



# *Drink Offering*

Yes, Lord,  
I said  
That I would be  
As wine poured forth  
Upon Thine  
Altar.

But I did not  
Anticipate  
That pouring forth  
Would be complete -  
The emptying  
Of the full cup.

Upon Thine altar -  
What a place  
For dregs to flow  
And uncrushed grapes  
To show so clearly  
In the liquid life  
I gave Thee there.

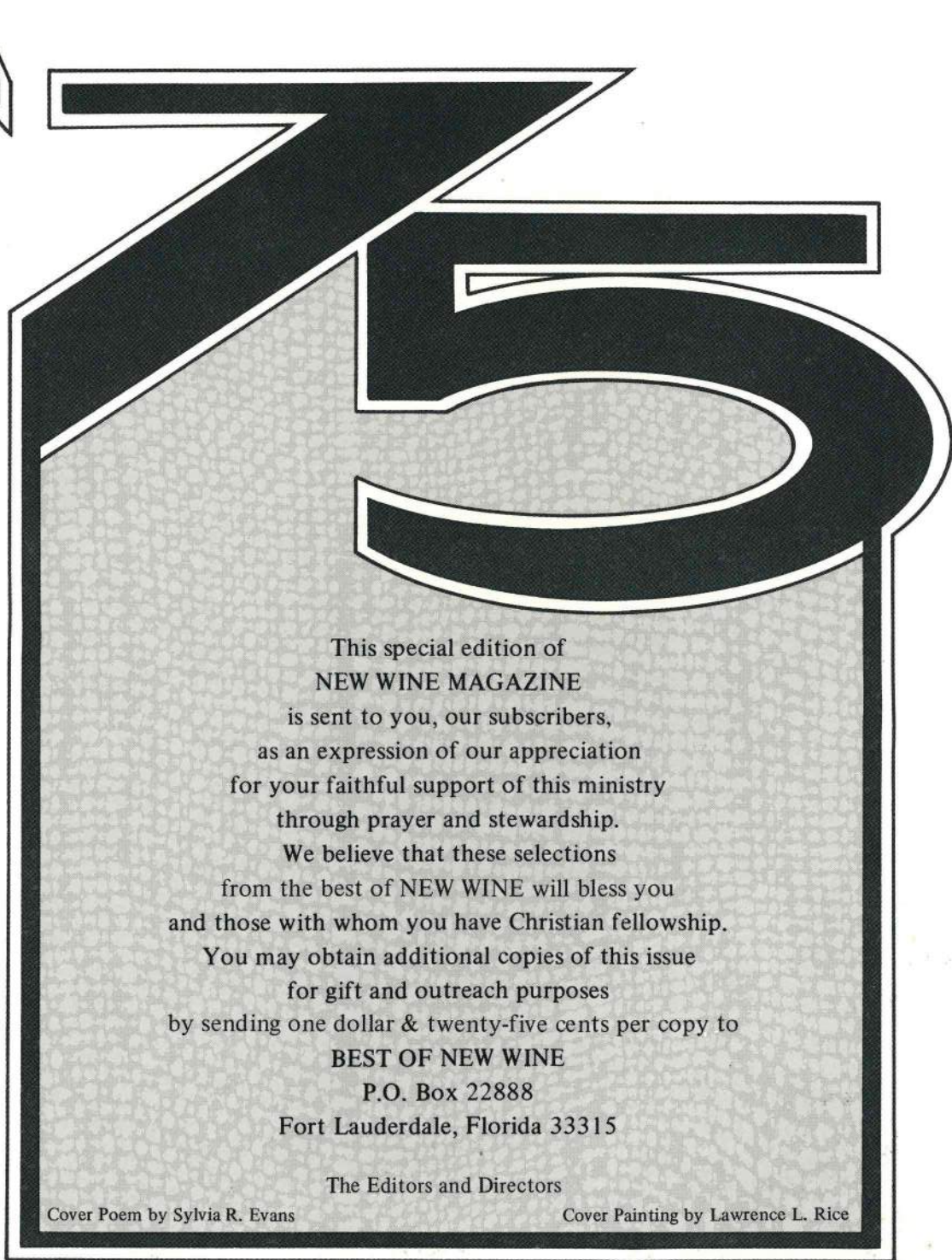
No effort that I made  
Could gather up  
The total life outpoured  
And put it back into the cup.  
You saw it, Lord,  
In all its imperfection,  
Though I turned to run  
From priests and  
Sanctifiers.

I did not know  
Their ministry of  
Crushing grapes  
Mistakenly  
Poured out  
Upon Your altar  
Would crush me, too.  
But they are Thine,  
With Task divine,  
And Thine is my  
New Wine.

Sylvia R. Evans

*The Best of 1975*





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1975*





# new wine


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# LEARNING A NEW WAY TO LIVE

by Charles Simpson

**When we choose the kingdom of God, we choose a new life-style.**

"Change me, Lord . . . conform me to Your image . . . I want to be like You . . ." We often pray this dangerous prayer.

In order to be changed, we must be flexible in His hands. Perhaps this is why Jesus said, "Let the little children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14, NAS). Children are pliable and teachable. To live under God's government we must become again like little children. We must be born again and grow up in God's ways. There must continue to be a youth-like flexibility and adventuresome attitude as we grow.

God has a promised land for the church as He did for Israel. There is a land of righteousness, peace and joy. The land of promise is victory in this life. Under the lordship of Jesus, Christians can rule over their circumstances and manifest Christ in this world. The writer of Hebrews states it this way:

And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard . . . There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. (Hebrews 3:17-19; 4:1-2, 9-10, NAS).

If Christians will walk in faith and obedience to the direction of God and His delegated leadership (as was Moses), they will be led into a place of rest from their own works, cares and enemies. Coming under authority brings rest. The one (or ones) to whom you submit assumes responsibility for your protection and provision before God (as did Moses). Though one submitted to authority will do the works of obedience, yet it is not laborious or burdensome.

Jesus invited people to accept His government by saying, "My yoke is easy . . ." It was a binding commitment, but He bore the responsibilities of those under His government.

Several years ago a young friend was led to me for training. I believed that it was the Lord that led him, though I put him off in order to try his commitment. Finally, he drove several hundred miles to see me. He laid the matter squarely on the line. He wanted to be under my oversight.

"Well, I've laid it before you," he said somewhat relieved. "From now on I'm *your* problem." He entered into rest. I felt the responsibility before God, as it fell upon my shoulders, to lead him into the ways of God as far as I had been, and would be led. There is a rest for all of us as we find the will of God under Jesus' lordship. The young man has since gone forth into a rich harvest.

