christian living. However, the harmony of predestination with the universality of prevenient grace remains to be solved, as does the fuller understanding of perseverance of the saints with the Wesleyan fears of an antinomianism it might breed. As the logical consequence of predestination, the seeds for such fuller agreement may lie, in the first instance, with developing the theme of common grace and, in the second, with the awareness of the need for discipleship. Certainly the catholic spirit of John Wesley would not be offended if such harmony were achieved.



Pontius' Puddle



Two Encounters with Agony and Ecstasy

by C. S. Cowles

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Blaise Pascal, 17th-century mathematical genius, had a transcendent encounter with God that changed his life. His testimony was found sewn inside the lining of his cloak following his death, and reads in part:

The year of grace 1654

Monday, 23 November . . .

From about half past ten in the evening until half past twelve,

..... FIRE

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars.

Certitude, certitude, feeling, joy, peace.

God of Jesus Christ. . . .

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.

Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy. . . .

(D. Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 314)

The apostle Paul knew something about this euphoric experience of spiritual ecstasy. And he also knew much about its opposite: spiritual agony. It is not true that Christian maturity brings about a leveling out of human emotions. To the contrary, as we shall note in these two passages, there is an intensifying focus and clarifying awareness of the human spirit in its heights and depths. Yet Paul also takes us beyond the wild extremities of emotional swings to solid spiritual truth, which is constant and changeless.

1. BEYOND AGONY: COMFORT AND RESURRECTION

2 Cor. 1:3-11

With incredible candor, Paul confides the appalling defeat, the shattering failure, the intractable heartbreak of his ministry. We do not know what happened in Asia, but he reaches deep into the Greek language to find words that convey a pain almost beyond comprehension, especially in verse 8 (NASB).

Affliction means trouble, distress, squeezed, compressed, forced through a narrow place, under great pressure. *Burdened* has the connotation of violence, of having been savaged in some severe way. *Excessively* underscores the intensity of the trauma. In the Greek, this adverb is built upon the root *ballō*, which means to throw, as in casting a missile, a dart, a javelin. It speaks

of the vulnerability of being shot at. *Beyond our strength* conveys the absolute bankruptcy of resources. *Despair* is more than depression; it speaks of a perplexity, an uncertainty, an inability to figure out what is going on. It describes that dark night of the soul in which there is no divine light, no higher meaning, no cosmic purpose in view. In short, it is a kind of *death* (v. 9), all the more intractable because we are still alive and fully conscious of what we are going through. Though dying, we have neither the martyr's release nor his reward.

Out of this shattering trauma, however, dawns a radiant light that illuminates the face of God in a radically new way.

First, God does not afflict but comforts! (1:3-7)

A. *Appalling Misunderstanding*: that God causes suffering, either as a punishment for sins or as a discipline toward holiness. It is the nearly universal and deeply rooted idea that God wills evil in order to bring about good ends.

"I've helped Johnny to become a Christian," said my fourth grade daughter one day. I asked her to explain. She told me that at the beginning of the year, Johnny had a foul mouth and "cussed" all the time.

"Daddy, Johnny hasn't said even one swear word for the last three or four weeks, not since I made a Christian out of him."

"That's wonderful," I replied. "But how did you make him a Christian?"

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"I beat him up!"

Though that method of "behavioral modification" has a certain appeal, that is not how God deals with us. He does not cause affliction!

B. What Kind of a God?

1. *He is the Father of Jesus Christ* (v. 3a). He is the kind of Father who could have a Son like Jesus. And Jesus would rather die than afflict—and He did!

2. *He is the Father of mercies* (v. 3b).

3. *He is the God of all comfort* (v. 3c). Ten times in five verses Paul uses the word *paracetos*, comfort, which John uses to describe the Holy Spirit.

C. Why Does God Comfort? (vv. 4-7). In order that we may comfort others who are in distress.

A little girl came home from a neighbor's house where her little friend had died.

"Why did you go?" questioned her father.

"To comfort her mother," said the child.

"What could you do to comfort her?"

"I climbed into her lap and cried with her."

Second, God does not destroy but delivers (1:8-11)

A. An Even More Appalling Misunderstanding: that God causes death? That God is not only the Creator of life but its Executor as well. A student of mine wrote:

I believe that God uses hell as His main threat of punishment, but I also believe He does punish on earth as well. For instance, I know a strong Christian couple where the husband fell away from the Lord, and their three-month-old baby was taken from them in crib death. Can one not say that this is God's punishment for backsliding?

Here is another situation. A Christian girl prays desperately for her out-of-town boyfriend to come and visit her. She prays only for her own satisfaction and not for the Lord's will. On his way to see her he is killed in a car accident. Is this not a form of divine punishment for selfishness?

My response was: If this is what God is like, then who needs a devil? Death was never God's intention for His creation or for man. Paul is crystal clear: "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12, NASB). And again, "For the wages of sin is death" (6:23).

B. What Kind of a God?

1. *He is the God who raises the dead* (v. 9). Sin kills, but God raises the dead!

2. *He is the God who delivers* (v. 10).

3. *He is the God of the eternally unfolding tomorrows*, "on whom we have set our hope" (v. 10, NASB).

For those who are in Christ Jesus, beyond every death is a resurrection, beyond every ending a new beginning, beyond cessation a new creation. Or as the old colored preacher put it in his Good Friday sermon: "It's Friday, but Sunday's a-comin'!"

II. BEYOND ECSTASY: GRACE AND POWER

2 Cor. 12:1-10

From the agony of affliction to the ecstasy of deliverance, Paul now goes from the ecstasy of heavenly visions to the agony of human weakness, and beyond.

First, Paul's Ecstasy (vv. 1-5a)

A. Paul Had Many Visions: the Damascus road encounter with the Light (Acts 9:2-6), the Macedonian call (16:9), divine affirmation at Corinth (18:9-10), the trance in the Temple (22:17-21), and the angel who stood by him during the storm at sea (27:23-24).

B. This Vision Was of Greater Intensity than Any Other. He speaks of himself as being in the third person, not sure whether he was in or out of his body, and was lifted up to "the third heaven," not a place but a state of ultimate spiritual exaltation. "Paradise" comes from a Persian word that means "walled garden" where kings walked. He "heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak" (v. 4, NASB). Not esoteric knowledge such as the Gnostics claimed, but "inexpressible revelation." The spirit of man is capable of experiences beyond the boundaries of mere human verbalization.

C. Visions Are Marginal in Significance (vv. 1, 5). Why? Visions play a very small role in the Bible. Jesus was transfigured once! And that is because God's primary mode of revelation, from Gen. 1:3 to Revelation 22, is by the Word! The Word spoken, the Word written, and the Word incarnate in Jesus. While visions may overwhelm, it is the Word that informs the mind, enlightens the understanding, and moves the will to a decision in self-conscious freedom.

Further, visions are unreliable. Paul had a vision used against him at least once (Acts 21:10-14). King Saul discovered that even a witch at Endor can conjure up a vision, in his case a vision that spelled death (1 Sam. 28:7-19).

D. Visions Are Dangerous Spiritually. They tend to inflate the ego, encourage elitism, and even lead to spiritual arrogance (v. 7a). There is no arrogance to match that of the one who speaks for God. There is no higher court of appeals. The one who boasts of visions has become his own pope!

Second, Paul's Agony (vv 7b-8)

A. What Was His Thorn in the Flesh? Calvin thought it was spiritual temptations. Luther suggested it was persecutions (cf. 11:24-28). Medieval monks believed it to be sexual desire. Others have suggested that it was epilepsy, or the vexation of being single! Whatever it was, Paul uses a graphic word to describe the object of torment: literally a "stake" used to impale the condemned as a gross form of execution. And *in the flesh* implies a bodily affliction.

It is important to note that Paul does not say that God sent the painful ailment. He tracks its source to Satan. And yet God is able to use this distress for Paul's ultimate spiritual benefit—"to keep me from exalting myself!" (NASB). While God does not cause suffering, He can use it for our ultimate good and His greater glory.

B. Paul Learns to Live with Limitations. Experiences of rapturous ecstasy do not cancel out our basic humanity with all of its liabilities. Thorns in the flesh painfully remind us of our human transitoriness and finitude.

Third, Paul's Mighty Discovery of God's Grace (vv. 9-10)

A. Unanswered Prayer? (vv. 8-9). No! God's answer was not deliverance from the thorn but deliverance through and in spite of it.

Continued on p. 42

THE PRERETIREMENT YEARS: EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

by Dennis Apple

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As you approach retirement age, you will probably check out your pension plan, tax-sheltered annuity, and anticipated retirement income. However, you may give very little attention to the emotional preparations you need to make in order to insure a successful retirement. If you have not made the necessary emotional preparations, you could be in for big trouble.

For the past 12 years I have served as a senior adult minister and have been positioned to observe both laymen and clergy as they make the transition from "active" to "retired." Those who look ahead and prepare themselves enter into retirement with little or no problem. Others are shocked and surprised at the changes that retirement brings to them. These are the ones who suffer.

Someone has aptly said that mountain climbing is a very dangerous sport, but that climbing down the mountain is even more dangerous. Retirement, for the unprepared, can be very dangerous. However, it can also be the most rewarding time in your life.

Let's look at the statistics. In 1900, life expectancy in the United States was about 47 for a man and 51 for a woman. Only 10 percent of the population reached "middle age." Today, the average is 74 for men and 78 for women. People reaching their 65th birthday this year can expect to live; on average, 15 more years. Fortunately, this increased longevity doesn't mean those last years must be endured in bad health or senility. Today's 70-year-olds often resemble yesterday's 40-year-olds—quite a different picture from "Whistler's mother," who epitomized old age a century ago. She was only 44 when she sat for that famous painting!

One of the big shocks you must prepare for is the change in your role from pastor to pastor emeritus or retired pastor. "When you retire, you move suddenly

from pastor to retired pastor; from pulpit to pew; from a ringing telephone to silence; from sermon preparation to sermon listening; from chairman of the board to church member. These are not easy transitions. In fact, such drastic changes can be dangerous.

What are some of the *pitfalls* of retirement? Two seem to stand out:

1. Moving away from a community to which you have given a portion of your life in ministry is often a heart-wrenching experience. However, if you move to another pastorate, the pain of leaving friends is somewhat eased by building new relationships. When you retire, you leave a familiar church and community where you have filled a well-established role to become part of a new church and community where you are virtually unknown. There is no waiting, well-defined role for you to fill. You can soon come to feel exiled.

Oh sure, it is great to travel, see the kids and grandkids, play a few rounds of golf, and read that book without phone interruptions. But after a while, you miss being needed. The fishing, golf, and free time all begin to lose their appeal. In short, you begin to miss some of the pressure points, and you long for the times when people "needed you."

2. Another danger is the severing of ties from district and general offices. While some of you fulfill district and general office responsibilities grudgingly, others of you enjoy them and are saddened when you must hand in your letter of resignation.

What can you do when you suddenly find yourself headed for retirement and must face these dangers? *Special interests* can help you make the transition less traumatically. They may include:

1. Church. If you move to a new area, you must realize that you have the option to be involved as much or as little as you wish. You control the degree of your in-

vovement. Many ministers take a part-time staff position at a local church or do supply preaching. Others give their services as chaplain or counselor at a local hospital. Many district superintendents wisely use their retired elders to teach special courses or help tutor ministers who are taking the home study courses.

2. Family. Retirement can be the time to strengthen family ties. Perhaps the pressures of full-time ministry have taken their toll. Now you have the opportunity to spend much more time with your companion and enjoy the fruit of your years in "ministry memories." You also have more time to spend with grandchildren.

3. Travel. Still another positive thing about retirement is the opportunity for travel. Older adults are traveling as never before. Someone anonymously penned a poem that describes grandmothers who are no longer sitting in their rocking chairs.

*In the dim and distant past,
When life's tempo wasn't fast;
Grandma used to rock and knit,
Crochet, tat, and baby-sit.*

*When the kids were in a jam,
They could always count on "Gram,"
In the age of gracious living,
Grandma was the gal for giving.*

*Grandma now is in the gym,
Exercising to keep slim;
She's off touring with the bunch,
Taking clients out to lunch.*

*Driving north to ski or curl,
All her days are in a whirl,
Nothing seems to stop or block her,
Now that Grandma's off her rocker!**

The same could be said about Grandpas!

4. Study. Keep your mind alive and growing. Every minister reads a lot out of necessity. He is compelled to read if he would adequately feed his flock. However, in retirement you now have the opportunity to read for your own interest and pleasure rather than reading through the "sermon lens." I know of one retired minister who has a great interest in any material written about the apostle Paul. In fact, he has made an agreement with a church college library in which they will send him one book a month on Paul. At last check he had read over 20 books on the apostle.

