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THE

# *Preacher's* MAGAZINE

AUG 16 '93

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**A NEW LOOK AT  
JUSTIFICATION**

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**TRANSLATING  
THE LANGUAGE  
OF THEOLOGY**

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**JESUS  
PREACHED  
DIRECTLY**

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**HURTING  
PARENTS**

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OLIVER NELSON  
OLIVER NELSON UNIVERSITY  
KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS

*People today  
need to have  
their faith reinforced,  
they need to have  
their hope renewed,  
and they need to have  
their love restored.*

*—Rick McDaniel*

# RESTORING GENTLY

by Randal E. Denny

Spokane, Wash.

AUG 18 '93

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KANKAKE, ILLINOIS



**T**he church has been accused of shooting its own wounded.

However, I witnessed the opposite today. A group of ordained elders to which I belong has brought a brother through the process of restoration. Appropriate disciplines guided him back to a place of wholeness. He willingly submitted to his peers. His passage progressed through stages of repentance, loneliness, submissiveness, emotional and spiritual healing, and loving guidance by a superior officer and the gentle, caring touch of a loving pastor. As the elders prayed with words of encouragement, I felt the delight of seeing restoration made complete. My brother in the Lord hugged me, letting me sense the intimacy of his deep joy in that embrace. Restoration is beautiful—a profound celebration of God's grace.

Paul wrote, "You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand" (Gal. 6:2, CEV). He said that in the context of restoring a Christian brother who has been tempted and failed. Paul urges the Christian family to assume responsibility to help him bear that heavy burden. Three principles guide us in carrying the burden with someone who has stumbled and fallen.

First, we should carry one another's burdens in order to restore. Paul instructed, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1). A carpenter who has hit his thumb with a hammer gets very protective of that injured member. He grabs that sore thumb and sticks it in his mouth. Other fingers curl around that injured member to help ease the pain. His feet head for an ice pack or cold water. His tongue and lips form sympathetic sounds! When one member

hurts, it should bring no joy to the other members.

Let the church family resist the urge to reveal the hurting one who has stumbled. When Noah got drunk and stretched out naked on the ground, his son, Ham, laughed at his father's error. But the other two sons took a garment, backed into his tent, and covered Noah. "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8, NASB)—it doesn't rejoice in revealing them.

Let the church family resist responding with rejection. Instead, Paul says, "Restore him gently." The Greek word for "restore" describes a doctor setting a broken bone. When a brother stumbles and falls, it's like having a bone broken. It needs to be reset tenderly. Fishermen used the word to describe "mending their nets." If nets aren't mended, you can't use them successfully. You will lose a lot through the broken places. I wonder how many we let slip through the cracks because we failed to restore those who stumbled and fell!

Second, we should carry one another's burdens out of love. Paul said, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (v. 2). What is the law of Christ? Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another" (John 13:34). Restoration is a family matter: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6:10). If we love our fallen brother, we can carry his burden and help restore him gently.

Third, we should carry one another's burdens with genuine humility. Paul said, "You who are godly should gently and humbly help him back onto the right path, remembering that next time it might be one of you who

is in the wrong" (v. 1, TLB). The Greek word for "humility" or "meekness" is not a sissy, weak word. It describes "power under control." A doctor setting a broken bone restores gently. He doesn't use a crowbar or a pipe wrench. He uses power under control. In restoring a brother, if we lack humility—power under control—we may hurt him even more.

Jesus emphasized, "Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about" (Matt. 7:12, CEV).

"I could have sinned too; it could have been me who fell or stumbled." If you can admit that, you will restore the person who has stumbled—with humility and gentleness.

"That could never happen to me! I would never do such a thing!" If you think like that, you will probably hurt the one who needs to be restored gently. You will never be able to restore a fallen brother until you gain a deep sense of your own unworthiness to be called a child of God. Paul wrote, "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. . . . But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy" (Titus 3:3-5).

A little child strayed away. A search was organized, but after two days, the child was not found. Finally searchers joined hands and walked carefully through the open fields so that no area would be overlooked. They came upon the dead body of the child. When the mother received her dead baby, she cried out, "Why didn't you join hands sooner?"

We are family. Couldn't we join hands to help a fallen brother? ■



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## EDITORIAL

- Restoring Gently 1  
*Randal E. Denny*

## THEOLOGY

- A New Look at Justification 4  
*H. Ray Dunning*
- Translating the Language of Theology 8  
*Larry R. Hughes*
- Can Reading Contemporary Theology Make a Difference? 12  
*Henry W. Spaulding II*
- Worship and Sacraments 16  
*Kent E. Brower*
- One Person's View of Emerging Trends in Church Music 21  
*Joe Seaborn*

## PREACHING

- Jesus Preached Directly 26  
*Morris Chalfant*
- Faith 27  
*Bonnie K. Hallman*

## PASTORAL CARE

- Helping People Avoid Bereavement Mistakes 28  
*Victor M. Parachin*

## EVANGELISM

- The Bible and Cross-cultural Ministries 30  
*Steven Kasambalis*

## MINISTER'S MATE

- We're Moving Again 33  
*Carol McGarry*
- Thoughts on an Empty Nest 34  
*Diana Cox*

## PASTOR, BE ENCOURAGED

- Do the Best You Can 35  
*C. Neil Strait*

## PASTOR'S PERSONAL GROWTH

- Hurting Parents 36  
*Andrew and Rachel Hanners*

## PASTOR'S PROFESSIONAL GROWTH \_\_\_\_\_

- Pastoring Our Town 38  
*Bob Johnson*

## TODAY'S BOOKS FOR TODAY'S PREACHERS 39

## CHURCH ADMINISTRATION \_\_\_\_\_

- How Does Your Church Select Its Leaders? 40  
*Velva Lorenz*
- Prayer for a Church Board Meeting 41  
*John Hay, Jr.*

## STEWARDSHIP \_\_\_\_\_

- Parsonage or Housing Allowance? 42  
*Board of Pensions and Benefits USA  
of the Church of the Nazarene*

## HOLINESS HERITAGE \_\_\_\_\_

- Life-Shortening Soul Passion—James B. Chapman 44  
*J. Ray Shadowens*

## HINDERING HANG-UPS \_\_\_\_\_

- The Hang-up of Overcaution 46  
*Raymond C. Kratzer*

## CHRISTIAN HOLIDAYS \_\_\_\_\_

- Thanksgiving Praise Service 48  
*Betty B. Robertson*

## CHURCH GROWTH REVISITED \_\_\_\_\_

- Simeon Searsites 49  
*L. Wayne Sears*

## CHAPLAINCY \_\_\_\_\_

- Ministry Opportunities in Law Enforcement 50  
*Wally Johnston*

## ARK ROCKER \_\_\_\_\_

- Pastoral Interview 52

## WORSHIP AND PREACHING HELPS \_\_\_\_\_ 53

*W. Donald Wellman*

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## A New Look at Justification

by H. Ray Dunning  
Nashville

One of the central salvation metaphors used by Christian theology is "justification." It plays a less prominent role in the New Testament than in the history of Western Christian thought, since it appears almost exclusively in Romans and Galatians with minimal attention elsewhere. The preoccupation of theologians in the Western church with this metaphor, especially since the Protestant Reformation, has thus been considerably out of proportion to scriptural emphasis. While there are historical and cultural reasons for this, it still remains that the history of theologizing about salvation in the West has revolved around the attempt to understand this metaphor. In recent years it has emerged in the forefront of theological discussion due to the fact that this doctrine still stands as one of the major differences between Catholic and Protestant theology. The concern for ecumenical dialogue has been the catalyst for this new interest in the topic.<sup>1</sup>

The work of Karl Barth has been a major factor in the present discussion. This has been intensified by the claim of Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung that, with Barth, the difference between Protestant thought and the contemporary Catholic understanding has disappeared, and the reason for the Reformation no longer exists. However, A. E. McGrath has pointed out that Kung has been too selective in his research, and the major disagreement still stands. "For Barth, [man's] righteousness is always alien, outside man; the Western Catholic tradition, as a whole, insists that man *becomes* righteous in justification."<sup>2</sup>

The quotation above reflects the fact that the doctrine of justification has been interpreted in two major ways, partly as a result of a semantic debate. Does the original term mean "to declare holy" or "to make holy"? Although I am not equipped to enter into this linguistic debate, we may note later that, when rightly understood theologically and biblically, both meanings may be valid, and the debate could dissolve into thin air.

In the Protestant wing of the Christian church, the preponderance of sympathy has held it as meaning "to declare holy." As the theologian says, this means it is a forensic term. But the Catholic view tends to see it as "making holy." The result is two antithetical ways of interpreting justification.

For our purposes it is important to note that John Wesley was unhappy with both these proposed interpretations and struggled with them. But, unfortunately, he could not find a way through the impasse he felt. In fact, the absence of a solution to his dilemma resulted in a bit of confusion in his discussions of the subject. He was quite clear in what it did not mean, but when he attempted to explain what it did mean, he had difficulty distinguishing it from sanctifica-

tion. Even though he precisely identified the difference between the two (he defined justification as a relative change and sanctification as a real change), in application he wrestled to keep them separate. A careful reading of his sermon on "The Lord Our Righteousness" reveals a subtle sliding back and forth between the two ideas as he attempted to avoid the fallacies of each position.

We are more fortunate, since the advance of biblical studies in our day has discerned more clearly the biblical background for the term and made possible an understanding that avoids all the pitfalls Wesley sensed in the prevailing interpretations. (See note 9.)

The fundamental fallacy of the traditional views hangs on a simple error. Almost any popular treatment of justification will state that the metaphor is derived from the law-court. In a word it is declared to be a legal term.<sup>3</sup> From that point the path leads in a diverging direction from biblical faith and eventually results in a lopsided teaching. The courtroom thus becomes the point of departure for interpreting both the Atonement and the divine-human relation.

Theologians have, from the beginning, recognized that "justification" is really a derivative of the more basic term, "righteousness." It could more properly be called "righteousfication," but that's awfully awkward. The same development just referred to follows from misinterpreting "righteousness" in this context as legal or ethical righteousness and thus reinforcing the courtroom mentality. As we shall see, it is a far more personal concept than this.



In order to see the significance of the more biblical (and derivatively Wesleyan) understanding, we need to review in more detail the two major ways in which justification has been interpreted in the history of Christian thought. As noted above, the history of the doctrine of justification has been directly related to the understanding of righteousness as ethical conformity to law.

Beginning with Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries, it was believed that actual ethical righteousness was required of human persons in order for them to be accepted by God. For Augustine, this righteousness was a gift of grace, but in the course of time the view emerged that this righteousness was the result of good works. This development became the basis for the medieval Catholic penitential system. According to this interpretation, justification is defined as making one righteous ethically and is thus confused with sanctification.

The inevitable result of holding that one must be ethically righteous in order to be ready for heaven was the doctrine of purgatory. Very few people could expect to so perfectly keep the law in order to reach the goal of perfect holiness in this life. Thus, for good Catholics, there was the provision for an additional period of probation to complete the process of becoming ethically holy—in purgatory. Some such conclusion is logically entailed by any position that holds ethical holiness to be essential for entrance into heaven.

Wesley vigorously rejected this way of interpreting justification, denying that a person must be sanctified before he can be justified. As he put it, "It is not a saint but a sinner that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner. God justifieth not the godly, but the ungodly; not those that are holy already, but the unholy."<sup>5</sup>

The second view was introduced centrally by the Protestant Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin and continues to be propagated by their successors to the present day, including such popular religious writers as Charles Swindoll and R. C. Sproul. This way of understanding justification, or righteousness, suggests that it is impossible to be ethically righteous when one is judged by the law in its

most stringent implications, but that God accepts one "as if" he were righteous in terms of an "alien righteousness." This simply means that the ethical righteousness of Christ is accounted to the believer. Luther's famous formula (*simul, justus, peccatore*, meaning the believer is simultaneously a sinner and justified) embodies this teaching.

Calvin, who is most articulate here, is clearly correct in arguing that when a human being is judged by the full outward and inward implications of the law (see his exposition of the Ten Commandments in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*), no one can measure up. Hence, if anyone is to be saved, it must be on the basis of another's satisfaction of God's justice in our place.

In recent years  
justification has  
emerged in the  
forefront of  
theological  
discussion.

Wesley fully concurred with the judgment that the law in its full implications puts self-salvation beyond possibility for any human being if conformity to the law is the prerequisite. (See his sermon on "The Righteousness of Faith.") But he reserves some of his sharpest criticism for the idea that God "is deceived in those whom He justifies; that He thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that He accounts them to be otherwise than they are."<sup>6</sup>

Having thus rejected both traditional options, Wesley is left with a dilemma from which he is unable to extricate himself. In attempting to straddle the fence, he falls into confusion at

times. He does attempt to get out of the muddle by seeking to rehabilitate the ideas of imputed and imparted righteousness. But these concepts simply assume one or the other of the traditional views. Standard Protestant textbooks spend much time distinguishing between these and arguing for one or the other, depending on the theologian's point of view. "Imputed" righteousness refers to the righteousness of Christ credited to the account of the believer, whereas "imparted" righteousness suggests that the believer is truly sanctified or really righteous in himself, even if conceived as a gift.

The classical Protestant Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin, made central use of the concept of imputed righteousness in order to avoid the works righteousness of the prevailing views on salvation. In his comments on Gal. 3:6, Luther says:

These two things make Christian righteousness perfect: The first is faith in the heart, which is a divinely granted gift and which formally believes in Christ; the second is that God reckons this imperfect faith as perfect righteousness for the sake of Christ, His Son, who suffered for the sins of the world and in whom I begin to believe. On account of this faith in Christ, God does not see the sin that still remains in me. For so long as I go on living in the flesh, there is certainly sin in me. But meanwhile, Christ protects me under the shadow of His wings and spreads over me the wide heaven of the forgiveness of sins, under which I live in safety. This prevents God from seeing the sins that still cling to my flesh. My flesh distrusts God, is angry with Him, does not rejoice in Him, etc. But God overlooks these sins, and in His sight they are as though they were not sins. This is accomplished by imputation on account of the faith by which I begin to take hold of Christ; and on His account God reckons imperfect righteousness as perfect righteousness and sin as not sin, even though it really is sin.<sup>7</sup>

Calvin, in much more stilted language, relates the same idea to justification by faith: "It is evident, that we obtain justification before God, solely by the intervention of the righteousness of Christ. Which is equivalent to

saying, that a man is righteous, not in himself, but because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation."<sup>8</sup> Calvin, however, is not quite as bold as Luther in celebrating the continuing sinfulness of the justified person, since he, unlike the German Reformer, holds that the law has a function in the believer's life to give him guidance in developing his Christian life. In fact, he speaks in glowing words of the growth in holiness that should characterize genuine faith but always stops short of claiming the possibility of entire sanctification in this life because he sees "perfection" as flawless conformity to the law of God—and thus no finite human can attain in the flesh.

John Wesley  
wrestled to keep  
justification and  
sanctification  
separate.

Holiness theologians have entered the fray from time to time on this issue, of course arguing for imparted righteousness on the same grounds as the Calvinists and other classical Protestant theologians and thus have lost the case before it is argued.

As suggested earlier, modern biblical studies have made us aware that there is another understanding of righteousness—and thus justification—in the Scripture that is quite different from these classical views and thus transcends all the arguments and debates that have cluttered the theological scene for centuries. What is that view?

The clue lies in the multiple meanings of the key Old Testament term usually translated as "righteousness."

One of the prime meanings really is ethical conformity to the law, but there are others just as important. The "righteousness of God" refers to His compassion for the needy and consequent action to deliver them as illustrated by the Exodus. It was this meaning that Luther discovered in preparing his lectures on Romans and with which he was able to achieve a breakthrough to the gospel. His words are still as thrilling today as over 400 years ago:

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me.<sup>9</sup>

Another nuance of the term "righteousness" suggests the idea of *faithfulness*, keeping one's word or acting in accordance with one's nature. However, the understanding of righteousness that becomes the key to unraveling the dilemma surrounding justification is that it is relational in nature. *Righteousness is a term of relation.*<sup>10</sup>

In a word, one is righteous if he conforms to the requirements of the relation within which he stands. That this does not necessarily entail ethical conduct is seen in the infamous story in Genesis 38 about Judah and Tamar. The Levirate law called for a brother to enter into a marriage relation with the widow of his deceased sibling. Judah balked at giving his third son to twice-widowed Tamar, so she played the prostitute and lured Judah into her tent and became pregnant by him. Upon learning that his daughter-in-law was with child, Judah was "righteously" indignant and insisted that she be executed by burning. But

upon being exposed as the father, he confessed, "She is more righteous than I" (Gen. 38:26). The relation within which each stood called for a certain action that Judah had refused to follow. Therefore he was unfaithful (unrighteous), whereas Tamar did not violate the requirements of the relation and thus was more righteous. Few, if any, would suggest that either's action was ethical.

Having rejected  
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This principle defines the divine-human relation, which must now be understood in personal terms. God has given His Word. He has offered full and free acceptance. His part in the relation is faithfulness to His commitment. Humanity's part is to simply accept God's proffered forgiveness. That acceptance is the meaning of faith in the Pauline sense. Thus, believing God, taking Him at His Word, makes one "righteous" in this relational sense, even though ethical transformation is not involved. In a word, the believer is "justified (righteous-fied) by faith."

This soundly biblical interpretation provides a way out of the impasse that is created when righteousness is understood in a legalistic way. Let us notice a few of the problems now avoided.

The dilemmas created in connection with the justice of God now dis-



appear. Of course, Old Testament scholar Norman Snaith points out that the term "justice" is really not found in the New Testament and rarely in the Old Testament. He tells us that the "emphasis in much Christian teaching, which tends to put justice first and mercy afterwards, is due largely to the fact that in the Vulgate the Latin *justitia* is used most frequently where the EVV have 'righteousness,' and the Latin *justus* where the EVV have 'righteous.'"<sup>11</sup> The implication is that it may be incorrect to refer to justice in the Roman legal sense as a biblical attribute of God.

Modern biblical studies have made us aware that there is another understanding of righteousness.

But taking the traditional view of legal justice as an attribute of God, what is the dilemma? If God is just, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished. He cannot merely ignore sin and treat the person as if he had never sinned. But since the sinner is indeed guilty, apparently the only way of pronouncing him righteous (innocent) is to "impute" another's righteousness to his account. But this too is unjust, argues H. Orton Wiley.

If "just" or "justice" as applied to God actually means righteous in the sense of faithfulness to His Word, or nature as merciful, then when God keeps His promise of forgiveness, He is "both just [righteous] and the justifier [righteous-fier] of the one who

believes in Jesus [has faith]" (Rom. 3:26, author's paraphrase).

John's words now become crystal clear when he says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just [righteous in the sense of being faithful to His promise] and will forgive" (1 John 1:9).

The whole complex of issues surrounding the debate over imputed and imparted righteousness disappears, since both assume the necessity of ethical righteousness as a requirement for God's acceptance. With that understanding now cleared up, there is no longer any need to utilize these ploys. Of course, the question of the possibility of "imparted" righteousness ethically still remains. Can a fallen person really be holy in this life? The holiness movement, sharing John Wesley's "optimism of grace," has always insisted that God can indeed create a "holy heart" and requires a "holy life." But this is a different issue, since biblically these are not the basis for justification but the fruit of justification. More on this later.

Another debate that is addressed by this biblical view of righteousness is the linguistic one referred to above. If God declares a person righteous in the relational sense, that declaration makes it true, not as a legal fiction but in a real, though nonethical, sense.

In the context of this article another issue needs to be mentioned: the relation between justification and sanctification. Popular folk piety has so closely identified "being saved" with a change of life-style that they have virtually become identical. Thus it is extremely difficult to sort out the necessary distinctions. That is, for all practical purposes, this gets the cart before the horse or, in more sophisticated theological language, sanctification is confused with justification or perhaps even made the basis for justification.

But holiness theologians have always declared that while justification and sanctification are chronologically simultaneous, justification is logically prior. Hence, while "being saved" is—or should be—accompanied by an ethical reorientation, that is not the basis of acceptance by God. Thus sanctification, whether outward or inward, is the result of acceptance. God

takes me "just as I am" and at that moment begins the process of transforming me into the kind of holy person He wants me to be. No matter where I am in that pilgrimage toward Christlikeness, I still stand in need of

The whole complex of issues surrounding the debate disappears.

His grace. But as long as I trust His promise, His faithfulness to His own nature and Word assures me that I am "accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6, KJV). ■

1. See, e.g., George Tavad, *Justification* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); G. C. Berkouwer, *Faith and Justification* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954); and Hans Kung, *Justification* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964). All emphasize the ecumenical dimensions of the discussion.

2. A. E. McGrath, "Justification: Barth, Trent, and Kung," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1981): 521.

3. Even my own discussion of the topic falls into this error in an earlier work. See *Introduction to Wesleyan Theology*.

4. I use the term *Wesleyan* here to refer to a position that is systematically consistent with the central commitments of a Wesleyan perspective, which includes adjusting any theory in the light of Scripture, and not necessarily the exact views of John Wesley himself, who was not a systematic theologian and also lived before the day of scientific biblical scholarship.

5. "Justification by Faith," in *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley*, ed. E. H. Sugden (London: Epworth Press, 1961), 1:122.

6. *Ibid.*, 120.

7. Jaroslav Pelican and Walter A. Hanson, *Luther's Works*, 55 volumes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 26:231-32.

8. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.11.23.

9. Preface to Latin Writings, from *Martin Luther* (selections), ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1961).

10. See Bernhard Anderson, *Out of the Depths* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 98-102; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 439-41; Norman H. Snaith, "Just, Justify, Justification," in *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964).

11. Snaith, "Justice," in *Wordbook*.

# Translating the Language of Theology

by Larry R. Hughes  
*Bartlesville, Okla.*

**A**nd another thing, Pastor," his voice fairly crackled over the telephone, "you stand up in that pulpit and use all those big words!"

Now that accusation hurt! I was a young pastor, and I was being royally chewed out by a member of the congregation who was enumerating a list of his grievances, which seemed to me to be grossly inaccurate and unfair. Obviously the man was full of pent-up anger, as he often was. True to my training and experience, I was simply trying to accept his feelings of anger without resistance or defense so that perhaps he could rid himself of them and go on to more positive things.

But the charge of using big words in the pulpit especially stung. My ministry up to that time had been largely concentrated on churches recently planted where new Christians needed discipling. I was very intent on, even sensitive about, communicating the gospel in understandable terms. So, for the first time, I interrupted his tirade with a defensive question, "What big words, Bill?"

"Well," his answer came after some hesitation, "words like 'sanctification.'"

My rejoinder was quick: "I have no choice in that matter, Bill; 'sanctification' is a biblical word!"

There, I felt smugly justified! I not only had protected myself with the Bible but also privately noted he had probably diagnosed his own central problem. For his part, he simply changed the subject and began a new list of my considerable faults. Within a week or two, Bill came weeping and apologizing. We were able to resolve our differences, renew our brotherhood in Christ, and move to a new level of fellowship.

However, I have never forgotten the challenge of that one accusation. I am not as sure of my answer as I was on that long-ago day. Certainly I did and do have an obligation to preach the

multifaceted biblical truth of sanctification. Do I, however, have to use the word "sanctification" in order to preach the truth of sanctification? And, of course, the broader question is, how do we translate the language of theology into the understandable language of persons in the pew who have not been raised in an environment where the language has meaning? The question is further complicated for the pastor who ministers where theological language is revered and expected as a part of a regular diet.

I want to make it very clear that this is not an appeal for less theological or doctrinal preaching. I am using the word "doctrine" in the sense of individual teachings and the word "theology" to refer to the larger framework or schematic of Christian teachings. Indeed, there appears to be considerable spiritual anemia in our churches today due to people not being certain of what they believe and why. That theological uncertainty, even confusion, is further exacerbated by the assault from all sides via various kinds of "Christian" and sometimes questionable doctrines. More theological teaching is needed, not less.

It also appears that the preaching pulpit is the cornerstone of any hope for the necessary meat and potatoes instruction in Christian doctrine. It used to be thought that the adult Sunday School hour was an important supplement to the church's teaching mission, but the trend now for that hour is moving more in the direction of life adjust-

ment "sharing times," where content is more important than content.

Historically church music concentrated on the great doctrines of the church, but contemporary Christian music, especially choruses and specials, appears to be devoid of theological content in favor of relational, emotional themes. In many instances the newer songs are even devoid of much language in favor of one or two phrases repeated over and over, *ad infinitum*. So, if our people are going to be exposed to the "weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith" (Matt. 23:23, RSV) and other great themes of the gospel, it is going to have to come from those who occupy our pulpits.

There are those who say, "We don't need to hear doctrinal preaching; we need to hear about Jesus." Taken literally, that statement is extremely contradictory. Doctrine simply means teachings. It is impossible to "preach Jesus" without talking about His origin, His life and ministry, and His death and resurrection, all of which are salted with claims or teachings—doctrines—made by Him or about Him. So it is impossible to have nondoctrinal "Jesus" preaching. The only choice is whether you communicate accurate, clear doctrines or confused, inaccurate ones.

Probably the statement that places "doctrine" and "Jesus" in opposition is not intended to be taken literally. Usually it seems to mean we should not be emphasizing the fine points of doctrinal distinctives to the neglect of the central core of the gospel message. If that is its meaning, then I can affirm the intent, though there is a time and place to talk about distinctives. The great, central truths must be proclaimed. The burden of this missive is that we proclaim them accurately, inspirationally, and in terms all audiences can understand.

There are compelling reasons for giving attention to the translation of



theological language. The first and most elementary reason is that Jesus defined the mission of the Church as one of reaching out to the world. He evidently understood that the world would not spontaneously reach for the Church. "[You] go into all the world" (Mark 16:15), Jesus said, and His first assignment was the home base with the native language.

Therefore, if we are going to communicate "words about God," the responsibility of clear, meaningful language rests on the side of the communicator, not the listeners.

In my seminary days, I heard a lecture on preaching by one of America's greatest and most recognized pastoral preachers. In the course of the lecture he referred to a great preacher from the past who was asked what were the three most important things in a sermon. The great man answered, "One, lucidity! Two, lucidity! Three, lucidity!" Ironically, I had to find a dictionary afterward to discover that he was talking about clarity or transparency of communication.

His point is well taken if not demonstrated; only after we have communicated clearly in the power of the Spirit does the message become the responsibility of the listeners. Jesus encapsulated profound truths in simple stories so that those who had ears could hear. A peculiar expression, but obviously meaning that the truth once clearly taught was then left to the will to know on the part of the listeners.

A second compelling reason to give attention to the translation of theological language lies in the amazing capacity of this strange medium of expression we call language. If language is anything, it is dynamic or changeable. D. Elton Trueblood observes, "Our century has witnessed a remarkable change in the language of Christian faith."<sup>2</sup> What he observes about the somewhat specialized language of faith is true of the so-called popular language as well. Words that meant one thing some years back have changed meanings completely (e.g., *rap*). Some words, primarily colloquialisms, that I heard in my childhood have passed out of existence. The question for the preacher is this, "When words change, where do meanings go?"

A part of the challenge of the dynamism of language is that when we use earthly figures, for that is all we

know, to refer to heavenly things such as the "throne of God," for instance, what part of the earthly meaning is carried over to the celestial truth and what part is not? Is it the physical repose that a throne represents? And how can it be, since God is Spirit? Or is it the authority and majesty of the earthly figure that the expression is communicating? And will it communicate effectively in a democracy that was born out of rebellion to monarchical authority? That particular figure may be fairly easy to translate into meaning, but it is indicative of some of the problems of the dynamic and even analogical quality of language.



## How do we translate theology into understandable language?



Indeed, if we are going to be translators of theological language, it is mandatory that we give some thought to the history of the language that gave us Christian theology. The Old Testament, written in the Hebrew language, was so concrete in its expression that some call it an "optical language." That is, they took things they saw to communicate things that they felt: "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1, RSV). By the time the New Testament is written, a second language is being used, Greek. Greek retains the ability to convey concrete images but adds an analytical, abstract quality that was not nearly so present in the Hebrew Old Testament. Paul is most adept at using this abstraction of truth in long doctrinal passages. That may be the reason Peter observes that Paul's letters have "some things in them hard to understand" (2 Pet. 3:16, RSV).

In the time of the Middle Ages, Christian teaching was tremendously impacted not just by Greek language

but by Greek philosophy, which was highly analytical, extremely abstract, and conceptual.<sup>3</sup> From that collision between philosophy and Christian teaching, there emerged the great systems of theology and the tradition of systematizing Christian truth. Systems of theology, like systems of anything, even computers, have their own esoteric nomenclature. Those persons trained in the systems are naturally true to their training and its specialized language. Besides that, the language becomes their comfort zone, their instrument for going deep into the truth of God where lesser-trained people cannot see or, at least, communicate. Using their beloved technical language, theologians can lock other people out of the treasure room.

Look at the big picture of what's happened to God's truth. What started out as a channeled but unorganized "water of life" flow through the Old Testament into and through the New Testament becomes the carefully calibrated, if not symmetrical, "blocks of ice" typical of systematic theology. It's the same substance in two different forms.

The preacher's task is to somehow return the truth from its preservative form—blocks of ice—back into its drinkable and life-giving form. That is, unless you enjoy dropping chunks of ice on people's heads, or, perhaps, you have some carcasses lying about needing to be packed in ice.

Seriously, given the dynamic quality of language and the tendency of theology to be closed into its own verbiage, it is a fantastic challenge for the preacher to find tools for handling these great truths with language that conveys meaning without compromising truth. The following suggestions bear the limitation of all "how to" suggestions, similar to trying to wear someone else's shoes. But they are starting places. Hopefully they will stimulate ideas for other approaches that are specifically fitted for you.

There is a customary requirement for those who translate the Bible into other languages that has some application to translating theological language into the vernacular. A successful translator of the Bible must have an extensive understanding of the languages in which the Bible was written. He must have a good understanding of the language into which it is

being translated and must have a clear understanding of the message the Bible conveys. The application here is that the preacher must have a firm grasp of the theology he hopes to translate. He must know something about the comprehension level of the people to whom he hopes to communicate. Of course, there must be the heart-deep conviction of the truth of the message his theology conveys.



## The preaching pulpit is the cornerstone of any hope for the necessary meat and potatoes instruction in Christian doctrine.



You must have a superior understanding of the theology you hope to communicate. As a college professor, I am well acquainted with the myth that excuses application to study because the less known the better the rapport with those who know nothing. Unfortunately it doesn't work that way. It is, of course, possible to know theology really well and not be able to communicate its truth on a popular level. However, it is impossible to communicate its truth on a popular level without knowing it well. To know it well takes plain old hard work and application.

There are some approaches that are very helpful in mastering theology. First, not only read theology from the books that present it in a sympathetic manner, but also, after you are indoctrinated through and through, read from those who disagree or dispute the doctrine in various modifying ways. It is often on the grindstone of debate and dialogue that our grasp of truth becomes the sharpest. It is instructive that the Book of Acts refers to the gospel being presented in argumentation form. Indeed, the Scrip-

tures record that in Ephesus Paul for two years "argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus" (Acts 19:9, RSV).

Second, study doctrine in its historical context. Penetrating insights into doctrines are gained where there is knowledge of the circumstances that surrounded the life struggle of theologians. Who can understand Augustine's view of sin and evil without knowing something about his early struggle over the apparent contradiction of a supposedly good Creator and a creation that had obviously gone awry? No one fully appreciates Luther's liberating discovery of justification by faith until he knows about his desperately intense search for some kind of peace with God. Wesley's emphasis on the doctrine of assurance is taken for granted until you understand how unique and significant it was in the theological milieu of his day. If theology is to be grasped thoroughly, even to the point of coming alive, it must be studied in its living context.