The children of Israel cried by

reason of their taskmasters, who afflicted them. They had labored under Egyptian enslavement without profit, peace or joy. They had experienced the deprivation of bad government. God chose Moses to lead them into a land of abundance and rest. He had prepared a land for them. However, between Egypt and Canaan were many obstacles and dangers. In order to make Moses a qualified leader He had to prepare him in the wilderness through which Israel would travel. For forty years Moses was in the wilderness. During those forty years Moses learned a new way to live. He had been trained in Egypt — in the palace, no less. He had been faithful in carnal wisdom, now God would teach him spiritual wisdom. God would not allow Canaan to be a "new Egypt" with Egyptian ways. In order to prevent that, God would have to wash Moses of "Egyptianism" and teach him to trust God and be disciplined by God.

In the wilderness, Moses had to get over the bitterness of rejection; he had to survive the barrenness of the land. He had to trust the Lord for provision; he had to adjust to a radically different life-style. No doubt he was unaware that he was being disciplined to lead millions through the same paths. "He was the first born among many brethren."

One of the most significant differences in Moses' life-style was that he became a "pastor," a shepherd of some sheep. He had not done that before. In Egypt Moses had learned to be an "overlord." Now, he would learn to lead by example. Sheep were strange to Moses, though his fore-



fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been shepherds. For forty years he learned the ways of shepherds and sheep.

### MOSES RECEIVES THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Hebrews 4:2 tells us that they (Israel) had the gospel preached to them — the good news. Moses preached it to them. Where did Moses get it?

Higher and higher Moses led the flock up the side of the mountain. The cool mountain air bathed his body and each breath brought exhilaration. Moses looked and felt much less than his eighty years as he viewed the rocky canyons and expansive plains. For forty years he had made his home in the palaces of Egypt. Now, forty years had been completed in the wilderness and nomadic tents. Proud Moses, strong Moses, brilliant Moses, had become meek Moses, disciplined under the reins of God. To Moses, this was just another day. The zeal and youthful enthusiasm had long passed into memory. But on God's calendar it was a special day. Moses was prepared, restrained, matured and disciplined.

Suddenly the bush blazed up in a fiery profusion. Moses, not easily excited anymore, walked by with hardly a turn of his head. Walking further, he looked expecting a scorched branch, but no, the bush was still burning.

"Hmnn . . . I'll turn back and take a closer look at this marvelous sight and see why the bush is not burned up."

Out of the fire came the voice, "Moses, Moses." Moses trembled in amazement and holy fear.

"Here I am . . ."

"Pull off your shoes, you are on holy ground!" Moses fell prostrate as God began to declare the good news.

God's message contained four essential points. First, He was the covenant-making-and-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — the same then as ever. Second, He was aware of the affliction of His people in Egypt. Third, He had come down to bring deliverance. His deliverance would not

only get them *out of* Egypt but *into* a large land flowing with milk and honey. However, He warned Moses that the land was presently occupied by giants. The fourth emphasis in this encounter was that God would use Moses to bring deliverance. The last point was accompanied by some persuasion.

Finally, Moses went off to Egypt with the assurance that "I AM" was with him, the God who gave no name, but was the only God eternal. Moses represented the kingdom of God to the kingdom of Egypt. Though outnumbered, Moses was in the majority. He had "good news" for Israel, bad news for Egypt.

In Exodus 3:16 Moses was told to gather the elders and deliver the gospel to them. It is significant that God instructed Moses to honor Israel's leaders. Moses did not go directly to the people. If he had done so the elders would have been bypassed and their office weakened. No doubt the eldership left a lot to be desired, having been for so many years enslaved. Nevertheless, God honored them and began while they were yet in Egypt to recognize the emerging government.

### A CONTEST OF KINGDOMS

It would have been easy if Moses could have simply declared, "Let my people go!" and Pharaoh could have said, "Yes, I understand; of course they can all leave at once."

Slaves are not so easily freed. There was a contest as to who would govern God's people. So it is. After Moses convinced the Israelites, Pharaoh had yet to be convinced.

First, God instructed Moses to perform three sign miracles. They had no other purpose than to show God's presence with Moses. However, the magicians and pagan sorcerers of Egypt also did signs. Pharaoh hardened his heart and tightened his grip on Israel. He increased their burdens. Many Israelites grew angry at Moses because of Pharaoh's response. It usually gets worse before it gets better. Kingdom gospel is a direct challenge to

the powers of darkness and will result in a declaration of war.

When Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, He also did signs. All hell broke loose against Him. He said:

If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. When a strong *man* fully armed guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder (Luke 11:20-22, NAS).

Jesus bound Satan, took away his armor, plundered his house and released the captives. Moses would have to do the same thing. It was war — supernatural war to the death. One plague after another was unleashed in a supernatural battle. Evangelism is not only telling the good news, it is having the spiritual artillery to bring deliverance from Satan's bondage. In the Scriptures, miracles and evangelism go hand in hand. Miracles are not incidental to deliverance, but necessary weapons in a life and death situation.

### HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

The final plague was the death of all the firstborn in Egypt, whose fathers did not observe God's instruction. God meant business in the release of His firstborn to accomplish His purpose.

Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their father's households, a lamb for a household (Exodus 12:3, NAS).

In delivering Israel out of Egypt, Moses had to do more than conquer Egypt, he had to establish Israel. God had promised to pass over every Israelite home in the night of judgment, and spare their first born son if they observed the sacrifice. That night Israel learned something about the grace of God, just as Egypt learned the severity of God. Israel learned something about substitutionary



atonement. The lambs had died for their sons. Many lessons and fore-shadows of Calvary were learned in that crucial time. Those lessons were learned in the home. God in His divine wisdom used that time of judgment to regather the family out of slavery — around the lamb. He reestablished the family in its relationship to God and each other. The blood of the lamb was applied to the doorposts. It was not simply an individual's testimony — it was a family testimony. Christ in the home — Christ covering the home. The unleavened bread represented the honesty of Christ — a guileless family relationship. The bitter herbs represented family repentance. The family arose and dressed for the journey at midnight. This represented spiritual preparedness in the family.

That night when Israel began its long pilgrimage to a new land, it was not just a large number of *individuals* who went forth, it was a large group of *families*. Even in the very beginnings of redemption and salvation God was preparing them in His ways of government. The Scripture teaches household salvation. A believing member can be used to sanctify the whole family to God's purpose (1 Corinthians 7:12-14).

### LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father (Galatians 4:1,2 NAS).

Israel had been in slavery. The fact that the people were now freed slaves did not mean they were mature. God appointed a governor who had travelled the wilderness road to lead them to maturity. Then, God established certain rules. Children have to be led by certain "do's" and "don't's." Every government must have laws. Shortly after God led Israel out of Egypt, He introduced them to the constitution. These ten commands all had to do with relationships. As immature, Egyptianized slaves, their biggest problem would be how to

exercise their new-found freedom within the framework of relationships. They were free, but it was to be a responsible freedom. "*Thou shalt not . . .*" the finger of God wrote. "*Thou shalt . . .*" it continued. These were not mere suggestions.