Other options are open to help keep your mind stimulated and growing. Consider taking a course at a nearby college or university. You may be surprised to discover the low-cost tuitions available to older adults. Still another educational opportunity is the elder-hostel program. Started in 1978, it combines travel with a week-long educational experience at a college or university. For more information on the subject, write: Elder Hostel, 100 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116.

5. Hobby. Another way to enjoy retirement is to invest more time in your hobby. Perhaps it's time to dust off the stamp books or get out that can of buffalo nickels you have been saving. Or maybe you have always had an interest in ham radio but didn't have time to learn the theory or Morse code. Now is the time to rejuvenate those old interests in hobbies, or to start a new one.

To be sure, retirement will be different. Your ability to retire successfully will be tied directly to your ability to handle change. One can bemoan retirement, live in the past, and mournfully long for the "good ol' days"; or one can look for new opportunities of serving in this new chapter of life.

—Provided by Pensions and Benefits Services—USA, Church of the Nazarene

*J. Winston Pearce, *Ten Good Things I Know About Retirement* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982). All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Two Encounters

Continued from p. 40

B. *God's Answer Is* (1) the gift of His presence, and (2) the gift of His power. God's perfect will is in no way diminished by human weakness. To the contrary, "power is perfected in weakness" (NASB). After all, what could be weaker than God's Son dying on a cross?

C. *Paul's Rest* (v. 10). Literally, "I am well pleased in weaknesses." Or "I have cheerfully made up my mind to be proud of my weaknesses, because they mean a deeper experience of the power of Christ" (Phillips).

I shall not soon forget the day when Joni Eareckson visited our campus. A quadraplegic from the day she broke her neck at 18 years of age, it is hard to imagine a more distressing and confining "thorn in the flesh."

As she was wheeled up the specially prepared ramp to the gymnasium platform, I felt a great rush of pity. But that soon gave way to a rising sense of wonder and awe as she began to talk about Jesus. Her face, her voice, radiated a glory that kept us spellbound.

Had she prayed for healing? Of course. And thousands of friends as well. But God told her what He revealed to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Then Joni added her own

testimony: "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (NASB).

And then, without announcement or accompaniment, she began to sing in a strong, clear voice:

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound!
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.*

She sang the second verse, and the third. And then she said: "Oh, I confess that I do grow weary of being encased in this nearly useless body. But one of these days, my Heavenly Father is going to call my name, and He is going to say, 'Joni, come home!'"

"Immediately I will be set free from the prison house of this body, and I will fly up to heaven. The first thing I am going to do is stretch my new arms and throw them around the neck of Jesus and tell Him a thousand times how much I love Him. And then I am going to stretch my new legs, and walk, and run, and dance all over God's heaven, singing,

*"When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright, shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun."*



ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

by Raymond C. Kratzer
Yakima, Wash.

Scripture Lesson—1 Thess. 5:14-24

Text—"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through" (1 Thess. 5:23, NIV).

As he passed along the barren sand flats of India, Dr. M. L. Dolbeer, a Lutheran missionary, thought to himself, My soul is like that: barren and absolutely dry. He wondered why he was coming to India when he had so little spiritual help to offer to the people.

Then he found a book that told about receiving the Holy Spirit. His faith took hold of God's Word, and in simple consecration he trusted God to give him the gift of the Holy Spirit. And He did! Dolbeer was cleansed from inbred sin and "filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19). The love of God had been "shed abroad" in his heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). He testified that it was a wonderful experience that resulted in "continual joy, fellowship, and blessedness in service."

There must be a time in the born-again Christian's life when, as a result of his full commitment to God, he receives this second work of grace by faith. This is a major spiritual experience! Without it, spiritual life will be dry and arid, and God's commands hard to obey. There will be a "must" complex in service to God, rather than a "may I" eagerness to do His will.

The lack of spiritual victory, or a shallow Christian life, is the result of the failure to go on to holiness of heart. It should be the passion of every professed follower of Jesus Christ to find this sanctifying fullness.

WHAT HAPPENS IN SANCTIFICATION?

The Holy Spirit, in response to full consecration, brings inner cleansing of the born-again Christian's heart from moral pollution with which he was born. In its place, the Holy Spirit fills the heart with perfect love.

In Hebrews 4, this experience is explained as the second rest, or the rest that "remains . . . for the people of God" (v. 9, NIV). The analogy of the children of Israel leaving Egypt, a type of sin, and moving on to the land of Canaan, a type of holiness, depicts the two works of grace beautifully.

Jesus alludes to the two kinds of rest in Matt. 11:28-29. He says to the sinner: "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest." This is rest from the guilt of sin. Then He continues: "Take my yoke upon you [consecration]

. . . and you will find rest for your souls" (NIV). One is a *given* rest, the second is a *found* rest—found because the Christian has consecrated his ransomed powers to Jesus Christ and has taken on His yoke.

THE PLAN OF THE AGES

To further answer the question as to what happens when one is sanctified, it will be helpful to look at man's predicament from the time he was created. In Genesis 1, we have the dramatic picture of God's creative acts, culminating in the creation of man. He assessed all of His creation as "very good." God, who is the epitome of perfection, created man after His own image. He had a perfect body, a perfect mind, and a perfect spirit, without sin.

Then our first parents yielded to temptation and sinned. The subsequent banishment from the Garden of Eden and their loss of holiness of heart left them with guilt and a nature that was imbued with sin.

The ongoing results of the tainted nature of our first parents have polluted the entire human race. Eph. 2:1 says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." This indicates that prior to conversion, spiritual nature is dormant because we are a part of the fallen race.

David declares, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). He is saying that he was born with a sinful nature, in the image of Adam. He was not born a *sinner*, for that involves volition, based on knowledge of good and evil. A baby is incapable of understanding or making such a choice.

A spirit of selfishness can be detected within even the smallest baby. He does not mind waking you in the middle of the night to satisfy his needs. His anger will often cause him to get red in the face as he screams for "his way!" This is a manifestation of the carnal nature with which he was born. But by the grace of God, the blood of Christ covers this sin nature. Should he die in infancy, it would be removed, and he would be welcomed in heaven, completely holy.

The age of innocence in a child partly depends on the environment in which he has been reared. Some children, such as those reared in a Christian home, may feel the sense of guilt for their sins earlier than others. They

have been taught that to break the commands of God saddens not only their parents but also Jesus, who wants to come into their hearts to cleanse them from sin and make them ready for heaven.

When a child comes to the age of accountability, he recognizes that to sin brings him under the judgment of God. He begins to feel guilt for his sins. The carnal nature with which he was born sires sins that bring condemnation. If this way of life continues, his heart becomes filled with transgressions that inhibit full enjoyment of life.

When he is converted, God forgives him and washes away his *committed* transgressions and returns him to the place of innocency with which he was born—free from the blight of transgressions. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9). He is free from the guilt of his past! He becomes a child of God, justified, regenerated, and adopted into the family of God!

But there still remains the seed of sin in his heart. He is not responsible for it being there; therefore he cannot be forgiven of it in his prayer for salvation. But he can be cleansed from this carnal nature he inherited from Adam by a second work of grace called entire sanctification. The text says: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.”

The text comes at the close of a beautiful treatise on this second work of grace. A cursory reading of this five-chapter book reveals that it speaks to Christians. They are exemplary in many ways, but Paul is aware of their lack, that they are less than perfect in love. He is praying that he might come to them to help “perfect that which is lacking in [their] faith” (3:10). This lack is that their hearts need to be established in holiness before God.

Paul points out that the Thessalonians should be sanctified, and challenges them with the hope that God would sanctify them “through and through” (5:23, NIV).

In Acts, Peter shares with the brethren at Jerusalem what happened to Cornelius when he was sanctified. He says, “God . . . put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (15:8-9). He was alluding to what had happened to him and to the other 120 persons in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost, when they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. These twice-touched disciples’ hearts were purified by faith. Any other characteristic of a sanctified person is purely a result of this deep, underlying cause. Gentleness, patience, lack of carnal anger and jealousy, unselfishness, humility—all are results of a heart that has been cleansed from inbred sin by the Holy Spirit.

A cleansed heart is the key to spiritual health and normality. Conversion may take the fever of sin from a sinner’s heart, but unless the virus of carnality is cleansed, there will be an outbreak of the sin disease as some “root of bitterness” springs up and defiles (Heb. 12:15).

WHAT KEEPS PEOPLE FROM EXPERIENCING ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION?

1. Misunderstanding. Sometimes people listen to an uninformed person tell what it means to be sanctified. They draw false conclusions about what sanctification is and are thus kept out of the experience.

Some say that holiness people preach a “faultless perfection,” free from errors in judgment. Genuine holiness preachers have never preached such a doctrine. It’s not only unscriptural, it’s impossible, since “we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). The text says we’re to be preserved *blameless*, not faultless. No sanctified person would ever claim to have never made a mistake since being entirely sanctified. We will never be completely free from faults and errors of judgment until we get to heaven. Even Paul has been judged by some to be guilty in this regard in his severe treatment of Mark and the subsequent dissension between the apostle and Barnabas (Acts 15).

2. Confusing purity and maturity. This problem has caused much misunderstanding among those who seem reluctant to enter into this second work of grace. The newly sanctified believer has a lot to learn, and may not perform as perfectly as older Christians. His immaturity may cause some to suggest he isn’t really sanctified at all.

I have known some very young Christians who were truly sanctified wholly. In spite of their immature actions, they were filled with God’s Spirit. Each year you could see wonderful spiritual growth.

I have also known some folks who were very mature as far as years go, but they had failed to seek holiness. They were mature but not pure. Carnal nature showed up in many ways. They were critical, self-centered, and judgmental.

3. Seeking someone else’s experience. Perhaps the reason every one of the 120 persons in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost were sanctified was that they had no background of witnesses to color their faith. They just waited for the Lord to come and cleanse their consecrated hearts.

A man was seeking to be sanctified. But he refused to believe the work was done, because he never had a baptism of joy. At a revival meeting one night, he heard another man testify to his own difficulty entering into this grace. But he knew what was blocking his way: his wallet. He told how one day he got down on his knees behind his barn. Taking his wallet in his hand, he said that he was tired of going on without the blessing, and that from that moment on, God could have all his money if He required it. “I threw my billfold up in the air, and when it hit the ground, my heart was filled with the Holy Spirit in sanctifying power.”

The seeker said to himself, “Now I know what I must do.” So he went out behind the barn and knelt down with his wallet in his hand. Trying to remember how the other man had prayed, he took his wallet and threw it up in the air, expecting to have a baptism of sanctifying power when it hit the ground. But nothing happened. He refused to believe until he had a feeling of great joy. He did not find full salvation until he was willing to “take it by faith.”

We must remember that the God who made every leaf different, every snowflake unique, and every fingerprint an individual trademark, has a unique experience for each of us, too. When we do our part, we can be sure that God will not fail to do His work.

4. Unwillingness to yield. When it comes to full sur-

render of our all to God, Satan makes his greatest stand. He will try to scare the believer out of the most thrilling experience and life-style in all the world. It was in this context that he was designated the "father of lies" (John 8:44, NIV), and where the name fits most aptly.

By way of contrast, Jesus Christ gives us a picture of God as the most perfect Father. This picture of God tells so much. Let me illustrate: My son Ron was a normal boy. But suppose he came to me when he was about 12 years old and said, "Dad, I've been thinking. I have not always been obedient to you. But I have decided that from this day on, whatever you ask me to do, I will do it immediately without complaint. Your word shall be my will." What do you think I would have done if such a thing had happened? When I recovered from the shock, I am sure my heart would have overflowed with love, and that I would have rewarded him generously. I certainly would not have decided to make his life miserable just because he said he would obey me implicitly!

If we, as human parents, react with love and consideration to our children's obedience, how much more will our Heavenly Father seek to fill our lives "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

5. *Unbelief* The fifth thing that keeps men from the experience of heart holiness is unbelief. It is difficult to conceive how any student of the Bible can doubt the existence of such an experience. Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 17) climaxes in verse 17: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." God's command to be holy is reiterated time and again in the Scriptures. Heb. 12:14 makes this experience a must: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness [the sanctification, NASB], without which no man shall see the Lord." These and many other references should shatter unbelief. It is unique how the Scriptures plainly outline this experience as a second work of grace that only Christians are eligible to receive.

If misunderstanding, confusing purity with maturity, seeking someone else's experience, unwillingness to surrender, and unbelief all keep people from experiencing sanctification,

WHAT GETS PEOPLE IN?

Five simple steps are necessary to find the experience of entire sanctification:

1. *A sound conversion.* The verse prior to my text says: "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess.

5:22). We know that when one is born again, he must stop sinning. Sin must be done away with if one is really saved. Many people seeking to be sanctified wholly really need to experience a sound *conversion*.