A third step in mastering theology is the most difficult one of all; it is to rewrite the doctrines in your own words. Rewrite it for yourself and for your files, but don't limit it to that. Most churches of any size have some kind of church paper. Most church papers have some kind of pastor's column. Why not try to sneak some theology in popular terms into the column occasionally? A title like "When God Takes Us into His Family" could talk about the great privileges of adoption without mentioning the term. Or, if you really wanted to help your people with both life issues and current theological pressures, do a carefully researched piece on "How to Think Biblically About Divine Healing," a topic that is especially muddled in today's religious currents. But, whether you publish or not, submit your own questions and understanding of theology to the discipline of the pen; it will pay dividends.

What I suggest does take time and effort. I hear the echo of pastor friends of mine who laugh at me when I make such suggestions for study. They tell me they are too busy running the church and ministering to people. I have pastored. I have certainly been aware of the constraints of time. I also know that most of us usually find time for what we want to do. If we will pay the price of effort to

master theological truths, our personal ministry to people will be enriched and considerably more substantive.

To really understand doctrine, or anything else for that matter, you must teach it to someone else. A pastor who wants to be a translator in the pulpit must schedule himself into teaching opportunities outside the pulpit. Our tradition, unfortunately, has no formal catechism opportunities, but a pastor can find similar openings somewhere in the life of the youth. One of the most productive learning and ministry experiences I had as a pastor was teaching a doctrinal series to junior high youth for their God and Church badge in the Crusader program. Teaching new convert classes, membership classes, discipleship classes, where there is exchange with people of no theological background as well as people from a variety of theological backgrounds, are excellent opportunities to discuss, clarify, and communicate theological concepts in a variety of nontraditional and challenging settings. Such stimulating experiences inform your pulpit work and sometimes even afford the opportunity to introduce the language of theology in a way you wouldn't dare from the pulpit. My educated opinion is that those kind of exchanges with people would show you a surprising capacity for theological curiosity and understanding among your people.



## Only after we have communicated clearly in the power of the Spirit does the message become the responsibility of the listeners.



A suggestion that combines mastering theology and learning to translate it into understandable terms is to select models who do it well and read af-

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His ability at analogy is reminiscent of the optical language of the Old

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# Can Reading Contemporary Theology Make a Difference?

by Henry W. Spaulding II

Woodbridge, Va.

Until recently I have been involved in teaching theology at Eastern Nazarene College. In this position, the question was often posed to me: "Can reading contemporary theology make a difference?" The not-so-subtle implication is that a pastor must certainly have more important things to do than settle in for an afternoon of reading theology, especially contemporary theology.

I remember one occasion when a pastor who was enrolled in a graduate program in religion decided to switch to a program in pastoral counseling. He made it clear that pastoral counseling was where he saw the need; theology was just so much head knowledge. As a professor of theology I disagreed with him. As a senior pastor I certainly disagree with him. I'll tell you why a pastor cannot afford to avoid reading contemporary theology.

We will consider reasons why some do not read contemporary theology. Then we will suggest some reasons why reading contemporary theology may be beneficial. Next we will look at some major themes in contemporary theology and suggest ways in which some of these themes intersect with parish ministry. Finally, we will look at some good places to begin reading contemporary theology.

## Contemporary Theology: Pros and Cons

A few definitions might help clarify. First, theology should be understood as the general term that applies to the process of faith seeking understanding. Therefore, theology is for all people of faith and an evidence of spiritual maturity. All theology, whether it is biblical, historical, or systematic, falls under this heading.

Second, modern theology refers to theology done since Schleiermacher in the 19th century. Otto Heick summarizes this theology as the attempt "to synthesize God and the world, culture and religion, philosophy and theology, intuition and feeling, experience and history."<sup>1</sup> This period is characterized by an attempt to respond creatively to modern culture and takes experience seriously.

Third, contemporary theology usually refers to theology done in the 20th century. It is in this latter sense that I use the term.

Since my very first days in formal preparation for the ministry, theology has captivated my imagination. I was enthralled by reading the work of W. T. Purkiser, H. Orton Wiley, and Ralph Earle. During college my theological vision was expanded by reading Luther and Wesley. People like Barth, Bultmann, Tillich, Brunner, and others taught me to think about God in fresh ways. All of this and more has driven me to read theology with an eye toward spiritual growth as often as toward intellectual growth. Therefore, the importance of theology has never been a question for me. Yet many pastors do not read any theology.

Next we will consider some reasons why pastors fail to explore contemporary theology.

## Lack of Time

One possible reason that pastors dismiss theology is lack of time. Recently returning to parish ministry has reminded me of the many time demands placed on a pastor. There are sermons to prepare and budgets to plan. There are people to see in the hospital and at home. The telephone rings both at the parsonage and at the office. This is to say nothing of board meetings, counseling, weddings, funerals, and much more. Reading theology takes time and, for many pastors, there is already too little time. Consequently, theological reading is an easy thing to cut from one's life.

## Theology Can Be Threatening

Many do not read theology because it appears to be too difficult. It is painful to exercise those theological muscles that worked so well in college and seminary. What makes things worse is that so much theology has been written, it is difficult to know where to begin. Does one begin with reading Wesley or Tillich? Besides that, where do you start in Wesley or Tillich? Would it be better to read from Augustine or Barth? And when you read is it possible to understand the point being made? Theology does not lend itself to 15-minute blocks of time. Understanding theology is a result of a lifetime's effort. It will require that the reader look at books about theology—secondary sources. It might also mean that we will need to talk to professors of theology or others who are reading theology with us. But, most of all, it will mean that we must read and perhaps reread the theologians themselves—primary sources. Some may only read enough to be left feeling lost in the wilderness. Let me



suggest that the Promised Land awaits those who persevere.

### *Theology Seems Removed from Life*

Some pastors might neglect theology because it seems so far removed from where real people live. Who are these eggheaded theologians anyway?

A student in one of my theology classes asked what studying the "death of God" theologian had to do with anything. It was a legitimate question. I explained that at least some "death of God" theology turned on the proposition that God was absent in the modern world. I further asked him to reflect upon what might be happening in the mind of a little girl who is sexually abused as she prays that God will take the pain away. What must it feel like as the girl grows up with questions about the seeming "absence" of God? Modern Western society has with relative ease and occasional celebration witnessed the disappearance of God. When it is put this way, it is easy to see that theology, especially contemporary theology, is all about life. It comes out of the visceral questions that people of faith are asking.

Let's look at some reasons why it might be advisable for the pastor to read theology.

### *Discipline*

Reading theology disciplines the mind to grapple with concepts and issues that might be easy to ignore. It allows one to have a discussion with a great theologian at almost any time. The very nature of theology as faith seeking understanding reminds us that others are on this journey as well. I might not agree with George Lindbeck, but it might be good for me to struggle with him for a while.<sup>2</sup> It might be easy to dismiss the work of David Tracy, but reading it will help me see what a great many men and women are thinking.<sup>3</sup> Reading theology is worthwhile for the discipline it can bring.

### *Encourages Us to Know Our Tradition*

Reading theology forces us to understand our theological tradition better. It does so because it reminds us that our traditions exist. Beyond this, it suggests that we need to know the faith "once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3), lest we unwittingly surrender it to counterfeits. We

would do well to heed the words of Gabriel Fackre: "The task of Christian Story-telling is to keep alive this set of counter-perceptions so the Church may be what it is and see what it is called to see, rather than be made over in the image of the regnant culture."<sup>4</sup> Reading any theology, especially those modern theologians, reminds us that unless we know where we stand, we might be caught standing alone. Such a discipline helps us claim no more and no less than our tradition allows.

### *Helps to See the Relation Between Faith and Thinking*

Reading theology will remind us that our faith does not exist apart from the hard work of thinking. It teaches that it is possible to love God with our mind as well as heart. Theology reminds me that preaching can and should address the issues that people really confront. A teacher of a senior high Sunday School class told me once that his students would not allow him to be less than honest. We can expect no less of ourselves as we stand before God's people to minister the Word of God. Perhaps people in the church have been entertained enough by Sunday. Maybe they are ready to hear the good Word of God preached by a person who has not only prayed about it but thought about it as well.

### *Major Themes in Contemporary Theology*

We will examine three general themes that have captivated the interest of contemporary theology. Other issues could be raised, but these three are representative.

### *God*

It may not sound like much to say that interest in God has captivated the minds of contemporary theologians, but it is the nature of the discussion that sets it apart. Schubert Ogden says in a celebrated essay that "the reality of God has now become the central theological problem."<sup>5</sup> The problem of God has taken center stage due to the general direction of Western civilization. One aspect of this has been the rise of modern science. The rise of modern science has led to an attempt to make it the self-sufficient resource for all of life. Perhaps unwittingly the theologian has allowed the culture that has risen around science to be

the sole definition of truth. Ogden responds to this by suggesting "that the primary use or function of 'God' is to refer to the objective ground in reality itself of our ineradicable confidence in the final worth of our existence."<sup>6</sup> The problem that this suggests is to define exactly what we mean by the word "God."

Many contemporary theologians, including Ogden, see that the basic problem has been that, for classical theology, God has been defined in the philosophical language of Aristotle. Such a God is more like a Supreme Being or idea than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Theology in this tradition emphasizes the transcendence of God. This means that God has been understood by many to be unaffected by our suffering and pain. While Aquinas is the best example of this way of thinking about God, it is a general characteristic of Christian theology, according to Ogden.

Some contemporary theologians have decided to talk about God using the language and categories of Alfred North Whitehead. Theology from this perspective emphasizes the transcendence of God but also places emphasis upon immanence. Here the essential relation between God and the world is defined as dynamic. In fact, God is, in many ways, dependent upon the world. This means that God is affected by us. This general discussion has revolutionized the way that many people think about God.

Many issues need to be discussed in order to fully understand what is at stake in this debate. Those theologians who unite the immanence and transcendence of God have helped us all see God's relation to humankind more clearly. One can talk about the relation between God and the world in terms of the Spirit. Wesleyan theology seems to be a natural way of proposing that God is affected by the world, by us. The parish minister needs to hear the pleas of the world when it is suggested that a God who is not involved will not serve the needs of hurting humanity. This is one way in which contemporary theology can help the parish minister—by pointing out the importance of God for spiritual life.

### *Reexamination of Culture*

Many efforts of contemporary theology have focused on ways to under-

stand culture. This general direction can be noted in the work of Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God*, and even Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. Robinson sums it up clearly: "For I am convinced that there is a growing gulf between the traditional orthodox supernaturalism in which our faith has been framed and the categories which the 'lay' finds meaningful today."<sup>7</sup> Paul Tillich went so far as to say that his entire work was an attempt to bring Christianity and Western humanism closer together.<sup>8</sup> He even sought to define theology in terms of a correlation between human questions and divine answers. For a decade or two, liberal theology sought to accommodate theology to culture with mixed results.

## A pastor cannot avoid reading contemporary theology.

The area where this has the most importance for parish ministry is the need to look very seriously at the human dilemma. It is dangerous to allow culture to set the agenda and define the Christian response. But it is equally dangerous to deny the validity of the question. Theology and the ministry that comes out of it must be able to look deep in the eyes of the world's hurt and pain with the hope of the gospel. Sometimes we want to restrict the kinds of questions we will allow to be asked, because more than often it is uncomfortable to really listen. Contemporary theology illustrates some of the dangers of such listening, but it also shows us some of the possibilities as well. It suggests that we find a way of creatively dealing with the world without losing our soul.

One response to this is emerging out of the work of Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon. They suggest that "we have an opportunity to dis-

cover what has and always is the case—that the church, as those called out by God, embodies a social alternative that the world cannot on its own terms know."<sup>9</sup> Essentially, they are suggesting that the church has allowed the world to set the agenda, to define the terms, and, to a large extent, to stipulate the answers. They want the church to be more vigorous in its attempt to define itself as an alternative to secularism instead of trying to be like it. They are very critical of the work of people like Tillich and Robinson, who sought to accommodate the secular and the sacred.

All of this suggests that the parish minister is in a position to help people begin to make sense out of culture. Perhaps it will be possible to find a path between a complete rejection or acceptance of culture. It might serve as a call to transform culture through the grace of God. Reading contemporary theology could serve as a catalyst for doing just that. A parish minister will confront this issue at eye level. More often than not it will be a question on heavy metal music that forces the pastor to reconsider culture. Will the path be a complete rejection of culture or an uncritical acceptance? Contemporary theology may be a way of seeing the issue in a broader context.

### *The Role of the Church*

Some contemporary theologians have forced the church to reexamine its role in the world. People like Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, in her book *In Memory of Her*, have attempted to confront the church with its participation in the oppression of women. James Cone in *God of the Oppressed* has asked similar questions in reference to the plight of black people. Jose Miguez-Bonino in *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* raises questions about the role of the church in third world countries. Scores of contemporary theologians are not so much interested in the metaphysical issues that surround God-talk. Neither are they interested in the accommodation or rejection of culture by theology. They are concerned about social justice, that is, racism, sexism, poverty, hunger, and so on. These theologians call our attention to the oppressed people of the earth. These people who are in Latin America, Africa, and North

America are moving along a distinct path. They remind the church of its responsibilities in regard to the poor and oppressed. They remind us that God identifies with the oppressed in the Scripture.

These theologians will not allow the church to sit by and watch the poor die unchallenged. They want the church to respond to these people with its resources, its theology, and its values. They suggest that people like Wesley wrote medical handbooks out of a concern for the poor. These theologians are quick to point out that the church should not "spiritualize" these issues at the expense of looking at tough issues.

A parish minister must deal with these issues on a daily basis. People who are homeless, without food, and have no access to health care and the like are more than ideas to the parish minister. Women who have been abused and, in some cases, abandoned walk in the church office. The church cannot turn its back on these people as it seeks to minister to the so-called spiritual needs of people. Liberation theologians confront the church with its responsibilities in these areas. In fact, the parish minister determines the response of the church. Reading contemporary theologians who deal with these issues can help the parish minister think through the social issues.

## Theology is for all people of faith an evidence of spiritual maturity.

The three issues shared in this section in no way exhaust the multifaceted arena of contemporary theology. The feminists' critique is widely represented in the literature. These women and men are forcing the church to reexamine its dealing with women. The work of the deconstructionists deserves attention. They are changing the face of contemporary

theology. The work of David Tracy is well worth our time as he emphasizes the hermeneutical dimension of theology. Theologians who represent the gay and lesbian groups are vocal and sometimes very influential on seminary campuses. Then there is the phenomenon of evangelical theology and even dominion theology. All of this suggests that a wise parish minister will spend some portion of time reading and trying to understand the contemporary theological scene. It is as alive and diverse as the world in which we are ministering.

### Some Suggestions for Beginning to Read Contemporary Theology

You might be convinced after reading this article that contemporary theology is worth some of your time. But you might be wondering where to begin reading. First, it is important that you decide to read more than contemporary theology. While it is crucial to allow time for reading other theology as well, the point of this article is to suggest the importance of reading contemporary theology.

Reading theology  
will help reveal  
what a great many  
men and women  
are thinking.

A good place to begin is with a book *about* contemporary theology. This helps you get a broad perspective on issues that have captivated the interest of theology in this century. Jeffrey Hooper, *Understanding Modern Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), has in two volumes done a good job of discussing the main issues in contemporary theology. He begins by looking at the cultural and intellectual revolutions that served to create the climate in which

contemporary theology was born. Alasdair I. C. Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), has written a very useful book that looks at some of the major theological voices in the last century. Both of these books will be useful to anyone who wants to understand contemporary theology.

Let me suggest a few books that will give a new reader a little flavor of contemporary theology. First, Paul Tillich, *Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), is a book of sermons preached by Tillich at Union Theological Seminary. In a very readable fashion, the sermons reflect some of the theological concerns in America after World War II. David Tracy, *The Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), presents some of the ideas of this influential theologian. He clearly presents the modern dilemma and some theological alternatives in this situation. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1989), is a book that presents the feminists' critique very powerfully. She argues that the pattern of male domination has colored all Christian theology and must come to an end. Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1985), is interesting because it is a major theological response to the so-called ecological concern. A great deal of discussion is going on in the international media about this issue. It might be interesting to approach these issues through the eyes of a major theologian. Paul Jewett, *God, Creation, and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), is a significant contribution by an evangelical. The interesting thing about Jewett's book is that it will acquaint the reader with how evangelical theology has responded to some of these issues.

These books are only suggestions. Literally dozens of highly significant books are available. The important

thing seems to be that we begin to digest some of them. It is important that we do not neglect the reading of standard theological books from our own tradition that will acquaint us with major doctrinal issues.

All theology is  
contemporary; if it  
doesn't happen  
now, it really  
doesn't matter.

Can reading contemporary theology make a difference? The clear answer is yes. The task of understanding even some of these rather strange theologians is significant. I would like to think that the effort will pay richly. Perhaps all of this stems from my belief that all theology is contemporary; if it does not happen now, then it really does not matter. We believe that, in order for faith to be meaningful, it must be a continuous activity. Theological thinking in another sense must be continuous. Contemporary theology helps remind us of that fact. ■

1. Otto Heick, *A History of Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 2:150.

2. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984). He indicates his view by the following comment: "This general way of conceptualizing religion will be called in what follows a 'cultural-linguistic' approach and the implied view of church doctrine will be referred to as a 'regulative' or 'rule' theory" (18).

3. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroads, 1987). He argues in this book that Christian theology should be understood as primarily hermeneutical.

4. Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 2:2.

5. Schubert Ogden, *The Reality of God, and Other Essays* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1977), 1.

6. *Ibid.*, 37.

7. John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 8.

8. Paul Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 35.

9. Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 17-18.



# Worship and Sacraments

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## The Problem of the Sacraments

Judging from the increase in publications devoted to worship and the plethora of worship choruses and courses on worship, it appears as if modern evangelicalism has rediscovered the importance of worship.

This renewed interest in worship is to be commended. One dimension of this reflection should be a fresh look at the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion. If practice is any indication of theology, some ministers are confused and uncertain about the place in our worship of these appointed means of grace. Consequently, the sacraments are sometimes relegated to a low priority in the worshipping community.

For some of us, the lack of emphasis on the sacraments is part of our heritage. Baptisms were rare. Infant baptism had been virtually supplanted

by infant dedication. Adult baptism was scarcely mentioned, apparently seen as an optional extra. People could have been forgiven if they thought that the two important "sacraments" were infant dedication and joining the church.

Holy Communion fared somewhat better. We held—celebrated would be the wrong word—Communion once a quarter because it was demanded in the *Manual*. It was essentially an affair for an inner circle of adult church members who had examined themselves with exceedingly great scrupulosity. While this after-service went on, the rest of us were asked to wait quietly out in the foyer of the church.

It was not always so in holiness circles. Wesley himself preached a sermon titled "The Duty of Constant Communion." But, for the most part, the holiness movement departed

from Wesley in this matter. Several reasons for this could be advanced.

At the theological level, P. M. Bassett has pointed out that some late 19th-century holiness theologians held a rather low view of the sacraments. It was only a short step from low estimate to neglect.

On a practical level, holiness people feared a return to "dead formalism," seeing "liturgy" as the enemy of spiritual worship. (See Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* [Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1991], esp. chap. 1.) When this fear was mixed with the growing dislike of anything that smacked of the nonrational or with a virulent anti-Catholicism that confused attention to the sacraments as "pandering to Rome," the lack of attention to the sacraments in worship soon followed.

But there was a price to pay for this. Ole Borgen contends that by losing the balance in worship between word and sacrament,

the theologically impoverished heirs of Wesley, without realizing the consequences, open the road to a future revivalism in danger of shallowness; to conceptions of holiness that have lost the Wesleyan anchorage in the eternal wonder of Christ's atonement; and to a pragmatic activism where the motivating force is materialistic and subjectivistic rather than the flowing from lives filled with the love of God, and, as a consequence, of all men. (Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* [Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury, 1985], 16)



## Issues in Worship

Worship that does not have a proper sacramental dimension is at risk.

The primary danger is that worship will become human-centered and shallow. No congregation or minister ever deliberately sets out on the path of human-centered worship. But people may demand a higher emotional temperature than comes from Word-centered service. When this demand is linked with Western individualism, worship can be squeezed in the direction of a "me-centered" emotionalism. But worship must always be corporate and God-centered. The sacraments contribute to both aspects.

A similar danger arises from our ever-increasing technological sophistication and professionalism. The quality of our sound and light system, our choral presentations, our special musicians can make us satisfied spectators rather than involved participants. People who come to participate in worship of God in the community of faith become mere spectators and critics.

The third danger is that of taming God—and then ignoring Him. God is a God of mystery and awe. We are not very comfortable with mystery; we much prefer explanations. This leads to the situation described by Staples: "To many devout persons deeply committed to the Christian faith, there is something strange and incomprehensible in the phenomenon of sacramental practice in the life of the church" (p. 25). But when we reduce the sacraments to terms we can fully understand, we strip them of their mystery. Alternatively, we run the risk of arguing that because we cannot fully explain how the sacraments become means of grace, perhaps they really aren't.

At the root of these problems, of course, is inadequate theology. This inevitably leads to the neglect of the sacraments. Sadly, we can thereby rob the church of a richness of worship and limit the experience of the risen Christ in our midst.

There are encouraging signs. Within my own denomination, classic Wesleyan understandings of sacraments are being proclaimed with increasing clarity. Bassett, Dunning, Greathouse, Grider, and especially Staples are among those who have started us on the long road back to re-

covering the Wesleyan balance, at least in theory.

This article makes no claim to saying anything new or to being an advance on anything already stated by these scholars. Its aim is far more modest, namely, to reap some of the fruits of their work and that of others in the hope that it might have a positive impact on our thinking about worship and sacraments.

## The Sacraments and Worship

### *What Is a Sacrament?*

The standard definition of sacrament in Wesleyanism is "an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same." But this definition is not as straightforward as it might appear. The crucial terms to understand are "sign" and "means."

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In this definition, "sign" has the connotation of "symbol" in modern theological thought. That is, a sign signifies the thing to which it refers, points to it, and participates in it. It is more than a spiritual road sign that merely points. Its true character is most clearly seen in the Last Supper, where the bread and wine not only pointed to Christ's death and the new covenant community but also, in some senses, brought them about.

At times, the definition has been understood in a minimalist sense. But such a reading ignores the last phrase of the definition. A sacrament is a physical sign that is a means of grace to the receiver.

"Means" of grace draws attention to the fact that the sacraments are the ordinary way by which the Holy Spirit makes the grace of God available to

those who will receive it and enter into the personal relationship God is offering in His grace. The sign is directly related to the thing signified, namely, the grace of God.

### *The Theological Context of the Sacraments*

In order to understand the place of sacraments in worship, we need to set them in their appropriate theological context. There are many ways in which this context could be expressed; this article wishes to highlight five points that are crucial for a correct understanding of sacraments and worship.

First, sacraments are Christ-centered. They come from Christ and point directly and objectively to the life and work of Christ. They do not focus on the individual who is receiving them nor on the minister who is administering them. They point to Christ and to Him alone.

Second, sacraments are grace-centered. They are always at God's initiative. Grace is the unmotivated favor of God whereby a person is brought into a right relationship with God and enabled to live in that relationship through the Holy Spirit. In that sense, gospel and sacrament are identified. In this, classic Wesleyan thought is identical with classic evangelical thought: "The reception of the thing signified depends upon the faith of the receiver, for without faith it cannot be received. But the sacrament is the seal of donation nevertheless. . . . Man's faith does not make the grace of God" (Tim Bradshaw, *The Olive Branch: An Evangelical Anglican Doctrine of the Church* [Carlisle, Eng.: Paternoster, 1992], 182).

Third, sacraments are covenant-oriented. That means that they are ordained as the means of grace within the community of believers, the Body of Christ. They are signs and symbols of the corporate salvation in which we individually participate.

Fourth, sacraments are mysterious. Just as the precise way in which the Atonement works is unexplainable, so the precise way in which the sacraments are means of grace is beyond our explanation.

Finally, the sacraments are eschatological. That means that they extend backward and forward and are active in the present. They can only be understood fully in the context of the

hope of the Church based on the cross of Christ and present now through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Both sacraments share these characteristics. But each also has some significant individual points that help us understand more fully their proper place in the worshipping community.

### Baptism

First, baptism is the sign of the new covenant community. Paul makes this link between baptism and the covenant explicit in Col. 2:11-14. When one is baptized, one becomes a member of the new community. Thus, it is initiatory and unrepeatable, drawing attention to the unity in the Body of Christ. Just as the Jewish boy who was circumcised on the eighth day became a member of the covenant community by the grace of God, so the "baptizand" is incorporated into the new covenant community wholly on the basis of the grace of God. In that sense, the sacrament is also anticipatory, for it requires the response of the recipient, whether immediately (adult baptism) or later (infant baptism—compare circumcision and bar mitzvah) to witness to the personal work of God. Baptism, then, is the mark of Christ that the baptizand bears, identifying him or her as Christ's (see Staples, 122-23).

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Second, baptism is the sign of dying and rising with Christ (see Rom. 6:3-4). When one is baptized, one identifies fully with Christ in His death. The baptizand dies to the do-

minion and power of sin and rises to the Lordship of Christ. Thus, baptism can never be separated from the cross of Christ. Staples puts the case well:

When the water of baptism is separated from the blood of the Cross, baptism loses its significance for many Christians, and the focus of attention wanders from Christ to the skill of the minister, or the structure of the baptistery, or the wet clothing after immersion, or, in the case of infant baptism, the beauty (or crying) of the baby, or the religiosity of the parents. Such missing of the mark is nothing short of tragic. (P. 134)

Third, baptism is a sign of God's prevenient and saving grace. God has taken the initiative in providing the means of our salvation. The focus of baptism is the objective grace, the act of the crucified Lord. "It heralds Christ's commitment and atonement, the root of our salvation" (Bradshaw, *Olive Branch*, 186). Although faith is a condition of regeneration, it is not the cause of it, so baptism is not primarily the response of the believer. Before we ever respond to the grace of God, He has acted. Baptism is not primarily our witness to God's grace but a gift of God himself.

Fourth, baptism is the sign of our community solidarity (see esp. Eph. 4:4-6). Christ's death has created a new race of those who are in Him (2:11-22). Baptism signifies the transfer of lordship from that old corporate solidarity of being in Adam to the new solidarity of being in Christ (see Rom. 6:5-14).

Fifth, baptism is the sign of receiving the Holy Spirit. Baptism and the reception of the Spirit stand in close connection in the New Testament. The New Testament knows of no such thing as a Christian who has not received the Spirit (see Rom. 8:9). Wesley and Paul are entirely in agreement at this point.

Classic evangelicalism and classic Wesleyanism are together in their basic theological understanding of the sacrament of baptism. And for both, infant baptism is the preferred means by which children of Christian families are incorporated into the church.

Sectors of the Wesleyan tradition within the holiness movement have not always appreciated this and have

tended to lose their nerve in the face of the individualism in some evangelical circles, a process that has aptly been termed the "baptistification of the holiness movement." (Staples points to the earlier Anabaptist tradition as the origin of this thinking.)

The theological issues seem clear, however. They center on two questions. First, is baptism an objective sign of God's grace or a testimony to the faith of the recipient? Classic Wesleyanism would affirm with classic evangelicalism that it is primarily an objective sign of God's grace. To be sure, baptism at whatever age must be accompanied by a response, sooner or later, in the heart of the baptizand.

Sacraments  
point directly to  
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work of Christ.

Second, is the newborn a member of the new covenant community of salvation or not? It would be quite consistent for those who hold to a doctrine of double predestination, whereby some children are born with no hope of salvation, to deny baptism to anyone who has not already shown that they are part of God's elect. On the basis of the universal Atonement and God's prevenient grace, however, Wesley held that salvation was already accomplished and, therefore, available for all, including the newborn, whether baptized or not. If, as Wesleyans hold, the child is part of the new covenant community, baptism is appropriate as the sign of incorporation by the grace of God into that new covenant community. Baptism for adults and children is the sign of God's grace, not the baptizand's faith. As Staples has so poignantly observed, "In a sense, all baptisms are really 'infant' baptisms" (p. 181).

Tim Bradshaw has summarized the classic evangelical position as follows:

In brief, the children of the peo-

ple of God, people who profess the faith and are themselves baptized and partakers in the covenant meal, should be sealed by the sign of baptism. They should be brought up within the covenant, learning to pray with parents and the church, appropriating the promises of God sealed on them at baptism, growing into the Christian faith. Their unbelief can make the . . . seal of no account. But that is not the expectation of the prayerful family of the church. There is such a thing as an infant Christian, the church is not catholic without all age-groups, and there must be no confusion between knowledge on the one hand and faith of a childlike kind on the other. (P. 190)

We cannot fully explain how the sacraments become means of grace.

This suggests that a certain distortion has crept into our theology of adult baptism as well. Frequently, it is implicitly seen as a dramatic witness to the believer's faith. But, however full of drama a baptismal service might be, it is a drama that ought to focus on the grace of God, the cross of Christ, and God's action in incorporating the new member into the covenant community.

One final note: God is not dependent upon baptism for incorporation into the new covenant community, although this is the ordinary sacrament for it.

#### Lord's Supper

Each Christian is baptized only once but participates repeatedly in the Lord's Supper. But what view ought one to take of this means of grace that the Lord commands us to celebrate?

First, the Lord's Supper must al-

ways be Christ-centered. It always finds its focus in the cross, resurrection, presence, and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It always is a sign of the finished work of Christ, a sign of His victory over death, a sign of His continued presence with us through the Holy Spirit, and a sign of His coming again.

Second, the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper were community-based from the start. Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper were like similar combinations familiar to us from the Old Testament. By sharing this last meal with His disciples, breaking bread with them and passing the cup to them, He was affecting the new covenant community in His blood. To be sure, the Cross was yet in front, founding the new covenant community through participation in His death.

The metaphor of the messianic banquet uniquely captures this communal aspect. It reminds us of our solidarity with all who are in Christ. It stretches back; we are one with that great company of witnesses, which no one can number, who are already the dead in Christ. And so, we recite the creed, that expression of our historic, common faith. We eat and drink with them, as it were. At the same time, through the hymns and anthems of praise, we join with that great throng in glorifying the One who sits upon the throne and the Lamb.

It also has a present, "home and abroad" axis. It affirms our solidarity with all who are brothers and sisters in Christ, wherever they may be.

Third, the Lord's Supper is a remembrance. Here the memorialist view is on the right lines, but it does not go far enough. A clue may be gleaned from the fact that the Last Supper occurred during Passover. Passover was more than a memorial; it was a reenactment of the deliverance by Yahweh. It was thus a living drama that each family was to experience as if it were the original Passover. The same pattern applied in the covenant renewal festival in Israel (see Deut. 5:4). Through the sacrament we participate in and continue our participation in the death of our Lord and our mutual participation one with the other.

The debate over remembrance his-

torically centered on the *real* presence of Christ in the sacrament. Understood in biblical terms, the Lord's Supper is the sign of Christ's presence among His people. It is a *real*, not merely a symbolic, presence. The Lord's Supper "mediates communion with the crucified one in the presence of the risen one" (J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* [London: SCM, 1977], 250). Precisely how He is present in the sacrament is a mystery.

Fourth, the Lord's Supper is an offering. This does not mean that Christ's sacrifice is being repeated by the minister. Christ died once for all and ever intercedes on our behalf. Thus, "we do not offer up Christ; He offers up himself" (Staples, 238), a thought expressed eloquently in Wesley's hymn:

*Five bleeding wounds He bears,  
Received on Calvary.  
They pour effectual prayers;  
They strongly plead for me.  
"Forgive him, oh, forgive," they cry,  
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die."*

Is baptism an objective sign of God's grace or a testimony to the faith of the recipient?