The first four commandments had to do with relating to God. One's relationship to God is the cornerstone of all other relationships. The fifth command had to do with how to relate in the family. One's relationship to the Heavenly Father will be immediately reflected in parental honor. The sixth through tenth commandments have to do with community relationships — the extension of family life. Without family, community has no source and no standard for holy relationships. Whatever families are, communities will become.

The covenant that God established with Moses on Sinai was by no means His first covenant with man. God had covenanted with Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God had been dealing with man on the basis of faith for centuries. Some of these men had known great maturity and close fellowship. Enoch walked so close to God that he was translated by faith so that he should not see death. However, Israel had long been deprived of spiritual food. They were "carnal," immature and rebellious; hence, legalism was necessary. A mature walk in the Spirit will soon lead a people out of legalism into the law of the Spirit of Christ. Grace, service, mutual love and honor of leadership then becomes a matter of conviction by the Holy Spirit. Only when that happens can the heirs of the kingdom inherit the kingdom responsibility.

### PROBLEMS OF THE WILDERNESS

When Israel saw Pharaoh's armies drowned in the sea, they rejoiced with great joy. To many, the battle seemed won. They had been redeemed by the blood, baptized in water and Spirit and were "out of Egypt." Many Christians came through similar experiences believing that they have

arrived in Canaan. Actually, Israel had only gotten to the wilderness. The wilderness was yet to be crossed.

Getting Israel out of Egypt was the easy part. Getting "Egypt" out of Israel was the hard part. God had to change their ways before bringing them into a new land. The wilderness would bring the refining process. Only those who can adjust to God's ways would make the destination.

It was a mixed multitude that came out with Moses. Many who came were not bonafide Israelites. Many of them had no desire to serve God, but only to get away from Egypt. While they were varied in background and motive, they all rejoiced in the drowning of Egypt's army. They all sang a new song. Miriam led the ladies in a dance with timbrels and music. They certainly seemed united in one spirit. Only the on-coming trials would reveal their true motives and commitments. In less than three days they were grumbling because of the water shortage, murmuring against Moses' leadership and longing to go back to Egypt. These were the people who had been redeemed, baptized, delivered and who had had a miracle every morning for breakfast. They knew God's acts, but constantly rebelled against His ways (Psalm 103:7). Only those who learned His ways entered the land.

There are several problems that Israel faced in the wilderness, which newly Spirit-filled people will inevitably face. *One is the unity problem.* They looked so united as they came up out of the water. The Spirit of unity had come upon them. It's one thing to have the Holy Spirit of unity — quite another thing to be united in the Holy Spirit. All spiritual people desire unity. Unity is the Holy Spirit's desire. But refining is required to make it a reality. It's one thing to be united in the *problems* from whence we came, quite another to be united in the *purpose* to which we are committed.

"I was delivered from narcotics," says one.

"Praise the Lord! I was delivered from alcohol, Brother."



"I love you," another chimes in.

"My church was dead, now I've been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Praise the Lord!"

"Me too, brother. I understand! Isn't it wonderful to be one in the Spirit!"

A few months go by. The testimonies have been rehearsed over many times. A unity in past problems and testimonies must now give way to the Lord's leading in a daily walk and common goals.

"Say Brother, you know I was praying recently and God seemed to say to me that we should . . ."

"Oh, Brother, I don't believe that's right! I feel led that we should . . ."

"I rebuke you devil!"

What happened to the unity? If unity is to be achieved it must be based on a common vision — the kingdom of God, first.

Closely related to the *unity problem* is the *leadership problem*. Unity is the result of recognizing leadership and vision. From Moses' first attempt to help his fellow Israelites their question was, "Who made you a prince and judge over us?" (Exodus 2:14). Time after time there was a leadership crisis. Moses had been prepared eighty years, approved by God supernaturally and had the vision of leadership. Nevertheless, time after time God had to confirm Moses' leadership through bitter lessons. God's kingdom functions by delegated authority. Even when Moses abused his authority (by striking the rock the second time) God still honored him before the people. Privately, God dealt severely with Moses in personal discipline. More than any other reason, the first wilderness generation was denied entrance to Canaan because of disobedience to leadership. (See Hebrews 3 and 4). The kingdom of God is not a democracy. (See Numbers 14:4).

Another problem is *wilderness peril*. The wilderness is not domesticated. When one enters the spiritual realm, he enters the realm where many other spirits operate besides the Holy Spirit. In the wilderness there were snakes, scorpions, dry places and temperature extremes. The wilderness is no place to

play games or conduct your own private expedition. You need leadership and fellowship.

After entering the charismatic dimension, I soon discovered that Satan also was a spiritual being. Everything categorized as Holy Spirit, wasn't Holy Spirit. The discerning of spirits was not a luxury, but a necessity.

In the desert, it gets real hot and real cold in one twelve-hour period.

"Oh praise God, hallelujah! Jesus is wonderful! I'll never go back! Take all I have, Lord! I feel warm all over! Whew, wow!"

". . . God? Where are you? Oh, He's left me . . . I feel so cold. Lord, nobody cares about me . . . I don't know, is this really real? Down in the vaaallegeyy." The roller coaster syndrome.

I used to think Israel was so spiritual. They got up each morning and looked up at the cloud . . . the trumpets blew and they piously folded their hands.

"The cloud is moving brothers, let us follow it."

It wasn't that way. It gets 160 degrees out in that desert. If *you* found a low, slow-moving cloud you'd follow it too. You can fry in the daytime and freeze at night — unless you *follow* the Spirit.

Another wilderness problem was what I call, *getting to know you*. It's one thing to get baptized with people, it's another thing to walk the Christian walk with them. Soon you get to know how *they* really are and how *you* really are. In Egypt you weren't bothered with that — you were too busy building pyramids. Now, you're a babe in God's nursery with a lot of other babes.

"I didn't know he was like that. He seemed like such a mature person. He took my toys."

I can hear Paul say, "From henceforth I'll know no man after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 5:16). There's coming a time when we will really get to know one another beyond our religious terminology and grow up together. Knowing one another, yet we will love one another with Christ's love.