2. *Belief of the truth.* One must be convinced there is a second work of grace available. Anyone who studies God's Word with an open mind will conclude that there is a deeper work of grace following conversion. Many have sought and found this experience without a preacher to guide them or a holiness book to shed light upon the need. In their quest for God's highest and best, they have earnestly searched the Scriptures and entered into this grace, not knowing what happened. The Holy Spirit guided them not only to the need but also to the provisions.

3. *A spiritual hunger.* Jesus said: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). If you feel you need more of God, you hunger for His fullness. Unless you sense that you cannot make it in life without sanctifying fullness, chances are you will never receive it. The hunger for sanctification must possess you.

4. *A full surrender.* We must present our bodies as "a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1-2). It is a spiritual imperative. It is sort of like the "I do" we say at the altar when we are united in marriage. "Forsaking all others," we give ourselves unreservedly to God. It's an "I do" with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength!

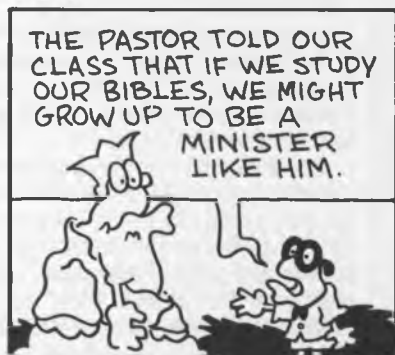
5. *Ask in faith.* "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

Dr. F. B. Meyer advised, "Once you obtain forgiveness, fulfill the conditions of consecration, remembering the Holy Spirit is given in answer to prayer. Reverently appropriate this gift. Rise from your knees, reckoning that God has kept His Word, and that you are filled with His Spirit. Trust. Believe in spite of feelings. Say over and over: 'I thank Thee that Thou hast kept Thy Word.' Sooner or later you will rejoice with exceeding joy."

This line of reasoning is confirmed in 1 John 5:14-15: "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." No-where in God's Word is there anything more in His will than that His children be filled with His Holy Spirit in sanctifying power.



Pontius' Puddle



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AN ETHIC OF LOVE: A REVIEW ESSAY

by Gerard Reed

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Today, as always, persons pursuing holiness tend to err in two ways: Some equate holiness with ethics and settle into concrete legalisms; others sever holiness from ethics and drift into chaotic antinomianisms. It is almost axiomatic that holy persons act rightly, righteously, living out ethical principles. Yet when *reduced* to sets of behavior, holiness dries to settled forms. It is similarly axiomatic that holy persons act spontaneously, spiritually, inwardly prompted by the Spirit. Yet when *freed* of all external constraints, "Spirit-led" activities frequently splinter into helter-skelter, subjective eccentricities.

To avoid these two errors, to find a balanced holiness ethic, a love ethic, much can be gleaned from a recent book by an Oxford professor, Oliver O'Donovan: *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Eerdmans, 1986). After failing to effectively teach Christian ethics from a propositional, apologetical stance, O'Donovan has concluded that discerning moral principles demand *theological* reflection. Furthermore, Christian ethics should be *evangelical*, issuing "from the gospel of Jesus Christ" and flowing into a "life in the Holy Spirit" that avoids both legalism and antinomianism.

If Christian holiness necessarily includes Christian ethics, if moral theology flows from the Christian gospel, there can never be, as some propose, an "ethics of the Kingdom" contradistinct from an "ethics of creation." For the gospel centers on Christ's resurrection. And in the reality of the Resurrection resides the integrating theological touchstone for Christian ethics. "We are driven," O'Donovan says, to begin with the Resurrection "because it tells us of God's vindication of his creation, and so of our created life" (p. 13). We must begin, as Peter did, in "the most consistently theological New Testament treatise on ethics," with a great affirmation: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus

Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3, RSV).

Firmly rooted in a Resurrection perspective, Christian ethics appropriates a "natural ethic" that insists nature (human nature as well as the cosmos) presents an *is* that implies certain *oughts*. For if Jesus' resurrection *restored* creation, as many classical theologians insisted, an illuminated awareness of creation reveals enduring ethical truths. Through Jesus' resurrection we look backward, finding in creation the natural law that is God's primordial design.

Various ethicists have, of course, sought to design moral systems based solely upon the "natural law," but apart from Jesus' resurrection creation's ethical truths have proved difficult to discern. Judaism developed an elevated moral code based upon divine revelation, but apart from the Resurrection the Mosaic Law has proved difficult to obey. Only the resurrected Christ imparts a new life that grants the needed freedom *from* the Law that enables us to in fact *fulfill* the Law. Such freedom comes as we, in our subjectivity, recapitulate what Jesus experienced in His subjectivity—a freedom "the Spirit forms and brings to expression [as] *the appropriate pattern of free response to objective reality*," which is love. "Love is the overall shape of Christian ethics, the form of human participation in created order" (p. 25). In its freedom, love (which by definition must be free)

achieves its creativity by being perceptive. It attempts to act *for* any being only on the basis of an appreciation *of* that being. Thus classical Christian descriptions of love are often found invoking two other terms which expound its sense: the first of these is "wisdom," which is the intellectual apprehension of the order of things which discloses how each being stands in relation to each other; the second is "delight," which is affective attention to something simply *for what* it is and *for the fact that* it is. Such love is the fruit of God's presence within us, uniting us to the humanity of God in Christ,

who cherishes and defends all that God the Father has made and thought (p. 26).

To develop his theme, O'Donovan addresses three subjects: (1) the objective reality; (2) the subjective reality; and (3) the form of the moral life.

Objective Reality

The objective reality, something standing quite apart from us, is the gospel's proclamation of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As we look backward to that event, we may behold the right created order, for Christ's resurrection not only guarantees mankind's resurrection but also illuminates "the renewal of all creation with him" (p. 31). An *order*, a divinely directed teleological order, indwells creation; it is an order with moral as well as material components. Thus Christian ethics reveres creation, seeing therein (through the corrective lens of the Resurrection) moral principles. Unlike many highly subjective modern ethical theories, evangelical ethics takes seriously the objectively *given* order of creation.

Christians also look forward, in the light of the Resurrection, to the coming kingdom of God, expecting history to culminate in this world's transformation. Thus Christ's resurrection "vindicates the created order in this double sense: it redeems it and it transforms it" (p. 56). Both the beginning and the end of creation matter. Consequently, classical Christian theologians clearly differentiated between creation and providence. God's work of creation is complete; God's providence in history continues. They saw a design in creation, mysteriously implemented and amplified in history, which would be consummated at the end of time.

Since morality is the way persons live in creation, "Christian morality is his glad response to the deed of God [the Resurrection] which has restored, proved and fulfilled that order, making man free to conform to it" (p. 76). Needing to know how to act, Chris-

tians learn as faith enables them to participate with Christ in a new life. "True knowledge of moral order is knowledge 'in Christ'" (p. 85). Despite our disfigured inner image of God (which limits our knowledge), despite the perversions of idolatrous ideologies that captivate us, we still have the ability to know, "in Christ," moral truth. We come to know such truth through conversion, through the Cross, through discipleship—costly steps, but necessary ones if we are to know truth.

Subjective Reality

Having discussed "the objective reality," O'Donovan next deals with "the subjective reality." He seeks to show how the indwelling Holy Spirit enables believers and the Church to shape and live out an evangelical ethic. "The Spirit evokes our *free* response as moral agents to the reality of redemption" (p. 106). As Paul suggests in Phil. 2:13, the Spirit of God enlivens both our minds and our wills by restoring "our access to reality," a process that quickens our wills and informs our consciences without coercing us to compliance but calling us to cooperate with the love of God as present in His Spirit. Only as reoriented by the resurrected Christ, present in the indwelling Holy Spirit, can we live freely, freely following those ethical principles illuminated in Christ.

"The Spirit makes the reality of the redemption *present* to us" and, still more, "*authoritative* to us" (pp. 102-3). Human freedom always flourishes within an arena of authority, "the objective correlate of freedom," which, like a prescribed football field, provides "an immediate and sufficient ground for acting" (p. 122). The universe blends freedom and order, spontaneity and unbending facticity. For Christian ethics, Christ provides abiding authority, and the Spirit bears witness to Him. The Incarnation, rightly understood and internalized by faith, means that only Jesus provides us a prototype, for only He incarnates the ethos that exemplifies "the true order of human life in the world" (p. 146).

Form of the Moral Life

O'Donovan next addresses "the form of the moral life," a love that includes both "an *ordered moral field* of action" and "an *ordered moral subject*," or in "more traditional terms, . . . a form relating to *human acts* and also to *moral character*" (p. 183).

We live within a "moral field," constituted by the experiences of the past, both personal and collective, and by anticipated events and their coming

consequences. Yet we must not derive our moral principles solely from human experiences or prediction. We need the illumination of a "transhistorical order of things" (p. 118), a transcendent reference point, a supernatural wisdom that fits new events into stable frameworks, understanding them from the perspective of lasting principles,

Synderesis and conscientia can claim our attention with profit.

yet handling them with flexibility and creativity.

By rightly combining what medieval thinkers called *synderesis* (the "comprehension of moral principles") and *conscientia* (their "application to particular cases"), moral learning takes place, not by "accumulating new information about the moral order, but of discovering in closer detail that which we already know in broad outline" (p. 195).

Rightly read, the Bible will "guide our thoughts toward a *comprehensive* moral viewpoint, and not merely to articulate disconnected moral claims. We must look within it not only for moral bricks, but for indications of the order in which the bricks belong together" (p. 200). From the NT perspective, the key to moral thinking, the impetus of moral action, is *love*. Within our moral field, necessarily pluriform, we struggle to find adequate bearings.

Since God only ultimately is, the love given Him must be singular.

But in its "inclusiveness" and its "priority," love—God's love—forms the field of Christian ethics.

Responding to the "moral field" is the "moral subject," who needs the personal integrity found only in following a coherent moral law within a complex series of events. The Christian view of the moral subject, O'Donovan contends, best appears in 1 Corinthians 13, where *love* clearly surpasses while simultaneously informing all vir-


tues. This theological stance appears in Augustine, who held that "true virtue is love for God." Augustine shared Plato's vision of the "unity of the virtues," reflecting "the soul's orientation to its transcendent good." Thomas Aquinas only slightly amended this classical view, saying love is "the form of the virtues." Thus love indwells acts that are good and completely fulfills the moral law. In sum: Love is the unifying, ordering principle that shapes both the moral field and the moral subject. Love both fulfills the moral law and forges the lineaments of the moral virtues.

Such love laminates the loving agent and the moral field that is God's love. Since God only ultimately *is*, the love given Him must be singular: all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. God commands us to love others in concert with loving Him. Thus love finds no conflict between what is due God and what is due others (despite the oft-repeated maxim "God first; others second; self last"). The two apparently separate commands, as John shows, blend together when we unite them in a single command: We should love Jesus.

Above all else, we should love Christ, because in loving Jesus as the Christ, we embrace Him as the One sent from God and consequently rightly love all that is: God, others, ourselves, our world. Love for the resurrected Lord becomes love for all He represents. Consequently, "the true moral life of the Christian community is its love, and its love is unintelligible except as a participation in the life of the one who reveals himself to us as Love, except, that is, as the entry of mankind and of the restored creation upon its supernatural end" (p. 246).

For ultimately the only real issue in ethics is the "supernatural end" to which we are called.

In the light of that question, the issues of morality which are as complex and diverse as the created order which gives rise to them are reduced to a stark and an awesome simplicity. We can speak of the simple alternative of a broad way and a narrow way, the straightforward either-or opposition of sin and virtue. We can speak of the life of the believer as one in which there is love and no sin, and of the life of the unbeliever as one in which there is sin and no love (p. 260).

We choose either to love or not to love; that is the ultimate choice. This simple choice determines our eternal destiny. This simple choice determines Christian ethics. Love, indeed, is *the* answer. 

TAMING TRANSITION TENSIONS

by Anne Elver
Alex, Okla.

The waitress cleared the table at our annual pastors' wives' luncheon swiftly, clattering dishes. Her hurried, noisy movements made it difficult to converse with the gray-haired, grandmotherly woman beside me.

"Are you moving this year, dear?" my luncheon companion asked.

"No, and I'm grateful," I answered.

"I understand. Before Harold retired, he dreaded annual conferences, fearful he'd hear his name when the bishop read the list of transferring pastors as the last item of business. It was tough."

"Tell me how you coped," I pleaded.

"Not well, I'm afraid. We packed our belongings and said good-bye in two weeks, hardly enough time to realize we were moving. We'd arrive in our new church physically spent and emotionally drained. Every time we'd move, I'd be sick within three months. Probably from stress," she added.