The bread and wine are also gifts of our hand, symbolizing our renewed offering of ourselves completely and wholly to God. Here is the sense in which Wesley understood the Lord's Supper as the sanctifying sacrament. Staples sums up this aspect by reminding us that in the Eucharist, "We are invited for repentance, for self-examination, for renewal, for spiritual sustenance, for thanksgiving, for fellowship, for anticipation of the heavenly kingdom, and for celebration in our pilgrimage toward perfection" (p. 202). We offer ourselves *in response*

to Christ's once-for-all offering of himself.

Fifth, the Lord's Supper is the sign of the Messianic age. It points back to the cross of Christ; in the Lord's Supper, based on the grace of God supremely offered to all on the cross of His Son, we participate in that once-for-all death. It is this dimension that makes the Lord's Supper a sacrament of invitation even to those who have not yet trusted fully in Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, we experience the living presence of the living Christ in our midst, incorporating us into His body and making us one. The Lord's Supper also points forward to that great marriage supper of the Lamb, when all things are consummated in the Messianic kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

#### *The Worship Context of the Sacraments*

There are two nonnegotiables in the worship context of the sacraments. First, worship and sacraments must always be God-/Christ-centered, not human-centered. Second, the sacraments are always community-based, not individual-based.

**The Lord's  
Supper is a  
sign of the  
finished work  
of Christ.**

#### **Baptism and Worship**

First, baptisms should always be held in the context of a worship service in which the community of believers plays an integral part. Baptism is the sign of God's incorporation of the individual into the new covenant community. Hence, there is a responsibility laid upon the covenant community that welcomes the new member, whether infant or adult, into its midst. Here is the reason for the presence of godparents at an infant baptism. Like the parents, they commit

themselves to the Christian nurturing of this newly incorporated member. But they alone are not responsible for the child's nurturing in the faith; that is the corporate responsibility of the whole covenant community and especially its local expression. Precisely the same obligation is laid on the community at an adult baptism.

Second, baptism for adults who come to faith and who have not been baptized as infants should not be delayed. Baptism is a sign of God's grace, not of human faith. There is no reason to wait until the candidate has proven his or her faith. God is incorporating that one into the new covenant community.

**The Lord's  
Supper is an  
offering.**

Third, the mode is not important; the sacrament is. Whether baptism is by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling is quite irrelevant. It is not how much of the individual that is covered by water that is significant; it is the grace of God completely incorporating the individual into Christ's death and resurrection and the full identification of the individual with the community of faith that is significant.

#### **Lord's Supper and Worship**

The Lord's Supper is the repeatable and appointed means of grace. There are implications to this point that are often missed.

First, "once per quarter" is too infrequent. At the very least, such an infrequent celebration tends to minimize the importance of the sacrament. It may imply that we have severed the link between Holy Communion and the sanctified life. Or, it may be an unconscious signal that our preference for informal worship is more important than following the pattern of the Early Church and the command of Holy Scripture.

Second, current practice may need

reexamination. For instance, if a wedding service is to include a celebration of the Lord's Supper—something that is appropriate—it needs to be for all the gathered community. Or, when Communion is celebrated with those in hospital or with shut-ins, the community connection needs especially to be stressed. It is always a fellowship with Christ and with fellow Christians.

**It is not how  
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individual is  
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is significant.**

Third, our form of celebration needs further reflection. Because the sacrament is a sign of our oneness with all Christians, the recitation of the creed, preferably the Nicene Creed, is a fitting reminder of our intimate connection with the disciples of Christ throughout history, while singing of anthems of praise points forward to that day when we will join the hosts of heaven in worship.

Fourth, as a sign of our unity with Christians everywhere, an offering for the poor—Hunger and Disaster Fund?—may be a fitting token of our solidarity with those who suffer.

#### **Conclusion**

Several years ago, Donald Dayton wrote a book titled *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*. Dayton focused on the rediscovery of social concern at the heart of Wesleyan piety. A similar discovery, this time focused on the importance of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, may now be occurring within the holiness movement. My prayer is that the discovery will bear fruit in our congregations. ■

# One Person's View of Emerging Trends in Church Music

by Joe Seaborn

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**I**n many areas of church life today the tide is turning away from tradition. Whether this spirit expresses itself in the osmosis between denominations, or in a kind of religious restlessness that seeks spiritual contentment without much regard for questions of orthodoxy, or by a vernacular liturgy, ours is a generation that might arguably be called "The Iconoclastic Controversy Revisited."

Perhaps in no arena of church life is this movement toward diversity more pronounced than in our worship music. Certainly if one considers creative conflict as a valid signal of substantive redirection, the chronic struggle in many of our congregations for a balanced musical package that meets the needs of most, while at the same time offending the least, hints that music is experiencing nothing short of a revolution.

For the people who are called upon to decide the musical combinations that appear in our worship services, the challenge to catch just the right dynamic between biblical soundness and cultural currency, and to do so every week, is every bit as demanding as preaching relevant sermons. The medium is different, but the mental investment necessary for choosing the best music in the best order ranks right alongside the preparations of sermons as a task requiring a well-disciplined and sensitive human spirit.

When you scan the variety of music styles that can be employed in worship—jazz, hymnic, classical, chant, pop, gospel, folk, rock, and electronic—it is easy to see why we must reject the rather simple notion that we will ever achieve a unified

style for church music. From our time forward, it must stand as a foundational premise that church music will necessarily remain diverse and free, employing, on the one hand, the great musical traditions of the past, while creating its own styles in cooperation with the culture of the times.

When we turn to the Scriptures in search of guidelines for shaping the content and style of Christian music for our own times, we meet with an amazing openness. In part this may

through the bars of a prison (Acts 16:25). But these instances only highlight the fact that people in the Early Church viewed songs as a natural component of their daily praise to God. These references do not carry with them any explicit theological interpretation.

The writings of Paul furnish us with at least three key passages that offer insights into the character of music that might properly be called "Christian."

In 1 Cor. 14:15, Paul is addressing the need for clarity of communication in public worship. In order for others to be built up in Christ or "edified" (v. 17), the person who speaks in a tongue or who sings or who offers thanksgiving must communicate a clear message that others can understand and affirm.

In this passage Paul sets forth a central characteristic of music that can qualify as Christian: (1) *It must present a clear message that builds up the faith of the bearers.* The *Wesleyan Bible Commentary* adds these words:

Paul makes clear in verses 14-17 that the Christian religion is intelligent as well as emotional, social as well as personal. . . . On the practical side Morris remarks: "All too often prayers are offered in a kind of emotional jargon, and hymns are chosen on the basis of attractive tunes rather than sound theology." (Charles Carter, ed., *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965], 5:218)

Along with Paul's emphasis on the need for a clear message through our music, another feature of Christian music emerges from this verse: Paul also teaches (2) *that our singing*



be due to the relative scarcity of references to music that carry with them any theological explanation. We read of Mary magnifying the Lord after discovering that she was carrying an unusual baby (Luke 1:46-55). Or we read about that Baby, now grown, singing a psalm or hymn with His disciples in the Upper Room (Matt. 26:30), or of Paul and Silas singing





must bring together both intelligibility and emotional involvement. Along with the mental acceptance, there must be the emotional involvement. Here Paul is emphasizing the need for the full extent of human per-



sonality to be influenced and affected by participation in worship. Our Wesleyan tradition is replete with unfortunate instances from the past when only one or two aspects of the human personality were addressed by worship, and the results ran the gamut from emotional extremism to a thoroughly secular socialism.

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## In no arena of church life is the movement toward diversity more pronounced than in worship music.

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Along with a need for clarity, Paul offers another characteristic that will be true of music that is approved by God. In Col. 3:16, Paul suggests that psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are useful for didactic purposes. (3) *Music that God affirms is that which inculcates Christian truth.* The assortment of musical forms mentioned in this verse was used by the Early Church as a means for instructing believers in the great truths of the Church.

Along with the transferring of truths through music, the early Chris-

tians also saw music (4) *as a means for instructing or admonishing believers in proper Christian behavior.* Though the terms are not exclusive, "teaching" here refers to the transmission of doctrine or beliefs, whereas "admonishing" focuses more on behavior (both KJV).

"Spiritual songs" to which Paul

refers here were written by creative individuals in the church and are believed by scholars to have been comparable to our modern-day ballads or folk songs. A good example of a spiritual song is found in 1 Tim. 3:16, where Paul gives us these lyrics: "He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory."

A third characteristic of Christian music is suggested by Paul in Eph. 5:19-20. Paul says, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything." In this verse Paul declares that our music must (5) *be a worthy vehicle for praise and thanksgiving to God.* By implication Christian music will not draw attention to the singer but will point beyond the singer to the God who gave the singer the ability to sing.

F. F. Bruce, quoted in *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, discriminates these three types of music in this way:

If we are to distinguish between the three kinds of musical composition, "psalms" may refer to the Old Testament Psalter, which has provided a perennial source of Christian praise from ancient times; "hymns" may denote Christian canticles such as have been recognized in several places in the New Testament; "spiritual songs" may be unpremeditated words sung "in the Spirit" voicing praise and holy aspirations.

Paul observes that, no matter which of these is used, the purpose of the music must be that of *bringing honor to God and causing others to increase in their love and respect for Him.*

In summary, these three passages establish this set of criteria for music that can be characterized as "Christian." (1) It must communicate a message with clarity so that others can comprehend it and mature in their faith as a result of hearing it. (2) It must allow for a full engagement of the whole person in the worship event. The mind, emotion, and will should be moved toward God by the music. (3) It must shape the life of the church so as to reinforce proper beliefs and inculcate moral behavior. (4) It must focus attention on God and the thanks that is due Him for His help and blessings in our lives.

With these four foundational principles before us, we can now examine a number of ways in which these truths help us analyze current trends and trajectories in church music. For all of their brevity, these guidelines serve as powerful directives and correctives to the evolving shape of church music today. Consider these statements that serve to interface these biblical principles with what we are seeing develop in the area of church music today.

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## Songs were a natural component of daily praise in the Early Church.

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### OBSERVATION 1

#### INTENSE WORSHIP EXPERIENCES ARE UNPREDICTABLE

When we open ourselves up to the energy of God, we can never fully predict what our reaction to that energy will be. Vance Havner used to say, "Where there's holy fire, there's usually wild fire, but, O God, give us fire."

Whether by its quiet intensity or excessive decibels, music has a way of evoking a physical reaction. That, of course, is as it should be. Dancing in the Spirit and clapping that accompanied Old Testament worship were physical manifestations of an inward grace. The people were experiencing an inner change and, in appreciation to God, were rejoicing with the full measure of their personalities.

In our own day such physical expressions as the raising of hands or closing the eyes or clapping along with a chorus are commonly demonstrated behaviors in times of worship. As with any type of behavior that can be imitated, all of these physical movements at one time or another have been abused. Many critics of such expressions, in fact, cite these abuses as reason for dispensing with the privilege. But that is to deprecate the individuality of expression that God has built into the members of the human family. What rather needs to occur is the regular affirmation that all types of outward expression be commensurate with the disposition of the person exhibiting them. That may mean great diversity within even one worship service and, for some, a measure of distraction. But a celebration of our uniqueness before God urges that we affirm our diversity of expression from a common faith.

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## Christian music will point beyond the singer to God.

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One of the principles outlined from Paul's writing insists that the attention of our music be focused on God and not on the worshiper turned performer. There is a precarious balance between the two, of course. There must at the same time be freedom of expression on the part of the individual, but not to the point where that expression directs attention away from God and onto the person. Cer-

tain types of music such as rock or country or jazz have an inherent tendency to draw attention to the performer and away from God. The one sharing music through those mediums must be especially cautious that he seeks to keep the congregation focused on God rather than on himself.

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## "O God, give us fire!"

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If we have to make a choice, it is more in keeping with the biblical guidelines suggested above to have an inferior singer whose heart is attuned toward God leading the worship than it is to have a gifted singer whose attention is focused on his performance, with God a dim shadow in the distance. As far as I could discover from my study, the Bible never highlights the giftedness of a singer, but it does refer to the devotion of the singer's heart.

As far as the Bible is concerned, when it comes to genuine worship of God, the quality of the worship being offered by the worshiper ranks above any talents or lack of them that the worshiper does or does not possess. In both your experience and mine, that truth is confirmed by the experiences we have had in services when we were required to compare the two.

It is a rare and lovely privilege indeed when we are guided in song by a person of superior vocal ability whose heart is clearly merged with God's. The closer to God the musician, the more lofty and enriching will be the song.

But whether we grimace because a singer has brought the focus of his music down from the majesty of heaven or experience embarrassment because an otherwise wonderful person has momentarily lost himself in a cloud of egotism, the point remains the same: worship is intensely personal and any form, such as music, that is so intense and mysterious at the same time will have its unpredictable moments. That is a point for both extra caution as well as joy.

## OBSERVATION 2

### ALL TYPES OF MUSIC HAVE A LESSER OR GREATER DEGREE OF CLARITY

We must dismiss outright any suggestion that there are certain types of music that God categorically cannot use to His glory. If we truly believe that God's Word is communicable to any culture, we must also agree that God can use the media specific to that culture in order to convey His truth.

At this point much argumentation occurs. Some declare outright that certain types of music such as jazz or rock can never be the vehicle for God's message. But there is a crucial consideration that must be noted.

One of the reasons why there is disagreement over what music styles God can and cannot use is because certain musical styles are not as intelligible to one group as they are to another. Granted, several musical forms are understandable to most if not all people. For example, take hymns. They are usually sung with an organ or piano providing the melodic line. They are typically written so that the individual words are clear and easily understood by a person who might be listening for the first time. That is not universally true of hymns, but it is largely true. For that reason, people with a multiplicity of musical tastes, even those who have no personal appreciation for the hymnic tradition, can, if they desire to, appreciate and understand the hymns. If clarity of message is an issue, according to 1 Cor. 14:15, then the hymn will long stand as a musical form worthy of perpetual use in the church.

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## The Bible never highlights the giftedness of the singer.

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There are other music styles that, though less understandable to one group of people, are quite clearly comprehended by another. A number

of people who prefer country gospel music are often ridiculed by those who believe that their more classical or hymnic preferences focus more on God, while country gospel focuses more on man.

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**To one who finds  
country gospel  
inspirational, the  
lyrics are as clear  
as the hymns  
were to Charles  
Wesley.**

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Certainly in a sense that is true. But it is also true that much of the criticism leveled at those who like country music arises because the critic has not been trained to appreciate country gospel and perhaps finds it rather unintelligible. To one who finds country gospel the common coin of his culture, however, the lyrics are as clear as the hymns were to Charles Wesley.

By the same token, a person who enjoys Christian rock music and who can mouth the words along with the singer is often surprised by a person who claims that the music seems to have no message. For many people who have grown up in that culture, the rock or jazz style of music is the most comfortable idiom in which they can both find and express their faith.

Granted, the overlap of intelligibility across several cultural subgroups is not as great with country gospel or jazz or rock as it might be with hymns. But just because a person from one generation or culture cannot understand the music of another does not invalidate that music as a potential avenue for God's grace.

One man commented, "Any music that appeals to the heels before it appeals to the head is not worthy of God." According to Paul's criteria, in genuine worship the whole person

votes: mind, body, and will. It is hard to argue from the Scripture that God is concerned about the sequence in which these three proceed. More important, read the people with whom you are worshipping. Engage them at their point of greatest interest, whether it be intellectual or emotional. Then lead them from that point to a biblical balance in which the full spectrum of the personality is engaged in the adoration of God.

#### OBSERVATION 3

**WHATEVER COMBINATION  
OF MUSIC WE CHOOSE FOR  
OUR CHURCH, IT SHOULD  
REINFORCE THE GREAT  
DOCTRINES AND ETHICAL  
TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH**

It is invigorating for a congregation to sing together using contemporary music forms that resonate with current culture. However, a congregation should also maintain its continuity with the past through traditional musical forms for one great reason—the truths of God come to us through continuity with our past, not in separation from it.

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**Many people  
see traditional  
forms of music  
as one  
generation  
imposing its  
preferences  
upon another.**

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There is a proper sense in which many people resist "traditional music." Often "traditional" means nothing more than what was done four or five years ago. One little boy illustrated this limited definition when he was asked to write a history of the church, tracing it back as far as he could. He wrote, "My pastor was born in 1945. . . ." Little wonder that

many people despise traditional forms, which they see as little more than one generation imposing its preferences upon another.

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**The words of  
songs are human  
creations  
designed to reflect  
the character of  
God and the  
ethical purity of  
His children.**

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Properly understood, the traditional forms of church music gather up the experiences of the church from Bible times until now and give us a sense of continuity with our past. It is foolish to discard forms and practices with which the church has prayed and praised for centuries. In the musical area such forms as the Gregorian chant, the oratorio, the hymn, and antiphonal singing have been used by God to nourish the life of the church for many years. We are wise if, from time to time, we employ these forms which have been tried and tested over the generations. To discount them outright is tantamount to exhibiting what C. S. Lewis properly called a kind of "chronological snobbery," which treats anything from the past as inherently inferior.

#### OBSERVATION 4

**NO MATTER WHAT  
MUSICAL FORM,  
THE CONTENT OR LYRICS  
NEED TO BE EVALUATED  
FOR BIBLICAL ACCURACY**

Someone has said, "The sung word is the remembered word." When Arius, the presbyter from Alexandria in the fourth century, set about spreading his teaching, which taught that Jesus was a kind of inferior second God, he did a clever thing. He translated his beliefs into street songs and had the children

singing his theology into the hearts of a whole generation. When the Wesleys wanted to spread scriptural holiness, they allowed 6,000-plus hymns to help them achieve their goal.

Because we tend to repeat musical lines over and over again, we need to keep a vigilant eye on the lyrics of the songs that we allow into our church repertoire. No type of music should be excluded from this scrutiny. Are the words of the hymn true to biblical ideas and teachings? Does the hymn bring glory to God? Does the gospel song admonish the congregation toward a self-ish or unselfish life-style?

The words of songs are not the inspired words of God. They are human creations that, for the most part, were designed to reflect the character of God and the ethical purity of His children. Not every line in every musical composition keeps to that noble purpose. To the degree that musical pieces do not glorify God, teach the truths of the Bible, or admonish people to righteous living, they fall short of their best designs and biblical norms and may need to be left out of the musical programming of the church.

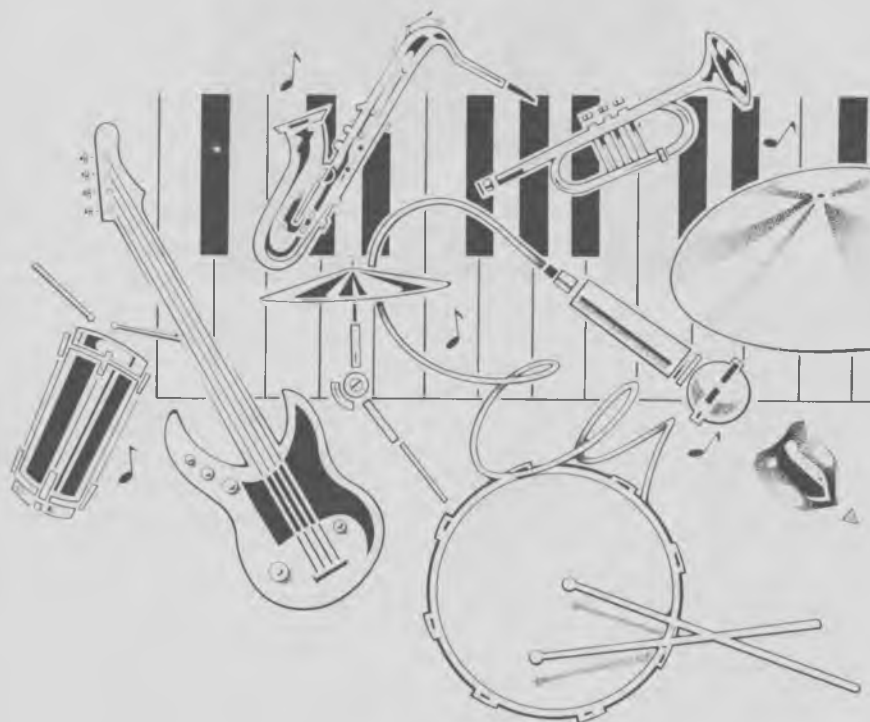
#### OBSERVATION 5

**IN ORDER FOR THE WHOLE PERSON TO BE ENGAGED IN THE MUSICAL EXPRESSION OF FAITH, HE MUST FEEL THAT THE MUSIC LINKS WITH THE REAL WORLD IN WHICH HE CURRENTLY LIVES**

When a worshiper of God is called upon regularly to leave behind the contours of his culture in order to worship God, there will come a time when that worshiper will sense that the God of his worship is not relevant to his culture. If a person is used to classical music and enters a church in which the music is country gospel,

he will, in time, either leave that church or else struggle with a chasm between the world of life and the world of worship.

For worship to be valid for a worshiper, it needs to assume the neutral cultural forms in which he lives and fill them with biblical truth. That pattern has been in place for generations. Many people in Daniel's world were having false dreams. But God, adapting the mode of dreaming for higher purposes, gave Daniel true dreams. The form was neutral. The content was not.



Some will hold that with rock music even the form is unholy and therefore useless as a means for communicating God's grace.

When we require people to leave behind their culture in order to worship God through forms that are foreign to them, we run the risk of turning them away from God altogether. Their sense of God can become stiff and inflexible and dry, not because God is, but because we are.

#### OBSERVATION 6

**EXCELLENT CHRISTIAN MUSIC WILL POSSESS A QUALITY AND MAGNIFICENCE WITH THE SUBJECT MATTER BEING DESCRIBED**

Just as it would be ridiculous to il-

lustrate the sovereignty of God using a 39¢ water pistol, so it is inappropriate to use certain musical compositions because they simply are not of sufficient quality to exalt their subject. There is a profound distance in quality between the words and music of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," and the little song quoted below.

*I want to be an angel  
And with the angels stand,  
A crown upon my forehead,  
A harp upon my hand.*

Paul's principle suggests that God should be the focal point of our worship unless, of course, we are teaching or admonishing. The ditty above falls short on both counts. Not all songs are born equal.

As professionals who have been trained in theology and good judgment, we are responsible for helping to sort through the volumes of music that are available to us today and to make judgments about them based on such criteria as excellence, nobility, and faithfulness to the Word of God.

Justin Martyr, the great second-century apologist, noted in his *Second Apology*, "All that has been said well belongs to us Christians." Through the rich diversity of musical forms available to us today, God has more languages than ever through which to speak to the generations. The forms are so diverse, in fact, that many of us have difficulty appreciating the full spectrum of possibilities. When we stand before God at the end of things, and "in a nobler, sweeter song [we] sing [His] power to save," we will be glad that we grappled with the diverse range of musical styles of our own time and to the best of our ability filled them with the truths of God and sent them out to shape the souls of men and women for God. ■

## Jesus Preached Directly

by Morris Chalfant

*Bourbonnais, Ill.*

A clergyman was called in the middle of the night by a woman in his congregation.

"Well, friend," he said, "so you are ill and feel need for the consolation of religion? What in particular can I do for you?"

"No," replied the lady. "I'm just nervous and can't sleep."

"But how can I help that?" asked the astonished preacher.

The lady answered, "Sir, you always put me to sleep so nicely at church that I thought you might preach me a little sermon over the phone just now."

Today's church needs the thrust of preaching that will keep people awake! Many laymen cry out that they are bored stiff. They can hardly stand the services, yet they feel obligated to show up and they do—even putting their money in the offering plates. However, many congregations are ready to go to sleep when it comes to the Sunday morning sermon.

We have church growth seminars and lovely church plants and trained personnel. We have up-to-date equipment—intercoms, public-address systems, movie projectors, slide shows—you name it! We have fancy clothes and badges and colorful brochures. But we lack the most important ingredient of all—the gripping message that truly gets hold of the heart every Sunday.

Pioneer preachers of the holiness movement at the turn of the 20th century called sin "sin" and named sinful practices. Fearful denunciations of sin, the exactions of divine righteousness, and the certainty of Judgment Day with the perdition of ungodly men to follow, furnished a bed of thorns for such men upon which rest was made impossible. Holiness churches were a hotbed of prayer.



Hangers-on would be either prayed in or out of the church. Her ministers brought out the Atonement, with the circumstances of Jesus' death for sin and the sinner, in such a way as to make sin appear "exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7:13, KJV).

Jesus preached directly. He did not spend His time discoursing about imaginary characters or talking to persons not present, some vague third person, but He employed the second person—"Thou art the man!" (See 2 Sam. 12:7, KJV.) He singled out sin and people in His preaching so that they knew of what He spoke and to whom He spoke. Jesus was unlike that church in a large city that professes to represent Him, whose pastor assures hearers by advance announcement that they may attend services there with the assurance that they will not be made uncomfortable or put in an embarrassing position. But indeed, just that embarrassment or discomfort must take place before

salvation is theirs. Jesus used plain terms—"lust," "adultery," "fornication," "evil thoughts," "covetousness." He called scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites" and "whited sepulchres" (Matt. 23:27, KJV). He said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! . . . Bethsaida!" (11:21, KJV). "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee" (23:37, KJV). To the Jews He deliberately said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:44, KJV).

Today has become a day of diplomacy. Where diplomacy ends and compromise begins, only God knows.

John the Baptist was once a very popular man. Large crowds attended his revival. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan" (Matt. 3:5-6, KJV). What a crowd! But few men can handle outstanding success in his field and not show some trace of pride. John was one of those rare men.

Though they had come to hear John preach, it was his privilege to introduce Jesus to that crowd: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30, KJV) showed the caliber of the man.

John the Baptist could have avoided truth and ignored the act of adultery by Herod living with his brother's wife. He could have condemned sin in a general way, but this preacher was specific.

I went to the dentist, and he was rough on one of my teeth! Yet, I realize that he had to get rough before my tooth could be normal again.

Many a person will never be at peace with God and himself until some preacher has the courage to preach to him the judgment of God, tempered with pure love.

Often—much too often—we





preachers preach what appears to be irrelevant, or we miss the mark by a mile. Successful prophets, pastors, and preachers of yesteryears could interpret the fine print of men's hearts. They knew the particular truth that would point up the occasion. They fearlessly declared truth.

The apostle Paul tells us that "perilous times shall come . . . in the last days" (2 Tim. 3:1, KJV). It will be dangerous in those times for men's souls. We must arise and proclaim without fear the time-worn message of "repent or perish." Only the biblical preaching of repentance will produce sin-killing, soul-saving, restitution revivals. Lack of conviction and failure to repent has produced "painless births." Awaken to the fact that worldliness in the church has taken and is taking a great toll of spiritual stamina, weakening the testimony of many Christians and silencing the testimony of many others.

We stand at the crossroads. Will we follow the crowd or Christ? Will we seek out "the old paths, where is the good way" around our old-fashioned altars "and walk therein" (Jer. 6:16, KJV), or will we be deluded by a religious philosophy that tends to eliminate the need of an altar? "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, . . . after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8, KJV). "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression" (Isa. 58:1, KJV).

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8, KJV).

Today, some religious leaders seem to look down on simplicity and directness. They infer that a sermon should be a profound utterance upon some sociological or political ques-

tion. Such ministers apparently conceive of themselves as assistants to Congress: "Get a bill through, and the world is in good shape." Other ministers, who have gotten a little beyond sociology, regard themselves as theologians and probe deeply the mysteries of the universe. But where does all this leave the poor souls who sit in the congregation?

Undoubtedly Jesus would shock many modern congregations. What an uproar He might cause in some seminaries! He wasn't a conventional pulpiteer. His style would shake some people today. His first message in some pulpits would be His last.

Yet, Jesus would get today what He got in His day: response. People did not sleep when He spoke. Some of His listeners voted for His execution. Others went out and died for Him. But indifference did not characterize His congregations.

Mainly Jesus' speaking put God in human focus. He made God awesomely real. He awakened people to their immense lostness apart from God—whether or not they acted on that wakening. He made those who had ears to hear to want God until they abandoned all for Him.

Should we, in our time, shy away from Jesus' simplistic and direct technique, rather than standing in awe at the force of it?

Let's emphasize in our message that man is born a sinner, destined for hell, but that Jesus died and rose to save him. Salvation,

therefore, is free to all who will receive Christ by faith.

My appeal is for simple, direct communication, not for superficial study or shallow preaching. Dig deep, but don't come up dry. Use your professional tools at home, but take the inspired Word into the pulpit. ■

# Faith

by **Bonnie K. Hallman**


*Harrisburg, Pa.*

With the trials and the worries  
That we have from day to day,  
We often feel as if the Lord  
Is very far away.


But He is looking down and  
Watching us with care.  
And, if we take the time to pray,  
We'll feel His presence there.

We take the time to worry  
Over what a day may bring,  
But often do not thank Him  
For the many little things.

God feels our every sorrow.  
And He'll dry our every tear  
If we will truly trust Him,  
And in our hearts keep Him near.



Many a person  
will never be  
at peace with  
God and himself  
until some  
preacher has  
the courage to  
preach to him  
the judgment  
of God.



# Helping People Avoid Bereavement Mistakes

by Victor M. Parachin

Virginia Beach, Va.



In his autobiography, *Man of the House*, former Congressman Tip O'Neill tells of a Boston neighbor who suffered a heart attack and died. His young daughter was so traumatized that she refused to speak in the weeks following. The mother, alarmed by her daughter's withdrawal, asked Mr. O'Neill to help take her to a nearby hospital.

Of course, the congressman was eager to help and drove the little girl to the hospital. That act of mercy made him late for a New York meeting. When he arrived there, other committee members waiting for O'Neill asked why he was late. The congressman explained that a little girl had lost her father and was unable to speak because of her trauma.

Other people who heard O'Neill's account were moved with compassion. One of them suggested they take up a collection and buy the child a gift. A hat was passed, and Tip O'Neill went to a toy store and purchased the biggest stuffed animal he could find. They then shipped it back to the hospital where the girl was confined.

Here is Tip O'Neill's account of what transpired: "When the doll arrived, I was told later, the girl lit up and started to talk again. Years later, after a speech I gave at a college in my district, a woman came up to me and said, 'I'm the little girl you sent that doll to. It meant so much to me, and I've always wanted to thank you.'"

The fact is that the majority of people recover from loss and can begin to enjoy life. However, some people experience a grief that becomes arrested. The hurt from loss remains constant over many years. They simply never move from pain to peace. Consequently, they are unable to reenter the mainstream of living. They remain permanent grievers.

At the time of loss, a person's religious leader can be tremendously helpful in guiding him through grief. Here are common bereavement mistakes for people to avoid.

## *Grief and Faith Are Incompatible*

Some people assume incorrectly that the presence of grief is the absence of faith. In various subtle ways, the bereaved come to believe, "If I had more faith, I would not feel this badly." Many people with deep, abiding faith experience the pain of loss. It should never be forgotten that Jesus wept when He learned that His close friend, Lazarus, had died.

Another example is that of former slave Pierre Toussaint, whose name has been submitted recently for canonization. While his entire life is inspiring, Toussaint's response to the

death of his adopted daughter is particularly worth noting. In 1815 Toussaint's sister gave birth to a girl whom she named Euphemia. Within 60 days the mother died and the father abandoned the child. So Toussaint and his wife adopted the infant.

Since Toussaint and his wife could not have children of their own, little Euphemia was viewed as a special gift from God. Her presence in their home provided the Toussaints the happiest period of their lives.



Bereaved people may need to be reminded often that they are not lacking in faith because they are grieving.



Lovingly, Pierre Toussaint watched the little girl mature. He hired a tutor to teach her English and French and employed another teacher to give her music lessons. After work he felt a rush of joy when he caught sight of his daughter waiting for him by the entrance to their home.