## LEARNING TO TRUST GOD

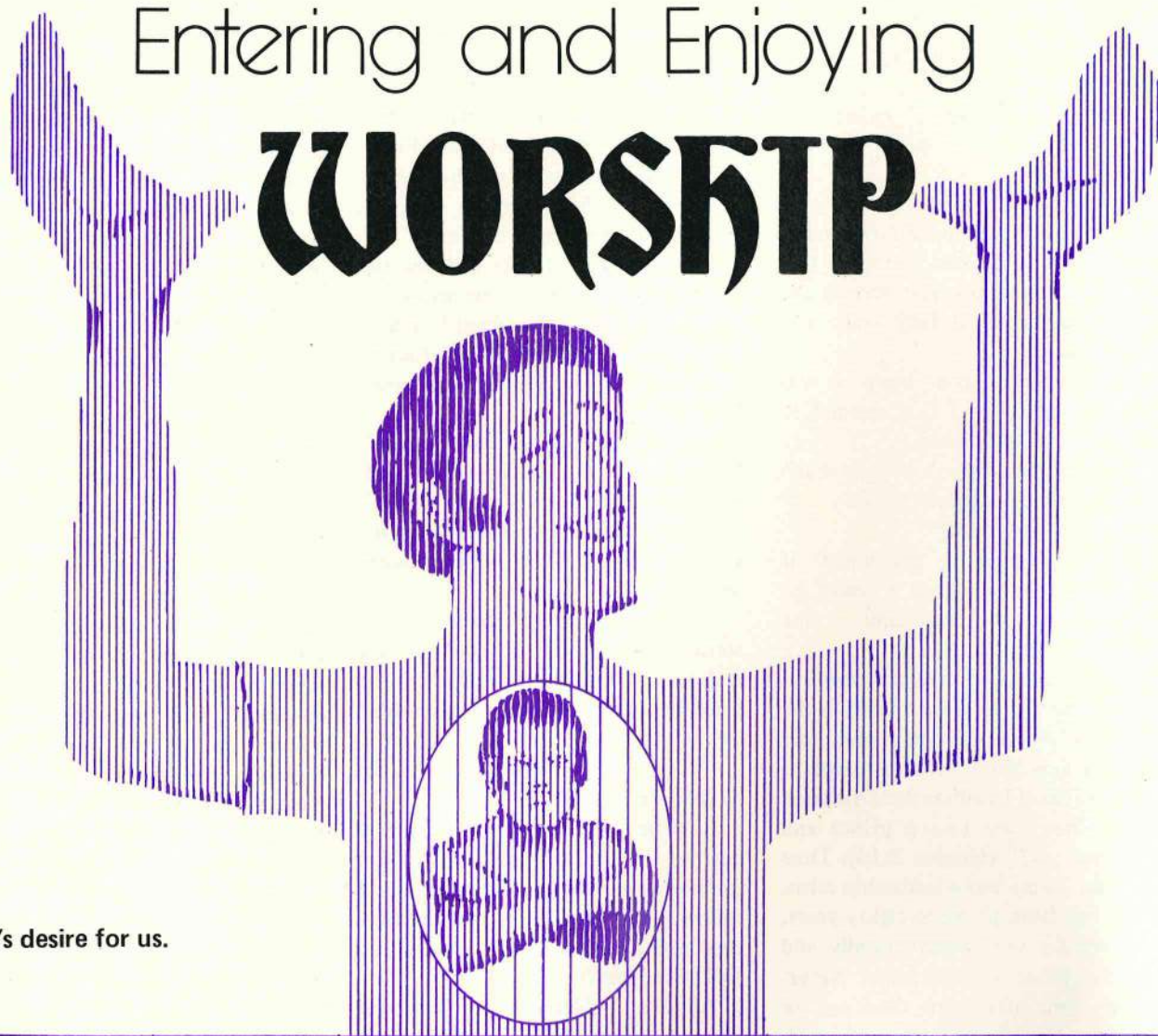
Israel's great difficulty was learning to trust God in all things. Everything they feared would happen if they trusted God, did happen because they failed to trust God. They resisted change, leadership, God's purpose and each other. Hence they fell in the wilderness. Sometimes, thousands perished in one day because they preferred their own ways. God had a better way. In Exodus 15:26 God had promised a disease-free life if they obeyed. God's ways do not destroy us — it's our own ways. (See Isaiah 55). Repentance is primarily a matter of ceasing to trust yourself and beginning to trust God. That means trusting God's established leaders and brethren as well. Progress can only be made in an atmosphere of trust.

Yes, there are many dangers in the wilderness. There are dangers in submission to leadership. But all obedience is as unto the Lord from whom comes all authority. The beginning and end of our obedience must be because He has convicted us and set us in that place. Obedience and submission are not coerced. When you consider the *alternatives* to government and fellowship, you will appreciate government and fellowship. When you trust, soon you will find rest.

Israel wandered in the wilderness forty years. Jesus was out of the wilderness in forty days. The length of your journey will be greatly affected by your response to trial and temptation. All of us must cross barren lands, dry places and ugly obstacles in order to come into our place in God's kingdom. Paul reminded early Christians that one enters the kingdom through much tribulation (Acts 14:22). Trust in Jesus' lordship, submission to experienced and proven leadership, in all things giving thanks, walking with the flock, and a willingness to change your ways can help overcome the wilderness problems. Remember, God is not only preparing a place for us, He is preparing us for the place. He's not only giving us a new land in which to live, He's teaching us a new way to live. ☞



# Entering and Enjoying **WORSHIP**



God's desire for us.

by Bob Mumford

**M**any people *know* God — but, ask yourself this question: How many people do I know who actually *enjoy* God? Perhaps the very thought of enjoying God comes as a surprise to you. *Westminster Catechism* states that belief this way: QUESTION: What is the chief end of man? ANSWER: The chief end of man is to know God and enjoy Him forever.

What does enjoying God have to do with our subject of worship? Everything! How can we possibly worship anyone or anything we do not consider worthwhile — or worthy of sacrifice and praise? The very word *worship* means *worth-ship*. Whether it is money . . . a goal in life . . . another person . . . or heathen god,

the object must stir within us a feeling of satisfaction, enjoyment and value. The question involved in worship is — *Is it worth it?*

As Christians, we join with John the Revelator when he writes: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

Not only does this verse present the fact that God is worthy of our worship, but it reveals another factor often neglected in our thinking — *God wants to enjoy us!* We were created for this very purpose — for *His* pleasure.

How do we go about enjoying God and affording Him pleasure? Most Christians embrace the truths of God with the seeming idea that they are in

an endurance contest. Many will say, "Oh, please pray for me that I may endure to the end!" What a perversion of God's intent in creating man. What pleasure could He possibly receive from watching His created ones "enduring" until He could give them something which they would be able to enjoy?

One of the means God established to provide enjoyment and pleasure is the *avenue of worship*. He made us so that we could fulfill this desire on both His part and ours. The new nature we are given at the time of our new birth is structured for this very purpose. But we do have the responsibility for cooperating with Him in the development and maturing of that new nature.