Aren't you glad our appointment system has changed? But advance notice doesn't remove the hassle. The wife is the family member hardest hit with the stress of moving, since she acts as the shock absorber for everyone else, at the same time experiencing needs of her own. Pastors' wives are no exception, and those whose husbands serve in denominations without an annual appointment system move frequently, too. I once heard that the

average length of service for a minister is under three years.

Consider what moving does to your family. Your husband faces the same adjustment problems any professional does when transferring. He must learn the power structures within his congregation, their unwritten traditions, and their unique strengths and weaknesses. These and other challenges pull at him, and you share his tension.

It takes energy to keep up with preschoolers anyway, and moving adds extra demands to a mother's schedule. School-age children dislike having their household disrupted. They miss old friends and feel threatened with the prospect of attending new schools. They might even find moving an unwanted intrusion in their lives, grieving openly. You're forced to help them adjust, absorbing some of their stress in the process.

Look what moving does to you. Physically, you spend yourself. Moving forces you to leave friends, and you experience apprehension, knowing they won't be available on a daily basis. Moving might disrupt your career progress. You must seek out new professionals to serve the family, weeding out those who don't measure up.

The above stresses are common to movers everywhere, but pastors' wives face additional ones. The ministry isn't like occupations where the professional works apart from the

spouse and family. You are highly visible in the church, your husband's professional arena. Your family and the congregation must blend together, perhaps with preconceived (and incorrect) notions of what your roles are, lacking clear guidelines. The congregation's impression of you will color your husband's ministry. Some people anxiously wait to meet you, wanting to give you responsibilities. Your identity might become overshadowed by your role as your husband's wife in your new community; you might feel tension over this. All of this puts extra pressure on pastors' wives when we move.

Moving always taxes personal resources, but does it have to be a time of excessive stress? Any pastor's wife who makes the effort to ease her transitions benefits herself and her family, since she has more resources with which to cope when her own needs are satisfied. Her husband's church also benefits, since a smooth transition gives her time to get acquainted free of excess tension that robs her vitality and enthusiasm for her role in the new congregation. Here are some hints to ease your stress when the moving van is coming.

Keep up with your personal interests, even during moving. This helps you maintain a sense of identity during change. I make it a point to contact someone from my new home in advance for information on clubs

and groups catering to my professional and personal interests. And I continue pursuing these as quickly as possible after we move. Many organizations have directories. Officers are easy to locate from these. Consult the yellow pages. I have located hobby club officers by contacting businesses catering to the hobby and telling them what I want. Contacting people with similar interests before I move lets me look forward to something in my new home while I'm packing to go.

Getting our home settled has a high priority with me when we move; since we live in church parsonages, I get them personalized rapidly. I learned how important this is when I helped a friend pack. "Let me share something," she said as we wrapped dishes and packed them. "I haven't put down roots here, hoping we'd move quickly. I've lived here three years with unpacked boxes, no pictures on the walls, and no clue as to who lives here when someone comes into the house. I'll never do this again, for it's made me feel stressed and unsettled. Whenever I move from now on, I'll put down roots, unpack completely, and etch my personality into our home. Life here would have been better had I done this."

It pleases me when I'm reasonably settled and a visitor comments on our hobbies, interests, or favorite colors without me telling them what they are. How can they do this? Pictures, evidence of our hobbies, and other personal touches give clues. Guests' comments show me when I've succeeded in turning the parsonage into a home. A personalized parsonage lets me feel serene and still tied to my past while I'm establishing myself in a new church and community.

I also take care of our physical needs carefully during transition time. Moving is hard, and I'm tempted to fix a quick bite instead of nourishing meals when I am busy with endless details. The problem with quick bites is that they are usually not balanced, and we tend to eat them while continuing our chores. Then someone gets food where it shouldn't be, creating an extra cleanup chore. Quick bites also leave us with no energy and usurp family fellowship around the table,

STRESS TEST

Use the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, based on the study by Richard H. Rahe and Thomas H. Holmes, to evaluate life-style changes occurring near your moving date. Look at the life-changing event in the left column and its score in the right one. Then add your total.

According to these two researchers, anyone with a score of 300 in a given year has an 80 percent change of producing a stress-related illness; a score of 150 gives you a 50 percent chance. If you've experienced more than five of these events, even minor ones, you should realize that you are under stress, and make an effort to care for yourself properly.

Remember, the table isn't a complete list of stress-producing events. Think back over your life in the last year, and list anything (happy or sad) that has called for a personal adjustment. Give yourself an approximate unit score to each one, and add these into your total score from the table.

Consider your own temperament when adding your scores. They should not be viewed as universally rigid; what may be a minor inconvenience to one person may be a bigger adjustment to someone else. You can estimate your unit scores better than anyone else, and the ability to handle stress varies from one person to the next. If you cope with stress easily, you might give yourself a few points off your total score for this.

Don't become morbid if you have a high score. Many stress-related illnesses are of a minor character from which you will recover quickly,

such as backaches, insomnia, increased susceptibility to colds, and so on. And not everyone under stress, minor or severe, becomes ill. These scores are merely warning signs to be aware that you are under stress and to take it easy.

| <i>Event</i> | <i>Unit Score</i> |
|--|-------------------|
| Death of Spouse..... | 100 |
| Death of Family Member..... | 63 |
| Personal Injury/Illness..... | 53 |
| Getting Fired..... | 47 |
| Retirement..... | 45 |
| Change in Health of Family Member..... | 41 |
| Pregnancy..... | 40 |
| Sexual Problems..... | 39 |
| New Family Member..... | 39 |
| Major Business Problems..... | 39 |
| Change in Financial Status..... | 38 |
| Death of Friend..... | 37 |
| Switch to Different Work..... | 36 |
| Taking On Large Mortgage..... | 31 |
| Foreclosure of Loan..... | 30 |
| Change in Work Responsibility..... | 29 |
| Child Leaving Home..... | 29 |
| In-law Trouble..... | 29 |
| Outstanding Personal Achievement..... | 28 |
| Wife Starts or Stops Work..... | 26 |
| Starting or Leaving School..... | 26 |
| Change in Living Conditions..... | 25 |
| Revision of Personal Habits..... | 24 |
| Trouble with Boss..... | 23 |
| Change in Work Hours or Conditions..... | 20 |
| Change in Residence..... | 20 |
| Change of School..... | 20 |
| Change in Recreation..... | 19 |
| Change in Church Activities..... | 19 |
| Taking On Debt..... | 17 |
| Change in Sleeping Habits..... | 16 |
| Change in Number of Family Reunions..... | 15 |
| Change in Eating Habits..... | 15 |
| Vacation..... | 13 |
| Christmas..... | 12 |
| Minor Violation of Law..... | 11 |

Source: Christiaan Barnard with Peter Evans, *Christiaan Barnard's Program for Living with Arthritis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 118.

all of which contribute to lagging enthusiasm and stress.

It's trouble during moving to serve meals that are balanced, relaxed, and appealing, but it's worthwhile. Good meals give my family energy with which to cope, time to relax, and consistent fellowship. If I eat alone for any reason during moving, my solitary place is set properly, and I dine to music, relaxing as I eat. The

dividends in added relaxation make good meals an excellent stress reducer.

I also guard our activity level when we move. Daily time spent packing and unpacking is planned and limited. Once I didn't do this, and my husband and I kept going long after his back ached. My feet hurt and my fingers were sore from taping boxes shut. The next day, he still hurt and I

had swollen feet, sore muscles, and cracked fingers. I was miserable and grumpy. It's much better on my disposition (and family relationships) when I see that we get necessary rest, giving ourselves time for renewal. It takes us longer to move and get settled this way, but a less concentrated pace avoids the danger of overdoing and producing excessive stress and fatigue.

It's tempting to neglect my spiritual needs during transitions, but I resist this tendency. Once a fellowship group had an extra meeting scheduled a week before we left town, and everyone expressed surprise when I attended. Time was precious, but the spiritual lift the group imparted was priceless. My fondest memory of any move is the caring these dear people displayed. Several offered specific help and followed through. I'd have missed this blessing had I not sought their fellowship. Now I never skip fellowship while moving; it's an edification when I need it most.

Devotional aids also help me fight the tendency to slack off in my spiritual life when we move. I obtain extra booklets and materials for reading and reflection during our transition times, preferably ones that I am especially anxious to study. This gives me an added incentive to make a time and place to use them.

A good spot for devotions isn't always available when we move, so I overcome this handicap however I can. Once I carried my worship journal, pen, Bible, and a new devotional booklet out in the backyard and leaned up against our new parsonage, finding a quiet place. There are other ways of finding a devotional

spot too. A friend built a partition of moving boxes for her devotions while she moved.

Time for devotions is easy to lose when I'm moving, so I make every effort not to interrupt my morning devotional period. This might not be possible sometimes, so I try to remain flexible if my routine is broken, and grab another time. A friend says she breaks her customary devotional time into three periods when she moves. She enjoys the breaks, and this works for her. You might have to improvise to find ways to meet your spiritual needs during transitions, but the blessings of doing so are especially beneficial.

Two medical researchers did a study on factors calling for personal adjustments, and gave a score to each, relating their information to stress-related illnesses (see sidebar). Certain levels of accumulated points from these factors predispose a person to disease. Several factors automatically accompany pastors' wives when we move. If you have experienced other life changes simultaneous to moving, this compounds the adjustment already forced on you.

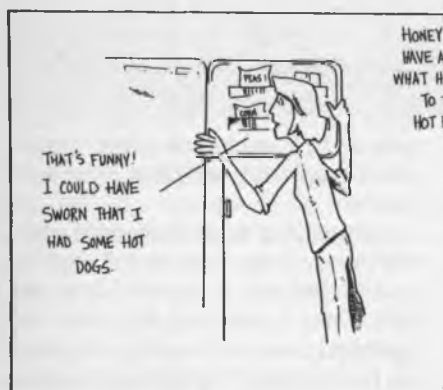
How does this knowledge serve us? It's a caution. Once when we moved, our oldest child left for college, we'd had a family death, and my husband began further education. The move cut off some volunteer work I loved, and I earned a degree I'd been working on prior to moving. After breezing through our move, physical problems forced me to slow my pace. Looking back, I feel stress was the root of my distress. It would have been better had I eased into our new location fore-

warned that I already faced several major personal adjustments and taken extra time settling in. Now I feel it wise to evaluate my life carefully before moving. This warns me of other overlooked factors in my life that put pressure on me in addition to moving. I can then allow myself extra time to adjust, perhaps avoiding the consequences of excessive stress at a later date.

One "job benefit" of moving I especially enjoy as a pastor's wife is easy acceptance into my new church. This benefit isn't without some built-in problems too. Every time we move, someone always greets me, telling about the jobs they want me to take. Once I yielded to this pressure, taking too many jobs, and was soon sorry. My assistant youth group leader wanted the title but no work. Instead of half the youth work load, I got it all. Soon I resented too many activities and had to resign several jobs.

Looking back on this experience, I decided that it would be best when I'm new in the congregation if I don't take any responsibilities for a year. This voids expectations of giving unwanted jobs to me, and gives me time to evaluate my abilities with the opportunities in our congregation. After a year, I volunteer for specific jobs I feel I can handle. Other pastors' wives ease this pressure by volunteering for what they want to do quickly, rather than taking slack jobs that don't suit them.

Moving is a difficult part of being a pastor's wife, but it doesn't need to be staggering. Since moving vans are inevitable, thank the Lord for each move, and make moving as easy on yourself as possible. 🐾



HONEY, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HOT DOGS?



R. GREEN



I HAD TO FEED THEM TO THE (HOMPSON'S) DOG TO GET TO THE FRONT DOOR.

DEALING WITH DIVORCE

A Pastoral Letter

Dear Congregation:

As your staff, we need to write you concerning an item that is now confronting and will continue to face the church over the next few years. It is the issue of divorce within the body of believers. We do not condone divorce, but it does happen. We want you to understand the stand we are taking after much prayer. If you have any questions, please feel free to discuss these with us.

1. We have chosen to be *redemptive* in our dealings with every individual. This may appear to some people as being wishy-washy, but we believe that Jesus Christ was redemptive to the people with whom He dealt. Being redemptive may mean going an extra mile, not being judgmental, but being loving, understanding, supportive, and accepting.
2. We have chosen to *create an environment of preventiveness where it is easy to share early the problems of a marriage*. It is never easy to share, but we would like for you to be able to confide as early as possible with a Sunday School teacher, with a pastoral staff member, our counseling center, or a selected individual. We want to make sure that we offer an accepting attitude and environment where Christians can say, "I am hurting; I do need help."
3. We have chosen to *respond to individuals*. We could have laid down laws, rules, and guidelines that would not have applied to some individuals. We have chosen, instead, to respond to the individual needs, and to each person in his own particular, unique case.
4. We have also chosen to be a *confronting source of strength*. By "confronting," we mean that we will deal with divorce head-on, not avoiding the issue, but being compassionate and maybe even saying to the individual, "You need our support, and we can help you. Allow us, from a Christian perspective, to guide you to biblical principles that will direct you."
5. We have chosen to understand that *one's actions influence the actions of others*. We are greatly concerned that our attitude, our understanding, and our actions are Christlike. Being Christlike in all that we do is the most important issue for us all (that includes those who are going through the divorce, those who are dealing with the issues, and those who are on the sidelines). That means holding our tongues, not spreading *even the truth* any more than it is already spread, doing what Christ would have done, which was to listen with compassion. He accepted persons even when He did not approve of their actions.
6. We have chosen to *understand that leadership roles are important*. It may be necessary (this is not always the case) to allow one or both parties to take a sabbatical. If necessary, this will be done in order for the person to properly heal as the body of Christ ministers to the individual.