Then, when Euphemia was 14, she contracted tuberculosis. The best doctors were consulted, but Euphemia continued to lose weight and strength. *She died at 14 years of age.*

Pierre Toussaint, the man who is now nominated for sainthood, could not hide either his anger or his depression. While notes poured in and friends came to bring comfort, the father withdrew and was inconsolable. Pierre Toussaint was so devastated that he suspended his charitable activities and did not return to work for several months. Later, of course, he resumed both and went on to live until he was 87 years of age.

This one important point emerges from Toussaint's life and his grief—that he was a man of faith did not prevent him from feeling the impact of loss. Bereaved people may need to be reminded often that they are not lacking in faith because they are grieving.

#### *Withdrawal*

While pain usually causes people to withdraw, such retreat should only be temporary. Grieving women and men should be encouraged to remain active. This is the advice offered by psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers. When her husband, Milt, died following an 18-month battle with cancer, Dr. Brothers subsequently wrote the book *Widowed*. In it she advises:

Get out of the house. Do anything to get out, even if you do not want to. Get involved in a club or in local politics; take a first-aid class; volunteer at a library, hospital, or museum. Get a paying job. Whatever you do, do not give in to the inertia that will keep you indoors.

#### *Flight into Activity*

Where some people are tempted to withdraw from living, other grieving individuals can become overly involved with activities. This is a danger because such involvement can be a thinly disguised attempt to run away from grief. It is impossible to escape grief. Endless activity only prolongs and delays grief recovery. Dr. James P. Cattell, M.D., assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia University, cautions against overinvolvement as an escape mechanism:

The active avoidance of being alone, a desperate search for social distraction at any cost can include

successive telephone conversations of endless length, a continuous round of breakfast, luncheon, cocktail or dinner meetings or all-day or all-night bridge or poker games . . . this is a dangerous game.

#### *One Year Heals All*

Many people operate under the mistaken notion that after 12 months the bereaved should be fully recovered. In grief support groups, a common concern expressed is the pressure the bereaved feel to be "perfect" after 12 months. Others naively say to them: "It's been a year now; don't you think you should be over this?" "It's been over a year now; I think you're just feeling sorry for yourself." Actually the first year is just the beginning.



It is  
impossible  
to escape  
grief.



For example, one woman, whose husband was killed in an automobile accident, reports: "I thought that if I could just get through *one year*, I would be all right again. I set my jaw and held on. At the end of the year, I suddenly found myself almost more miserable than on the day my husband died. What a fool I had been to expect an instant cure at the end of a year's widowhood!"

It is important for the bereaved as well as their family and friends to understand that a loss to death creates a deep, deep wound, one which takes between three and five years to heal. Patience on everyone's part is the key. People do recover but it is a slow, gradual process.

#### *The "My Life Is Over" Syndrome*

A loss to death is usually accompanied by strong feelings that life in general has come to a grinding halt. Yet, history is filled with examples of

women and men who were able to forge new beginnings out of painful endings.

One such example is Barbara J. Hargrove. As a child, she was raised on a farm and then married a Colorado dairy farmer. Together, they farmed for 17 years. Her husband died while in his mid-30s, and she was left alone to raise their four children.

While dealing with her own loss, Hargrove continued to operate the farm, be a single parent, and she returned to college. Eight years later the woman who had always been on a farm earned both a master's degree and a doctorate. She moved from the farm to teaching, first at Yale and later at the Illif School of Theology in Colorado.

Grieving individuals may occasionally need reminders that there is life after loss. While life will certainly be different, it can also be rewarding and fulfilling.

#### *Tranquilizers, Sleeping Pills, and Alcohol*

Many grieving people seek relief through artificial means. For men it is often alcohol, and for women it is usually sleeping pills or tranquilizers. While medication and alcohol can block pain initially, the end result is grief delayed.

Informed clergy and psychiatrists caution against the use of drugs in any form. Beverly Raphael, an Australian psychiatrist and author of *The Anatomy of Bereavement*, says, "Drugs do little to improve outcome in such bereavements and may even become a further factor hampering resolution."

And Rev. John Hewett, author of *After Suicide*, advises the bereaved to "beware of simplistic medical treatment. Drugs may certainly serve a purpose in your situation, but they won't cure your grief. In fact, they may complicate the healing process as much as they aid it. Tranquilizers won't end the pain. They'll only mask it for a while."

Finally, by avoiding these common bereavement mistakes, grieving women and men will heal from loss. As they recover, a time will come when they will experience the truth of poet George Herbert's words, "Grief melts away, like snow in May."

# The Bible and Cross-cultural Ministries

by Steven Kasambalis

Enmore, N.S.W., Australia

**T**he Bible gives us the model for cross-cultural work and ministries. We find a message of what we ought to say and how to say it. The Bible announces the gospel. Through the Bible, God himself actually crosses human culture and effectively touches lives. The Bible communicates the Good News to the world. We recall Paul's statement that "the scripture . . . preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham" (Gal. 3:8, RSV). God communicates and evangelizes through all the Scriptures. Since Scripture is divine evangelization, we can learn how to preach the gospel by considering how God has done it. He has given us in the process of biblical inspiration a beautiful evangelistic model of His condescension. His sublime truth reveals himself and His Christ, His mercy and His justice, and His full salvation. He chose to make this disclosure through the vocabulary and grammar of human languages, through human beings, human images, and human cultures.

What a lesson we learn from God himself about effective communication. John R. W. Stott wrote in his chapter of *The Bible in World Evangelism*:

Yet through this lowly medium of human words and images, God was speaking His own word. Our evangelical doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture emphasizes its double authorship. Men spoke and

God spoke. Men spoke from God (2 Pet. 1:21) and God spoke through men (Heb. 1:1). The words spoken were equally His and theirs. He decided what He wanted to say, yet He did not smother their human personalities. They used



their faculties freely, yet did not distort the divine message. Christians want to assert something similar about the Incarnation, the climax of the self-communicating God. "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). That is God through whom the universe was created, became a human being, with all the particularity of a first century Palestinian Jew. He became little, weak, poor, and vulnerable. He experienced pain and hunger, and exposed himself to temptation. All this was included in the "flesh," the human being He became. Yet when He became one of us, He did not cease to be Himself. He remained forever the eternal Word or Son of God. . . . He identified with us, though without

surrendering His own identity. And this principle of "identification without loss of identity" is the model for all evangelism, especially cross-cultural evangelism.<sup>1</sup>

Churches in Australia have been of very little influence to migrants for the simple reason that they have refused to identify with the people they claim to be serving. They remain themselves and never become like them. They stay aloof. They hold on desperately to their own cultural inheritance in the mistaken notion that it is an indispensable part of their identity. They're unwilling to let it go. But this was not the way of Jesus, who emptied himself of His glory and

humbled himself to serve.

On the other hand, they must be careful not to go to the other extreme and make the opposite mistake. Some are so determined to identify with the people in cross-cultural ministry that they are willing to surrender even their Christian standards and values. Again, this was not Jesus' way. In becoming human, He remained truly divine. We must be careful that we're not so willing to serve others that we lose our personal authenticity.

Some people  
reject the  
gospel, not  
because they  
perceive it to  
be false, but  
because they  
perceive it  
to be alien.

We have to wrestle with the reasons why so many migrant people reject the gospel, and we need to give due weight to the cultural factors. Some people reject the gospel, not because they perceive it to be false, but because they perceive it to be alien.

Others reject the gospel because they perceive it to be a threat to their own culture. Of course Jesus challenges every culture. Whenever we present the gospel to Hindus or Buddhists, Jews or Muslims, Orthodox or Catholics, secularists or Marxists, Jesus Christ confronts them with His demand to dislodge whatever has secured their allegiance and replace it with himself. He is Lord of every person and every culture. His threat, His confrontation cannot be avoided. Does the gospel we proclaim present people with other threats that are unnecessary, such as calls for the abolition of harmless customs, national art, architecture, music, and festivals? Are we culture-proud and culture-blind?

### *New Testament and Models of Cross-cultural Ministries*

Rev. C. E. Wilcox, in his dissertation on *The Ethnic Church in Australia*,<sup>1</sup> observes these models about cultural communication through Jesus, Peter, and Paul.

#### 1. *Jesus*

Jesus is our Leader in cross-cultural communication. He set the example for us on how to minister to other people with different culture, religions, and traditions. In His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), Jesus gives us a model for a cross-cultural approach to personal evangelism.

The Samaritan woman was conscious of social, racial, and religious barriers. The reaction of Jesus' disciples indicates that the social barrier was more significant than that of race.

Jesus broke through the barriers and communicated effectively with her. He showed that she mattered as a person much more than the cultural prejudice He could have been expected to have as a Jew. Jesus did not ask her to leave her culture, tradition, and country in order to be acceptable but, rather, to leave her sinful manner of living.

Jesus humbled himself and asked her for a drink of water and drank out of a bucket handled by a sinful Samaritan woman. Paul E. Little noted,

It is fascinating to see this woman's curiosity kindle and beginning to burn as our Lord draws her along. First He came to her where she was. Second, He showed an interest in her concerns. He is using His reactions and His words to arouse a positive response to Himself and His message of truth . . . by this simple act of talking with the woman, He demolishes social, religious, and racial and political barriers. As a man He speaks to her as a woman. As a Rabbi He speaks to her as an immoral woman. As a Jew He speaks to her a Samaritan. Thus He startles her while she can't quite grasp His significance. She can sense the deeper dimension in His life by His refusal to discriminate against her. He is accepting her.<sup>2</sup>

Consider Jesus' answer to the question: "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). It crystallized His attitude to-

ward those who were despised for racial, religious, and social differences. The story of the Good Samaritan answered the simple question of who our neighbor is.

When God spoke to us in Scripture, He used human language. When He spoke to us in Christ, He assumed human flesh. In order to reveal himself, He emptied and humbled himself. That is the model of effective communication that the Bible supplies. There is self-emptying and self-humbling in all authentic evangelism; without that we contradict our gospel and misrepresent the Christ we proclaim. Jesus showed us that He is the Model to follow so that we can overcome wrong attitudes, prejudices, and cultural differences.

#### 2. *Peter*

Peter had quite a few racial, religious, and cultural hang-ups to overcome. In Acts 10:1-10 we are introduced to Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort. He is called "a devout man" (RSV), that is, he worshiped the God of the Jews. An angel appeared to him one day and told him to send for Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, who would give him further instructions.

Jesus is Lord  
of every  
person and  
every culture.

Meanwhile, the Lord was working on Peter and preparing him for a very important assignment. Peter was not prepared for this great assignment, so God had to use some object lessons to get His message through to Peter. Peter realized that God wanted him to reach out to the Gentiles. He had to leave behind him all his religious prejudice, bigotry, and culture to reach out in love to lost Gentiles. Peter was ready to defend his action to the culture-bound church leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-18). It is hard for us to realize now what a revolutionary idea it was to them then.



### 3. Paul

Paul previously persecuted Christians and later was converted miraculously. He became the greatest reporter of the centuries for his faith in Christ Jesus. After Christ, Paul is our second most important model for cross-cultural ministries. Paul had to overcome his own cultural, religious, and ethnic awareness so that he could be more effective for his Lord. In his letter to the Philippians Paul records of himself:

Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless (3:5-6).

In his Corinthian correspondence, Paul sets out the implications in his cross-cultural ministry:

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Cor. 9:20-23, RSV).

Out of this passage we observe at least three principles:

1. The extension of the gospel and the salvation of persons determines the attitude to culture that is to be taken by the Christian worker.

Evangelical outreach has suffered by missionary-evangelists with good intentions and pure motives who knew theology but not people.

2. It is necessary to distinguish between that which is essentially part of our Christian faith and that which is not, and then hold on to the essential. We must be prepared to set aside those things that are not essentially part of our Christian faith but are only cultural adherence.

3. The Christian cross-cultural worker must be prepared to adjust to the culture of those to whom he goes. He should not expect them to adjust to his. C. E. Wilcox insisted,

It is necessary to add that this involves what is essentially a heart attitude towards others and their way of life, and not a mere imitation of externals of their culture, adopting their dress and food. What is needed is that empathy and real identification with the other person in the way in which he sees and feels things.<sup>3</sup>

Study of the Scriptures and of people in their cultural contexts must go hand in hand. Evangelical outreach has suffered by missionary-evangelists with good intentions and pure motives who knew theology but not people. Others may know people but not theology. Still others may know neither!

The study of cross-cultural methods, intercultural relationships, and multicultural facets must be done side by side with biblical principles in order to produce effective communicators.

The Bible and study of human behavior must go hand in hand for Australian Christians in order to be most effective in sharing the message of Jesus Christ. ■

1. A Recorder, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (by the Institute of International Studies, Sierra Bonita Ave., Pasadena, Calif., 1981), 6.

2. Paul E. Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 36.

3. C. E. Wilcox, "The Ethnic Church in Australia" (Diss., Baptist Theological College of Queensland, Brisbane, 1979), 35.



## Pontius' Puddle



# We're Moving Again

by Carol McGarry

Boswell, Pa.

**I** never get used to the nomad existence of parsonage life. Whether a year or 10, the time you spend at each pastorate goes by much too quickly. Just when you think you have settled in, God calls you to another place, another church.

The packing is finished. Everything we own, except the furniture, is neatly packed and labeled in boxes. I wait for the U-haul truck to arrive.

I remember the day we arrived. Men from the congregation were lined up, and each piece of furniture was unpacked and put in its new place. Ladies brought food and an eager anticipation to get to know the new parsonage family. They welcomed us with opened arms, pitching in to make quick work of the mountain of boxes that contained our cherished possessions. Where are they now?

We prayed sincerely concerning this move, asking the Lord to make the hurt minimal to our precious people. Even so, some find it difficult to say good-bye. Don't they realize we still need their help and comfort, even though we are leaving?

I shall miss these loving people who opened their hearts, homes, and lives to the strangers who had come to fill their parsonage and pulpit. They loved our children and prayed, comforted, cried, and rejoiced with us as one by one they left home for lives of their own. These same people will open their hearts and arms to our successor.

The U-haul is packed and ready to leave. One last time I walk through this house that was my home for seven years. There's the room that was my office with its sunny window overlooking my husband's office. I think of the stories and articles written here, the church work and bulletin I lovingly labored over each week.

Here are the rooms where precious grandchildren slept when they stayed overnight at Gramma's. Two of these precious grandchildren will be left behind as we make this move. Too many hours and too many miles will prevent us from seeing them often.

The dining room is where we entertained our beloved people. Church meetings were held there and friends gathered. I remember the Bible studies around the table and the many cups of coffee shared with love and laughter, and those who sat there in tears needing comfort.

Walking through the front door for the last time, I see the swing that was the center of great times of fellowship. The ladies would stop by in the summer to sit with me, sipping iced tea, while sharing their hurts, victories, and everyday talk. What a blessed place that gentle old swing was! The Lord was always there. I will miss that old swing, but most of all, I will miss the people who sat there with me.

My eyes fill with tears—I can hardly see. As we drive away, I whisper a prayer to our blessed Lord, thanking Him for the privilege of living in this house, serving this church, and knowing these wonderful, caring people.

Moving is not easy for a pastor and his family. Each move means tearing up roots and starting over, always

leaving a piece of ourselves behind. We take with us only our possessions and the memories we have collected. The door closes on this part of our life, never to be opened again.

Traveling down the road behind the U-haul that my husband is driving, an overwhelming thought strikes me: all our earthly possessions are in that truck! I wonder what would it be like to stay in the same place—the same house all my life! I think of the security of having a home of my own. When a pastor retires, he doesn't have a house to live in. If he dies, his wife has even less. I have no regrets, however. The ministry is our life. Our Lord Jesus had no place to call home either, except heaven. I am suddenly overjoyed—God has given us the opportunity, not only to visit places all over the United States but to actually live there. The God we serve always presents new challenges, new places to see, and new things to do.

All at once, I notice the turn signal of the U-haul is blinking, and we are turning into a driveway. We must be at our new pastorate! I notice many men and ladies eagerly waiting to welcome us to our new place of service, our new home.

I am suddenly excited about the days, months, and years ahead. I get out of the car, and I'm embraced by several ladies I don't even know. I feel I have come home—or is it a new door opening? New adventures lie ahead. New roads to explore, new people to love, a new home to decorate.

I feel so fortunate, as I go through the door of this new parsonage, that God has called us to this new place of service, this new life—these new sheep to shepherd. And I thank the Lord for making this move just a little easier. ■



# Thoughts on an Empty Nest

by Diana Cox

Spokane, Wash.



their father and I have done our job.

I'm also glad I know that it is normal to grieve. A part of my life is over. A precious relationship has changed, never to be the same. So when the tears flow and the heart aches, it is all right to experience that pain. God assures me that when they have established their own identities, separate from me, they will come home as dear and precious friends. Already this is happening with our oldest child.

The Lord brings little gems into my life from many sources—encouragement from friends, a beautiful article in *Guideposts Magazine* called "Turning Loose." I sobbed through it but felt a healing afterward. An article in the newspaper explained how important it is for parents to understand that they can never be repaid for the time, effort,

money, and worry that they pour into their children. A deep insight came from that same article: "Children al-

ways mean more to parents than parents mean to children."

So where do we go from here? We have time for my husband and me. I am free from many household tasks, so we are spending more time together. We're even dating again. We take time to develop friendships and to reach out to other people through ministries in the church. We have more time with the Lord in Bible study and prayer.

One day I found a little card. I sent it to my youngest child.

**"What Parent Says":**

You're going out without a jacket?

**"What Parent Means":**

If you go out without a jacket, you might catch cold and get sick and die, and I'll miss you.

**"What Parent Says":**

No, you can't stay out late!

**"What Parent Means":**

If you stay out too late, you won't get enough sleep, and you'll get sick and die, and I'll miss you.

**"What Parent Says":**

Do your homework!

**"What Parent Means":**

If you don't do your homework, you'll grow up to be a bum, get sick and die, and I'll miss you.

**"What Parent Says":**

I love you.

**"What Parent Means":**

I love you.

Then I wrote: "You are on your own now, and you're doing just fine. So the nagging has stopped. But I'll never stop saying, 'I love you,' because I do and always will."

—Mom ■



**O**ver 20 years of mothering and nurturing—and suddenly the job is at an end. It's time to be a friend and a resource person if needed. But the days of feeding, laundering, setting limits, disciplining, tucking in, comforting in illness, listening for the key in the lock, after-school snacks, unexpected dinner guests, and a hundred other things are gone—forever.

I'm glad that I know this is God's plan. This is how it is meant to be. If they have gone off to build their own lives and dreams, if they are becoming confident, productive adults, then

# Do the Best You Can

by C. Neil Strait

Grand Rapids, Mich.

**A**lan Cox, in his book *Straight Talk for Monday Morning*, tells the story of Carl Lewis, U.S. Olympics star. Lewis, at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, was victor and hero of the U.S. team and hoped to repeat his feats in 1988.

The goal of Carl Lewis in the 1988 Olympics was to win the 100-meter sprint and win over his archrival, Canada's Ben Johnson. He had prepared well and went into the Olympics in Seoul, South Korea, with his mind set on winning. But on the September day the race was run, Ben Johnson set a new world record by running the 100-meter in 9.79 seconds. Lewis had to settle for second.

Lewis set an American record even in defeat. While Lewis was not always a good loser, his perspective on this occasion was gracious. He said, "I ran the best I could, and now it's on to the next race." He further added, "The Olympics is about performing the best you can, and I did" (Alan Cox, *Straight Talk for Monday Morning* [New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990], 295-96).

Pastor, ministry is about performing the best you can! That is all we are responsible for. But we are responsible for that. When we can rest our heads at night or walk through the crises, knowing we have done our best, we can be at peace with ourselves. We can do no more than give ministry our best.

What are the benefits of giving one's best?

One, we have the approval of God. What more does one need? If we have God's approval for ministry, we have inner peace and assurance to face any battle, endure any crisis, or pursue any task. To settle for less is to begin the descent to the lowlands when the inner turmoil increases, relationships

deteriorate, and crises build. One way to keep encouraged is to keep the approval of God on your ministry.

Two, we have the approval of ourselves. Our most discouraging times are when we know we have not done our best. Our self-esteem is damaged, and our motivation to journey onward is deterred. In such circumstances we are our own worst enemies. Where we are doing battle with ourselves, there is conflict that spreads to other areas of life—in our marriages, our ministries, our relationships, to name a few.

Three, we have the approval of those whom we serve. People, for the most part, do not want, nor expect, perfection. They do, however, want—and have a right to expect—that we give our best. Ninety-five percent (or better) of laypersons are gracious, supportive, understanding, and encouraging of their pastor. They go the extra mile more than they are often given credit for. They love their pastor. They are disappointed, however, when their pastor lets them down. And well they should be. But for the pastor who does his best, and gives his best, they are waiting to encourage, support, and give applause for such a servant.

Four, we are more equipped to face the critics and the crises if we have done our best. Too often the individuals who have compromised with the best, be they pastor or layperson, respond out of guilt in the time of crisis. Their self-esteem is low; hence, their security is threatened by a critic or a crisis. In such times, emotions are churned and defense strategies are used, rather than reason and damage-control words. Most of the time it stems from failure of excellence. Where our goal is to do, and give, our best, it becomes a

positive deterrent to the critic and the crisis. We should understand, of course, that one cannot be assured that our best will always be enough—for some people. But where we have such assurance in our own hearts, we are better equipped to answer our critics, resolve the crisis, and move on with meaningful ministry.

Five, we are more open to growth, learning, and success where we have done our best. To do one's best means there must be stretching of the mind and heart; there must be learning of the new and better ways; and there must be a deep dependence on God where one pursues the best. Such pursuits stretch life, expanding its abilities, deepening its character, and broadening its potential. Through such growth processes, one is better equipped, not only to give excellence to ministry but also to have resources for the rough times.

Six, we're recipients of the benefits from giving our best in ministry. From such an involvement with excellence the pastor sees lives changed in exciting ways. Such pastors see growth in those whom they serve, since their pursuit of excellence is a challenge to others. They have opportunities to disciple others.

Pastor, be encouraged! Be intent on doing your best in ministry. Give time to preparation, prayer, planning—those activities that will deepen your excellence and equip you for greater ministry. Guard your time so that you give yourself to priority ministry, rather than letting the precious moments slip away with trivia and nonessentials. A pastor can be his best encourager by giving his/her best to ministry. The heart responds to such service with satisfaction and peace. This is motivation for future ministry and growth. ■

# Hurting Parents

by Andrew and Rachel Hanners

Clackamas, Oreg.

**W**e live in a day in which many of the old rules simply do not seem to apply. Many parents who love God with all of their hearts are discovering alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual misconduct, stealing, lying, homosexuality, suicide, AIDS, and other tragic problems right at their own doors instead of out in the world where we thought they were.

Billy Graham said, "God has no grandchildren." Every person must have his or her own relationship with Jesus Christ. However, God is a parent. He suffered 100% failure with His first "offspring," Adam. God knows what it is like to have His heart break. He hurts with us when our children drift away from Him. Parents can try to do everything right in nurturing and training their children, but still those children can make self-destructive choices.

What do you do when your daughter runs away? Or you discover that she has moved in with a boyfriend? Or your son is an alcoholic, a drug user, has AIDS, or is in jail? How do you respond when you fear that a certain life-style is leading your loved ones away from God, away from the church, and away from your family? Do you preach at them? Do you pretend it is not happening? Do you avoid talking about it at church or with Christian friends? These things *can* and *do* happen to Christian families.

We are not confessing our children's sins. Our daughters went through enough of these tragedies for us to know something about them. We wish to share the joy that we now feel with our daughters and their families serving the Lord. There are some pitfalls to avoid along the way to restoration.

If your children are drifting away

from the Lord, it is easy to respond in one of two ways: either to criticize endlessly or act as if it is not happening.

If you really desire to bring them back to God, then the family, especially parents, must find a thousand ways to say, "I love you!" Do it in your actions, in your deeds, in your letters—in every way. The parent must find ways to say, "There is nothing in the world that you can do that will cause me to stop loving you!" That is the kind of unconditional love that Jesus offers us. We must do no less to our children if our real goal is restoration!

If our goal is to impress them with their sin—the error of their ways or how much better we are than they—then by all means, constantly preach at them.

Some of the pitfalls are a bit difficult to recognize in ourselves when our children are young. For instance, the attitude of smugness is a problem. Our children were raised in the church. Our home had family worship, prayer before meals, and usually Rachel, my wife, would pray with our girls before they left the house for school. We tithed our income and often paid double tithe. Since we were a praying, Bible-honoring family, we "knew" that none of those problems that other people had with their children growing up would ever come to us. How smug we were! We did not recognize it in ourselves at the time.

There were times when friends would ask questions about our girls. They asked in such a way that implied we must have done something terribly wrong to have our girls make some of their choices. There were times that the devil sat on our shoulders to accuse us and to remind us that we must be terrible parents for these things to have happened.

In 1975 Rachel suffered a terrible stroke, which followed a series of difficult surgeries. She was in a coma for five days. She came out of it blind and paralyzed. During that time of testing, God became very personal to me, assuring that He loved Rachel even more than I could love her. God was able to make even this tragedy work out for His glory and for Rachel's good.

Oh, what a powerful lesson! What a release that gave me!

But it also carried over into the area of pain concerning our girls. God showed us that, in spite of what it looked like on the outside, He was working; He loved our girls. God had some wonderful things He was doing in His own time and in His own way to bring them back!

In our search for answers and understanding, Rachel and I had to go back and examine some of our basic "templates," those strong, inner convictions, the things we believe to be true. I suppose everyone has them. Let me give a few nonrelevant examples: (1) Life by the yard is hard; by the inch it's a cinch. (2) I can change my feelings by what I tell myself. (3) God loves me just the way I am. (4) There is nothing that is going to happen to me today, Lord, that You and I cannot handle. Such a list is endless. We all have them.

A relevant belief is that God loves our children even more than we love our children.

Or, God created us all with free will—the right to make whatever choices we want, regardless of relatives or the prayers of others.

Or, in spite of our prayers, our children can choose to make all the wrong decisions and ultimately go to hell. That was a hard one!

Or, to make some wrong decisions to go out into sin does not lock our



children into that sin. We love them and God loves them.

Or, our children are not really ours. They belong to God or to themselves, depending on their decisions. They are only *ours* in the sense of a stewardship for a little while.

From this background came not only what we thought and believed but also how we responded to the things happening in our family.

At one time, I thought our three girls were "ours" until they left home. Thus, I thought that I could order them and control their lives and behavior. From this perspective, however, I think we parents probably have considerable control until children are around 10 to 12 or 14. However, there is a point at which we either gracefully change our posture and become consultants (as if our children want our help), or we simply force them to become more devious. It is easy for children to find out the answers that we want to hear or the behavior we want to see. Then behind our back they can do whatever they want! Almost with each passing year, in our society, parents have less and less impact upon children, especially upon teens.

Rachel and I found tension developing between us over some of the things our girls were doing. How much do we step in and bail our children out of problems they are creating? Sometimes we were so preoccupied over the problems that we would live with the "noose of hurt and pain and frustration" ever tightening around us. We not only saw the heartbreak but also could see ahead what problems they would have to live with—and we as well.

We decided that, with God's help, we would not let this heartbreak completely dominate our lives or our thinking. It is easy to be overwhelmed by such tragedies! It is easy to begin to see ourselves as "victims." For example, "How could our daughter love us and bring this disgrace on us?"

But we also remembered that we had become "happy survivors" of cancer. Rachel had two different cancer surgeries, one in 1954 and the other in 1968. Only we could determine if we would be victims or happy survivors. We chose an attitude of joy.

We learned another lesson. It is too easy to get angry at your loved one

for bringing such disgrace to you and your family. It is a world-shaking moment when you can acknowledge that, at least, part of the problem is totally selfish—you want others to praise you for successful parenting! The more you feel others have placed you on some kind of a pedestal, the greater your temptation to yield to this reaction.

I have been in the Church of the Nazarene since I was a teenager in Fairbury, Nebr. It was my privilege to serve as a pastor for many years as well as training in alcohol-drug work at such schools as The Yale School of Alcohol Studies and Rutgers Center of Alcohol and Drug Studies. These were valuable in many ways. One of the most insidious things that happens when your son or daughter gets into difficult behaviors is what happens to us as parents in almost automatic response. I learned it in the classroom, but I saw it in my own life and in the lives of others. For instance, it is easier to change churches than to find another Christian to share your pain. It is easier to fall into the pattern of never mentioning our children to others in the church. It is too painful. It is easier to lie, to deliberately say something untrue, than to tell the truth about what is happening. So we converse in ways to avoid talking about what our children are doing.

I also learned that there is healing in telling the truth to compassionate, caring, understanding friends! If I can get it outside of me, I can examine it, look at it, and maybe make changes. Besides that, I do not have to allow the problems to cause me to have ulcers. I don't have to let resentments fester within me. There is healing in getting the problems on the outside instead of letting them fester on the inside.

Many years ago at a meeting in Portland, Oreg., where Dr. James Dobson was speaking, I had a chance to share some of my hurt with him. He encouraged me a great deal. He seemed to be aware that these kinds of tragedies are happening in the religious world among ministers and church leaders. Later, he sent me a copy of the book *Parents in Pain*, written by an acquaintance of his, Dr. John White. It changed the way we approached our girls and their problems.

And now? Our oldest daughter has

reached five years of sobriety, holds a position at a university, and is working on a master's degree in counseling. Our middle daughter has four years of sobriety. She and her husband, a former alcoholic and drug user, get up at 5 A.M. to share an hour of Bible reading and prayer. Our youngest girl leads the children's ministries at a large church. Her husband serves on the church board.

Pastor Earl Lee gave the following from an unknown author:

### "Letting Go"

To let go doesn't mean to *stop caring*, it means I can't *do it* for someone else.

To let go is not to *cut myself off*, it's the realization that I can't *control* another.

To let go is not to *enable*, but to allow learning from natural *consequences*.

To let go is to admit *powerlessness*, which means, the *outcome* is not in *my* hands.

To let go is not to try to *change* or *blame* another, I can *only* change myself.

To let go is not to *care for*, but to *care about*.

To let go is not to *fix*, but to be *supportive*.

To let go is not to *judge*, but to allow another to be a human being.

To let go is not to be in the *middle*, arranging all the outcomes, but to *allow* others to *effect* their own outcomes.

To let go is not to be *protective*, it is to permit another to face reality.

To let go is not to *deny*, but to *accept*.

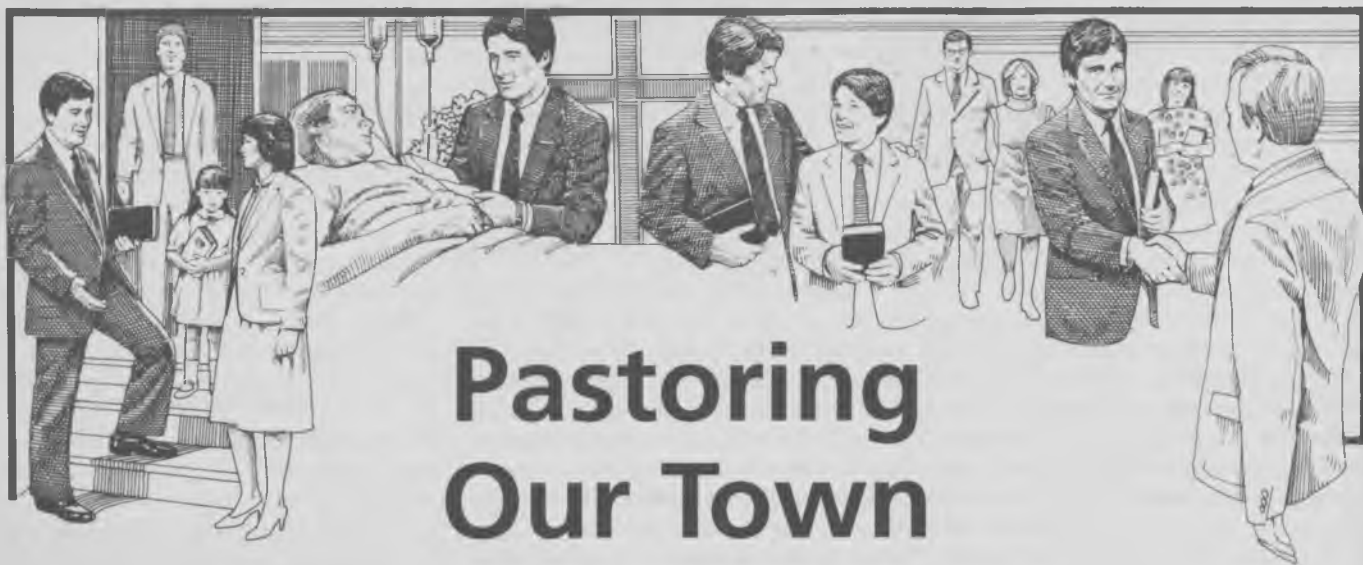
To let go is not to *nag*, scold, or argue, but to *search out my own* shortcomings and correct them.