When I first became conscious of



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the fact that I could afford God pleasure, a desire was born within me to be a God-pleaser in every area of my life. My prayer life then underwent a revision. Instead of having long and detailed petitions, I reduced them into one comprehensive request: "Lord, this morning . . . this day . . . let me be a son of Yours who brings pleasure to Your heart." I came to see, too, that Jesus was a Father-pleaser. That is why He could say, "My Father is always with me because I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Jesus quite evidently *knew* what pleased His Father.

This made me realize how little I actually knew about pleasing God. I yearned to know Him better that I might discover those things which gave Him pleasure. In the area of human relationships, we often remark, "I really do enjoy that brother since I have come to *know* him." Yes, this is a principle of enjoyment. As we become acquainted with another person, we often find we have similar interests . . . there develops a comfortableness in each other's company . . . trust is built . . . and eventually a oneness is established that produces enjoyment for both parties.

Once we come to an understanding that our worship brings God pleasure, and we come to know Him in a more intimate relationship, we find ourselves saying, "God, I don't want to just worship you once in a while, *I want to become a worshiper.*" When God hears that cry, He goes to work to accomplish the request.

### SOME BASICS TO WORSHIP

Everyone needs to *learn* how to worship God for it is not an in-born accomplishment. The desire to worship something or someone outside of ourselves may be a natural tendency

for man; but to offer acceptable worship, and to experience the satisfactions inherent in that act, must be learned. All arts require certain disciplines; basic principles must be understood, accepted and put into practice. It is true that differing personalities may find differing expressions of worship, but all must come into God's presence in God's prescribed way.

Worship is something that happens. It is a subjective experience. We speak of having a "worship service" — which usually includes singing, praising, reading of the Word of God. All of these may *lead* to worship — but worship is much more than any of these expressions. Something must transpire in the spirit of a man. He will *know* when he has come into the presence of God. In an attempt to help us understand our personal responses, we present these two figures:

No. 1 — is you . . . the worshiper.

No. 2 — is also you . . . that inner man who controls the attitudes, desires and impulses of No. 1.



Suppose you are in a meeting and everyone is called upon to stand before the Lord and worship in song. You (No. 1) may rise to the occasion, hold your hymnal, and join in every verse of "Amazing Grace" — and yet not one iota of worship result. Your inner man (No. 2) may be gritting his teeth and saying, "Amazing Grace! I don't feel like worshiping! God hasn't been very good to me . . . I didn't sleep well last night . . . Frank never paid me that \$5 he owes me . . ." Man No. 1 continues singing away — even raising his hands in praise. Yet Man No. 2 remains bowed over . . . depressed or in rebellion.

Worship for No. 1 often becomes only an outward habit. Clapping our hands and raising them toward heaven can be simply spiritual calisthenics — a superficial following of the crowd. It is always more than that when No. 2 worships. *Worship is a personal response.*

The song, "Set My Spirit Free That I May Worship Thee," says what we are desiring to achieve. True worship does not automatically result from corporate participation; although God can use an atmosphere of worship to warm No. 2 and break down the barriers that interfere with the freedom of spirit which must be experienced in order for one to come into God's presence.

Are you beginning to sense the difference here? Singing is meant to lead to praise. It affords expression for our emotions. Praise, in turn, can move one into worship. However, there are times when I praise the Lord and do not at all feel like worshiping. I know praise is commanded by God, so I praise Him. I know, too, that worship is a response which cannot be commanded. It must be voluntary to be acceptable to Him. Actions can be under the control of outside authority; but attitude is under the control of inner responses . . . Man No. 2 holds the reins here.

The Book of Psalms affords varied insights into the act of worship. King David, who wrote many of the Psalms, was known as "a man after God's own heart." His ability to praise and worship was a developed art. It began while tending sheep on the Judean hill-sides. There he became acutely aware of the goodness and greatness of his God. This saw him through many difficulties when, as a young man, he was persecuted by King Saul . . . when he was called upon to go into battle . . . to assume rulership of Israel . . . and when he fell into sin and realized his need for cleansing. All of these proved occasions for seeking an entrance into God's presence.

At one time (Psalm 42:5), David cried out, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" He was talking to his inner



man (No.2) — making use of that wonderful mechanism God has placed within each of us whereby body, soul and spirit can communicate with each other and exert influence upon each other. David realized his spirit just did not feel like worshipping — it was under the control of his soul. So he went to the root of the trouble; but he concludes (vs. 11): “. . . for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance.”

God did not design the Christian life to be lived under the domination of the soul, where emotions . . . intellect . . . double-mindedness rule. He desires that we form disciplines by which we can live in an attitude of constant communion with Him. If this relationship is possible, why aren't we more consistently enjoying it? Frankly, there are some roadblocks that may need removing. There are habits and attitudes that demand cultivating. God has prescribed certain rules and regulations which we must meet before we become *worshippers*.

### SOME HINDRANCES TO WORSHIP

What are some of the things which hinder us from offering the worship God finds acceptable? Let's take a lesson from some worshipers in the Old Testament — seeing what interfered with their worship and how God handled the situation. The story is found in Ezekiel 44:4 — 16. God is conversing with the prophet about conditions in the Temple, God's designated house of worship.

(4) Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord: and I fell on my face.

Note two things: (a) God honored the Temple with His presence. It filled the house. (b) Ezekiel experiences genuine worship. He beholds the glory of God and prostrates himself before Him. This involves the action of both Man No. 1 and Man No. 2.

(5) And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold

with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

Evidently there are some instructions that need to be known and obeyed in this matter of worship. God might have said, “Stop, Look and Listen!” God is concerned about what goes on in His house, whether you can sense His concern or not. “Mark well!”

(6) And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations.

Remember, those to whom God is asking Ezekiel to speak are *His* people. They acknowledged God and belonged to Him. Yet we find God denouncing their rebellion. Does God have “good” and “bad” children, just as we do? Doesn't your treatment of your children vary as to their individual needs? Hear what God has to say regarding these rebellious children of His.

(7) In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, and the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.

(8) And ye have not kept charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

Notice the phrase *for yourselves*. These worshipers evidently thought the house of God was maintained primarily for them — not for God. Are we ever guilty of this same attitude?

(9) Thus saith the Lord God; no stranger uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

It is apparent that God is quite aware of those who “do not know” Him. He has set up certain prerequi-

sites regarding worship and we must adhere to them or meet disapproval.

(10) And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity.

That last word might better have been translated “lawlessness.” There is a penalty for not complying with God's requirements. The Levites were the priestly tribe set apart to lead the people in the act of worship in the house of the Lord. They had been disobedient in going off worshipping idols and now were performing duties in the house of the God of their fathers. Do we ever erect idols in our own lives and yet come to the house of God and expect Him to accept our worship? God said, “They shall even bear their iniquity.”

(11) Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them.