7. We have chosen to make sure that we value *confidentiality*. I, as your senior pastor, do not talk publicly about the divorces, the counseling, or the crisis that is happening in the lives of the families. Staff members do not talk openly about this. We want to make sure that we are holding in confidence anything that is told to us and that we allow that individual the right to be able to bare his soul. In this way, we can get to the root of the problem in helping that individual. You, as the body, need to pray for the staff, for there is *never* a time that we do not need prayer in dealing with individuals and cases of divorce.

These seven steps have been deliberately thought out. We are presently ministering under the above guidelines and asking for your support and your guidance as we deal with this critical issue in the life of our church.

Thank you for loving, thank you for caring, and thank you for being redemptive in the body of believers here at Central.

Your pastoral team,
Central Church of the Nazarene, Orlando, Fla.

CHURCH APHORISMS

by Charles J. Woods
Bloomington, Ind.

An aphorism is a short, concise statement about a principle. The problem with most aphorisms is that the principles themselves are never challenged. The principle may have been true long ago, or the tone of the principle may still be true but lose meaning when applied to real-life situations. Thus both preachers and congregations can get into trouble by relying on aphorisms, yet there are more aphorisms about churches than possibly any other type of organization in America. I present several of these aphorisms for further thought and discussion.

1 We had a strong church in the good old days.

Most churches talk about "the good old days." Few talk about "the bad old days." Maybe that's because there are no bad old days. Many of us are in the habit of reinterpreting the past in light of the present. We vividly remember the positive aspects of the past, selectively remembering the negative. Under these conditions, it's a wonder that any pastor is seen as doing a better job than his predecessor. Churches or pastors that dwell on "Things just aren't what they used to be" run the risk of living in the past. Churches that live in the past have trouble confronting the future. Paul realized this when he told the Philippian church, "I . . . count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my

Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (3:8, NKJV).

2 Today's youth are the future of this church.

The youth may be somebody else's future church, but only about 20 to 30 percent of them will be active adults in the church they grow up in. The youth program should be seen as a type of missionary program. Resources should be given to the youth program, not as a way of insuring that this church will continue in the future, but as a way of helping other churches in the future. If a

church's only new members are the youth that grow up there, it will soon die. The church must reach out to others in the community in order to grow.

3. The pastor is ultimately responsible for the growth or decline of a church.

Just as there have been periods in history where it was easier than others to be the president of the United States, most churches are easier to pastor at certain times than at others. Environmental factors affect church growth, as do economic factors, community factors, leadership factors, and so on. Any church can usually pinpoint some of the factors that may have influenced a church's growth or decline. But when a church claims to have found "the" reason or reasons, it often gets itself into trouble. Trouble arises when one church tries to tell another how best to grow. Trouble arises when a scapegoat is found to blame the decline on. A church that finds itself in a growth period should indeed be thankful. One that finds itself declining should keep trying new things rather than blaming persons

4. Leave a problem alone, and it will go away.

A problem may go away. It also may explode! If the problem is embedded in a causal loop, it will continue to get worse until one of the persons leaves the church. A causal loop occurs when an increase in A causes an increase in B and an increase in B also causes an increase in A. An example of a causal loop may occur when a person becomes bored in church. This boredom causes the person to invest very little of himself in worship. This in turn causes more boredom, and so on. Other causal loops can occur between two or more persons. At times there is very little the church can do about the matter, but it should never expect the problem to disappear with no consequences. Some problems can be dealt with in a loving manner. At times a problem is a signal that a certain group is not getting enough attention. Dealing with the problem lets the group know that someone is paying attention to them.

5. Rumors are false and should be ignored.

Rumors are usually not true, but many times the tone of the rumor is. Often the facts have been exaggerated, but the tone is correct. The tone should be given attention while the rumor is dismissed. Rumors emerge through the social communication systems of the church. These systems are usually much more powerful than the established committees, because they are formed around friendships and families. By getting to know the social structure of the church, one will usually know whom to call to find out more accurate information.

6. A pastor should become more effective as he goes along.

People are cumulatively disappointed in leaders. People believe leaders can do less and less the longer they

are there. After 10 years, there is enough negative evidence to convict any leader. That is one reason that 10 years is just about the limit of most pastors. A pastor who stays a long time in a church will usually be protected by the church's members. Since followers create leaders, church members can protect the pastor. This is done by allowing the pastor to be human and make mistakes. A pastor can usually learn from his own mistakes without being constantly reminded of them.

7. We must find the goals of the church in order to grow together.

A church may find it necessary to have a mission statement setting it off from other churches in the community. But to say that a goal's statement would suddenly persuade everyone to work together is stretching it. When is the last time you thought about what your personal goals were before you behaved in a certain manner? If a church prints in its bulletin a statement of commitment to evangelism, will the members suddenly begin witnessing while at work the following week? A description of the church should not be grandiose in the expectation of that goal or mission statement. Several members of the same church will attend the church for very different reasons. If any one of those reasons can be agreed upon by all the members of the church, it will usually be too broad to be a very descriptive goal.

8. All committees make rational decisions.

Committees are incapable of always making totally rational decisions because of the following constraints:

- a. Almost never will the same people be present twice in a row on the same committee. The change in personnel often affects the decisions made.
- b. Most decisions involve ambiguous preferences. Two or three choices will always sound right.
- c. Decision making involves unclear technology. Persons are never sure what information to use, where to gather it, or what outcomes might occur based upon each decision.

9. We've already tried that.

Every new idea can be compared to some old concept that failed. Persons should not look for the similarities in a new idea. They should look for what makes the idea different. The reason the old idea failed may not be relevant or present, or may have been altered in the new idea.

10. I hear more complaints in our church than anywhere else.

Everyone complains about institutions. It would seem that the world is made up of dumbbells and storytellers. Most stories involve a dumbbell at the punch line, but it is the dumbbells that are always promoted or praised rather than the storytellers. All organizations have negative stories about them. If the church is given something else to discuss, the members may not dwell on the negative so much.

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN A PREACHER

(Name Withheld)

Some time ago a discouraged pastor wrote that after several years in the ministry, he was having financial problems. His car and his best suit were both old; his children were having a difficult time staying in denominational colleges, even with government loans. He felt compelled to resign from the ministry and seek a profession with greater financial rewards.

My mind flashed back 25 years to the little home mission church I pastored. The church had so few members that there were few demands on my time. There were no interruptions in my study because the church could not afford a telephone. I would spend hours praying and reading the Bible, especially the Gospels, trying to determine how Jesus would react in various situations so that I could imitate Him. Eventually I came to see the people with whom I interacted as "souls for whom Christ died."

The community seemed unaffected by my efforts, and I felt insignificant both in the church world and to society at large.

But there were moments. One summer Sunday evening I preached a simple sermon on being "born again" to about 25 persons. Later as I locked up the church, I paused for a moment and looked up at the moonlit sky. I felt good and clean. I had preached the gospel, the pure gospel. At that moment, my life and message seemed tied to eternity.

After two years with no tangible results, however, I concluded that it really didn't matter who pastored this little church. I should try a profession where I could have more influence on society. I resigned and returned to graduate school and another profession. My departure was not a significant event in church history. The Sunday School superintendent, however, did send word that he would now attend the church since the "nigger lover" was leaving.

As I was packing my books, one of the boys I had coached in Little League baseball dropped by and asked if I would come watch him pitch in the play-offs. I told him, "Sure"; but we both knew I wouldn't. Then Buddy drove up in his old pickup truck loaded with all his children. He was wearing my old college sweatshirt. He helped me finish loading my books. We locked the church. I handed Buddy the key, and we stood there for a moment, looking at the ground, avoiding each other's eyes. As I started to my car, Buddy looked at his children, then at me, then at the sky, and asked, "What'll we do next winter?"

Leaving was harder than I had anticipated. I stopped

at a little store, wrote my resignation from both the ministry and the church, and dropped it in the mail. To seal my decision, I went into the store and called out the name of a beer I saw advertised. I drank half of it.

I'm a lawyer now. The community doesn't think what I do is insignificant. I have a phone on my credenza with a lot of buttons on it, and it rings all day. When I am involved in a celebrated trial, TV cameras follow me down the courthouse steps. That is a heady feeling. I make a great deal more money than I did as a home mission pastor. Yet I am sure that I worry more about money now than I did then.

I still manage to read the Bible—about five minutes a day. The law is a jealous mistress. One friend who knew me as a pastor remarked one day, "You *used* to be the nicest guy I ever met."

There are rewards for excelling as a trial lawyer, but you pay a price. After one brutal criminal trial, a woman juror came up to me, shook her head, and said: "You are the meanest lawyer in town."

The greatest reward of devoting one's life to the Christian ministry is what happens to the minister himself. By devoting himself daily to the reading of the Word and to service to others, the person becomes more like Jesus. The principle is: The biggest reward of a man's labor is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it.

Ministers are, of course, underpaid, and that should be remedied. But when a minister continues to serve despite the lack of financial reward, it lends credibility to his message. The television evangelist may be a millionaire, but the measure of any man is what he becomes in the process.

Having been trained as a preacher, I learned to speak for a decision. Once when a trial was going badly, I turned to my cocounsel and said: "Let me sum up. I'll give an altar call."

After the passionate oration, when the jury retired to deliberate, the court reporter came up to me and said, "You should have been a preacher!" I walked away from her. She cornered me a second time and insisted, "I'm serious, you should have been a preacher!"

Again, without answering I retreated into the hall. Undaunted, she followed me there and for the third time said, "Really, you *should* have been a preacher!"

"Yes, ma'am," I replied softly. "You're right, I should have."

ACCOUNTABILITY

Continued from p. 21

been a highlight hour for five men.

Ministers may be able to schedule prayer fellowship with other ministers of their own denomination or tradition. God's people are called out of the isolation of competition into genuine community. Isolation is a favorite technique of the enemy of souls, not limited to the socially deprived and disadvantaged in the community. One-on-one, or in small groups, ministers can simply confess to each other, "I need prayer! Let's meet once a week for a few weeks and pray together." The results can be personally redemptive. And sometimes effects of personal prayer groups have been literally miraculous. Small prayer fellowship groups have been known to be the fertile soil from which God has given genuine revival.

One of the most exciting kind of accountability groups is a cross-denominational ministers' prayer fellowship. Where such a group is possible, ties of fellowship cross denominational lines, and Christian accountability can bind whole communities together. If existing ministers' meetings are strictly business or lacking in spiritual life, a minister looking for Christian fellowship may have to start a *prayer* fellowship. Without competing with any existing organization, he can invite neighboring pastors to breakfast or lunch and lay out the personal spiritual need that prompts such a call. If there is response, a fellowship group may be under way.

God's good people are like men and women who work around high-tension transformers. The call of God, the challenge of the gospel, the desire to succeed, and the potential for helping people for time and eternity represent powerful currents of energy. Burnout and worse can happen when good and holy people begin to frustrate this healing energy of God. Attitudes during trials or in great success can change in subtle ways; motivations can be clouded. The secret is to keep the energy flowing in and through the minister rather than shorting out and blowing him apart.

God's plan for all the Church, and

especially for His ministers, is the mutual insight and strength, the support and healing of godly fellowship, regularly meeting together. Such fellowship is worth almost any effort to obtain. It does not need to remain "the missing ingredient." 🙏

NOTES

1. Rev. Sandy Williams, First Baptist Church of Freeport, Maine, "Letters," *Christianity Today*, Sept. 4, 1987.

2. R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Christian Perfection* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 411.

BROTHERS

Continued from p. 21

assignment in Zimbabwe. I know that Roger Kvam at First Presbyterian in Quincy is seeking a new assistant because Larry Baskins has moved to Richmond, Va.; Brandt Gillespie at Glad Tidings Assembly has 200 *gypsies* in an afternoon service each Sunday besides his two morning services, and is working too hard. And I know and care about a whole lot more that can't be written! I'm thrilled that three weeks ago in Braintree Baptist's Sunday evening service Pastor Kenneth Rayner challenged his congregation, to complete consecration, and two-thirds of his congregation came to the altar to tell God He could use them any way He will.