To let go is not to *adjust* everything to my desires, but to *take each day* as it comes, and to cherish the moment.

To let go is not to *criticize* and *regulate* anyone, but to become the *best I can be*.

To let go is not to *regret* the past, but to *grow* and live for the future.

To let go is to *fear less*, trust in Christ more, and freely give the love He's given to me. ■



## Pastoring Our Town

by Bob Johnson

Kaiserslautern, Germany

Several years ago I read *On to Alaska*, by M. R. Korody, who served as pastor building the Church of the Nazarene in Anchorage, Alaska, from 1949 to 1963. He ministered in a frontier town, in another time and era. But he left his footprints on the streets of that city.

Most of us will never pastor in a frontier town. But we can leave our footprints on the streets of the town we've been called to serve. We make an impact for Christ and the church.

Jerry's family were farmers for several generations. They were all members of an established church. Jerry felt the need to make a change. He felt that he was not getting fed spiritually, so he began attending a holiness church. His family felt he had deserted them. For a few months they were treated as though they were traitors. Jerry went through the battle of rejection and won the victory.

Sixty-four percent of holiness churches are in communities with under 15,000 population. In most of these towns the religious lines of the community have already been drawn. If this is true, how do we reach its residents?

The pastor of a small community church has many opportunities not available to everyone else in the ministry. Let's examine some of the things we can do to build Christ's Church.

First, contact the editor of the local newspaper to see if you can write a pastor's column. You want your com-

munity to know you, your philosophy of ministry, and your interests. You can do this through the newspaper.

Second, check to see if any of the radio stations allow time for on-air devotions in the morning or evening. Several pastors have used the radio as a means to reach new families with the gospel of Jesus Christ. One pastor had a Saturday morning musical/call-in program from which he built a pioneer church.

Third, join one of the fraternal organizations: the Lions, Kiwanis, Toastmasters, etc., which will give you contacts with a new group of people you would never meet normally.

Dr. William J. Prince tells of joining the Lions organization during his first small-church assignment. He also tells how he affected the organization and how it helped him break down some of the barriers in the town he had been called to serve.

Fourth, become a part of athletic events in your school, whether or not you have children in their programs. If any of your church children are involved in any kind of a program, be

there for them. The children will be thrilled to see you at their games, choir, or band presentations. Their parents will accept your presence as approval of their children's activities. You will also meet new people from your school district.

Fifth, if you or your wife get a chance to substitute teach, do it. You will get a chance to meet the teaching staff and principals in the schools where you work. The more exposure you get in the community, the more opportunities you will have to reach new people.

Sixth, offer your services to the superintendent of schools of your school district to participate on committees. Take time to talk with the mayor of your town and offer yourself to serve on any committee where he feels you could help to accomplish his goals for the city.

It's important that we become available to the needs of the community. Of course our church and its members must always come first! We must schedule our time for the maximum effort of our church. Then the clubs, committees, and boards can fit into our work schedule.

Far too often our churches survive in almost complete obscurity within thriving communities simply because we have failed to minister to the entire community. As pastors, servants of Christ, we have the privilege of leaving our footprints on the streets of our community. ■



# Today's Books for Today's Preachers



## ***Thank God and Take Courage: How the Holy Spirit Worked in My Life***

by Lewis T. Corlett

edited/annotated by Frank G. Carver  
(San Diego: Point Loma Press, 1992)

This publication leaves us an important legacy from one of the significant early leaders in the Church of the Nazarene. This book fuses Corlett's autobiographical memories with theological meditations. Equally important: it is bolstered by the meticulous, extensive, and illuminating footnotes provided by Frank Carver.

The book grew out of a "Panoramic Vision" given Corlett, which prodded him to write his life story. As he describes it, sitting in his recliner after an evening spent talking with his brother, Shelby, "I sensed the moving of the Spirit in my mind. As I listened I noted that the Holy Spirit was giving me a Panoramic Review of His dealings with me from early youth to that day" (pp. ix-x).

Impressed to share it with others, he began writing with hopes of memorializing his insights in print. His good friend Frank Carver thought it needed to be published and devoted part of his recent sabbatical to getting it prepared for this publication. On January 1, 1992, Corlett died, at the age of 95, while this book was going to print—comforted by the knowledge that his vision would be shared.

Reared in a devout home in Pennsylvania, Corlett early attended a Methodist church. But his parents, hungry for clear holiness preaching, joined the Church of the Nazarene in 1910. As a youngster he responded to revivalistic invitations and tried to live a Christian life, but it was not until 1915 that Corlett discovered God's "Establishing

Grace" in a local church revival. "In a few seconds," he says, "I sensed an inner cleansing of my motives and a deep consciousness of a peace and calmness I had never felt before which has continued to this day. I realized I was enjoying what John Wesley spoke of as being 'sanctified wholly'" (p. 3).

In addition to this clear testimony to the sanctifying grace instantly experienced in his youth, throughout the book Corlett explains how the Spirit enabled him to grow in grace, to become a more Christlike person. Early on "the Spirit enabled me to make an honest evaluation of myself. My heart was pure in motives but my mind was warped regarding my mental powers, my actions, and reactions" (p. 16).

Consequently he still tended to be critical, blunt, undisciplined, and cynical. Then "the Spirit showed me that these attitudes or moods were not only hindering me in spiritual progress, they also often blocked His efforts to use me in His Kingdom" (p. 17). So he discovered the need for self-discipline, for an on-going consecration, for learning even in the "dark night of the soul" difficult times, so as to allow the Spirit to refine him more perfectly.

In time he felt called to the ministry, attended several colleges (meeting his wife at Arkansas Holiness College), and associated with some of the great leaders of the young denomination. One of them, J. B. Chapman, whom he met during his senior year at Peniel College, "was the most balanced Christian I had ever met, a clear Bible expositor, a wise administrator and effective preacher" (p. 7).

Following brief pastorates in California, Montana, New Jersey, and Texas, Corlett was called to teach at Bethany-Peniell College. Here he began an educational career of 32 years, which led

him, in time, to the presidencies of Northwest Nazarene College and Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Those of us associated with Nazarene colleges can identify with much in the chapters devoted to these years, for Corlett honestly describes the tough times as well as the triumphs he experienced. In the midst of one of his darkest hours, while heading NTS, he found strength in a phrase of the apostle Paul's, "Thank God and take courage" (see Acts 28:15).

Amazingly, one of the most fruitful phases of Corlett's ministry began when he and his wife moved into Royal Oaks Manor, a retirement complex. Here they supported the established religious activities, and in time he became something of a pastor to that community of senior citizens, counseling, praying, teaching, and caring for them.

In addition to his autobiographical chapters, Corlett discusses the Holy Spirit's help in counseling, leadership, and guidance. While short and succinct, these sections compress a lifetime's learning into wise words to digest and exemplify. Then, in a final chapter, "Development in Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit," he sums up what he learned in a lifetime, confessing that "all that I have become and accomplished in over sixty years of service for God and His Kingdom was done through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit as I gave wholehearted obedience to His wisdom, power, and grace" (p. 80).

We who seek to follow Corlett's Lord can learn much from what he learned, listening as he did to the Spirit. This fine book can be purchased for \$6.00 from PLNC's bookstore or the Point Loma Press, 3900 Lomaland, San Diego, CA 92106.

—Gerard Reed

## How Does Your Church Select Its Leaders?

by Velva Lorenz

Stockton, Calif.

**H**ow carefully do you select church leaders? Is spiritual background considered prominently in the decision? Do they receive sufficient training? Most crucial of all, how much time and thought is given to the people who compose the nominating committee?

These questions need to be regarded thoughtfully and prayerfully if the mission of the church is realized and carried out effectively. Leader training is a key function of every church.

Donald A. Abdom, who has held Parish Leadership Seminars in almost every state, says in his book *Training and Equipping the Saints*, "A congregation will be no more effective than its leaders."

Churches include people of diverse and special gifts with different personalities and backgrounds. From this body of believers leaders are selected. These Christians, however, serve in the task of leading, not in exercising power and authority. Among other things, each one must be "blameless . . . a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled; he must hold firm to the sure word as taught" (Titus 1:7-9, RSV).

The New Testament provides a criterion for the kind of leaders needed. If people who are asked to serve do not have spiritual qualifications, the ministry of the church will be harmed.

Many persons have essential qualifications, but they are handicapped if asked to lead without a clear idea of the duties of a particular office and without needed training.

Janet had been a member of a small-town congregation for only a few months when asked to be a nominee for the office of secretary. She was hesitant at first, but Harry, a nom-

inating committee member, scoffed, "It's no big deal. All you do is take notes at church business meetings."

If people who are asked to serve do not have spiritual qualifications, the ministry of the church will be harmed.

So she consented and was subsequently elected by the congregation. She told of the experience later: "It was the most frustrating time of my life. I discovered, all too soon, it wasn't a simple position. I had to not only take minutes but also keep an accurate record. I was required to carry on correspondence ordered by the congregation, which had no church secretary, and notify the person or persons responsible for carrying out the motion involved. I also had to maintain a mem-

bership book of all baptized and voting members." She lamented, "If only I had known in the beginning what I was supposed to do and how to do it, all the confusion and doubt I experienced could have been avoided."

Rick, an executive with many employees working under him, hard driving and efficient, was considered the perfect choice for evangelism chairman because of his organizing ability. Almost immediately after his election, however, it became clear that he did not fully understand what evangelism meant. His program for the year consisted of only social events, good as fellowship gatherings but lacking the commitment of spreading the Good News.

Finally and fortunately, he was made aware of the inadequacy of his concept of evangelism. Precious time had been wasted. A job description with training given by the nominating committee would have eliminated any misunderstanding.

The nominating committee must assume the critical role in the process. On this function, Abdom has this to say, "How the nominating committee is chosen and the people who make it up are the crucial factors in the whole ministry of the church."

This is not made clear to all congregations. John, a member of a small-town church, was asked to serve on the nominating committee, but with no definite idea of what to do. He thought the purpose was just to get people to serve in each office.

After numerous telephone calls and as many refusals, he began to realize the enormity of getting the "quota," which was two people for each office. Excuses ran from "I've done my part," "Let someone else do it," to a curt, "No way!"

Neither John nor his fellow com-



mittee members had the knowledge to evaluate each person according to his spiritual credentials. That is, did the potential leader participate regularly, attend worship services and Sunday School, and maintain good moral character?

John's committee did manage to get a slate of nominees by sheer, desperate measures. Frustrated again and again by refusals, they felt ecstatically grateful when anyone, however grudgingly, accepted a leadership position.

It may be difficult to associate this lack of religious consideration to a church event of such importance; but it actually happens.

Unfamiliarity with biblical admonitions might be one reason. It could also be that ideal leadership qualifications, pointed out by Paul to both Titus and Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-13), are not considered an imperative in today's world. Whatever the reasons, both church members and staff share the responsibility for the difficulties experienced by John, Rick, and Janet.

These familiar problems lead back to the value of a nominating committee. The members of the nominating committee must have the same requirements as the individuals they choose for leaders. They must also have the capability and astuteness for matching a person's talents and spiritual gifts with the job he is asked to fill. The money management skills of a banker will not necessarily be enough to qualify him as chairman of the stewardship committee if his spiritual background is unacceptable.

Consideration of a person's background and qualifications must never be done in a critical way, but only in light of God's Word.

The nominating committee should make certain each nominee is alerted to what is expected of him. After election, or before if possible, a detailed job description should be made available and intensive training begun immediately.

Led by Christ-dedicated people with proven character, adequate preparation, thorough knowledge of the task ahead, enthusiasm for the Lord's Word, and love for fellow Christians, the church can become a vibrant living force in its mission to spread the gospel to the world. ■

All incidents related are true. Names have been changed. Permission was granted for Abdom's quotations.

# Prayer for a Church Board Meeting

by John Hay, Jr.  
*Indianapolis*

Lord,

Everything is ready for the church board meeting but me.

Agenda, reports, recommendations, documentations all in order.  
Now, O God, prepare my heart and mind to be very present tonight.  
Let me lead but not drive.

Let me direct but not circumvent.  
Let me guide, but with clarity of vision.

Help me listen without having to put in my own word.  
Help me trust Your Spirit to prompt us together to do what is best  
in Your church.  
Help us act unhastily and not "do" just because something needs to be  
done.

Teach us how to be led in the way of Your Son;  
How to build up the church, not become bogged down by numbers  
nor overly impressed by programs;  
How to give clear witness to Your life, not squander our opportunities;  
How to do not just the right things, but the right things in a redemptive way.

Somehow, by Your Spirit and presence, make us one in You tonight.  
And give us grace to lead together to Your glory.

Amen.





## Parsonage or Housing Allowance?

Submitted by the  
Board of Pensions and Benefits  
USA of the Church of the Nazarene

**S**hould we continue to provide a parsonage and utilities or should we change to a cash housing allowance and let our pastor buy his own home? Many churches are asking this difficult question, often out of genuine concern for the pastor's dilemma at retirement, when he has no real estate investment built up for a retirement home. The question becomes even more difficult to answer with the shift in the nation's economy and in each local economic situation. While there is *no absolute, authoritative answer*, the following list of advantages and disadvantages, which have become apparent to pastors and churches through actual experience, is offered to stimulate careful thinking and evaluation.

### Pro Parsonage and Con Housing Allowance

1. In some situations, there really is little choice. The parsonage may be connected to or adjoining the church building with no alternative for selling or renting. Unless used for Sunday School rooms, it remains the pastor's home.

2. Churches owning a parsonage may strengthen their ability to attract the pastoral candidate of their choice who may not be able or willing to buy a home.

3. In some areas, there are no property taxes due on a church-owned parsonage, which may mean less expense is involved.

4. The church handles repairs and

maintenance on the parsonage, thus freeing the minister from these time-consuming worries and expenses.

5. Often a parsonage is nicer than what a minister could afford to buy in the community.

6. Making a pastoral change is easier when moving from parsonage to parsonage,

since securing temporary quarters is unnecessary for house hunting or waiting for occupancy.

7. When the parsonage is sold, the church loses a traditional and meaningful way of showing love and concern for the parsonage family.

8. Many ministers do not have sufficient funds for a down payment on a home.

9. The church that enters the loan business to "give" the pastor the down payment often bears the cost of low interest and little or no payment on the principal. There may be tax implications as well. State nonprofit corporation laws must be followed carefully. Some states may even prohibit such loans.

10. The loan situation is hopefully

free of trouble, but awkward situations have developed!

11. Many homes appropriate for the minister's needs are out of price range for his salary.

12. Very often the church cannot afford a housing allowance that fully covers all expenses including real estate taxes, fire and casualty insurance, upkeep, etc. It takes constant review and appropriate board action to keep pace with these increasing, inflationary costs.

13. Some pastors do not have the extra time, money, and expertise to handle such a real estate investment, which includes the added responsibility to maintain and repair "his" home.

14. In some locations, real estate can move very slowly if at all! Adequate housing may not be available for purchase when needed. Likewise, a



home may not sell when it comes time for a pastoral change.

15. If the minister is the one who purchases the parsonage, any difference between purchase price and appraised value may be considered taxable as ordinary income.

16. Appreciation of property is assumed, but depreciation can be a reality due to natural and man-made disasters or economic conditions. Homeowners do not always sell at a profit. This potential is not a concern for the minister in a parsonage.

17. A minister who sells at a profit and moves to a parsonage can lose a substantial percentage of his profit to taxes if he does not reinvest in a primary residence within a given time.

#### **Pro Housing Allowance and Con Parsonage**

1. A housing allowance may solve the problem of having to build a new parsonage at today's costs, while at the same time help the pastor plan for his retirement.

2. With a housing allowance, some feel that compensation planning may be more flexible, easier to compare, and simpler to budget.

3. Home ownership suggests permanency and may encourage longer pastorates.

4. Since a homeowner pays real estate taxes, he has more voice in community affairs.

5. A minister buying a home gets to choose the kind, style, and location.

6. The minister's family may decorate as they wish—even remodel without board action.

7. Home ownership becomes an important investment for the future, assuming, of course, each property appreciates in value and appropriate equity is established.

8. Home-owning ministers get a tax break. Within certain limits, the housing allowance used to provide and furnish a home is nontaxable income. (Refer to current IRS regulations for specific details, especially with regard to housing allowance and the itemized deductions of mortgage interest and real estate taxes.)

9. After reaching age 55, a homeowner can sell his principal residence and generally is not required to pay any tax on the first \$125,000 of profit. (This is a onetime, lifetime exemption only.) If on previous home sales he has made gains and deferred the

taxes on them, he may include all those previous tax-deferred gains or "rollovers" up to the \$125,000 maximum. (IRS has specific regulations controlling how this may be done.)

10. In the event of disability, death, or retirement, home ownership with adequate insurance generally means an immediate move is unnecessary.



## **The local church board should explore the tax implications thoroughly before any decision is made.**



11. Often the pastor can proceed to get repairs and maintenance done without bureaucratic delay in the church board.

12. Often the pastor's housing can be nicer and more on a par with the membership and community than some parsonages.

The above lists are not intended to be exhaustive. Hopefully, they will stimulate thinking in this complex area. Many statements are similar but have opposite impact when phrased from a different perspective. In addition to the above considerations, the local church board should insist that the tax implications be explored thoroughly before any decision is made. After talking with several IRS offices, the following examples became apparent:

a. There is a concern where a parsonage is to be given to a minister or

sold to him at a value below the fair market value. The church may contend this is a "gift" and is not compensation. However, it is likely this would be challenged, forcing the minister to pay taxes or take the issue to a tax court.

b. Here the church does make such a considerable "gift" to their minister, the church may be jeopardizing or calling into question its tax-exempt status. In order to have such status, the assets of the corporation cannot accrue to the personal benefit of an individual other than as reportable compensation.

c. Another concern involves the sale or rental of the parsonage. The church can be subject to taxation when it receives "unrelated business income." This possible interpretation of the tax laws should not go unexplored before a final decision is made. Such a decision should be preceded by careful evaluation by the church in consultation with its church advisers and tax advisers.

For those church boards who decide to maintain a parsonage for their minister's use, there still is an alternative for caring for the retirement needs of their pastor's future. This alternative can materialize when the original question is rephrased as follows, "*How can we provide the pastor with an adequate salary now and also an adequate retirement nest egg without selling the parsonage?*" For many local churches, the answer is in starting a Retirement Housing Fund for their pastor by contributing into a Tax-sheltered Annuity Plan. Such plans are made possible under provisions of the federal income tax law and are sometimes referred to as 403(b) plans. Especially designed for nonprofit organizations, they usually provide more flexibility than the common IRA plans marketed to the general public. If the plan is properly recognized as a "church plan," certain distributions may be made as "housing allowance." Local churches who are interested in this alternative should contact their denomination's pension administration office for more details. ■

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

# Life-Shortening Soul Passion —James B. Chapman

by J. Ray Shadowens  
Spring, Tex.

**T**he great lack among us is . . . our want of life-shortening soul passion. We take the easy way.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. James Blaine Chapman’s poignant words have to be considered as the very heart and core of his unforgettable message titled “All Out for Souls.” It was delivered in Kansas City on January 9, 1946, before a group of denominational leaders. This marked the first such gathering following the cessation of hostilities ending a long, bloody war. There was no mistaking the purpose of this incomparable address. It served notice to these responsible clergymen and to the entire church that a “business as usual” attitude would not meet the challenges of the postwar world.

This Spirit-filled man was born in southern Illinois on August 30, 1884. His death came suddenly on July 30, 1947, in his home at Indian Lake, Mich. He “finished his course with joy” 18 months and 21 days following what must be regarded as the most impassioned plea for evangelism ever registered by a spokesman of the young Wesleyan body. Not one person in attendance at that assembly of Nazarene ministers even suspected his demise was less than two years away. The fact that his life would come to an end before his 63rd birthday doubtless never entered his mind. His copious writings do reflect a conscious awareness of his own mortality.

The powerful effect of this spiritual giant’s message made an indelible imprint on my mind. I had enrolled in the Nazarene Theological Seminary’s first class the previous fall and had slipped unnoticed into the evangelism conference.

There are those who point to this



event in the history of this Christian holiness movement as the launching of the most spiritually fruitful thrust this communion has experienced. The impact of this high moment lives, in some degree, into the closing decade of the 20th century.

What explanation is advanced for the distinctive quality that characterized this transitional leader from the P. F. Bresee/Hiram F. Reynolds era through the second generation of people called Nazarene? After years of observing Chapman as fellow evan-

gelist of the camp meeting circuit and at close proximity as an administrator, D. S. Corlett, former editor of the *Herald of Holiness*, succinctly describes him: “The simplicity of his faith, the ruggedness of his spirit, the ability he possessed to remain close to the ‘grass roots’ of the movement distinguished him as leader and example of faith, spirit, and genius.”<sup>2</sup> To this Corlett added: “Several referred to him as the Great Commoner of the Nazarene Movement.”<sup>3</sup> Such qualities are worthy of emulation by current and coming overseers of the Church of Jesus Christ.

As significant as these characterizations are to a proper understanding of the native of Illinois stock, his personal knowledge of, and relation to, the Almighty One transcends demonstrated virtues and strengths. Without reservation, he declares, “I do have an understanding with God.”<sup>4</sup> He seemed to be on the same spiritual wavelength with Brother Lawrence, Christian mystic of the 17th century. In his dying moments, he said, “I am doing that which I shall be doing through eternity, thanking God, praising God, adoring God, offering Him the love that fills my heart.”

In “My Creed for Today,” former evangelist-editor-administrator J. B. Chapman summarizes some essentials of his faith:

I believe that God is a person of infinite power, knowledge and love. . . . I believe that God will see that all things work together for my good because I love Him. . . .

I believe that I myself am an immortal spirit come from God, and that I shall live with Him forever. . . .

I believe that to live the good life, I must think as little as possible



of myself that I may think of God, my friends, and those I can help.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, this is not to be regarded as expressing all the articles of faith in his creed.

What higher tribute could a spiritually minded wife pay her spouse than that which Mrs. Louise Chapman has written: "When I thought of God and godliness, I thought of Dr. Chapman. And now since he has gone I understand so much better many things I read in the Bible."<sup>6</sup>

If mortal man can indeed "have an understanding with God," J. B. Chapman did enjoy such a relationship. From his saving encounter with the "God of all grace" as an adolescent in Oklahoma, through years of struggle and conquest, he forged a faith in the Divine that provided him an unshakable foundation for his earthly pilgrimage. So sure was he of the reality of the divine-human alliance that he spoke and wrote with the confidence of the supernaturally assured.

Valiant men and women, from Paul to David Brainerd, held back nothing to fulfill an all-consuming passion to reach the unconverted of their generation. They were ready and willing to lay their lives on the line for the gospel's sake. They were so intent on reclaiming the wretched of the world from Satan's grasp that they seemed to give little thought to preservation of physical and emotional energies. Never write off their selfless sacrifices as foolheartedness.

The Holy Spirit's appeal through Dr. Chapman to enlist his fellow servants in a self-giving ministry of intercessory prayer for a new vision and fresh endowment of Pentecostal power was genuine. Let none judge it to be the overzealous overture of one possessed by a martyr complex. Like Samuel Logan Brengle, he was the embodiment of "sane sanctity and sanctified sanity." Chapman would be the last person to propose some wild-eyed course of religious activity that intellectually and spiritually would lead blind followers in a fanatical effort to whip up unscriptural piety.

Some may misjudge his earnest appeal to "life-shortening soul passion," followed as it was by his untimely death, as an example of extremism. Scrutinize the life and work of the

20th-century proponent of Christian holiness as he preached his first sermon as a teenager in Oklahoma. Follow him across the intervening years to the final message he delivered before returning to his inviting homesetting for physical and spiritual revitalizing. What he preached and what he



## When I thought of God and godliness, I thought of Dr. Chapman.



practiced synchronized convincingly. He had nothing to prove to cynics.

It is not at all surprising that the *Chapman's Choice Outlines and Illustrations* includes a section titled "Soul Travail." Ten saints who have left their marks on Christian history because of their examples of prevailing prayer come in for consideration in this brief treatment. Three persons represent this group of prayer warriors: "The overhead closet supplications of George Whitefield was, 'Give me souls, or take my soul!' John Welch, who was found weeping and praying on the ground on a cold night, was pressed for an explanation for his distress. His reply was, 'I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, while I know not how it is with them.' Brainerd could say of himself: 'I cared not where I lived, or what hardships I went through so that I could gain souls for Christ. All my desire was for the conversion of the heathen, and all my hope was in God.'"<sup>7</sup> Chapman identified in compassion and concern with these disciples of the Way.

To portray Chapman as simply contemplative would not do justice to him or his dedicated service to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. He excelled as a preacher of the Word. His proficiency, while recognized in Christian holiness circles, would have as readily been acclaimed outside by wider exposure. He was one of the most prolific writers that the holiness movement has produced. He was a master in the use of meaningful figures of speech. He was, indeed, a most respected church administrator. Together with his colleague, Dr. R. T. Williams, who differed in personality and in style, they jointly served their denomination in a remarkable manner. This Wesleyan body will always be grateful that, in the providence of God, these two stalwarts were at the helm of this young church throughout a decisive era.

Would there have been a "Mid-Century Crusade for Souls" apart from the anointed messenger's memorable message a generation ago? The gratifying facts are that this evangelical fellowship did arise to the occasion and made some of its best gains in membership and stewardship.

The dynamic nature of the Great Commission, coupled with the Pentecostal empowerment, teaches us that as glorious as our heritage has been because of the likes of James B. Chapman, those of the Wesleyan persuasion must enter the 21st century praying that God will make them equal to the task. Bearers of the banner of full salvation can be counted upon to be in the vanguard of those Christian forces engaged in winning for Christ many of the world's newly liberated peoples. Willing to live by their commitments to free, full, and final salvation, they can be a vital force in driving back encroaching evil and win a host of disciples through the winsomeness of their spiritual testimonies and victorious living. ■

1. J. B. Chapman, *All Out for Souls* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, n.d.), pages unnumbered.

2. D. S. Corlett, *Spirit Filled* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, n.d.), 171.

3. *Ibid.*, 172.

4. Chapman, unnumbered.

5. Corlett, 171-72.

6. *Ibid.*, 173.

7. J. B. Chapman, *Chapman's Choice Outlines and Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1947), 46-47.

# The Hang-up of Overcaution

by Raymond C. Kratzer

Yakima, Wash.



**I**n building God's kingdom, there is a need for a certain kind of spiritual abandon. Not that one throws caution to the wind, but rather that we do not get hung up on the spike of "overcaution." Failure, if not disaster, awaits those who hesitate too much in moving forward in the Lord's work.

Boys stood at the edge of a ditch on a farm. One of the lads ran and jumped the "huge chasm." Another boy was dared to follow his example. Awed by the width of the waterway, he walked back several feet. Then screwing up his courage, he ran as fast as he could toward the flowing "Amazon." Just before he was to jump, and after he had committed himself to the challenge, he hesitated momentarily, then tried to regain his speed. When he jumped, this hesitancy was sufficient to spoil his effort. He landed in the middle of the ditch to the hilarity of all but himself. He could easily have made it had he not been overcautious.

This is a parable of many efforts in the ministry. Fear grips the heart of the pastor, and many potential successes are aborted. For example, the pastor of a struggling church was assigned a proportional share of budgets for "others." He looked at them and thought of his "poor" people. Soon his courage to challenge them to pay in full was extinguished beneath the blanket of overcaution. He reasoned that his people were doing all they could and that it was unkind to ask for more from them.

His love for his people should be commended,

but what he failed to see is that he was doing them a disservice, inhibiting their spiritual development by feeling sorry for them. Likewise, they were not being trained in the best kind of churchmanship.

Most of us reading for the first time the episode of Elijah and the widow with her starving son, with only one more meal left in her larder, felt the prophet was cruel to ask her for a donation first before she paid her own dues. But he was doing her a favor in asking her to invest in God's work—for others—so that God could perform a miracle for her and her family



(1 Kings 17).

The preacher must refuse to be overcautious. He must learn to challenge people to sacrifice beyond what seems judicious if there is a need. God has promised to "supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19, KJV).

I assisted in a dedication service in one of our churches. Along with the dedication of new pews, carpeting, etc., was the burning of the mortgage. A lovely congregation was present, the pastor was being paid a good salary, and all bills were being met. One of the laymen said to me: "Remember when you came to us a few years ago and gave us a pep talk. We were so discouraged with no money to do anything. Since that time things have turned around. We have no money problems."

Another layman continued: "We decided to take 10% of our income and give it for others, later raising it to 15%. Since we began paying our fair share to others in full, we have had no money problems."

Needless to say, I was almost shouting, "Glory!" I remembered how discouraged they had been and how finances were always meager. Likewise, it was impossible, according to their "scientific calculations," to meet their financial obligations. They could count their members and what they could give, and it just didn't add up. In fact, when they called a new pastor, they told me to tell him they couldn't pay their bills, they didn't have enough workers in the church, and that if he wanted to come under such circumstances, that was the chance he would have to take.

I praise God for a pastor who refused to be stymied on the hang-up of overcaution. Because he followed the call of a "great big God" and was not



afraid to tackle a hard job, his sanctified brashness opened up a gate of miracles that will not stop!



In many ways the preacher must not be deterred by overcaution. Often people are left to flounder in their spiritual struggles because a pastor is afraid to come to grips with their salvation. To be sure, we must exercise wisdom in dealing with people's spiritual problems. But so often we fail to realize that many folk are ripe for salvation *now*. Oh, for the wisdom and courage to move in and deal with prospective Christians when their "tide is surfing"! Eternity alone will reveal how many opportunities we have missed because we were overcautious.

Usually, when an unsaved person comes to church for the first time, he is open to the gospel. He should be contacted soon. With wisdom and tact, an effort should be made to help him find Christ. In times of grief or illness, people are wide-open to the gospel. Too much caution here will allow the awareness of need to subside. Who knows when such an opportunity will arise again?

In the matter of a building program there is a "time" to marshal the forces to get the job done. When a church is on the rise and needs appear, an alert pastor will begin to set things in motion before an ebbing time comes. It is amazing how enthusiasm builds enthusiasm. On the other hand, if progress gets thwarted on the hang-up of overcaution, the ground gained may soon be lost. It will be doubly hard to generate a new thrust.

In almost every church there are conservative members who like things as they are. To make necessary changes for progress causes them pain. Expense is involved and their patterns of life will be upset. Many times these are well-intentioned folk who love God, but who have a blind

spot in the area of church growth. They are weighted down with fears and apprehensions that obscure the vistas awaiting them.