Isn't that interesting? The rebellious priests were permitted to minister to the people. God acknowledged the fact that ministry to the multitudes is necessary. He honors the efforts of those who give themselves in ministry — even though they may do it while living in a lawless condition. We may find that we are in this same position — doing things God didn't tell us to do — even doing things He told us not to do — all the while expecting Him to be satisfied with our worship.

(12) Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity.

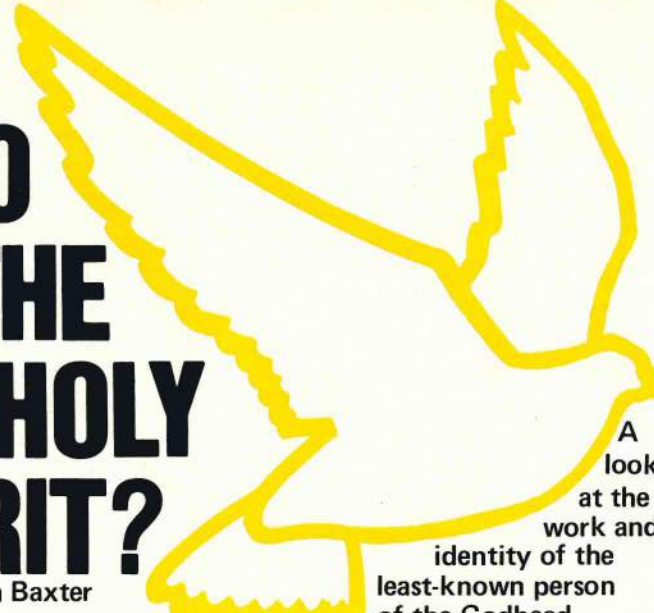
(13) And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations

(Continued on page 15)



# WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

by Ern Baxter



A look at the work and identity of the least-known person of the Godhead.

**S**ome years ago I was a member of a Friday luncheon discussion group, which consisted of men from various walks of life. I was one of two ministers attending. The group was not highly organized, and a simple post-card mailed the first day of the week informed us of the Friday topic. We covered a wide variety of subjects in these pleasurable Friday gatherings, and sometimes references were made to some aspects of the Christian religion. These were in the main, quite general.

Each person was allotted two minutes to speak to the subject, and if time allowed, there might be some general exchange after all had spoken, supervised by the chairman of the day. I had not been with the group too long before I realized how valuable those two minutes were, and so disciplined myself to use my time wisely.

I was delightfully surprised when the notice card arrived one week, announcing that we would discuss on the following Friday the subject, "What Does It Mean To Be Filled With The Holy Spirit?" Knowing the men in the group as I did, I could hardly wait for Friday. We had not been this topical about Christianity before.

Friday arrived and after the usual pleasantries, and the lunch which was always light and brief, we settled into the topic. One man, a lawyer, who obviously had little vital knowledge of Christian things, started the discussion, and his contribution went as follows.

"I don't profess to know much

about this, not being a particularly religious man. However, I would think that being filled with the Spirit is similar to the feeling I have when I come home at the end of a tiring day in my law practice, and after a pleasant meal settle down to listen to some good music. The feeling of relaxation that I experience, would be what I would think of as being filled with the Spirit."

The second man took his turn, and said much the same thing, only in his case it was good literature.

There were two or three, including the other minister in the group, who related the receiving of the Holy Spirit to a religious rite in which they had been involved in their particular church relationship. But obviously it meant nothing to them vitally having no continuing significance in daily experience.

I had managed to hold my peace and preserve my precious two minutes, although at times I had to fight the strong desire to "jump in." Now I found myself the last speaker. I recall saying, "Gentlemen, I have listened carefully as you have each expressed your idea of being filled with the Spirit, and note the wide variety of viewpoints. I am wondering, however, if there is not some authoritative source that would provide accurate information. I would like to suggest that since we are speaking of a Christian matter, we should be able to find some reference to it in the Bible, which is the text of our Christian

faith." With that I drew from my pocket my New Testament and turned to Acts, chapter 2, and began to slowly read the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. When I had finished reading, I simply said, "Gentlemen, it seems to me that we have here the official account of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit." And with that I closed my Testament, put it back in my pocket and said no more.

The chairman rather gruffly remarked that my time was up, and that particular Friday we had an early dismissal. I could tell that what I had done had disturbed, perplexed, and probably angered several of the men. The meeting broke up with some feeling of tension.

While a number of the men dismissed my contribution as a piece of religious fanaticism, God's Word produced in others a wholesome curiosity and a desire to know more. In following days and weeks I was approached by several members of the group, and was enabled by God to lead them into vital experiences of sound commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and into the fulness of the life and blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Some may smile at the responses given by these men, and say, "How can people be so ignorant of these things?" However, I think it is fair to say that the spiritual revitalizing we have been experiencing across the earth in recent years, has indicated that great cross sections of the professing Christian community have been, and yet are, living in considerable ignorance of the reality of the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit, and of the glorious possibility of being personally related to Him in meaningful experience.

A minister, whom I am sure would subscribe officially to the doctrine of the Trinity, commented to me that he had no problem with the Father and the Son, but didn't seem to be able to get his thinking straight on the Holy Spirit. As I listened to him, I seemed to be hearing a representative expression of haziness on this matter, shared by great numbers of professing Christians.



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### THE "THIRD" PERSON

In the great commission we are introduced to God as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Because this is the way God is referred to, each of the persons in the Trinity is spoken of as first, second and third. This makes the Holy Spirit the third person of the Triune God. Since there are only three persons in the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit is the third person, there is a sense in which He is "last." He is not only "last" however in this descriptive designation of God, but He is also "last" in the redemptive process. As God moved into the world of men to bring about their redemption, we are told that "the Father sent the Son." The Son "came" and did that which had to be done. In His impeccable life, substitutionary death, victorious resurrection, and ascension into the presence of God, He established His saving work as finished and acceptable. Upon Christ's return to heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent back to the earth to effect in the lives of men the redemptive work of the Father and the Son.

Probably another reason why the Holy Spirit has seemed to have a subordinate role to the Father and the Son, is that He is not only "last" in the biblical designation of the Trinity, but He was the last to receive consideration in the formation of our historic Christian creeds. In the Apostles' Creed, which is considered to be one of the earliest formulations of our Christian faith, the Father is referred to as "God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth," and then we are told of "Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, He descended into hell; the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand

of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." This is followed by the brief declaration, "*I believe in the Holy Ghost.*" It is not without significance that the Father and the Son receive fuller treatment than the Holy Ghost, who is simply mentioned.

It was not until the beginning of the fourth century that the Christian community got around to any extensive definitions of the Holy Spirit. It is also interesting that by this time the supernatural and charismatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit had receded considerably. Probably this shows the danger of reducing God, Christian experience, and even the Bible, to systematic definitions suitable to intellectual forms, while not retaining vital relationship to God through the Holy Spirit.