Having been a Nazarene all my life, there is a bond—a sense of "family"—for all Nazarenes, especially for the fellowship of Nazarene elders. I have no desire to be anything other than a Christian and a Nazarene. But I also have developed a sense of "family" for all of Christ's Church, wherever and however it touches my own group. I want to see my church and my denomination grow. But I want to be absolutely free from the selfish ambition and competitiveness that would grieve the heart of Jesus. I have realized that the harvest fields are far beyond our total human capacity, beyond all of the evangelicals put together. We need Churchwide revival and renewal in love. I have come to the realization that what is best for one part of Christ's Body is good for all the rest.

Probably without exception, each pastor who has been a part of this prayer fellowship over a period of time has been both an agent of healing and a recipient of loving care and concern in at least one time of real need. Crushing church crises have been met with united prayer. Wayward children have been prayed for, and we have rejoiced together at their homecomings.

Community effectiveness, at least to some extent, has been a by-product of this fellowship. Some attention has been given to networking involvement in social needs, such as shelter and food for the needy, although we usually try to "steer clear of business." We are *not* at some point of "arrival." This is certainly not a program or technique to be copied in detail. But this pastor has found strength and healing in a fellowship of honest accountability.

Frankly, there are Fridays that are too full for me to take two hours for lunch and fellowship. But often I hear a gentle Voice remind me about "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25). So then I go and laugh and pray and talk with my brothers, and I am never sorry. Well, hardly ever. 🙏

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The Effective Children's Sermon

by Sally Carpenter

Director of Education, First United Methodist Church, Parkersburg, W.Va.

A seminary professor once stated that a pastor should spend as much preparation time on the children's sermon as on the regular sermon—perhaps not in the literal number of minutes used, but to emphasize the importance of these rewarding informal moments with children.

Why have children's sermons? Analyze your typical worship service. Much, if not all, of it is probably geared toward adults. Setting aside a special time in the service for children affirms their place in the church and brings them to the congregation's attention. Children gathered for your talk each Sunday is an exciting visual sign of the church growth. Children find it difficult to sit still through an entire worship service; a children's talk gives them a time to move around. Children's sermons can add a breath of fresh air to a service that can sometimes be formal and routine. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, this gives the pastor an opportunity to interact with the younger members of the congregation and to aid in their spiritual growth.

Here are some suggestions for preparing effective children's sermons:

1. *Harmony.* Fit your talk into the overall theme of worship for that day. Keep up with the Sunday School curriculum and tie in your talk with that day's lesson. Keep your talk theologically sound.

2. *Avoid cuteness.* The children's talk is not a time to show off the children. It is a time of Christian education. Give your talk a dignified title such as "children's sermon" or "children's moments" rather than "kids'

time" or "wee ones." Santa Claus, Easter bunnies, and other catchy gimmicks have no place in a worship service.

3. *Remember your audience.* This is not a time to get at the parents through their children. Avoid remarks like "Tell your parents to do this," or "Do your parents say grace at mealtime?" Direct your message to the children's needs.

4. *Keep it simple.* One idea per talk is plenty. If one children's talk contains God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Easter, and the Cross,

Many a dull service has been rescued by an insightful children's sermon.

there are five ideas too many. Use simple vocabulary. Avoid complex theological terms such as Trinity, Atonement, salvation, and so on, that children do not understand. Read children's books to see how theological ideas are presented as well as the vocabulary used.

5. *Stay on the children's level.* Children think and reason differently from mature adults. Young children cannot comprehend metaphor, allegory, logic, or simile. A joke has a

pastor asking his church children, "What is brown, fuzzy, lives outdoors, climbs trees, and stores nuts for winter?" One little girl replies without enthusiasm, "It sounds like a squirrel to me, but it's probably Jesus."

6. *Relate to the children's present.* Children cannot comprehend the future past a few days or weeks. Keep your talks within the world they know: parents, siblings, school, playground, pets, love, sorry, hugs, paper routes, and so on. Avoid using "When you grow up into fine Christian men and women . . ."

7. *Use objects.* Children learn through their senses: touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing. Objects the children can see and touch can be meaningful. However, object lessons can be misused. It is not necessary to have an object for every single talk you give. Avoid relating your object to God or other abstract concepts. Use an object that fits directly with your topic. You can use objects that illustrate Bible customs, such as lamps, palm branches, figs, pottery, and so on. Do not give away your object to one child after the talk unless you have something to give everyone.

8. *Use giveaways carefully.* It is not necessary to give the children something every time you give a talk. This may seem like bribing them to come. Giveaways every week can also drain a budget. Giveaways used sparingly will be more meaningful than weekly gifts. When you do use them, be sure they relate to your talk and are not just cheap toy trinkets. Avoid candy if you can; some parents may not want their children to eat sweets between

meals, and candy tends to end up on hymnals and pew seats. For safety's sake, do not give objects that have sharp corners, can be easily broken, or are small enough to swallow. If you use booklets or tracts, make sure they are within the child's reading level. You may want to wrap small objects in a large envelope to prevent loss.

9. *Avoid moralizing.* This is not the time for "Keep your room neat" or "Obey your parents." This is the time to illustrate God's love and to praise Him. Never talk down to the children: "Now the lesson of today's talk . . ." If your talk was well written, the children will have already understood your point.

10. *Keep it short.* Children have brief attention spans. Two minutes may be more effective than five. Expanded talks can easily become too complicated.

11. *Involvement.* Children learn by doing. Ask questions during your talk, but avoid both "fishing around" for the "right" answer and using questions with yes-and-no responses. Invite children to share their feelings and opinions.

Children have a wonderful way of misinterpreting questions. In one talk I asked, "Why did Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple when He was eight days old?" One answer I heard was, "To baptize Him." That question was probably too difficult for the child to answer, based on his limited knowledge of that Bible story. When writing your talk, look at your questions and think of every possible way they could be misunderstood. If they seem misleading, rewrite them.

Children can also be physically involved. They can do hand movements to a song or to Scripture reading. They can act out scenes from the Bible, sing, or use socks as hand puppets.

You may want to try some dramatics yourself. Dress up as a Bible character. Use a hand puppet as an alter ego. You need not be skilled in throwing your voice; children will react to the puppet even if they see you talking.

12. *Prayer.* End your talk with a brief prayer. Pray *with* the children, not *to* them or *about* them. Again, keep your language simple and avoid adult phrases like "Almighty

God" or "Everlasting King." My favorite is "Good morning, God." Keep your prayer short, simple, and in harmony with your talk. One sentence is plenty: "Help us to be kind to others as Jesus was kind. Amen." Some children may not sit quietly during a lengthy, rambling prayer.

13. *Seating arrangements.* The worst children's talk I have seen was in a very large sanctuary. The lay reader giving the announcements

Children learn by doing; they have a wonderful way of misinterpreting abstract questions.

suddenly said, "Now for the children's sermon." He launched into the talk while still standing behind the lectern. I wonder how many children really listened.

For one thing, short children may not be able to see over the heads of adults in the pews. Having the children walk to the chancel sets this time apart as something special just for them. They can meet the pastor face-to-face. Plus, there is a bonding that comes from being with a peer group.

The best way to seat the children is for you to sit on the chancel steps with the children seated on the steps and floor facing you. Some children are uncomfortable if they are seated facing the congregation, and some may show off if they know people are looking at them.

Stay on the children's level physically. Sitting or standing over them implies talking down. If the children are sitting in a pew, sit either in a chair level with them or at the end of the pew. If you sit in the middle of the pew, your head will be swinging left and right to see everyone.

14. *Voice.* Speak loudly and clearly. Enunciate, pronounce words correctly, and use proper grammar. Avoid using a microphone if you can. Most people can project well enough to be heard in most sanctuaries (a music or drama coach can

help you). Even the hard of hearing in the congregation have told me they can hear me when I speak in public, and I never use microphones. The trouble with microphones is that most people are awkward in using them. People trip over the cords, the mike can pick up extraneous noises, and they can be in the way if you handle an object. Plus, children love to lean over your shoulder and shout things into the mike to hear their voices carry.


15. *Discipline.* As much as we love our children and want them to enjoy themselves, guidelines are needed to maintain order during the talk. A child who disrupts a talk will embarrass you and make the other children uncomfortable. A small amount of squirming is normal for young children, but this is different from interruptions that ruin a talk.

The best way to prevent disruptions is to write your talk well, organize it, memorize it, and present it well. If the children's sermon moves quickly, is interesting and easy to understand, the children are less likely to be restless. Approaching a talk with the attitude "I'll think of something when I'm in the pulpit" invites trouble.

Often disruptive behavior can be controlled simply by ignoring it. If you must discipline the child, do so in the least obtrusive manner. A quiet "Shhh, please listen" may be all that is needed. Or bring the group in on this without singling out the child. "Let's all be very quiet now and pray." Never lose your temper, embarrass the child, or raise your voice.

Some children disrupt by constantly talking about everything except your talk. Tell the child, "That's very interesting, but right now we're talking about _____. You can tell me about your new toy after the service."

A child who hits or pokes another child (or you) can often be stopped by reaching out and pushing their hand away gently, without calling attention to the act, and continuing with your talk.

As you gain experience in writing and presenting children's sermons, it will become easier for you to open God's Word to the children in new and exciting ways. You will no doubt find that your ministry will be blessed. 

A QUESTION OF SERMON STRUCTURE

by Daniel Plybon Love

Pastor, The Wesleyan Church, Oak Park, Ill.

Some time back, I slogged my way through a course in homiletics. The first day of class we were promised that "the serious student would develop confidence and clarity resulting in audience understanding, recall, and application."

With such pragmatic ends clearly defined, the question was obvious: What method or technique would best guarantee their achievement? My homiletics book gave this specific but old-fashioned answer: An audience best remembers three points, and remembers those points better if they are alliterated and each backed by a catchy illustration.

With these guidelines, we were free to select any passage of Scripture. I decided on James 2:14-26, the passage dealing with the relationship between faith and works. In compliance with the defined methodology, I carefully examined the text and created three alliterated points—"Dead Faith" (2:15-17), "Demon Faith" (2:18-19), and "Developed Faith" (2:20-25). Thankfully, the library was amply stocked with books of codified illustrations and anecdotes. Finally, armed only with a single 5" x 7" card and my *New American Standard*, I preached the three-point, alliterated, and illustrated Word.

The evaluation that followed my effort was mixed. I was told that my three points were "clear and discernible" and the application was "direct and relevant," although the delivery was "stiff."

Although I no longer adhere to such a strictly defined methodology, the class heightened my awareness of preaching styles. Some preachers have maintained the three-point, alliterated structure to amplify the passage in question. Others have developed variations on this structure by either modifying the number of points or using an outline as a vague guide holding together a series of tangents. Still others have disregarded structure altogether for a gift-of-gab style that meanders

through a passage or series of passages.

While the skill of many of these preachers is impressive, their styles raise a fundamental issue: Do such approaches honestly reflect the biblical text? To put it crassly, should marketing or personal objectives take precedence over accurate exegesis? In considering this question as well as my own style of preaching, I was eventually forced to recognize that such methods take serious liberties with Scripture and model poor Bible study techniques for our listeners.

My sermon on James 2:14-26 illustrates the problem. Approaching the text with a preconceived structure, I had to create three points. In reflecting on the text itself, however, I later realized that my second point, "Demon Faith" (2:18-19), was not intended by the biblical writer to be considered a separate point at all. Rather, this reference to the beliefs of demons was intended to be a vivid illustration of the absurdity of "dead faith," faith without actions. To make "Demon Faith" a separate point was to violate the structure of the passage and the thought, but the method forced me to adapt Scripture to a preconceived structure rather than submitting the structure of my sermon to the structure of the passage.

We evangelicals claim to accept the absolute authority of Scripture as one of our distinctives. Yet our sermons all too often demonstrate a callous disregard for the content of Scripture. If the task of preaching is to clarify Scripture and define its present implications, then the structure of a sermon must be submitted to the structure of the particular passage being dealt with. Structure and content cannot be separated. To do so not only violates the form of the passage but also risks misunderstanding its intended impact.

As an example, consider the writings of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6—8. He begins his argument by stating a principle certain Corinthians were fond of quot-

"I later realized that my second point, 'Demon Faith,' was not intended by the biblical writer to be a separate point at all."

ing: "Everything is permissible" for the Christian. Paul agrees, but reminds the Corinthians that "not everything is beneficial" (6:12, NIV). As soon as he makes this statement, however, he suddenly remembers an exception. Not *everything* is permissible; certain sexual relationships, for example, are clearly prohibited and cannot be considered a matter of Christian freedom (vv. 13-20). But, of course, that is not to infer that *all* sexual expression is wrong or that the marriage relationship itself is wrong (7:1-6). Paul explains this matter, carries on by dealing with several other related tangents such as singleness, divorce, and social status (vv. 6-40), and finally returns to the original issue of Christian freedom (8:1—11:1).