  
**Eternity alone  
will reveal  
how many  
opportunities  
we have  
missed because  
we were  
overcautious.**  


A wise pastor will make certain that he is not of their same mind, knowing that growth involves daring and sacrifice. Consequently, he will attempt to manifest an efficacious optimism, born of vision and faith, which is bound to spill over onto others.

A pastor recently took a new charge in a lovely church with a real opportunity for growth. However, upon a closer inspection he discovered they had overextended themselves in a recent remodeling program and owed a note to the bank. It was overdue. He went to the banker and said: "If you will renew this note for 90 days, I believe we can pay it

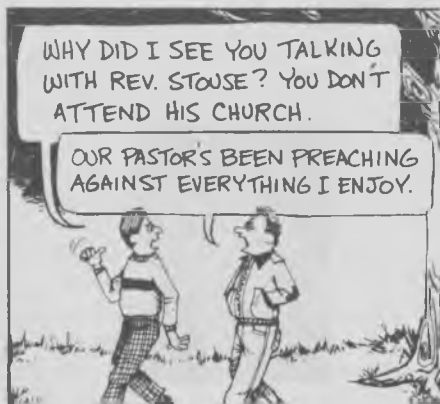
off." The banker replied that it would be impossible to do that. He knew the people and the circumstances. But this godly pastor, with caution thrown to the wind, said: "Please give me a chance as their new pastor."

The banker was persuaded. This pastor began to pray, to trust, to scratch his head, and to get his sanctified imagination working. God inspired him with a plan. He talked it over with his church board. They were shocked at first, because the plan was what he called the "90-10 Plan." The idea was to give 90% of one's income to the church for a specified time and live on the 10% balance to meet this emergency.

After the initial shock had subsided, the board accepted the challenge. Many in the congregation likewise joined this "Gideon Army." Miracles began to happen. Extra work came to some businessmen unexpectedly. A lost son was marvelously saved in one of these cooperating families. When the 90 days were up, the money was on hand to pay the debt.

"There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:24-25, KJV).

May we ask God for a double portion of His Holy Spirit to be poured upon us until we will realize that He has "not given us the spirit of fear; but of power" (2 Tim. 1:7, KJV). Let us get unhooked from over caution and be possessed with a holy recklessness. Who knows but that we will discover hidden springs of supply and a new awareness of the unsearchable riches of God through Christ Jesus our Lord. With Him, "all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26, KJV). ■



# Thanksgiving Praise Service

by Betty B. Robertson

St. Louis

**T**he "All" parts will be written on overhead transparency. The congregation reads this in unison.

Where testimonies are listed, ONE person is to stand and give a praise testimony.

Hymns are from WORSHIP IN SONG. Choruses are from MASTER CHORUS BOOK.

"Let's Just Praise the Lord"—Chorus 57

**Narrator:** "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15, NASB).

"It's Time to Praise the Lord"—Chorus 26

**Narrator:** "The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty" (Ps. 93:1, RSV).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your majesty.

"Thou Art Worthy"—Chorus 70

### Testimony

**Narrator:** "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1, NASB).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your creativity, which gave birth to all creation.

"How Great Thou Art!"—Hymn 5, verses 1 and 2

### Testimony

**Narrator:** All through Scripture God's guidance is evident. In the Old Testament, He guided by outward signs. Jesus guided by His own life and words. The Holy Spirit guides by promise, inner voice, and providence.

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your guidance.

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"—Hymn 65, verses 1 and 2

"He Leadeth Me"—Hymn 484, verses 1 and 3

### Testimony

**Narrator:** "Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations" (Ps. 119:89-90).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your faithfulness.

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"—Hymn 86, verses 1 and 2

### Testimony

**Narrator:** "His wisdom is profound, His power is vast. . . . He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble. He speaks to the sun and it does not shine; he seals off the light of the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. . . . He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted" (Job 9:4-8, 10).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your universal power.

"He Rolled the Sea Away"—Hymn 321, verse 1

### Testimony



**Narrator:** "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever" (Ps. 118:1).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your goodness to us.

"God Is So Good"—Chorus 65, verse 1—sing twice.

### Testimony

**Narrator:** "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory'" (Isa. 6:1-3).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your absolute holiness.

"Holy, Holy"—Chorus 74

"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"—Hymn 8, verses 1 and 4

### Testimony

**Narrator:** "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress'" (Ps. 91:1-2).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your protection.

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"—Hymn 4, verse 1

"God Will Take Care of You"—Hymn 450, all verses

### Testimony

**Narrator:** "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the

power that worketh in us, unto him be glory" (Eph. 3:20-21, KJV).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your sufficiency.

"He's Able"—Chorus 212

#### Testimony

**Narrator:** "The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace" (Ps. 29:11).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your abiding peace.

"It Is Mine"—Hymn 380, all verses

#### Testimony

**Narrator:** "I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands" (Ps. 63:2-4).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your love.

"The Love of God"—Chorus 38—sing twice.

#### Testimony

**Narrator:** "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Ps. 103:11, KJV).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your mercy.

"At Calvary"—Hymn 391, verse 2 and chorus

#### Testimony

**Narrator:** "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your grace.

"Grace Greater than Our Sin"—Hymn 213, verse 1—chorus twice

#### Testimony

**Narrator:** "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins" (Ps. 103:1-3).

**All:** We praise You, God, for Your abundant forgiveness.

"A New Name in Glory"—Hymn 410, all verses

#### Testimony

"Doxology"—Back cover of hymnal ■

# Simeon Searsites

by L. Wayne Sears

Chicago

I have recently discovered, and translated, a hitherto unknown fragment of Paul's letter to Rome. It gives the real reasons for the apostle's strong desire to go there. This fragment should be inserted between verses 12 and 13 of the first chapter. It reads like this:

"I am very grateful to the official board of the First Church at Rome for your invitation to become your senior pastor. I hereby accept the call and will get there as soon as I possibly can. I read with a great deal of interest your description of the city of Rome. You stated with proper pride that it not only is the capital city of the empire but also leads the world in all forms of education, philosophy, science, and democratic institutions. It should be an ideal field for the propagation of the gospel. All the world has heard of the deep concern that the excellent Caesars have always shown for the general population. No doubt we will be able to extend our ministry in the form of missions to those less fortunate than ourselves.

"I also read with interest your plan to locate your new cathedral in one of the more affluent suburbs. You have chosen well to find a place with so much to favor it. I am sure that the edifice you erect will have a very salutary effect on the people. I hereby give my wholehearted approval for you to begin construction immediately. We will use appropriate measures for financing when the need arises.

"As a word of advice, which you may already have apprehended, make sure that all the exterior elevations are imposing and indicative of success. The entire building should be constructed of the finest marble. I would urge you to engage the services of Lydia, of Philippi, a great friend of mine. She is a lady of great

artistic talent and blessed with a shrewd mind to handle both artists and materials. Have her begin immediately on the windows, and see that no expense is spared. We want our cathedral to exceed in every way, both in arches and apses, altars and enclaves the little cobblestone chapel that the followers of Peter have hastily thrown up! I would also make sure that the manse be large and well-appointed for comfort. It will impress even Seneca, a man whom I know but slightly, but whose influence is wide because of well-polished phrases for every occasion.

"When I come, I plan to bring the entire pastoral staff that has worked well with me here in Ephesus First Church. Timotheus will be my first assistant and will have charge of the Education Departments. Titus is a master of music and will choose the choir, the organist, and direct the anthems. One of my young men is Marcus, a nephew of our old friend Barnabas of blessed memory. Marcus has settled down now, and I use him for errands of all sorts. Tell the present ministers that they are welcome to attend the worship services, and I may let some of them teach from time to time. You need not be concerned for my health, for my personal physician, Dr. Luke, will also be with us.

"One further suggestion: let Aquila be the general contractor for the project. He will keep all the subcontractors in line, and his wife, Priscilla, will take charge of all the questions of decorations.

"I have long looked forward to coming to Rome, and intend to make this my last permanent pastorate from which we may sound the gospel to the rest of the world. I am sure that you and I can strengthen one another for this mighty work." ■

## Ministry Opportunities in Law Enforcement

by Wally Johnston

Abingdon, Ill.

**Y**ou see people at their worst. On rare occasions, you see them at their best. You are constantly dealing with human nature. When you think you've seen everything, someone does something to surprise you. You see people in life and in death. You try to piece together broken relationships. Am I talking about serving as a pastor? Yes. I am also talking about police work. The correlation between the two is amazing. Police chaplaincy provides the clergy and the church a wonderful opportunity for ministry. Serving as a law enforcement chaplain has some wonderful blessings. You probably won't build a superchurch by the increased attendance of police officers. Most will not darken the walls of your church. So why become a police chaplain?

### You Are Needed

As a concerned clergy, you are needed as a police chaplain for the following and many more reasons:

1. Law officers aren't noted for their trust in people. Very few people can they confide in. As a chaplain, you must earn the right to be their friend. In our department, one way of knowing you were accepted by the "troops" was to find yourself in a cartoon. One of the officers was an artist and decided to draw a cartoon of the chaplain. He drew me with curly hair, mustache, a pager in my belt, standing outside a bank with a burglar alarm going off. I had the suspect down on the pavement, and I was banging him in the head with a cross! Needless to say, I captured the crook and the stolen loot.

Police work is a closed shop. Very few people are let in to the fellow-

ship. Unfortunately, this causes them to turn to peer counseling whenever they face a problem. So they confide in persons who experience the same difficulties and are themselves without answers. It causes an ingrown fellowship, which hopefully would never happen in the church! Police have department psychologists, but psychologists don't ride in the car with them. Officers don't always need "professional" help (as if a minister isn't professional!) but just need a friend, a listening ear.

2. Death notifications. Some things about any job we don't like. One of those things for police officers is notifying family members of a death in their household.

While serving as chaplain in Santa Monica, Calif., we were summoned to a "DB" call (dead body.) A man was found dead in bed by his garden-er. The family was contacted. When they arrived, I comforted and prayed with the family, while the officer took care of policing details. He told me later, "It sure helped for you to be there. Officers can't always spend much time with families in this type



of situation. Thanks for helping me out, chaplain."

3. Liaison between the police department and community. A chaplain has the opportunity of representing the department in a positive light. Many chaplain departments work out of the community relations office. You will also serve as the contact person to other clergy in the community. As the key person, you provide a community network of support to the department. You will be called upon to represent the department and city at public functions. Though the purpose is not to promote your church, when you receive recognition, your church receives recognition. In a sense, chaplaincy becomes an extension of your church's outreach to the community.

4. Officers and their families need you. Once I got a call on a Sunday afternoon. A motorcycle cop was hav-

ing some personal problems. A few minutes later I met him in an abandoned parking lot. We walked around and talked for over an hour. Then I presented the gospel to him, and he prayed to receive Jesus Christ.

5. Law enforcement has a special place in society. Read Rom. 13:1-5, particularly in *The Living Bible*.

### **You Need the Chaplaincy**

1. The chaplaincy provides a break in your routine. You can only take so many committee and board meetings. Sermon writing sometimes gives you writer's block. Some pastors golf; some like Peter say, "I go a fishing" (John 21:3, KJV). A ride along in a patrol car can give you that break. That may sound strange, but for so many chaplains, it really does.

2. You get positive strokes from police personnel. Sometimes you get more compliments paid by police officers than most folks in your church! They know you have gone out of your way to minister to them. When you help an officer deal with a shooting, marital problem, or a difficult assignment, you are often rewarded with a "thank you" or "You really helped me, chaplain."

Police  
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wonderful  
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ministry.

### **Your Church Needs You in Chaplaincy**

1. Your involvement in chaplaincy helps build bridges to the community. When you receive recognition, your church does also. Your church becomes known in the community as a church that cares.

I'll never forget how our neighborhood realized our involvement. We prepared dinner at the church on Thanksgiving Day and served all the on-duty police personnel. We had squad cars and police motorcycles all day long coming in and out of the church. The next day, as I was walking to the office, a neighbor asked me, "I know that it's none of my business, but did you have a homicide at church yesterday?" I decided from then on I would let the neighborhood know about our special event and decrease their anxiety.

2. We opened up our sanctuary to organize a Neighborhood Watch program. Before long we became the model program for the city. We were featured on the local television news, and our church was presented an award of appreciation by our city council. Doors in the neighborhood were opened up to us that never were before.

### **How to Get Started**

Here are some things that will get you started:

1. Check with your police department to see if there is an existing chaplain program. If so, ask how you might get involved.

2. If your department doesn't have a program, submit a proposal to the chief. Let him know the benefits of a chaplaincy program by informing him of neighboring agencies who have a program. Get recommendations from the neighboring chiefs to your chief.

3. Contact the International Conference of Police Chaplains, Rte. 5, Box 310, No. 82, Livingston, TX 77351. Their telephone number is 409-327-2332. This professional police chaplaincy training organization can supply you with much information. By joining such an organization, it gives you professional credentials and a greater respect with enforcement people. They provide regional and national training seminars. In order to join, you must have ecclesiastical endorsement from the general church of your denomination.

4. Talk to other chaplains about their programs. Each agency operates differently and has various needs. What works in one department might not work in yours, but you can use what works for your situation.

5. Get the full support of the chief.

Let him know you are there as an asset to him, not a liability. He must feel secure about your position. In my first assignment, the chief was an atheist. He wasn't comfortable having a chaplain, but neighboring agencies bragged on their programs. He thought it would make the department look good. Because his heart wasn't in the program, political and ecumenical elements caused him to cut back on my involvement. Do your best to win the chief over.

Your  
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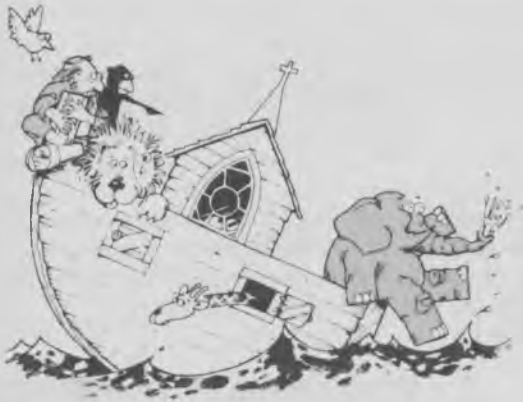
### **Things to Remember**

1. Get your church and church board behind you. This is critical. Ask for their input on how much time and energy you should devote to police ministry. Once you are a chaplain, don't talk too much about your involvement. Members of the church might get the perception that you are spending too much time chasing the bad guys instead of performing your church duties.

2. Get some prayer partners from your church who will support you and the department in prayer. No ministry is effective without prayer warriors.

3. When an officer comes to Jesus, try to get him to your church to give a brief testimony in a service. This will help the congregation feel involved and will also guide their prayers for police families.

There is so much more that can be said about the blessings of police chaplaincy, but I've told you enough. Now you'll have to find out for yourself! ■



## Pastoral Interview

**District Superintendent (D.S.):** I am glad to meet you. My name is I. M. Pius, D.S. of the Piney Woods District.

**Waylon:** My name is Waylon Rant. I'm very interested in going to the Piney Woods District.

**Narrator:** What he is really saying is that all the other districts have turned him down, and he's scraping the bottom of the barrel.

**D.S.:** Well, you look like the kind of man we need on our district.

**Narrator:** What he means is that if he is warm, breathes, and is willing to come—he'll do fine.

**D.S.:** I notice here that you made very good grades at Preacher Tech.

**Waylon:** Yes. Actually, it came quite easily.

**Narrator:** What he should have said was, "My wife did all my homework for me."

**D.S.:** We have some of the finest laymen in the world on the Piney Woods District.

**Narrator:** What he didn't go on to say was, "However, none of them are in the church I'm going to offer you."

**D.S.:** I have one church in mind that you might be well suited for.

**Narrator:** What he means is "Nobody else will take it."

**D.S.:** It is one of the steadiest congregations on the district.

**Narrator:** This means, "It hasn't done anything for 20 years."

**Waylon:** I just want a place to serve.

**Narrator:** What he means is, "How much does it pay?"

**D.S.:** This church is a real opportunity.

**Narrator:** What he is saying is, "If you can make this albatross fly, you can make it anywhere."

better than most on the district.

**Narrator:** What he's not saying is that this one has indoor plumbing.

**D.S.:** They even furnish you a vehicle to drive.

**Narrator:** He didn't tell him it was a school bus.

**D.S.:** You can rise to great heights in this church.

**Narrator:** He meant, "The steeple needs painting."

**D.S.:** They aren't able to pay very much right now.

**Narrator:** In other words, it's peanuts and has been for 30 years.

**Waylon:** That's O.K. We can manage.

**Narrator:** What he didn't say was, "If we can't—we're outta here!"

**D.S.:** The church is located in a solid community.

**Narrator:** What he meant was, "You couldn't change them with a stick of dynamite."

**D.S.:** You have some children, I understand.

**Waylon:** Yes, four beautiful daughters.

**Narrator:** What he was thinking was, Beauty is only skin deep.

**D.S.:** And your wife agrees with your call to the ministry?

**Waylon:** Oh, yes.

**Narrator:** What he means is, "She agrees that I'm out of my mind."

**D.S.:** You know, it is very important that your wife support your ministry.

**Narrator:** What he really said was, "She has to play the piano, teach Sunday School, be the NWMS president, and work full-time."

**D.S.:** The church I want to offer you is very efficient. They even have a volunteer system of cleaning the building.

**Narrator:** He means, "The pastor does it."

**D.S.:** They have a Sunday bulletin.

**Narrator:** The pastor does it too.

**D.S.:** They even have a nursing home ministry.

**Narrator:** Yes, the pastor does it also.

**D.S.:** They are in the midst of a renovation program.

**Narrator:** He means, "The building has been about to fall down for the last five years."

**Waylon:** I'm experienced in construction.

**Narrator:** What he means is, "I was a plumber's helper for four weeks."

**D.S.:** You will, of course, lead them in the payment of their budgets.

**Narrator:** He didn't tell him that they've never paid their budgets in full before.

**D.S.:** Budgets are important, you know.

**Narrator:** What he means is, "Especially the District Budget. It pays my salary."

**Waylon:** I really believe in paying budgets.

**Narrator:** What he said was, "At least until I get ordained."

**Waylon:** If I come to your district, I'd like to move right away.

**Narrator:** What he means is, "I'm behind on my rent."

**D.S.:** I'd like to get a pastor into this church as soon as possible.

**Narrator:** What he means is, "I haven't been able to get anyone down there in six months."

**D.S.:** Do you have any questions?

**Narrator:** What he is thinking is, I hope not, I've got to get rid of this coffee.

**Waylon:** No.

**D.S. (shaking Waylon's hand):** I will ask you to pray about this assignment.

**Narrator:** What he means is, "I pray to God you'll accept."

**Waylon:** Yes, I will.

**Narrator:** What he didn't say was, "My wife is already packing." ■





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WORSHIP

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W. Donald Wellman

## September/October/November 1993

Prepared by W. Donald Wellman

### INTRODUCTION

I would like to relate to two areas as we begin this three-month sermon series. They deal with what is popularly called the Worship portion and the Preaching or Teaching portion of the service. Worship means different things to different people. The truth is, most of the styles of worship emerge from our backgrounds, which are affected primarily by our culture.

Several years ago, in one of my extended personal prayer retreats, the Lord seemed to solidify in my heart an approach to worship that has been meaningful to me and, I believe, effective for many others. I had been studying the life and times of the Early Church. Four words emerged that seemed to explain to me the worship experience of these early Christians.

These four words are Praising, Praying, Paying, and Preaching/Teaching. It is not that other things could not be a part of worship for you, but only that these are the major elements on which most of us could, or perhaps already, focus.

Defending these tenets would be rather simple. However, they seem to provide a form that enhances our corporate experience and allows for "freedom with dignity."

The service examples that I have given in this project will further explain the goal for which I strive in a worship service. It creates an atmosphere for both worship and evangelism. Response to spiritual growth, as well as decisions to accept God's saving or sanctifying grace, are all natural in this approach.

As you will notice in the following sermon outlines, my approach to preaching/teaching could probably be best described as a combination of exegesis and exposition.

Not being a professional scholar, I have sought to develop a style of preaching/teaching in a simple manner by the use of somewhat detailed outlines. This manner, hopefully, makes it easy for the people to follow, take notes, and, later in the week, to study.

As I look back over 38 years of serving as pastor, I am convinced that most people want and need a strong diet of biblical studies that will instruct and inspire them to make decisions, not only to accept Christ but also to grow in grace and to carry out the Great Commission.

When we look at the great churches in our world that have emerged on the scene across hundreds of years, they have always been led by strong pulpits. This is certainly not the full reason, but it is clearly one of the major reasons.

As we walk together through this series on Pentecost and James, my prayer is that you will be blessed as you pray, study, and, perhaps, use portions of them in your ministry.

# THIS IS OUR MOMENT

by W. Donald Wellman

Acts 2:1

September 5, 1993

## INTRO:

The account in Acts of the Christians in the Early Church holds a strategic message for us. Just as Jesus "turned the light on" for the Christians of the Early Church and the power of Pentecost became "their moment," this, too, is "our moment" in 20th century churches of today in reaching our world with the claims of the gospel.

Four fundamental facts faced the early Christians, which are spelled out for us in the Book of Acts: The Moment of Pentecost, the Motive of Pentecost, the Miracles of Pentecost, and the Message of Pentecost.

Could there be, in our churches today, a similarity to these four fundamental facts that faced the Early Church? Are there specific guidelines for us in approaching our moment with the power that was available to those early Christians?

## I. This Was a Crushing Moment in the Life of the Church

Jesus had been crucified, and the apostles bewilderedly asked themselves, "Was all this true? Was it a dream? Has He really been resurrected?" Now, after spending 10 days in prayer, the emptiness they felt within seemed overwhelming. Four words describe this emptiness.

*A. They were discouraged.* Their Savior and Leader had left them. They were bewildered and lonely. The Early Church had begun with at least 500 believers; 380 had already left. Discouragement etched their very beings as they realized that only 120 remained.

*B. They were dejected.* Although they had been a part of Jesus' earthly ministry and experienced His presence with them, they needed more than a revered memory of Jesus. They needed a rousing message: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, KJV).

*C. They were disabled.* A vision without vitality ridicules our disability. Our mission statement is, "Confront every man, woman, and child in our city with the claims of the gospel!"

*D. They were depressed.* Why? Because of their sense of inadequacy. They could not face the future in their own strength.

## II. It Was a Crucial Moment in the Life of the Church

*A. They were a special people.*

1. They were called of God.  
And so are we.

2. They had a covenant with God.  
And so do we.

3. They had a commission from God.

We, too, have a commission. Across our world to-

day, 1 billion people are hearing the gospel via radio and television!

*B. They had a spectacular program.* What did they have? Their program included everything needed to fulfill the Great Commission: preaching, teaching, praising, and fellowshiping. Every day they went to the Temple courts. There were few, if any, without friends. This spectacular program, outlined specifically for us in Acts 2:42, can be ours for our churches today.

*C. They had a superlative staff.* Their staff included Impetuous Peter, the singer; Andrew, the young soul winner; Gentle John, the counselor; and all the rest of the Twelve!

Yes, this was their moment. They had everything that was needed. Can we identify in any way with that moment? What are the advantages we have today in our churches with our people, programs, staff, and beautiful new buildings?

## III. It Was a Challenging Moment in the Life of the Church (Acts 1:1-8)

*A. Jesus had shown to them many convincing proofs.* "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). We have all seen God perform miracles in our churches.

*B. Jesus shared with them a marvelous promise.* "On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (1:4-5). What a promise! Yes, they were discouraged, dejected, disabled, and depressed—but, in the midst of all that, Jesus showed them His marvelous promise. That is the way He deals with us today.

*C. Jesus shared with them a meaningful perspective.* "So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'" (1:6-8). We cannot convince our world by magnificent choirs, great sermons, or beautiful sanctuaries. That was *their* moment—when they received the power of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. This is *our* moment—to reach our world with the claims of the gospel by this same power.

#### IV. It Was a Committed Moment in the Life of the Church

*A. They stayed together in one place.* Three-fourths of the crowd of early Christians said, "I won't pay the price." And they left. But, do you know, God doesn't need a majority. He *is* the majority! In the Early Church, only 120 out of 500 "stayed by the stuff." Think of the great move God could bring in our churches today with the total commitment of the people in our congregations—large or small! When that crowd of 120 paid the price, 5,000 were saved in one week! How about that! Do you suppose they were saying, as we would, "Where will we put the crowd?" Oh, wouldn't it be great to have that kind of logistical problem?

*B. They stayed together for one purpose.* This is our moment. Here is what divides the winners from the whiners—one purpose. Have you seen some people who, if they can't sing a solo or sing in a special group, won't sing at all? If they don't play, they don't stay! If they don't do something special, they go somewhere else! If there is an entertainer scheduled for Sunday night, they might come!

*C. They stayed together in one partnership.* This concept, in the Greek, is "one ownership." "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (4:32). They didn't care who was "right" or who got the credit.

#### CONCLUSION:

If this is going to be our moment in reaching our world with the claims of the gospel, we must stay together in one place, for one purpose, in one partnership.

This is truly "our moment." Say it aloud together!

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "Bless His Holy Name"  
Welcome by the Pastor

#### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses (7 to 10 Minutes)  
"The Name of the Lord"  
"Bless the Name of Jesus"  
"Let the Redeemed"  
"Because He Lives"

Pastoral Prayer  
Preprayer Chorus "Alleluia, Alleluia"  
Open Altar Invitation  
Choir Special "We Are Standing on Holy Ground"  
Congregational Hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

#### PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

#### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "THIS IS OUR MOMENT"  
Acts 2:1

#### Creative Worship Ideas

##### Pastoral Prayer

As you begin to move into the prayer period, share a challenging scripture that points toward Pentecost. Also, invite the entire congregation to quote together the scripture, "And I, if I be lifted up . . . will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32, KJV).

##### Praising

This period is designed for at least two reasons: (1) Gathering people of all ages from various levels and interests to an experience of guiding them into the reality of lifting up Jesus. Allow the name of Jesus to provoke in them the message of the songs.

##### Paying

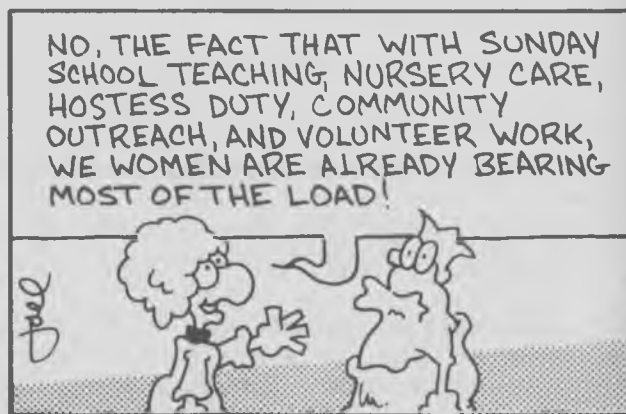
The apostle Paul quoted Jesus as saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Can you imagine what this could provide in the lives of your worshippers if this truth became a reality?

##### Preaching

Printing the outline of your message on one section of your bulletin or a separate insert would encourage your people to record the specific truths that apply to them.



## Pontius' Puddle



# THE MOTIVE OF PENTECOST

by W. Donald Wellman

Acts 2:1-4

September 12, 1993

## INTRO:

The "moment" the early Christians were facing was to settle for mediocrity or move to the miraculous!

Then, when the "Moment of Pentecost" came, only 120, including 11 staff members, stayed to pray! You see, they were facing mediocrity or the miraculous.

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:1-2). This was "their moment"—"when the Day of Pentecost came." "Their motive"—"all together in one place"!

One scholar has said that there was "one psyche and 120 bodies." The Greek word *homoi* in this text means "the spirit of unity." Another scholar said of this passage, "All unitedly—in one place."

The clearest picture of Pentecost is given to us in Acts 4:32: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had." The Greek word *kardia* (heart) means the "seat of the moral character." *Psyche* (mind) means the "seat of human conduct." They were moving from the moment to the motive. This is a picture of what the church was meant to be.

In this passage, Luke is calling for the "irreducible maximum"—spiritual and psychological unity. There is no more pressing item on God's agenda for us than this kind of unity. This is our moment; this should be our motive.

This motive took three distinct directions in the Early Church.

## I. They Became Trustees

Acts 4:32 has an incredible concept! Legally, they were owners. Lovingly, they were trustees.

*A. What is the purpose of a trustee?* A trustee "is under the duty" to the beneficiary to administer that trust. An illustration of this is the fact that all we are and have is God's. We are to administer what we've been given. There is an interesting twist in the law. A trustee cannot delegate that trust. "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me'" (Matt. 28:18).

*B. What is the practice of a trustee?* "They shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32). Another interesting twist is, "If it is a business, you cannot 'shut it down.'" Do you see their motive? They shared all they had.

## II. They Became Teachers

"With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all" (4:33). Their problems were the same as

ours today. They had the Sadducees, who didn't believe in the resurrection. Then, there were the Pharisees who believed Jesus' death was His doom. But in spite of their problems, they pressed forward. God's Word says, "With great power" they proclaimed the gospel.

*A. They taught with great power.* The Greek word for "power" is *dunamai* (v. 33). It means "efficacy," "appropriate," "fitting," "proper." This is the kind of power they experienced. So the question is, "Was this power only for a few?" "Was it magical?" "Was it mystical?" The answer is simple. These people were ordinary and average. They were fishermen, businessmen, doctors—just good people.

*B. They taught with a certain presence.* "Much grace was upon them all" (v. 33). Don't you just love that? This word "grace" is not a theological term. This was a "warm fellowship," a fellowship available to all of us. The New Testament word is translated "winsome," "attractive," "excited," "gracious." There was this "gracious" atmosphere upon the Church; therefore, they taught, preached, and fellowshiped with this grace! Do you see the picture? Because their motive was pure, they were open to God and open to all men.

## III. They Became Tenders

"There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need" (vv. 34-35). You might be thinking, Are there really needy people among us? When we tend to the needs of the Body of Christ, as we teach, it always "takes on a form of compassion and contrast."

*A. Those who owned land, houses, or fields sold them and brought the money to be distributed to anyone as he had need (vv. 34-37).*

*B. What a contrast to the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11.* Here, they kept back part of the money for themselves and lied to God and to the Church.

## CONCLUSION:

What was the motive of those who experienced Pentecost? "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (v. 32).

As a result, they were trustees. All they had was God's. They were teachers. They taught with great power. And they were tenders. Grace was abundant all about them.

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "All People of God"  
Welcome by the Pastor

### PRaising AND PRaying

Prayer Choruses (7 to 10 minutes) "Great and Mighty"  
"The Beauty of That Name"  
"Oh, How I Love Jesus"  
"I Love You, Lord"

### Pastoral Prayer

Preprayer Chorus "God Is So Good"  
Open Altar Invitation  
Choir Special "That the World May Know"  
Congregational Hymn "And Can It Be?"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

### PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "THE MOTIVE OF  
PENTECOST"  
Acts 2:1-4

### Creative Worship Ideas

#### Pastoral Prayer

If you have a youth ensemble strong enough to sing a two- or three-minute song before prayer, this could make a meaningful transition. Here I would suggest you use either your youth leader or someone who has great credence with the youth to pray.

#### Praising

Combine the children, youth, and adult choirs for this praising period. This period should last between 7-10 minutes. Then your children's choir could move to its separate church area.

#### Paying

One of the most meaningful stewardship experiences I have used is having a person who is well loved and respected to share a 60-second statement about God's blessing of his stewardship just before he prays for the offering.

PASTOR HUFNINNY WONDERED  
WHY THE CONGREGATION GAVE  
HIM A STANDING OVATION AT  
THE CLOSE OF HIS SERMONS.