### THE "ACTIVE AGENT" OF THE TRINITY

While it is true that in the historic process of redemptive activity, and in the historic development of the Christian creeds, He is "last," nevertheless, there is a very real sense in which He is "first." It is clear from Scripture that we would have no knowledge of the Son's saving work, and the Father's redeeming love, except as such are brought to our attention and pressed upon us by the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of your Father" (Matt. 10:20), and "the Spirit of His Son" (Gal. 4:6). It is the very nature of the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father and from the Son to reveal a life-purpose for mankind. All that the Father has planned, and the Son has made possible by His redemptive act, is made available to us by the Holy Spirit.

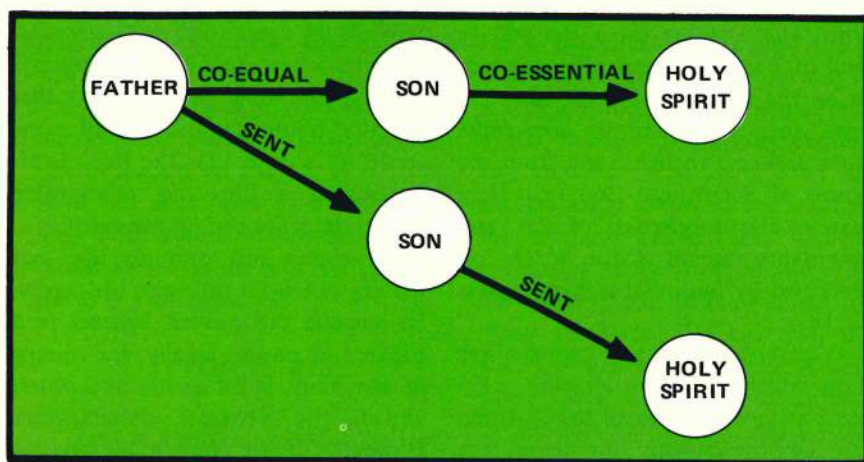
In early Christian times, experience and teaching were closely related. Men experienced the life of God by repentance, faith and obedience, before they attempted to define and creedalize their experience. We do not minimize the necessity of sound teaching in sound form. But the form can be "form without content." At the same

time it is obvious that content must have form. So we are confronted with the necessity of not favoring either/or, but insisting on both. However, the order seems to be, to experience the new life in God by responding to the simple declaration of the gospel, and then be taught from the Scriptures the meaning and ongoing implications of the wonderful thing that has happened. Our Lord in His earthly ministry "did and taught" (Acts 1:1). The grace of God first "brings salvation" and then teaches what that salvation brings (Titus 2:11-14).

It is desirable and important that those newly converted, or those who have come into some new phase or dimension of the Christian life, should be scripturally taught the meaning and purpose of their experience. However, until they are so taught, it is not uncommon for them to attempt to relate what is happening in sometimes unconventional and even unscriptural terms. The inarticulate sounds from an infant do not indicate the child is not alive because he cannot give an academic statement concerning the nature of human life. To punish the child, or question the reality of his existence because of his infantile ignorance is obviously ridiculous. We think the analogy is apparent. How many young converts, and those new in legitimate experiences in God have been criticized, and their experience questioned, because they have not been able to give mature explanations of their experiences, or have put wrong labels on right boxes. Certainly they need teaching and correction, but not ridicule and suspicion.

All through the Old Testament the Father's word comes to holy men who were enabled to supernaturally release the word by the Holy Spirit. In our diagram (see next page) we have shown the Trinity in the form of three circles horizontal and three circles diagonal. The three circles horizontal speak of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as co-equal and co-essential. In the three circles diagonal we have shown the Trinity in functional operation in relation to mankind, the Father sending the Son, the Son coming,





doing His work, and returning to the Father. This is followed by the coming of the Holy Spirit to the earth to be the "active agent" of the Trinity in all that is to be accomplished in redemptive and providential action in human experience.

### JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

It was the Holy Spirit who was active in the formation of the body of the Son in the womb of Mary. The angel declared to her, "*The Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). When the time came for our Lord to enter upon His ministry "when He was baptized, He went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him and He saw *the Spirit of God* descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Luke tells us that following this, "Jesus being full of *the Holy Spirit* returned from Jordan, and was led by *the Spirit* into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1). Here at the outset of our Lord's ministry the Father acknowledges His Son and equips Him with the Holy Spirit to perform His ministry and work in the earth.

In all the days of His earthly ministry He walked in complete obedience to the Father, and accomplished the Father's will by the power of the

Holy Spirit. The Son acknowledged His dependence upon the Holy Spirit when He said "If I cast out demons by *the Spirit of God*, then the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Matt. 12:28). He acknowledges His dependence upon the Holy Spirit as the divine agent of power and action. This had been prophesied of Him by Isaiah. Matthew quotes this prophecy, saying, "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put *my Spirit* upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles" (Matt. 12:18).

The place of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of our Lord is clearly seen in the summary given by Peter in Cornelius' house, as he declares "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the *Holy Spirit* and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). When our Lord came to the great moment of His sacrificial death, "He through *the eternal Spirit* offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). The resurrection of our Lord was also the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

### THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

Upon His ascension to heaven, one of His first acts was to "receive of the Father the promise of the *Holy Spirit*" which He "shed forth" on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). Thus by His death and resurrection He released the

Holy Spirit to perform the will of the Holy Three in the earth during this "day of salvation."

This was according to the plan our Lord had shared with His disciples in those intimate moments in the upper room discourse before He went to His death. He had said He would "pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever" (Jn. 14:16). Speaking of this Comforter and His coming, He said later in the same discourse, "And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn. 16:8). So He has established that the Holy Spirit is to be in this age the one who acts for the Father and the Son. We have from time to time tried to make the matter simple by saying "the Holy Spirit is 'God active' in the earth today." We have also suggested that this might well be why Satan so desperately fights the work of the Holy Spirit. He apparently doesn't mind people holding correct doctrinal views on the Trinity, or for that matter, on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, but He certainly doesn't want people to become involved personally with the Holy Spirit in real and vital experience.

In the Scriptures the Trinity is described as "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," (Matt. 28:19); the Holy Spirit being "last." However in terms of experience, we might well think of "Holy Spirit, Son, and Father." Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but *by Me*" (Jn. 14:6). But this does not complete the process of "coming unto the Father," "for through Him [Christ] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father" (Eph. 2:18). The Holy Spirit is the one by whom we are introduced to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and Jesus Christ is the one who introduces us to the Father. The structure and pattern of operation within the Trinity seems obvious throughout the Bible. The Holy Spirit is the one who performs the will of the Trinity, and provides such life and power as enables believing men and women to do the will of God.