This sort of complex yet hardly systematic argumentation means that the exegete (and the preacher is an exegete) must approach Paul's letters with great care in order to be sure his teaching is being properly understood. Each particular argument and its various tangents must be considered and honored.

The importance of such thoroughness is illustrated by 1 Corinthians 13, the Love Chapter, a favorite for preaching. This chapter is typically dealt with as an isolated unit. The resulting observations are seldom heretical, but they often fail to discern the intended impact of this chapter. By considering the structure and context of this passage, it is soon recognized as a climactic tangent to the larger issue of Corinthian arrogance and neglect. Paul is not simply defining love; he is subtly defining what the Corinthians are *not*. The real focus is the *costliness* of love, not its easy beauty. In other words, Paul's definition of love functions as a rebuke. This intended impact is often lost simply because we are too involved with our own preconceived structures or objectives rather than the structures and objectives of Scripture itself.

This basic exegetical principle becomes all the more important when dealing with the Old Testament. To attempt to approach these stories the same way we approach an Epistle leaves both the preacher and the listener confused. The difficulty with most Old Testament stories is that there is rarely any explanation of their theological importance. In order to compensate for Scripture's strange silence, we rush to create some meaning or moral, or to discover a significance in the use of numbers, symbols, or types. The often disappointing results probably accounts for the rarity of sermons dealing with Old Testament stories.

Once again, the problem is a failure to consider the structure of this type of biblical literature. In the case of the Old Testament, a hint concerning the proper approach is suggested by the way the ancient Jews thought about God. Their awareness did not rest on abstract theology reasoning, but on the account of

God's interaction within human history. The Jew accepted and clung to the idea of God's faithfulness, not on the basis of a formal theology, but because God had acted in a faithful manner: He had delivered them out of bondage in Egypt, sustained them in the wilderness, and so on. The prayer of Nehemiah 9 is an example of this type of thinking, the people showing themselves confident of God's undeserved but continuing faithfulness because of His past involvements.

With such a mind-set, these stories had importance, not because of an associated theological formulation (often there was none stated), but because of their impact. To simply hear the story of the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings was to be struck by God's supreme power, His inescapable holiness, and His immense faithfulness even to a people often without faith.

If this is so, then the attempt of the preacher must be to recreate the impact of an ancient story in such a way that a similar impact can be made on the people of this day. That may be accomplished by the use of explicit theological reasoning, but that reasoning must be a tool rather than an end in itself.

All this is simply to argue that the structure and content of our sermons must seek to reflect and clarify the structure and content of the passage of Scripture being considered. If the passage deals with an argument, then a sermon must consider the totality of that argument, even if it jumps across two or three chapters or is broken up by several tangents. If the passage is a tangent, such as 1 Corinthians 13, the sermon must seek to explain that tangent and how it fits into the broader structure. If such an argument or teaching involves five points, then the sermon must have five points; it must not be manipulated into three points or whatever our particular whim may be for that moment. In contrast, if the passage is a story or parable, the sermon must attempt to discern and recreate the impact that story was intended to have. Illustrations and other aids can be used, but the function of such aids is to better explain or recreate the passage and its relevance.

If the structure of a sermon disregards the structure of a passage simply in order to fulfill some catchy preconceived style or personal objective, then we are modeling a fundamental disrespect for the very Scriptures we claim to be authoritative. Indeed, if our sermons are to reflect this conviction concerning the authority of Scripture, then our words must seek to reflect and clarify the structure and content of the passage being considered. The highly structured three-point sermon or the virtually unstructured gift-of-gab sermon may demonstrate our personal creativity, but it falls short of creatively amplifying the meaning and impact of the Scriptures themselves.



SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS



UNWORTHY OF THE SACRIFICE

During the Vietnam War, a young West Point graduate was sent to lead a company of new recruits. One night he and his men were overrun by the Viet Cong. During the ensuing battle, the young lieutenant was able to get all his men to safety—except one. The soldier who was left behind was badly wounded. From their trenches, the rest of the company could hear their comrade moaning and calling for help. To climb out of the trench to attempt a rescue would have meant almost certain death.

Eventually the young lieutenant could endure the wounded man's crying no longer. He crawled out and stealthily made his way toward the wounded soldier. Finally reaching him, he pulled him back to the trench. But just as he pushed the wounded man over the side of the trench, a bullet ripped through the lieutenant's back, killing him instantly.

Several months later, the rescued man returned to the States. When the dead hero's parents learned this man was in the vicinity, they planned to have him to dinner. They wanted to know this young man whose life was spared at such a great cost to them.

On the evening of their dinner party, the honored guest arrived late. He was drunk. He was loud and obnoxious. He told off-color jokes, seasoned his language with profanity, and showed no concern for his hosts' feelings. The lieutenant's parents did what they could to redeem the evening, but to no avail.

At the end of the ordeal, the husband ushered the obscene visitor to the door. As he bid the guest goodnight and closed the door, his wife collapsed in tears, crying, "To think that our precious son had to die for somebody like that!"

Source

Anthony Campolo, *Who Switched the Price Tags?* Waco, Tex., Word Books, 1986

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated

Mankind takes the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the agony of the Father for granted. Christ gave His life so that we might live, even though we were unworthy of His sacrifice. How often must the Father echo the words of the hero's

mother: "To think that My precious Son had to die for somebody like that!"

Supporting Scriptures

1 Cor. 11:27-32; Heb. 6:4-6

—Submitted by
Chris Wiley

REFLECTION OF GLORY

"I discovered the secret of the sea in meditation upon a dewdrop."

Source

Kahlil Gibran

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated

God has revealed to us a portion of His nature and His glory. But what we have perceived is but an infinitesimal part of what He is.

Supporting Scriptures

John 14:9; 1 Cor. 13:12

—Submitted by
Bjorn Jestade

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

On January 15, 1549, a young Mennonite woman was brought to trial in Holland. Elizabeth was asked to swear under oath whether or not she had a husband. She answered, "I can take no oath."

To the question regarding whom she had taught, she would only answer, "I will confess only my faith."

They said they would torture her. She replied, "I hope that with God's help I shall keep my tongue and not be a traitor."

When asked why she had been rebaptized, she replied, "I haven't been baptized again. I have simply been baptized."

"Do you think that saves you?" they asked her.

She replied, "No. All the waters in the sea cannot save me. Christ saves me."

With this, they tortured her with thumbscrews until blood gushed from her nails and she fainted. Coming to, she still refused to give in to her inquisitors. She was then sentenced to death by drowning.

Source

Roland H. Bainton, *The Church of Our Fathers*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated

Christians have suffered for their faith—and may be asked to do so again.

Supporting Scriptures

2 Tim. 3:12; James 5:10

—Submitted by
Veora "Cookie" Tressler

FROM THE THRESHOLD OF DEATH

Gregory Robertson, a safety and training adviser for the U.S. Parachute Association and a veteran of 1,500 jumps, followed Debbie Williams and five other divers out of a plane two miles over Coolidge, Ariz. He watched as the group tried to link hands at 9,000 feet.

Suddenly, Williams collided with another skydiver, knocking herself unconscious. Robertson tucked his arms to his sides and, using his shoulders to steer, plummeted at 200 mph. His bullet maneuver allowed him to catch up with Debbie, who was spiraling downward on her back. Placing her in a sitting position, Robertson yanked her rip cord at 2,700 feet. He opened his own chute at 2,000 feet—10 seconds before he would have slammed into the ground.

Gregory Robertson risked his own life to snatch Debbie Williams from the threshold of death.

Source

The *Syracuse Herald-Journal*, Syracuse, N.Y., May 7, 1987

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated

As Christians, Christ has charged us with the responsibility to snatch others from the threshold of spiritual death.

Supporting Scriptures

Jude 23; John 4:35; Gal. 6:9

—Submitted by
Brooks Bowers

DYING TO BELIEVE

A railway employee accidentally locked himself in a refrigerated boxcar. His efforts to attract the attention of anyone outside failed, and unable to free himself, he resigned himself to his fate.

As he felt his body numbing with cold, he scribbled the record of his impending death on the wall of the boxcar. "I'm becoming colder," he wrote. "Half asleep

now, I can hardly write." And finally, "These may be my last words." And they were.

When the boxcar was finally opened, they found him there, frozen to death. And yet the temperature inside was only 56 degrees. The freezing apparatus was—and for some time had been—out of working order. There was no physical reason for his death. He was a victim of his own illusion.

Source,
Paul Butler, *Best Sermons*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated
It is more important to believe truth than to truly believe. Sincere belief in something other than truth leads to death.

Supporting Scriptures
Mark 9:23; John 8:24
—Submitted by
Mark Justice

LOVE HURTS

One spring morning I was walking along a path in the woods near my home. Suddenly a rabbit bound across the path. This rabbit looked a bit roughed up; its fur was sparse and uneven. As I stepped closer, the rabbit casually hopped to a grove of small trees a few yards away.

As I resumed my walk, a slight movement in the grass caught my eye. Stooping down, I saw four tiny creatures in a clump of grass. They were rabbit kits. Only two and a half inches long, hairless, and blind, they were totally helpless.

Their nest had been dug down into the earth. Leaves and grass had been arranged to form a camouflaged home. But the most striking feature was that the inside of the nest had been completely lined with fur—rabbit fur.

Then it hit me. That scraggy-furred rabbit I had just seen was the mother of this precious litter. Not only had she carried her young through pregnancy, endured labor and delivery pains, prepared a nest, and patiently nursed and protected them to this point, she had also given of herself. Painfully, she had pulled out great clumps of fur to line the nest, thus providing a soft, warm environment for her fragile kits.

Source
Personal experience

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated
The nurture of infant Christians by more mature spiritual parents is imperative. Nurture of others always involves a degree of self-sacrifice. Such giving of oneself can cause some pain and discomfort, but the rewards are infinitely and eternally worth the sacrifice.

Supporting Scriptures
1 Thess. 2:7-12; 1 Pet. 5:1-4
—Submitted by
Dan Ames

TOO LATE TO LET GO

An eagle, soaring high above the Niagara River, spotted an animal stranded on an ice floe. Swooping down, he dispatched his prey, then began to feed as they floated down the river toward the falls.

As the eagle fed, he kept his eyes on the narrowing distance between the roaring falls and his ice floe. Unconcerned, he enjoyed his feast up to the last moment, when he planned to let go and fly to safety. He didn't know that as he fed, the spray from the water was freezing his talons to the fur of his kill, which was already frozen to the floating ice. When the floe was only yards from the falls, the eagle tried to let go and fly away; the ice held him fast. With a final scream, the eagle disappeared over the side, into the churning, deadly maelstrom below.

Source
From a sermon by Rev. D. Paul Ray

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated
Many Christians are living like the eagle, one hand holding on to sin as long as they can, thinking they will be able to let go when the time comes. In actuality, that which they think they have a hold on has a hold on them, with the same disastrous results the eagle experienced.

Supporting Scriptures
Rom. 6:12; Phil. 2:15
—Submitted by
Hector Mendoza

THE GOOD STUFF

Mary Muldoon, of Norman, Okla., wrote a letter to the editor of the *Daily Oklahoman*. She was protesting a letter written by another woman, who had objected to news articles that focused on immorality and non-Christian values. Miss Muldoon had this to say:

"I, for one, enjoy reading about homosexuals and nudity and pornography and prostitution and all those kinds of good things like that. I am more offended by Billy Graham and his kind of religious pap. But everyone to his own taste. I can skip right over him and go on to the reports about sin and crime and other kinds of newsworthy human behavior that appeal to my taste. Without that, how dull would life be, anyway?"

Source
The *Daily Oklahoman*, Letters to the Editor, date unknown

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated
The blinding effect of sin. When we

choose to focus on the base side of life, it's easy to be blinded to the good.

Supporting Scriptures
Rom. 1:29-32; 2 Pet. 2:19
—Submitted by
Mike Ward

OOPS!

Yul Brynner was noted for his conceit. Once, as he was lunching at a posh New York restaurant, a camera flashed near his table. Enraged, Mr. Brynner charged over to the people with the camera and demanded that they give him the film. After all, they had not asked his permission to take his picture. The couple explained that their camera was a Polaroid, and asked Brynner to wait until the photo developed so as not to ruin the rest of the pack. Brynner was incensed but grudgingly agreed to wait. When the photo was developed, Brynner snatched it from the photographer's hand. Looking at it, the crimson crept up his face. There in his hand, he held a snapshot of the dessert tray between the photographer's and Brynner's tables.