GOING BACK TO  
POINT 18 UNDER  
ROMAN NUMERAL  
XXIII...BLAB  
...BLAB...

ALAN  
MORRIS



# THE MIRACLES OF PENTECOST

by W. Donald Wellman

Acts 2:1-13

September 19, 1993

## INTRO:

In the previous two messages, we have talked about "The Moment of Pentecost" and "The Motive of Pentecost." What do you think of when you think of "The Miracles of Pentecost"?

What was "The Moment of Pentecost"? It was a crushing moment. It was a crucial moment. It was a challenging moment, and it was a committed moment.

What was "The Motive of Pentecost"? It is described: "All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (Acts 4:32). As a result, they became trustees; no one claimed ownership. They became teachers; they testified with great power. They became tenders; there were no needy among them.

Someone has said that the Book of Acts is the most exciting book ever written. As we study it, there is little or no controversy regarding the moment or motive. Unfortunately, there are great differences of opinion about miracles.

I believe God has given to me an insight "exceptionally *noncontroversial*" on this subject. Please take your Bibles, open to Acts 2, and follow closely. In verses 1-13, there are *four miracles* and *four miracles only*. They are:

1. The Miracle of Sound.
2. The Miracle of Sight.
3. The Miracle of the Spirit.
4. The Miracle of Speech.

## I. There Is the Miracle of Sound

"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2).

*A. What is the sound of a violent wind?* This was a reverberating or tornado-like type of wind. Having been in 10 intensive days of prayer and heart-searching, they no doubt had to be drowsy. Do you see how this type of wind would have affected them in this state? It made them alert!

*B. What is the source of a violent wind?* It clearly came from heaven; it was supernatural. In other words, it was a physical miracle.

*C. What is the scope of this violent wind?* It "filled the whole house where they were sitting," according to the Scripture. Most scholars agree that this was the "birth of the New Testament Church." The real question is this: "Why was there such a miracle?" "When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language" (2:6).

## II. There Is the Miracle of Sight

"They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them" (2:3). There are three glaring facts about the tongues of fire:

*A. Clearly they were symbols.* Scripture says they saw "what seemed to be tongues of fire." Just picture this—a big red tongue hovering above and over the people. Obviously, this was a miracle. Have you ever seen this?

*B. Clearly they were separated.* Most scholars say it was one large tongue that then was separated into many tongues. Whether it was one or not, it was supernatural.

*C. Clearly they were resting.* The tongues of fire were resting on each person—120 tongues of fire in that room! Thus, each one experienced that miracle personally.

The question is, "Have you ever experienced that miracle?" No! The wind is a symbol of the Spirit of God. The fire is a symbol of the cleansing of our heart by the power of God.

## III. There Is the Miracle of the Spirit

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (2:4). How many? One hundred twenty. But, more importantly, "all of them." They were filled with a spiritual power, not brains or brawn.

Now, let the context of Acts 1:4-5 explain this verse:

*A. The promise is given.* "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (1:8). You might ask, "Why do you call this a promise?" Look at Acts 1:4-5: "On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"

*B. The purity is given.* "God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9). God did not differentiate between the Jews and the Gentiles when He gave the Holy Spirit.

*C. The power is given.* "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (1:8). Many people are interested in power. But look at the order:

1. The Wind—the Breath of God
2. The Tongues of Fire—the Cleansing of the Heart
3. The Miracle of the Spirit—the Infilling of His Holy Spirit

## IV. There Is the Miracle of Speech

"... and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). Did you notice that there was no teaching or coaching; no instructional videos—just the Holy Spirit! No one coached this special gift, which inaugurated the beginning of the Church! Sixteen differ-

ent languages were spoken, and people from all over heard them in their own languages.

*A. What is the purpose of the miraculous?* The "wind" is symbolic of the breath of God. The "fire" is symbolic of the cleansing of our heart. We have been to Pentecost when our lives emanate the breath of God and our spirit reflects the purity of God!

*B. What is the significance of the combination of Spirit and speech?* "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (1:8). Clearly, the "Spirit" and "power" are simultaneous. This is "Pentecostal power." The by-product of that experience depends on what the Holy Spirit gives you!

*C. Unmistakenly, if we have this miraculous power, we will be His witnesses!* "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:8).

## CONCLUSION:

Here is the simple and overwhelming revelation of God: There are four miracles at Pentecost! Which one do you want most?

1. The "rushing mighty wind" (2:1, KJV)
2. The tongues of fire on your heart
3. The ability to speak a language you haven't learned
4. The cleansing of your heart by the infilling of the Holy Spirit

All four at the same time have never happened since Pentecost. The speaking in foreign languages has happened several times since Pentecost. But, please note two things:

1. The first three—the rushing wind, the tongues of fire, and the ability to speak a language you haven't learned—are physical miracles.

2. Only the cleansing of the heart from original sin has happened to everyone when they have been "filled with the Holy Spirit."

Which one do you want? The physical miracles—sound, sight, speech? Or the spiritual miracles?

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "Alleluia, Praise the Lord"  
Welcome by the Pastor

### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "Blessed Be the Name"  
"Shine, Jesus, Shine"  
"Seekers of Your Heart"  
"Let the Redeemed"

Pastoral Prayer "Spirit of the Living God"

Preprayer Chorus  
Open Altar Invitation  
Choir Special "Let Thy Mantle Fall on Me"  
Congregational Hymn "And Can It Be?"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

### PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "THE MIRACLES OF PENTECOST"  
Acts 2:1-13

## Creative Worship Ideas

### Pastoral Prayer

Three weeks before Thanksgiving Sunday, arrange some slides of three or four missionary families where everyone can see them. As you talk about the world missions offering, they can see our work in action.

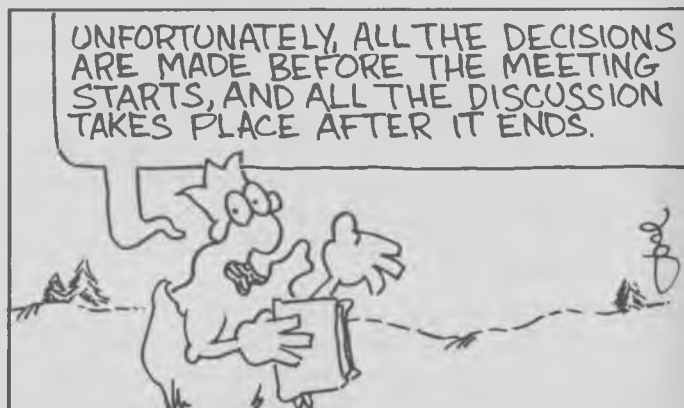
### Praising

While into the middle of praise time, have a person ready to share not more than *two minutes* of an answered prayer or a special event in his life.

### Preaching

If you do not normally give your congregation a printed detail of your sermon outline, this could be very meaningful. Be careful not to promise this all the time; this could be more than you can produce.

## Pontius' Puddle



# THE MESSAGE OF PENTECOST

by W. Donald Wellman

Acts 2:12-47

September 26, 1993

## INTRO:

We have discovered, in our study of the Early Church, that Pentecost was their moment. It was a crushing, crucial, challenging, and committed moment in the lives of these early Christians. They also faced their motive. It was to settle for mediocrity or to move to the miraculous. Then, there was their miracle. There was no doubt about the physical miracles: sight, sound, and speech. However, the spiritual miracle—the cleansing of the heart from original sin—was the source of the early Christians' power. This was truly the purpose and power of Pentecost.

In Acts 2:12-41, Peter "stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd" (v. 14). Peter was always an aggressive spokesman. However, now he was courageous and confident in the Lord. His preaching was frank, commanding, and centered upon Jesus Christ. His message demanded decision and confession as to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives.

Peter had four distinct issues to identify:

## I. There Are the Problems Peter Faced

"Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine'" (vv. 12-13).

*A. What were the bystanders' problems?* The same spiritual influences that had created an eagerness on the part of so many to hear Peter's message brought doubt, derision, and denial on the part of others. Some scorned the message he preached. Some said the disciples were drunk. They were, indeed, intoxicated; however, it was intoxication with the "new wine" of the kingdom of God.

*B. What were Peter's own problems?* Can you imagine addressing a crowd of thousands from 16 nations—people who were aware of your miserable failures and your denial of Jesus before He was crucified! Peter must have suffered over his own inadequacies. But that is the miracle of Pentecost: forgiveness, cleansing, and the reestablishment of one's self-image. All of this came through the supernatural power of God!

## II. There Is the Promise Peter Proclaimed

Verses 14-21 are the introduction verses to Peter's message to the people. His manner and method are not so familiar to us, as it was all based on Old Testament prophecy. We are all struck with the marvelous change in the character of Peter—from timidity to boldness!

*A. We realize the nerve of the Jewish church.* The people were on the verge of spiritual conviction and renewal. Their minds were searching for truth. They were looking for the Messiah and waiting for the pouring out of the Spirit.

ILLUS. What would happen today if a Jesus-type person

were to spend three years in the major churches, network television, and in the great stadiums of our nation preaching, teaching, healing, and working with all kinds of miracles, trying to change the world? Though this person could try, the religious leaders would fight him.

*B. We realize the fulfillment of prophecy at Pentecost.* Peter declared that the message of the Old Testament prophet Joel had been fulfilled (v. 16). Verses 17-21 are Joel's words concerning the last days, declaring the great promise: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (v. 21). This would be the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

## III. There Is the Purpose of Pentecost

In verses 22-36, Peter elaborates on the main theme of Pentecost: Jesus.

*A. Peter speaks of who Jesus was.* "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know" (v. 22).

*B. Peter speaks of why Jesus came.* "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross" (v. 23). Peter indicates that Jesus' death was both planned by God and known by Him from the beginning. Though the death of Christ was in the divine plan, it does not take away their guilt.

*C. Peter speaks of what Jesus did.* Here is the real issue. David was still in the tomb. But Jesus was not there! For the Pharisee, the tomb was the end for Jesus. For the Sadducee, there was no resurrection.

## IV. There Is the Power of the Cross

There are at least three very basic issues about this power that are inherent in verses 37-47.

*A. We see the power of conviction.*

1. "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart" (v. 37). Until the truth of God reaches and grips the heart, nothing will change.

2. "Brothers, what shall we do?" (v. 37). They were concerned!

3. "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.' With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation'" (vv. 38-40). They were convinced!

*B. We see the power of conversion.* "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (v. 41).

1. They received Peter's message.
2. They retained Peter's message and were gladly baptized.
3. They acted upon its principles and enthusiastically joined the church.

Is that what has happened to you?

*C. We see the power of commitment.* "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (vv. 42-47).

1. They were consumed: by the Word, by fellowship, and by prayer.
2. They were a community: "All the believers were together and had everything in common" (v. 44).
3. They were convincing: the Lord added to their number daily.

## CONCLUSION:

Now, the real issue is this: Here was an uneducated

man preaching—a fisherman by trade. Here was a man quoting Old Testament prophecy. Here was a man telling them who Jesus was, why Jesus came, and what Jesus did! And 3,000 people were saved!

Do you have an explanation for this? There is only one: the Holy Spirit fell upon them after 10 days of prayer!

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "That the World May Know"  
Welcome by the Pastor

#### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "Jesus, Lord to Me"  
"Undivided"  
"Wonderful Peace"  
"Shine On"

Pastoral Prayer "I Love You, Lord"  
Preprayer Chorus

Open Altar Invitation "Ye Shall Be My Witnesses"  
Choir Special

Congregational Hymn "The Church's One Foundation"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

#### PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

#### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "THE MESSAGE  
OF PENTECOST"  
Acts 2:12-47



## Pontius' Puddle



# TAKING THE TEST

by W. Donald Wellman

James 1:1-4

October 3, 1993

## INTRO:

I heard about a man who took a test in college. When he received the test back from the professor, he found that his score was a zero. He went to the professor and staged an argument against his grade. He said to his teacher, "I don't deserve a zero!"

The teacher's reply was, "You are right; but, I had no lower grade to give you."

Maybe you are failing as miserably. Do you know that God can help you get a passing grade? In the Book of James, He gives us five things about our tests and trials of life that are sure to help us with a high score!

## I. What Is the Point of Trials?

It's not a matter of "if" we have trials; it is a matter of "when" we have trials. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (vv. 2-3). Persecution, trials, and testing are all a part of life. They are universal, inevitable, and unavoidable!

## II. What Is the Pattern of Trials?

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (v. 2). James refers to them as "many kinds," "diverse," and "sundry." The truth is, my temptations may not be exactly like your temptations. However, both yours and mine come in at least two categories:

*A. Some testings (not temptations) come from God.* Some of these tests or trials may simply be like testing an automobile, airplane, or new medicine. Will it work? Can it help me? Peter said, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial" that comes your way (1 Pet. 4:12, KJV). This kind of testing is sent by God to cause you to stand.

*B. Some testings and, yes, temptations come from Satan.* Temptations that come to us from Satan are not for our good. The difference is:

1. Temptations that come from Satan cause us to stumble.

2. Tests or trials that come from God cause us to stand.

One is meant for maturity; the other is meant for misery!

Permit me to teach you two things at this point. Though it seems that James uses tests and trials almost interchangeably:

1. God does not cause both kinds. He only allows both kinds.

2. God will use both kinds for our good.

## III. What Is the Power of Trials?

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face

trials" (v. 2). The Greek word here means to "fall suddenly." Do you remember the man on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho? He "fell among thieves" (Luke 10:30, KJV).

ILLUS. Some of us are not too concerned with life right now. Our blood pressure is low, and our bank account is high. What would you do if the two were turned around? God is saying, "The power of the next trial may be great!" That's what happened to the man on his way to Jericho: he "fell among thieves."

ILLUS. One of my favorite people, Winston Churchill, said, "We must always be ready at our average moment for anything our enemy could hurl at us at his selected moment."

Let me ask, "Are you ready at your average moment?" Are you ready today for some great power?

## IV. What Is the Preparation for Trials?

"Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (v. 3), it's like taking a test.

ILLUS. There, perhaps, are some college young people here today who have just taken some tests. First of all, I hope you were prepared! Have you done your homework? Second, I don't want you to flunk life's greatest test!

It is not God's will that you have a variety of trials and tests. However, it is God's will that you are victorious through all these trials and tests. So, as you face tests of life or temptations from Satan, remember two things:

*A. It is not a sin to be tempted or tried.* If it were, our Lord himself would have sinned! Remember the words of Scripture: "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:14-15).

Another thing to remember is that your body is amoral, meaning morally neutral. That is, nothing about our body has the capacity for morality. Only the heart or spirit has this capacity. The Bible says, "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Jesus was as human as we are. Yet, He overcame temptation through His Spirit calling on the Father. One of the great three-fold illustrations of this is found in the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11).

*B. It is not a sin to go through morbid introspection.* Sometimes when bad things happen to us, we're prone to think, What have I done that's evil? Why am I expe-

riencing these trials? As a result, we often go through something of a morbid introspection. If we don't understand that this is an amoral problem, discouragement can overtake us.

Here's the point: Though God didn't cause your problem, He did permit it for a positive purpose. A principle all of us need to learn and relearn is that "the seeds of doubt often sprout from the soil of ignorance." This is especially true with regard to a proper understanding of anthropology. (Refer to the book, by Donald Wellman, *Dynamics of Discipling*, chapter 3.)

## V. What Is the Product of Trials?

Here are some questions we often hear: "Why does God allow it?" "If God could stop it, why doesn't He?" God is trying to do something special for every one of us! James wrote, "Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (vv. 3-4). Everything God does and allows in our lives is for our good and His glory!

In this passage, God mentions four fruits of our trials and temptations:

*A. The test of your faith is for your pleasure.* You say, "Pastor, what do you mean? I'm supposed to enjoy tests and trials?" Look at verse 2 again: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds." I didn't say that; James said that; rather, it was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we get rather stoic and take the position, "What we can't cure, we endure."

But, God said, "What you can't cure, you can endure!" Trials are a prelude to God's promises!

But, you say, "Pastor, that doesn't make sense." All right, let's look at the next step:

*B. The testing of your faith is for your patience.* "Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (v. 3). The King James Version says, "patience." Who of us has not said, "If only I were more consistent—consistent in prayer, in Bible study, sharing my faith, and in the very important issue of stewardship!" I love that scripture that says that Jesus was made "perfect through suffering" (Heb. 2:10). I love it but, humanly, I loathe it! However, this is the constant pressure that keeps us close to Jesus.

*C. The testing of your faith is for your preparedness.* "Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (v. 4). It's not a matter of "perfection;" it's preparedness or maturity.

ILLUS. God has a plan for the butterfly. For a long time it is confined in its "prison;" then, when it is prepared, it emerges—lovely and beautiful.

So many times you say, "O God, let me out of this mess." But God wants to keep you right where you are

for three reasons: for your (1) enjoyment, (2) endurance, and (3) enlargement!

*D. The testing of your faith is for your enrichment.*

"Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (v. 4). Can you believe that? Not lacking anything! This, then, is the reason we can "consider it pure joy." If you pass the test, you will be enriched!

## CONCLUSION:

As you reflect on the issue of the trials and tests that come your way, what kind of a grade are you getting? If we would test ourselves, what a difference it would make.

Let's bow our hearts before God and talk with Him about it.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "Bless the Lord, O My Soul"  
Welcome by the Pastor

#### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "Holy Ground"  
"Bless the Name of Jesus"  
"Praise You"  
"I Exalt Thee"

#### Pastoral Prayer

Preprayer Chorus "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"  
Open Altar Invitation

Choir Special "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"  
Congregational Hymn "How Great Thou Art!"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

#### PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

#### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "TAKING THE TEST"  
James 1:1-4

## Creative Worship Ideas

### Praising

When you start singing, use your hymnal to open this period, and then move to a series of current choruses and choruses of some well-known hymns that follow your message very specifically.

Ask the congregation to move to the center of the sanctuary for the last two or three choruses as you move toward prayer time. They should continue to sing as they move across the aisle to clasp hands.

### Praying

I suggest that if there are as many as three members of one family that can pray publicly, that you have them join hands with you and any others on the platform and have that family lead everyone in prayer.



# THE SUBTLE SNARE

by W. Donald Wellman

James 1:13-15

October 10, 1993

## INTRO:

It is important that we remember that the Book of James uses temptation in two ways:

1. Tests, trials, or hardships of life: These are sent by God, not for destruction, but, rather, for construction. God allows tests, trials, and hardships for the purpose of developing our character.

2. Temptation: This is an inducement to do evil. It is used with the idea of causing us to stumble or fall.

It is that type of temptation with which we are dealing in James 1:13-15. It is imperative that we understand that Satan's full plans are to destroy not only our lives but also the lives of all those whom we influence.

From this passage, I want to awaken you to three of the most subtle tactics Satan uses.

## I. Notice the Catch

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (v. 13). Three words stand out like beacons: "When," "Not," and "If." None of us is immune to thinking that I am somewhat, if not greatly, beyond much temptation, simply because I've been a Christian for a long time.

ILLUS. I remember vividly when I was 17 and a new Christian of 1 year. I said to my brother-in-law, who was about age 35, "Harry, in my year of development as a Christian, I don't seem to have many, if any, temptations anymore."

In his gentle wisdom, he said, "Don, you better be careful; they will come again." Little did I know!

When you become a friend of God, you become an enemy of Satan.

*A. When, not if, you are tempted.* James said, "When [you are] tempted." It is not a matter of whether; it is a matter of when. The Bible tells us that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15, KJV). One of the greatest temptation events in Jesus' earthly life is recorded in Matthew 4. In this chapter Jesus was clearly tempted physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Like Him, we, too, are tempted in all three of these areas.

*B. It is not God who is tempting us.* Then James said, "No one should say, 'God is tempting me.'" He clearly gives the reasons why we cannot be honest and at the same time accuse God. God cannot be tempted. He is a spiritual God. He is a holy God. He is incapable of doing anything evil.

*C. God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.* James goes on to say, "For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (v. 13). God's character does not and cannot allow Him to encourage, entice, or entreat us to do wrong. Thus, it is

important to recognize that the weakness of our flesh is used by its own amoral desires and Satan's immoral desires to cause us to stumble.

Do you remember the Garden of Eden? Do you remember Adam's alibi when God told him that he had sinned? Adam said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (Gen. 3:12).

But James moves on to tell us exactly how we are tempted.

## II. Notice the Cause

"But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (v. 14). James is saying that sin is an inside job! He illustrates the cause of sin as it relates to the body's amoral need for anything that is out of harmony with the will of God. The body has no need that is sinful except when that need is fulfilled in a way that violates the Word of God.

### A. *There is the courtship to sin.*

1. There is nothing wrong with hunger or the desire to eat.

The moral issue is tied to stealing or misrepresenting the truth in order to get the food.

2. There is nothing wrong with the psychological need to be loved, accepted, or needed.

But to lie, misrepresent, or bare false witness to meet that need is the evil.

3. There is nothing wrong with sexual fulfillment.

But to commit adultery or fornication to fulfill that need is where the sin lies.

*B. There is the conception of sin.* "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death" (v. 15). In other words, when the physical or psychological need or desire is approved by your knowledgeable spirit, then sin is born.

I've heard preachers say, "There's no fun in sin." That's ridiculous! There's not only fun and pleasure but also a deep physical and emotional satisfaction in sin! The Bible tells us there are "pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25, KJV).

ILLUS. I heard about a man walking down the street with a pod of beans on his arm. As he walked along, he dropped these pods for a herd of swine following him. A passerby said to him, "Mister, that's a strange way to feed your pigs."

Said the man, "Oh, no, I'm not feeding them; I'm leading them to slaughter."

Satan has a basket on his arm; in it are the pleasures of sin.

There's the courtship to sin—Satan dangles it in front of us. There is the conception of sin—after the desire has conceived, then it gives birth to sin. Then—

*C. There is the completion of sin.* "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (v. 15). Here you have Satan's LSD: Satan's Lust! Satan's Sin! Satan's Death!

Don't look at a thing for where it is, but for where it is headed!

## CONCLUSION:

You say, "What is the answer?"

1. Recognize that the body is amoral and does not understand the morality or the sinfulness of certain issues.
2. Remember that the spirit, however, does recognize moral issues, and if you disobey that God-given warning, you will sin.

The issue is this: God made you so that you can never be satisfied until you are satisfied in Jesus.



PASTOR, WE'VE BEEN HIRED BY THE LADIES CIRCLE TO DETERMINE WHO LAST USED THE CHURCH KITCHEN... MAY WE HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH YOU?

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "My Eternal King"  
Welcome by the Pastor

## PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "Come Praise the Lord"  
"I Love You, Lord"  
"Great and Mighty"  
"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

## Pastoral Prayer

Preprayer Chorus "Oh, How I Love Jesus"  
Open Altar Invitation  
Choir Special "How Firm a Foundation"  
Congregational Hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

## Cultivation of Friendship Cards

## PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

## PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "THE SUBTLE SNARE"  
James 1:13-15

## Creative Worship Ideas

### Praising

You might want to try this unique approach to a child or children's dedication service: build your praise time around God's family and the families who are being honored that day by a dedication service.

Have about four or five minutes of praise choruses with the family or families who are dedicating their children so you can move forward about halfway through this period.

When the dedication service is over, ask the congregation to stand and sing a praise chorus while the families and babies make their adjustment. This kind of experience is especially effective when you are preaching on some aspect of family life.

### Preaching

If you are preaching on the family, you might suggest an exceptionally good book or tape series or even start a "Family Series" of study a week or two later.

# FAVORITISM FROWNED UPON

by W. Donald Wellman

James 2:1-9, 12-13

October 17, 1993

## INTRO:

Someone said, "Prejudice is what makes people down on what they are not up on." James lays the law down as strongly as any biblical writer when he says, "My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism" (2:1).

My heart does a flip-flop when I hear a parent say, "He is my favorite child," or "She is my favorite." I think I know what he or she might mean by that. But it is a dreadful mistake within the human family or the broader family we call the Church.

Can you imagine our Lord having favorites among His disciples or among us today? But, you say, "What about Peter, James, and John? Weren't they Jesus' favorites?" If so, what do we do with the verse that deals with the idea that He is no respecter of persons? It is important that we understand that our Lord had no favorites, but He did have intimates.

Favoritism leaves the idea that we would do more for one than for the other, that we would treat one more fairly than another. Or that we might take advantage of certain circumstances for some.

Our Lord develops this thought of favoritism beautifully through James in these first 13 verses. There are at least three issues that need to be dealt with here:

## I. Favoritism Is Explained

"My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism" (2:1). Favoritism means partiality, one-sidedness, prejudice, bias, nepotism, or injustice.

Through James, our Lord was saying that to respect one person over another is not only dangerous but also damaging. Favoritism is the combination of a verb and noun.

God is saying that we should not judge a person by appearances. To some degree or another, we all are strangely tempted to do so!

ILLUS. The other day I was discussing with someone the potential of a new family coming to our church. The conversation was progressing in a normal and casual way. However, when I mentioned that this man was to become the supervisor and leader over 3,500 men in the establishment where he worked, the attention of that listening friend escalated to a high intensity!

Two brief thoughts I want to share with you:

*A. Observe the devastation of snobbishness.* Other than a critical tongue, nothing is more devastating to a person than snobbishness. When we look at a person in light of his or her attire, we are tempted to flatter or flatten him or her. Most of the time, we sincere Christians do not mean any particular harm by this. However, intentional or not, the damage has been done.

ILLUS. I heard about a dog named September who always jumped to conclusions. One day he jumped to the conclusion of a mule, and that was the last day of September!

*B. Observe the difference between gossip and flattery.*

1. Flattery is what you say to a person's face; what you would not say to his back.

2. Gossip is what you say behind a person's back, what you would not say to his face.

Listen carefully. Both are wrong! Both are dishonest! It's sort of a theistic existentialism. There's no building on earth that could contain its wreckage.

## II. Failure Is Exposed

"Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" (vv. 2-4).

ILLUS. Picture Mr. Gold-Fingers walking in—"A gem at every joint, and a nugget at every knuckle." The usher, caught up with all the glitter, almost stumbles over himself from the glare. He says to the man, "Here's a good seat for you," while, to the poor man, he says, "You stand over there or sit on the floor."

You say, "We would never say that!" Is it not true that too often, in our attempt to succeed and "build the church," we are pressured in that direction?

All of us know we must concern ourselves with solid, balanced demographics in the church. However, to favor one over another carries with it the biblical connotation of failure. Fortunately, clothes do not determine character.

ILLUS. History tells us that Mahatma Gandhi was searching for a religion in India. After his intensive study of many religions, he decided to go to a Christian church. He was in Europe at that time and attempted to visit a church one Sunday morning. The usher said to him, "I'm sorry, sir; this church is only for Europeans." So, he turned to Hinduism—and you know the rest of the story.

## III. The Faithful Are Exalted

"Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?" (v. 5). Real fame cannot be measured by financial figures!

*A. The faithful are the elect of God.* Paul, in 1 Cor. 1:26-31, makes clear the ones in God's sight who are worthy of position. He said the weak were the witnesses! The bare became believers; the disposed became disciples and the nobodies often became nobility!

*B. The faithful are the elite in faith.* "Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?" (v. 5). It simply says, when we snub or neglect the poor, we are snubbing and neglecting the spiritual millionaires.

*C. The faithful are the example in success.* These riches are not only here but hereafter!

ILLUS. The great missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson, labored long and hard. Rather than winning souls, he was arrested. He was hung by his thumbs and tortured! Finally, he was cast into prison. Taunting him, they said, "What are your plans now to win the heathen? Where are all those heathen you have won to Christ?"

Said he, "My future is as bright as the promises of God."

### CONCLUSION:

James sums it up: "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!" (vv. 12-13).

May we search our own hearts regarding this issue of favoritism and ask God to make us the kind of men and women that would bring honor to His name and cause.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "The Family of God"  
Welcome by the Pastor

### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "Let's Just Praise the Lord"  
"Let the Redeemed"  
"Jesus, Lord to Me"  
"Undivided"

### Pastoral Prayer

Preprayer Chorus "At the Cross"  
Open Altar Invitation  
Choir Special "Amazing Grace Medley"  
Congregational Hymn "O Worship the King"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

### PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "FAVORITISM  
FROWNED UPON"  
James 2:1-9, 12-13

### Creative Worship Ideas

#### Pastoral Prayer

We could make a significant improvement in our stewardship effectiveness if, at least four times a year, we ask one of our leaders who is highly respected, clearly a strong giver (not necessarily a well-to-do person), to share his strong conviction in stewardship.

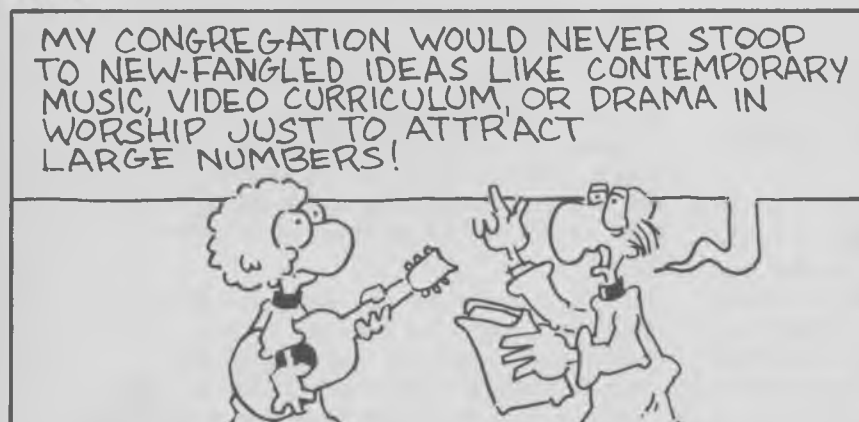
This should not last more than *two minutes*.

#### Praising

Remember that this period in the service has many goals. We hesitate to admit this, but much of the time this period is used to get the congregation into the sanctuary as well as into the spirit of worship.

Another important aspect of this period is to focus their minds on why they are there, what their personal needs are for that day, and an opportunity for God to show them areas of which they may not even be aware.

## Pontius' Puddle



# HOW TO RECOGNIZE DEAD FAITH

by W. Donald Wellman

James 2:14-26

October 24, 1993

## INTRO:

If you believe that good works saves you, or even helps you to be saved, you will never have assurance of your salvation!

ILLUS. What if someone were to ask, "Are you saved?" If good works saves you, how would you know if you had done enough to be saved?

But, you say, "I pray and read my Bible every day." Or "I've preached for years." Or "I pay my tithe—at least most of the time!" "I sure hope I am saved!"

If you depend upon works, you'll never be able to say, "I know that I know that I know I'm saved." There will always be a question.

ILLUS. Martin Luther, that brilliant young monk, was doing his best to be saved. He kept going up and down those steps, praying many prayers. All of a sudden God burned the truth of Rom. 1:17 into his heart. It says, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" From that blazing experience, the Reformation was born!

Having said that, let's look at James 2:14-16. "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?"

When you compare Paul's words in Eph. 2:8-10, these two scriptures seem in contradiction. He says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Here's the key:

1. Paul was speaking of justification before God.
2. James was speaking of justification before man.

God can see our hearts! He can see our faith. Can you see my heart, my faith, my love? The only way you will know my love and my faith is by what I do. Look at verse 14. "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?"

1. Paul was talking about the root of justification.
2. James was talking about the fruit of justification.

Here we have the "know-so" and the "show-so."

Let me show you how to recognize faith.

## I. There Is Faith That Is Worthless

Our scripture says, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food" (vv. 14-15).

ILLUS. Let's suppose that your best friend lost all of his possessions. He comes to your house with no money, no clothing except for what is on his back, and no food to feed his family. He says, "Remember the good old days we had together and how we shared so much together? Remember how God helped me get you back on your feet when you were in trouble?" Then he says to you, "Friend, I really need some help right now."