Source
"The Hollywood Showbiz Report," KBEQ radio, Kansas City, February 26, 1985

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated
The folly of pride and arrogance

Supporting Scriptures
Prov. 8:13; Jer. 48:29
—Submitted by
Dwayne Johnson

THE HARDENING OF A HEART

Dr. Morris Weigelt tells of a childhood memory:

"I can recall the various stages a pond near my house went through as it began to freeze. As the water just began to freeze, it formed a thin sheet of ice that you could throw a small pebble through. After it had frozen a little more, you could throw a small rock through it. Soon it would be thick enough for a squirrel to run across it. A little longer, and it was almost rubberlike; a person could jump on it as the ice gave just a little. Finally, it became so thick and hard that you could drive a tractor across it!"

Source
Dr. Morris Weigelt, from a class lecture at Nazarene Theological Seminary

Truth/Concept/Doctrine Illustrated
Left unchecked, the heart can gradually become so hard that nothing can penetrate it.

Supporting Scriptures
Mark 3:5; Heb. 3:15
—Submitted by
Mike Ward

SERMON OUTLINES



THE SECRET OF REST

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Ps. 37:7).

INTRODUCTION

- A. A few words blend the attraction, difficulty, and importance of rest.
 - III.: For a mother, the bereaved, the overactive
 - III.: Often a doctor's despair—advice unheeded
- B. In a restless world, an impossible miracle? Especially for youth.
 - III.: God-given energy (John 21:18)
- C. Psalmist not a know-it-all but a frustrated senior citizen; he had proven God's providence (v. 25), trusted God's righteousness (v. 28), and learned life's greatest secret (text).
 - III.: Much biblical counsel is age to youth, or parents to children.

I. A BELIEVER'S REST—"In the Lord"

- A. Not *Initial* Rest
 - A *gift* through coming "unto me" (Matt. 11:28)
- B. Not *Inner* Rest
 - Found* yoked with Christ in submission and service; a second, deeper rest
- C. Not *Eternal* Rest
 - Final* rest of the blessed dead (Rev. 14:13); rest in unceasing service, a glorified body, and heavenly fellowship
- D. Rest
 - When fretfulness (vv. 1, 7, 8), persecution (vv. 12, 14), evil, and hard times forbid rest

II. THE BASIS OF REST

Privileged and possible through:

- A. Renewed Trust and Active Faith
 - And *do* good; faith and faithfulness
- B. Intensified Communion
 - "Delight thyself" (v. 4).
- C. Confirmed Consecration
 - "Commit thy way" (v. 5).
- D. Exercised Patience
 - "Wait on" and "for" Him (vv. 34, 7).
 - III.: Peter in prison, Acts 12

APPLICATION

It is difficult to face life without restful nights.

It is difficult to face the Christian life without God's rest.

III.: At the heart of "wrestle" is rest.
—Albert J. Lown

THE MEANING OF MAN

"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7, NIV).

I. Man, His Nature

- A. The meanness of the material
 - 1. The dust of the ground. "Are you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills?" (Job 15:7, NIV).
 - 2. What is man? Bones, a tissue of flesh and gall, heart, liver and brains, a few limbs and muscles—that is all, says the doctor.
 - 3. What is man? Brains, some thought cells directed by nerves and electrical impulses, some feelings and fears, a few doubts and delusions, regrets and reserves, says the teacher.
 - 4. What is man? Soul, a spirit that knows no decay with the potential of God-life, an embodied soul-spirit, no mere clay, says the preacher.

B. The greatness of his Maker

- 1. The Lord God. "Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit" (Ps. 147:5, NIV).
 - Illustration:* A woman troubled and much distressed about the hard circumstances of her life was invited to spend some time in an isolated district. She stayed with a friend, and each night they sat at the window and watched the beautiful sky. One night the woman exclaimed with reverence, "God's glory in the heavens has soothed my mind, and I am so grateful to Him."

C. The excellence of his life

- 1. God breathed into him the breath of life. "The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of

whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1, NIV).

Illustration: King Hussein in his autobiography relates his rapid rise to the throne. As a carefree youngster, he had no thought of being king one day; but suddenly his grandfather was assassinated, and his father was declared incompetent to reign. Hussein was king. He put aside his youthful activities and accomplished great things for his government and people. Yet he still says that from time to time he feels the pull of the less active life and has to grit his teeth with determination and remember his exalted position.

- 2. The Christian has been selected by the Lord to be joint heir with Jesus Christ. Christians will ultimately be corulers with Christ, raised to an exalted position. Christ gives the power to live an exalted life.
- D. The limit of his nature. "Adam was made a living soul" (1 Cor. 15:45).
 - 1. "But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 4:29, NIV).

Illustration: When God was about to create man, says a Jewish legend, He took into His counsel the angels that stood around His throne. "Create him not," said the angel of justice, "for if You do, he will commit all kinds of wickedness. He will be hard and cruel, dishonest and unrighteous."

"Create him not," said the angel of truth, "for he will be false and deceitful to his brother and to You."

"Create him not," said the angel of holiness, "for he will follow that which is impure in Your sight and dishonor You to Your face."

Then stepped forward the angel of mercy (God's best beloved) and said, "Create him, our Heavenly Father, for when he sins and turns from Your

path of right and truth and holiness, I will take him by the hand and speak loving words to him and lead him back to You."

II. Man, His World

- A. God above him. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3, NIV).

Illustration: There is something in the thought of being *me*. Knowing that my God is on high and surrounds me with His love. Even in the loneliest of times, in the time when I feel neglected, He hears when I sigh in prayer. God is the Light. He makes everything clear in His time. My eyes do not feel the rays of His light, but my heart feels its warmth.

- B. Animals under him. "You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet" (Ps. 8:6, NIV).

Illustration: Sir E. Landseer, instructed by the Duke of Wellington, painted him in the den of lions and tigers. When visitors asked by what authority the duke commissioned such a painting, he took the Bible and showed them Gen. 1:26. Dominion is given to Adam over the earth and the animals. The duke then had that verse inscribed on the frame.

- C. Women beside him. "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord" (Prov. 18:22, NIV).

Illustration: Dr. Emmet Fox, when visiting America, said, "The most significant thing I saw in America was the tomb of General Grant on Riverside Drive in New York, modeled after Napoleon's tomb. Napoleon is alone in all his glory. Enter St. Paul's Cathedral and you will see Wellington's tomb there, and he also is alone. But look at Grant's tomb! Why, there are two tombs! One is for Grant, and one is for his wife. There is not another public monument where the man is recognized as having a wife. Yet they are made for each other!

the scar, much to the delight of the young soldier. Other soldiers came to look at the repaired boot. He took out his Bible and told them the story of the One who came to heal the scars of sin.

- B. In spirit, saintlike. "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:2).

Illustration: A pious elderly minister, concerned about the spiritual welfare of his fatherless grandson, took him as he visited the poor of his rural parish in a valley in the Alps. The boy enjoyed the beauty of the scenery, but when he realized how difficult it was for other children to enjoy God's beautiful pictures, he said, "When I am a man, I mean to take the side of the poor." And he did. That boy was Pestalozzi, a father of orphans, the founder of universal education. He rightly enjoys the high tribute paid to him by his biographer. "He lived like a beggar, that he might teach beggars to live like men."

- C. In service, sacrificial. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

Illustration: Oshalla, a leper in western Ethiopia, went to the Pokwa Mission for treatment. There he found Jesus Christ. He went back to his home and told them about Jesus and His love, but there was little response. In the center of the village was a tree where the people placed lambs' heads and chicken blood to appease the spirits. Oshalla, although barely able to wield an ax, destroyed the tree without harm to himself. Then the people listened to the gospel being preached. A brave Christian held the opinion of his primitive society in contempt and won a victory for the Cross.

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,

And all the world go free?

No, there's a cross for ev'ry

one,

And there's a cross for me.

THOMAS SHEPHERD, 1665-1739

—T. W. Thomas

PERSEVERING IN HOLINESS

Scripture: Jude 17-25

Text: Jude 21. "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

I. Keep the Faith (v. 20).

- A. Lay a good foundation.
1. In communion with God

2. In Scripture study

3. In church attendance

B. Continue building on a good foundation.

1. In a daily walk
2. In a lifelong process
3. In the Holy Spirit

II. Keep Loving (v. 21).

A. Present environment of love—God

1. He is the Source.
2. He is the Maintainer.

B. Future environment of love—God

1. Guarantee of a triumphant life
2. Guarantee of eternal life

III. Keep Sharing (vv. 22-23).

- A. With those wavering in judgment
B. With those falling away
C. With those in sin

—Derl Keefer

GET READY—HERE HE COMES

Scripture: 2 Pet. 3:14-18

Text: 2 Pet. 3:14. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

I. He Is Coming—Be Diligent.

- A. Keep doing your best—diligently.
B. Keep sharing your best—diligently.
C. Keep wanting the best—diligently

II. He Is Coming—Find Peace.

- A. Peace—found in happy people
1. Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
2. Peace with our own conscience
3. Peace with men
B. Peace—found in heaven-bound people
1. Because of the Cross
2. Because of the sprinkling of the Blood
3. Because of the Holy Spirit

III. He Is Coming—Find Holiness.

- A. In crisis experience
B. In everyday walk
C. In purity
D. In usefulness

—Derl Keefer

OUR SHEPHERD

Text: Psalm 23

Our Shepherd is . . .

- I. **Ps. 23:1:** Our *supply*
II. **Ps. 23:2:** Our *stillness*
III. **Ps. 23:3:** Our *storehouse*
IV. **Ps. 23:4:** Our *staff*
V. **Ps. 23:5:** Our *surprise*
VI. **Ps. 23:6:** Our *surety*
—J. Grant Swank, Jr.





THE ARK ROCKER

RELIGIOUS HYPERACTIVITY?

I am exhausted! Where is the "rest" for the people of God that is promised in the Scripture? Where is the easier yoke promised by our Lord? Where is the life of quiet godliness promoted by the apostle Paul? What is happening to the church that we feel compelled to race along at the lunatic pace of Wall Street? Why are we being more and more compelled to live on the exhausted edge of quasi-religious hyperactivity?

Am I showing my age? Am I representative of less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the clergy? Perhaps; but I think not. It seems nearly impossible to open any religious publication these days and not be overwhelmed by the hyped-up sense of frantic activity that literally jumps off the pages at you. I am weary, too, of the seemingly rabid desire of present-day leaders to vie for front-camera position and slick, glossy write-ups of their "superstar" accomplishments.

It seems unless one is venturing into exciting and hitherto-unheard-of but absolutely essential new ministries, they have somehow missed the cutting edge of the Spirit's new direction for the neosuper movement of now ministries.

I am tired of looking at Fifth Avenue types promote their own mega-brand of ministry. I am overloaded with "the latest and best" computer program designed to bring your backwoods church into the new age. I don't want any more prepackaged promotional programs for annual attendance drives. I want to be left alone! I want to be left alone with the dear and precious Lord. Left alone long enough to make some sense out of this monstrous menagerie of new ministry potentials that have buried my desk and stifled my own personal creativity.

It's not that I don't want to redeem the times. Anyone can see the days are evil. It's not that I resist change. It's just that I have a gut-level intuition that if we don't slow this thing down long enough to catch our breath and restore our bearings, we are going to promote, preplan, program, and package ourselves right out of business. Jesus told Martha she was "busy" about many things. Too many things, I think!

I don't have any desire to read the autobiography of any more spiritual superstars. I want to read more about men seeking to fashion their ministry after the impeccable pattern of George Mueller and women who, without that Maybelline look, have ministered after the fashion of spirit-lovely women such as Phoebe Palmer. I refuse to listen to another cassette of some Christian, upbeat singer scream out his petty brand of self-aggrandizement in the name of Jesus. I would like to get my hands on a few more Bev Sheas and Ethel Waters. Oh, where have they gone?

I want to say more—much more, but time will not permit it. This near edge of nervous exhaustion I run on compels me to leave my super, up-to-the-minute computer typewriter and get down to the business of preparing my Spirit-anointed Sunday message. Fifteen minutes to cut and paste should allow me just enough time to make it over to my next meeting. On the way, I plan to listen to a cassette lecture on how to manage stress better. Perhaps they will have coffee and doughnuts at the meeting. Some white sugar and a little caffeine should perk me right up. And all in the name of service to our Lord.

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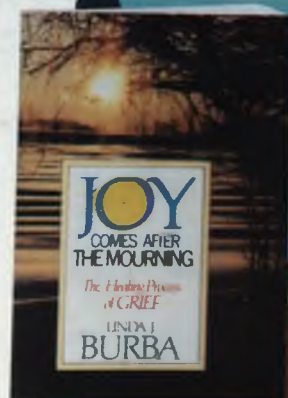
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