You reply, "Go, I wish you well, but I simply can't help you right now."

*A. Our faith is dead.* James tells us that not only is our faith worthless, but also, for all practical purposes, it is dead!

*B. Our lives are unchanged.* James said, "Faith without works is dead" (v. 20, KJV). There is little or no change in our lives.

Can you imagine what would happen in the church world if each of us would live up to the purpose of this text? Evangelism would be an everyday occurrence in our church.

## II. There Is Faith That Is Wanting

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?" (vv. 19-20).

*A. What is the evidence?* It is not difficult to be orthodox and correct. But to be in strong communion with God is something else. Notice closely: "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?" (v. 20). In other words, he was saying, "Do you really 'want to know' what kind of faith you have?"

1. It's wanting and lacking.
2. It's without satisfaction.

There is a clear, concise, and convincing reason why your faith is without deeds!

*B. What are the arguments?*

1. "Even the demons believe . . . there is one God. . . and [they] shudder" (v. 19)!
2. "Was not . . . Abraham considered righteous for what he did . . ." (v. 21).

Yet you want to be known as a righteous man because you believe! James, under the inspiration of God, is saying, "You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did" (v. 22).

Their faith did not bring peace. You can be orthodox—giving money, singing, and preaching—and be lost and go to hell!

## III. There Is Faith That Is Working

James is saying that faith that does not change your life-

style is wanting! (vv. 21-26). But here he gives you clearly a kind of faith that produces. Let's take these verses one by one and see how faith worked in Abraham's life.

A. *"Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?"* (v. 21). James is simply saying that Abraham's reputation was based on a faith that worked. Abraham said yes to God by giving Isaac. His faith worked to completion.

B. *"You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did"* (v. 22). Faith and actions both are good, but they don't work without each other. I love that phrase, "His faith and his actions were working together." That's the secret!

C. *"And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend"* (v. 23). Here we have the prophecy of Abraham and that of every one of us who really believe. I love the last portion of this verse, where it says, "And it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend." I really want to be called "God's friend," don't you? Real faith is never alone.

This is such a powerful truth about working faith. James shows faith in three strong contrasting scenes:

He talks about Abraham's faith (vv. 21-24).

He talks about the faith of Rahab, the harlot (v. 25).

He says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead" (v. 26).

## CONCLUSION:

Dear friend, if your religion hasn't changed your life, you need to change your religion.

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "Something Good Is Going to Happen"

Welcome by the Pastor

### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses

"Sanctuary"

"My Jesus, I Love Thee"

"I Will Praise You"

"Shine, Jesus, Shine"

Pastoral Prayer

Preprayer Chorus

"Spirit of the Living God"

Open Altar Invitation

Choir Special

"Majesty"

Congregational Hymn

"Blessed Assurance"

Cultivation of Friendship Cards

### PAYING

Announcements/Offering

Special Song

### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor

"HOW TO RECOGNIZE

DEAD FAITH"

James 2:14-16

## Creative Worship Ideas

### Pastoral Prayer

Above all else, staff or layman, make sure this prayer is a positive affirmation of our faith in the experiences of everyday living.

### Praising

Follow the opening choruses with one or two vital one-minute testimonies of people with present victory that will emphasize the issue of faith.

### Paying

If there is an experience among your people where someone has helped a needy cause, you might lift it up without mentioning the person's name. If this act is a corporate gift by the church, it would be great to praise God about it and challenge the church.

### Preaching

You might especially emphasize the importance of taking notes in that you are dealing with three levels of faith.



## Pontius' Puddle





# OUR DOMINANT DANGER

by W. Donald Wellman

James 3:1-12

October 31, 1993

## INTRO:

What member of your body causes you the most trouble?

ILLUS. I heard about a man who gave his child a penny to go to bed without his supper. Then, in the middle of the night he stole the penny from the child. In the morning, he scolded the child and sent him off to school without breakfast because he had lost the penny.

That's incredible and mean—but, I dare say, not as mean as the tongue is for many of us. "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell" (James 3:6).

This is a subject that is relevant to everyone's mouth. It is sometimes sweet—when we want something. It is sometimes smooth—when we're trying to pull something. It is sometimes sharp—when we haven't gotten our own way. In this passage, James speaks of the tongue in three ways:

## I. Notice the Dominion of the Tongue

James uses three illustrations to show us how the tongue dominates us.

*A. The tongue dominates like a bit.* "When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal" (v. 3). Picture with me a 100-pound lady in total control of a powerful stallion with one small bit in his mouth. Here's the analogy: A few small unkind words can destroy a home, a friendship, a club, a school, or a church.

ILLUS. A few years ago, a young man said to his pastor, "Sir, thank you for loving me in Christ." When the pastor questioned him as to what he meant, the young man said, "You asked me if I was saved, and I said I was not. Then you said, 'You're such a fine man to be lost.'" He went on to say to his pastor, "I have never gotten away from that."

*B. The tongue steers like a rudder.* "Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go" (v. 4). Oh, the power of speech! Your speech! My speech!

ILLUS. When I think of the massive power of speech, two people come to my mind:

First, I think of Dr. Billy Graham and the countless millions of people who have accepted Christ because of his preaching of the gospel. I am reminded of not only his preaching but also his example of an impeccable life.

Then, I think of Adolf Hitler, with his ranting and raving of atheism and cruelty that have helped to damn millions of people.

Oh, the incredible power of speech! The tongue is like a rudder—it can deliver or destroy!

*C. The tongue dominates with its spark.* "Likewise

the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark" (v. 5). James is saying that we should be careful how we use our tongue, for it is like a torch in a forest. A fire doesn't have to be great at its beginning.

ILLUS. Do you know the name Mrs. O'Leary? In 1871 she was milking her cows in her barn in Chicago. All of a sudden, the cow kicked her lantern over, and the hay caught fire. Here is part of what happened—17,450 buildings and essentially all of downtown Chicago burned to the ground. Some 250 lives were lost, and untold millions of dollars were lost. That was the Great Chicago Fire.

James is saying to us, "Words are like a fire." I shudder to think of the lives in hell today who became discouraged, disheartened, and disillusioned within the church by a few words from many good, but careless, people.

ILLUS. Sometime ago, a pastor friend of mine was trying to be friendly with a little boy in his church. A careless bystander misjudged his motives, misquoted his words, and mishandled the situation until the flames became so great the pastor and his family were, for all practical purposes, destroyed.

## II. Notice the Damage of the Tongue

"The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (vv. 6-8). James, the master illustrator, uses several figures of speech:

*A. The tongue corrupts the whole person.* "It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire" (v. 6).

ILLUS. Do you remember back in 1991 when the vast spill and fire in the oil fields of Kuwait was classified as the worst ecological problem? I believe I understand what the reporter meant, but I firmly believe that doesn't compare with the fire that is started by a corrupt tongue.

Many, if not most, of the people pushing free speech want to have the right to pollute the air with their godless humanism.

*B. The tongue sets the whole course of his life on fire.* "It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire" (v. 6).

1. Millions among us, as a regular practice, hellishly, hurtfully, and habitually use their tongues to destroy the lives and influence of others.

"A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire. A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends" (Prov. 16:27-

28).

2. Many times we speak of women as being critical and participating in gossip.

I have met some men who are the worst offenders. It's not gender that determines who loves gossip. It's deep insecurity and a sinful heart.

ILLUS. I heard about a woman who went to the local newspaper office to put an article in the society column. While there, she accidentally leaned back against the wall where there was a freshly painted sign that said, "Daily News." She noticed people looking at her strangely. So, when she got home she asked her husband this question, "Is there anything strange on my back that shouldn't be there?"

He replied, "No."

"If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Gal. 5:15).

C. *The tongue deadens like poison.* "But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (v. 8). "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov. 18:21). When we assassinate someone's character or influence, it's murder!

ILLUS. Dr. A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, said, "I'd rather play with forked lightning and live wires than to speak a reckless word against a servant of God." Have you been guilty of that?

### III. Notice the Contradiction of the Tongue

James found such inconsistencies in the Early Church. Tragically, it is also true today. None of us like it! None of us want it! But our feelings are not strong enough for us to do enough about it.

"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water" (vv. 9-12).

A. *In the natural world, contradiction and inconsistency is impossible.*

ILLUS. A spring doesn't give forth both fresh water and salt water. If a fig tree is a fig tree, it doesn't bear olives. "Neither [does] a salt spring produce fresh water."

B. *In the spiritual world, contradiction and inconsistency is impossible.* James is also saying that what is true of the physical world ought to be true of the spiri-

tual world. Too often we go from "Gossip in the Foyer to Glory in the Sanctuary." Likewise, we go from "Criticism in the Foyer to Creed in the Sanctuary." James indicates that this should not be. My friends, you can't bless God and curse man—and obey God. You say, "I don't do that." But when we criticize our fellowman, we are cursing him in the eyes of God.

ILLUS. Do you know what is the sweetest thing in the world? It's where the power of God is so real in a church that regular people are getting saved and the love of God is so evident that everybody feels it and knows it and gives it freely.

### CONCLUSION:

The dominant danger in the Body of Christ is the tongue. However, where the presence of the Lord is, there is love, peace, and kindness. May His presence infill our very beings. May the words we speak reflect this presence in a way that will bring glory and honor to Christ.

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "How Great Thou Art!"  
Welcome by the Pastor

#### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "Holy Is the Lord"  
"Bless the Name of Jesus"  
"Lord of All"  
"Shine On"

Pastoral Prayer  
Preprayer Chorus "God Is So Good"  
Open Altar Invitation  
Choir Special "He Is Jehovah"  
Congregational Hymn "Our Great Savior"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

#### PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

#### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "OUR DOMINANT DANGER"  
James 3:1-12

#### Creative Worship Ideas

##### Praising

Do all within your power to focus the attention of your people to see the purity and power of God so that they might be conditioned to be honest about themselves.

# THE WORTH OF WISDOM

by W. Donald Wellman

James 3:13-18

November 7, 1993

## INTRO:

I tried to picture James, standing there saying, "Who of you knows the worth of wisdom?" James was saying to these teachers, scholars, and leaders, "Who is wise and understanding among you?"

This passage deals with the potential, practice, and promise of wisdom. James says: "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (3:13-18).

## I. What Is the Potential of Wisdom?

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom" (v. 13). James doesn't say, "Who is a millionaire? Who is an educator? Who is the favorite among you?" The people were looking for a leader, and that search often takes a different direction. James is saying that wisdom is often different from money, degrees, and votes.

- A. *Wisdom is greater than money.*  
*Look at Prov. 3:13-17.*

ILLUS. I recently heard the story of a bank that moved \$7.5 billion from one bank to another. They used an army of 100 policemen to accomplish the move.

Thinking about this, I tried to picture what might have happened if they tried to move a truckload full of wisdom! It will be a great day in our nation, our system, our church, and the personal life of each of us when we really grasp the concept that wisdom is greater than money.

- B. *Wisdom is greater than military power.*  
*Look at Eccles. 9:16-18.*

ILLUS. Do you believe that? Do you know what we need in our government or any leading city, educational system, church, or home? It's men and women who walk in the wisdom and ways of God. One of my favorite biblical passages is 2 Chron. 1:10-13. I pray to God that each of us would follow this admonition!

- C. *Wisdom is greater than mental power.*  
*Look at Prov. 4:4-7.*

ILLUS. It is important to understand that if you have wisdom, you will have knowledge. The reverse is not always true. Knowledge fails if it is not linked to wisdom. Einstein

had knowledge but lacked in wisdom. Do you know why? He did not confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

## II. What Is the Practice of Wisdom?

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom" (v. 13). James is trying to emerge from the abstract to the concrete.

ILLUS. I heard about a man who always talked about how much he loved children. One day some children wrote in his wet concrete. He was angry! He was furious! Someone said, "I thought you loved children."

He said, "I do! I love them in the abstract, not in the concrete." Many people love wisdom in the same way.

### A. *James explains wisdom positively.*

1. It's not so much how clever your mind is, but how good your heart is. James said that if you are wise, you'll show it by your works.
2. Seat belts are necessary for this phrase: "Who is wise and understanding among you? *Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom*" (v. 13, italics added).

There is no such thing as "arrogant wisdom." The etymology of the word "wisdom" suggests "level." "Meekness" prevents us from having to look up or down. We can look everyone straight in the face!

### B. *James explains wisdom negatively.* Verses 14-16 uncover three very profound truths about wisdom.

1. "But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth" (v. 14). James says that truth will reveal itself. In other words, why deny it and make it worse! Truth will come out.
2. James speaks of the "origin of it." "Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil" (v. 15).
3. James indicates that the "outcome is unmistakable." "For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice" (v. 16).

Have you ever been in a crowd or a congregation where there is no peace, joy, or tranquillity?

## III. What Is the Promise of Wisdom?

"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (vv. 17-18). These two verses promise five things that all of us need.

- A. *Godly wisdom is pure.* If you have this wisdom, the basis or foundation of it all is pure. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:8).

*B. Godly wisdom is peace-loving.* Strife, for the pure in heart, is not present. Certainly, there can be confusion, inferiority, and emotional conflict, but not heart conflict.

*C. Godly wisdom is prudent.* It is easy to be considerate and more interested in unity than uniformity. Do you know what "gentle" (KJV) means? It means "a deep-seated desire to fit into a right situation."

**ILLUS.** On one occasion, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln was attending an elegant dinner with some elegant people. He was seated, however, next to a man who was not so elegant. The dear, not so elegant man took his cup of coffee and poured it into the saucer. President Lincoln was so concerned that the man feel comfortable and fit in, that he did likewise—he poured his own coffee from the cup to the saucer.

*D. Godly wisdom is pliant.* Wisdom is "full of mercy and good fruit" (v. 17). Someone has said, "There's no life so empty as a self-centered life. And there's no life so self-centered as an empty life."

*E. Godly wisdom is patient.* Verse 17 also says, "Impartial"—"without partiality" (KJV). It is sincere. James 2:2-4 is a classic illustration of partiality and favoritism.

## CONCLUSION:

The capstone of this entire message is found in the verse: "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (v. 18). I have tried to ponder two vital facts about the brand of wisdom about which James is talking:

1. How does God see us as His people?
2. What can we do about making godly wisdom *our* kind of wisdom?

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "My Eternal King"  
Welcome by the Pastor

## PRaising AND PRaying

Praise Choruses "I Will Enter His Gates"  
"Praise You"  
"Tis So Sweet"  
"Cast All Your Cares"

Pastoral Prayer  
Preprayer Chorus "I Love You, Lord"  
Open Altar Invitation  
Choir Special "How Firm a Foundation"  
Congregational Hymn "He Leadeth Me"  
Cultivation of Friendship Cards

## PAYING

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

## PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "THE WORTH OF WISDOM"  
James 3:13-18

## Creative Worship Ideas

### Praising

Make this a strong 10-12 minutes of single verses of hymns and appropriate choruses stressing the importance of God's wisdom in our lives.

Is there a person in your congregation who stands out for his spiritual wisdom and sensitivity? If so, use him to lift God up in testimony to emphasize this vital subject.

### Preaching

Before the special song and sermon, use the wisest, kindest person in your congregation to share an experience of how God gave him the right way of handling a sensitive situation that produced either a conversion or a restoration of someone.



# VICTORIOUS PRAYER

by W. Donald Wellman

James 4:1-10

November 14, 1993

## INTRO:

If there's one thing we need to do, it is to learn how to pray effectively. We need to learn how to link our lives with the omnipotent God!

1. We don't have a failure in our lives but that failure in prayer is related.
2. We don't have a sin in our lives but that which could be prevented through prayer.
3. We don't have a need in our lives but that prayer would make the difference.

Verses 1 and 2 emphasize this fact by showing us that the personal and interpersonal problems that come our way are a direct result of prayerlessness. "You do not ask God." God doesn't move into the arena of our lives except as we really pray.

ILLUS. A little boy was trying to move a big stone. When his daddy walked up to him, he asked, "Son, have you used all the strength you have?"

The boy replied that he had.

"But," his father said, "would you like me to help you?"

Doesn't that sound like you and me? Do you know that prayerlessness is a sin?

Verses 3 and 4 drive home this point. The core of much of confusion and disappointment in our prayer lives stems from a motivation that is selfish and an association that is sinful. There is no way we can have a meaningful prayer life with a relationship that is scheming, conniving, and spiritually adulterous.

Verses 5-10 deal with principles that give promise to a productive prayer life.

## I. We Must Be Responsive to the Spirit

I love Phillips' translation: "Do you think what the scriptures have to say about this is a mere formality? Do you imagine that this spirit of passionate jealousy is the Spirit he has caused to live in us?" (v. 5).

*A. Prayer is a relationship.* When our relationship to God is as it ought to be, we will experience a productive prayer life. It is not difficult to see through that puzzle. The Bible tells us that God is a jealous God and that we must be quick to respond to receive maximum benefit.

*B. God requires preeminence.* God doesn't want merely "a place" in your life. He doesn't even want "prominence" in your life. He will only accept preeminence. Do you want your prayers answered? Respond to the Holy Spirit.

## II. We Must Be Respectful to the Father

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (v. 6). Without intent to be disrespectful, our prayers are, "Not Thy will, but mine, be done."

*A. Prayer is not talking God into doing something*

*He doesn't want to do.*

*B. Prayer is not bending God's will to fit our will.* Prayer is discovering God's will and getting into it.

Look again at the opening words of the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-10). Much of the time our problem is that we come strutting into the presence of God, showing Him our wisdom and our desires.

When we lean on Jesus' Lordship, we begin to pull on the lever that opens the floodgates of God's perfect will.

## III. We Must Be Resistant to the Devil

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (v. 7). About the most courageous we ever become is to say, "Oh, Satan, leave me alone!" But Jesus has promised us authority over Satan. The Bible has a wonderful promise to each of us: "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4, KJV).

*A. Satan wages war against us.* Have you ever wondered why Satan hates us? He does not really hate you or me as much as he hates God. The question is, "How can you hurt someone whom you cannot possibly hurt?" You hurt someone that person loves. Do you get the picture? Satan hates God so much that the only way that he can get to Him is through us.

*B. God wins triumph for us.* How does God intend to win this war? In partnership with the prayers of His people. God responds with His omnipotence to our prayers.

1. The truth is that the devil doesn't care where I preach or what I preach.

2. The devil doesn't care who sings or how many times he sings.

His only real concern is that we leave out our urgent and persistent prayers.

## IV. We Must Remove Ourselves from All Sinfulness

"Come near to God and he will come near to you" (v. 8). It's not, "If you clean up your life, God will accept you." The truth is, "There's no real cleaning up of your life until you come to God!" God makes clear to us that if we come near to Him, He not only will come near to us but also will cleanse our hearts (see v. 8).

James is saying, "If we want our prayers answered, we cannot come to God with dirty hands, divided hearts, or a double mind." "Whosoever [is] a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (v. 4, KJV).

Is there some unrepented sin in your life? Until you confess, forsake, and make restitution for it, you will never be accepted by God.

The Bible says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18, KJV).

## V. We Must Come to God with a Resolute Purpose

"Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom" (v. 9). Too often our prayers are light, halfhearted, and soon forgotten. We need to weep before the Lord. God's Word says in Isaiah 38 that Hezekiah turned his face to God in agony, and God answered.

As God makes it clear throughout His Word, when He sees our penitent tears and hears our prayers, He will answer. Tragically, we have plenty of organizers and few agonizers. When was the last time we agonized over a person who was mortgaged for hell?

### CONCLUSION:

James said, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16, KJV).

Let us be:

- Responsive to the Spirit
- Respectful to the Father
- Resistant to the devil
- Remove ourselves from all sin
- Resolute in our purpose



### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "We Are Standing on Holy Ground"

Welcome by the Pastor

### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "I Will Enter His Gates"  
"Wonderful Peace"  
"I Just Feel like Something Good Is Going to Happen"  
"Sanctuary"

Pastoral Prayer

Preprayer Chorus "Alleluia, Alleluia"

Open Altar Invitation

Choir Special "I Must Tell Jesus"

Congregational Hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

Cultivation of Friendship Cards

### PAYING

Announcements/Offering

Special Song

### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "VICTORIOUS PRAYER"  
James 4:1-10

### Creative Worship Ideas

#### Pastoral Prayer

One of the most intimate and meaningful ways we pray is when the entire congregation, during the last chorus, moves into small circles of prayer by holding hands.

This gives a togetherness that is difficult to achieve with a large crowd. To make this successful, encourage everyone to move into these groups while they are standing and singing. Even shy visitors will respond to this encouragement. Once this catches on, it is easy to do anytime.

#### Praising

Tie all the music from the choir's opening song throughout the hymns and choruses into one unbroken experience. If the opening choir number is a familiar hymn, at least one verse of it could be repeated by the congregation.



# BOASTING ABOUT TOMORROW

by W. Donald Wellman

James 4:13-17

November 21, 1993

## INTRO:

The man who says there is no God is a fool! The bigger fool is the one who says there is a God but does not live as though he believes it. In this passage, James deals with those who talk about God but who do not walk with God. They are procrastinators. They are, in reality, con artists. You might say, "This man was a successful failure." I want you to notice three things about this passage, James 4:13-17.

## I. There Is the Promise You Should Never Make

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money'" (v. 13). The Bible says that "ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:13, KJV).

*A. The foolish man determined the duration.* James speaks of the man who looked at his calendar and said, in essence, "For the next 52 weeks this is what I'm going to do." On the surface, that sounds harmless. However, the Bible says, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6, KJV).

*B. The foolish man determined the destination.* Most successful Christians I know would have, humanly, chosen a different direction for their lives than God chose for them. It is a presumptuous and often devastating decision to choose our own way. Step forward a moment and ponder this phrase: "Lord, what is it and where is it You would want me to give my life?"

*C. The foolish man determined his direction.* He's going to buy! He's going to sell! He's going to be a merchant. He no doubt has studied charts, the *Wall Street Journal* of his day, and, with a marketing degree from Jerusalem University, he was well-equipped.

*D. The foolish man determined the dividends.* With him, it seemed to be projects and not prayer. It's true, both are important. However, unless genuine prayer carefully precedes projects, we could well end up in the pits! There is nothing wrong with profits if they are within the will or plan of God.

## II. There Is the Promise You Should Always Take

James is saying here, "You don't know where you will be or if you will be." James says that your life is but a mist that appears for a little while and then is gone.

ILLUS. Someone has described the heartbeat as a muffled drum, beating out a funeral march. About 30 million people die per year; 86,400 per day. You may have it figured out this way: "At 94 years old, you'll feel a slight pain, and it's all over." But chances are it will not happen that way.

*A. We often take the unbiblical position.* Most of us count on having tomorrow. That position is clearly unbiblical.

*B. We should always embrace the biblical premise.* You say, "Well, then, how shall I function regarding tomorrow?"

1. We need to live as though this is our last day!
2. I need to preach as a "dying man" to "dying people"!
3. You need to listen as though this were the last sermon you'll ever hear!

Are you saved? Can you say from your heart, "If I were to die today, I know I would be in heaven?"

## III. There Is the Posture You Must Never Forsake

"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (v. 17). What was the sin of the man who boasted about tomorrow? You can do wrong by doing wrong. You can also do wrong by not doing right.

Look again at verse 17. Do you know what is right for your life? God is saying to us, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (KJV).

*A. Many people do not see themselves as sinners.* Many people are good people, respectable businessmen, and decent moms and dads. But James is saying to us that "to omit is to commit." It's not a matter of how good you are! The issue is, "Have you accepted Jesus as Savior?"

*B. Many people leave God out of their lives.* Man's greatest sin is leaving God out of his life. It's faith in Jesus Christ alone that will save you.

ILLUS. Have you ever seen the little card that says:

"What must I do to be saved?"

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

"What must I do to be lost?"

Nothing!

You say, "Pastor, what do I have to do to be lost?" The answer is, "Stay as you are! Leave God out of your life!" James said, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (v. 17).

## CONCLUSION:

The bottom line question is, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?" You say, "I haven't opposed Him!" However, have you "espoused" Him? You may resent this, but I believe the Lord would rather we be out-and-out against Him than to not be out-and-out for Him! I wouldn't want to live 24 hours without knowing Christ as Savior.

The question is, "Will you accept Jesus today?"

### **SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Choral Call to Worship "All Hail, King Jesus"  
Welcome by the Pastor

### **PRAISING AND PRAYING**

Praise Choruses "I Will Call upon the Lord"  
"House of the Lord"  
"He's Real to Me"  
"I Will Enter His Gates"

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Preprayer Chorus "We Are One in the Bond of Love"  
Open Altar Invitation

Choir Special "Because He Lives"  
Congregational Hymn "Glory to His Name"

Cultivation of Friendship Cards

### **PAYING**

Announcements/Offering  
Special Song

### **PREACHING**

Message by the Pastor "BOASTING  
ABOUT TOMORROW"  
James 4:13-17

## **Creative Worship Ideas**

### ***Praising and Praying***

One of the experiences we did for several years that became very meaningful was gearing one Sunday evening service each month toward a healing time.

This service began with music, both congregational as well as special music, with the theme of healing and faith.

After people who wished to be anointed came to the altar, then the pastor, staff, church board, and those who strongly believed in healing would gather around them. An ensemble or soloist would then sing a song that supported the prayer of faith.

The anointing and praying would proceed.

Following this time of praying, we would all stand and sing a song of thanksgiving unto God.



"YES, I REALIZE ITS BEEN THREE DAYS...  
OUR PATIENT DETECTOR RADAR SYSTEM  
MUST HAVE MALFUNCTIONED."

# HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE SINNERS

by W. Donald Wellman

James 5:16-18

November 28, 1993

## INTRO:

Do you think it is possible to overstate prayer? Andrew Murray said, "God works only in answer to our prayers. It is prayer that will change our natural strength into supernatural strength." Dr. R. A. Torrey said, "Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God." Let's put it this way: "When we depend on real prayer, we get what God can do."

Do you know what our world needs? It needs what God can do to our hearts, our homes, and our church! I don't have any problems but what can be solved by prayer. He will show us, guide us, and give us the where-withal to solve them.

James has several recurring themes in this passage. One of them is prayer. Let me suggest to you three things:

## I. Admit Your Need

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (v. 16). How good are you at confession? Does it come easy? Are our confessions real and complete?

1. We're not bad at concealing our faults.
2. We're not too slow in castigating our foes.
3. We're quite proficient at criticizing our friends.

Someone has said, "To err is human and so is to cover up."

The history of great revivals is marked with confession. I'll never forget what one evangelist said in a Sunday morning service at Denver First Church of the Nazarene: "What price would you pay for unity?"

But let me suggest another question: "What price would you pay for a loved one to find God?"

These questions are closely related. Think of the things that take place when we confess our faults: restoration, reconciliation, revival, renewal.

ILLUS. Several years ago at an Asbury College chapel service, they began to confess their faults, and the Spirit of God broke in like a tornado. The students made restitution, the faculty made restitution, the administrators made restitution, and God brought revival! Revival that crossed denominational lines, state lines, national lines. It took about 10 years for that revival happening to cool off!

When confession replaces criticism and compassion replaces condemnation, healing of all kinds will begin to take place! That's the promise in verse 16. Listen carefully. The circle of confession needs to follow the circle of sin:

"Private Sin = Private Confession!"

"Public Sin = Public Confession!"

Step one: "Admit your need."

## II. Accept Your Friend

"Pray for each other" (v. 16). Luke wrote,

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'"

For "some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8).

ILLUS. This little illustration may make us laugh, but its message is so true!

A little girl heard the choir sing "God Is Still on the Throne." When she got home, she told her mother that the choir sang "God Is Still on the Phone."

There is a hot line to God that is never busy! He can talk to all of us at any time.

Some people have the idea that praying is getting ready for Christian service. Not true! I serve God more when I pray than at any other time. We can do more after we pray; however, we can do no more than pray until we pray.

God is saying, "Pray one for another. Confess your sin to one another that you may be healed."

## III. Acknowledge Your God

James holds up Elijah, with whom we can identify. "Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years" (v. 17). What God did for Elijah, He wants to do for us.

One of the great acknowledgments of man toward God is found in 1 Kings 18:42-46. This scripture deals with some great truths I want you to see.

A. *Notice the man of prayer.* Elijah was "a man of like passions" (v. 17, ASV)! He was a prophet, but not perfect. That ought to offer hope to all of us!

B. *Notice the moment of prayer.* "Ahab went off to

eat and drink" (1 Kings 18:42). However, "Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel" and prayed! Which are we best at doing—eating or praying?

*C. Notice the manner of prayer.* After Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, he "bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees" (v. 42). He was "bent down," "broken"! Is it any wonder why Elijah was so bold? When we are "bent," "broken," and "bowed down," we are not far from boldness!

*D. Notice the mood of prayer.* It is evident from verse 42 that, for Elijah, it was an impassioned mood!

*E. Notice the monotony of his prayer.* Elijah would not give up. He told his servant again and again, "Go and look toward the sea" (v. 43). Finally when he looked the seventh time, God had come through! When Jesus says, "Ask," He means "Keep on asking!" When Jesus says, "Seek," He means "Keep on seeking"! When Jesus says, "Knock," He means "Keep on knocking"! (See Matt. 7:7, Amp.)

Are you willing to pray that way?

*F. Notice the might of his prayer.* The powerful answer that came to Elijah's prayer is described: "Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on" (v. 45).

## CONCLUSION:

Nothing lies beyond the reach of real prayer. As we close, let's ponder the words of James: "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (4:2).

## SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Choral Call to Worship "How Firm a Foundation"  
Welcome by the Pastor

### PRAISING AND PRAYING

Praise Choruses "How Majestic Is Your Name"  
"Great and Mighty"  
"At Calvary"  
"People Need the Lord"

### Pastoral Prayer

Preprayer Chorus "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"  
Open Altar Invitation

Choir Special "Majesty"

Congregational Hymn "It Is Well with My Soul"

Cultivation of Friendship Cards

### PAYING

Announcements/Offering

Special Song

### PREACHING

Message by the Pastor "HOW TO WIN FRIENDS  
AND INFLUENCE SINNERS"  
James 5:16-18

## Creative Worship Ideas

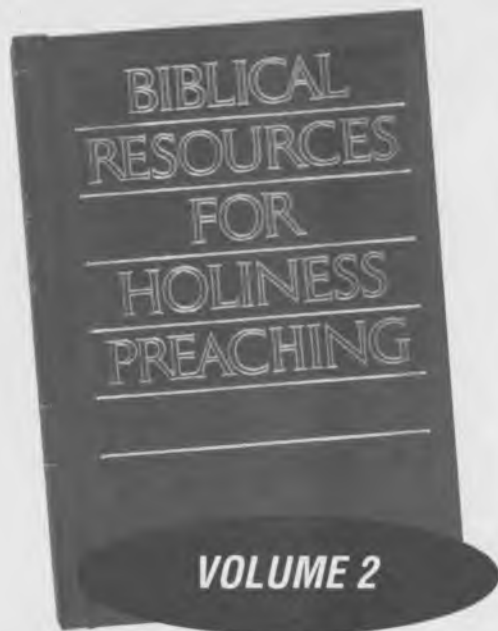
### Membership

For 35 of my 38 years as a pastor, I have done the typical ceremony of bringing the new members forward, reading the appropriate portion of the *Manual*, and receiving their responses. My assistants, laymen or staff, would then escort one family at a time to the pulpit, where I would give a brief biographical sketch of them. They would then be welcomed into the full membership of the church.

For the past three years, I have changed my program a bit. After a personal interview and training of each person with the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, I have used the middle of the praise portion of the service and called the person or persons to the altar. Then I introduce them to the congregation and ask them to greet the new members with a warm welcome, and the praise time then continues.

The strong part of this is the very visible statement to our largest gathering. I can receive people more often without taking 15-20 minutes of the services as in my previous way.

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