## THE MINISTRY OF CONVICTION

Jesus had said to His disciples, just before going to His death, "If I depart, I will send Him [the Holy Spirit] unto you. And when He is come, he will reprove [convict] the world" (Jn. 16:7,8). Notice the order here. The Holy Spirit comes to the disciples. They become the residence and headquarters of operation for the Holy Spirit. As they "preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Pet. 1:12), *the world* was convicted. "We are witnesses of these things; [Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension]" said the apostles, "and so is also the Holy Ghost" (Acts 5:33).

We see this work of the Holy Spirit in conviction on the day of Pentecost. After hearing Peter's Spirit-anointed preaching, a great number of the hearers "were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter told them what to do (Acts 2:38), "Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). The Holy Spirit had, through the preaching of the gospel, convicted them of their sin. Many had responded in true repentance, and had found that the same Holy Spirit who made them miserable with conviction, made them joyful in conversion.

Many others, however, did not receive the word of the gospel. Stephen referred to these rejectors as those who "do always resist the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:51). The Holy Spirit is the one who presents the claims of the Lord Jesus upon the hearts of men. To "resist" the introducer is to reject the one being introduced.

## . . . CONVERSION

All who respond to the conviction of the Spirit will "repent and be converted" (Acts 3:19). The Greek word translated "convert" is also

translated "turn" in several places. When the Lord revealed His will to Saul of Tarsus, He commissioned him to be His servant to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).

"Conversion" is a comprehensive term which embraces all that takes place at the beginning of the Christian life. On the human side there is a "turning unto God" in obedient response to "the word of the gospel" (1 Pet. 1:25). This word is "incorruptible seed." When one "obeys the truth" he is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:22,23).

Jesus spoke about this same experience to Nicodemus, where He said, "Except a man be born again [from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God." When one is "born again," Jesus says, he is "born of the Spirit" (John 3:1-8).

Here we see the word and the Spirit as the agents of the new birth. Paul speaking of this new life, declares, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]" (2 Cor. 5:17). Something happens when one becomes a Christian that is illustrated in the creation of the world. This sends us scurrying to Genesis. There we read that "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2). That seems to be a pretty good description of a life into which God has not yet come. Then we are told that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). But the Spirit cannot operate without the Word, and so we read, "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light" (Gen. 1:3).

So it is in the new creation. The Holy Spirit is "moving upon" the dark chaotic lives of "the world." Then comes "the word of the gospel." When the word is received in obedience, the Holy Spirit makes such a person "a

new creature, or creation."

While we cannot fully explain what happens when one is "born again," there is one thing clearly stated, that "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). The Holy Spirit established a life-giving relationship within the redeemed human spirit.

He comes not only as life, but moving out from this spirit life-center, He engulfs the yielded believer in a baptism of power. Ideally, the coming of the Holy Spirit as life and power should be virtually simultaneous. However, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). "We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:14). Where the Word is not preached concerning the baptism of the Spirit, there is not a call to, or basis for, faith. Therefore in many lives there is an unnecessary "gap" between the coming of the Spirit as life in the new birth, and His blessed baptism of power.

## . . . CONSTRUCTION

The Holy Spirit comes into the redeemed life not only to reside, but to preside. He is not only the resident Spirit, but the president Spirit. Having established His residence in the very heart of our being, He commences a program of change in every area of the converted life, and we "are changed into the same image [of the Lord] from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

This "changing" and structuring of the life of "the new creation" is comparable to the formation of the material creation, to which we have already referred. The Holy Spirit makes the "change" in response to the Word. This is why Christians are exhorted "as newborn babes, [to] desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). As we "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly" (Col. 3:16), and are constantly being "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18), our lives are being changed and structured to be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).



It is of the utmost importance in the life of the Christian, that the Word and the Spirit be given equal place. Imbalance here can produce fanaticism on the one hand, or lifeless doctrinal intellectualism on the other. A Spirit-filled life must also be a Word-filled life. When this combination is maintained we are on the way to God's goal for us — a Christlike life!

## ... COMMUNITY

There is a further work of the Holy Spirit which, in our opinion, has been neglected. It is, however, being restored in these days in a dimension that is exciting and hopeful. We refer to the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the converted into community. On the day of Pentecost, "they that gladly received Peter's word were baptized: and the same day there were *added unto them* about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). These "continued stedfastly in . . . fellow-

ship" (Acts 2:42). Having repented, been baptized, and received the gift of the Holy Spirit, it was obvious that what each one had experienced individually, could only be fully expressed and enjoyed corporately. They were automatically drawn to one another in the sharing of this new life, "and they, continuing daily *with one accord* in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46). This collective expression of the new life, power, and joy, gave them "favor with all the people." "And the Lord *added to them* day by day those that were saved" (Acts 2:47 ASV). How irresistibly attractive this community of redeemed and rejoicing people must have been.

Aspects of the life of the redeemed community may alter in different places and under differing circumstances, but the principle of unity and community is basic. Paul capsulated it when he wrote, "By *one Spirit* are we

all baptized into *one* body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into *one Spirit*" (1 Cor. 12:13). The pattern is so beautifully simple, and simply beautiful, that one cannot help wondering how Christian people could stray so far from "the beauty of God's plan" (Rom. 3:23 Phillip's).

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit, who has to so many of us been "last," may in our experience become "first," as He is allowed to make the loving purpose of the triune God real in our lives. Perhaps it would be especially meaningful in the day in which we live, to close with Paul's prayer for the division-threatened Corinthian church: "The grace (favor and spiritual blessing) of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the *presence and fellowship* (the communion) and sharing together, and participation) *in the Holy Spirit* to be with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. 13:14 Amp.). ☞

## ENTERING AND ENJOYING WORSHIP

(continued from page 10)

which they have committed.

(14) But, I will make them keepers of the charge of the house for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.

The words *me* and *mine* appear many times in these verses. God is careful to protect the approach to worship. *Me* and *mine* denote the very presence of God. He cannot accept lawlessness or carelessness on the part of those coming into His presence. These rebellious men were to be permitted the privilege of "doing the office of a priest" — *to the people — but not to God!* There is a difference. When God withdraws Himself, worship is withheld — for it is a two-way transaction.

(15) But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me

the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God.

(16) They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

Do you see a difference between *minister unto me* and *ministry to the people*? The latter may not involve an act of worship at all, even though performed in the sanctuary. Only those who came near to God and were permitted to handle the holy vessels provided for worship, experienced worship.

Woven throughout this incident are three basic principles of worship.

(1) God is quite aware of the inner conditions of those who come into His house to worship. He takes into consideration outward acts of disobedience, also.

(2) Both outward and inward conditions make a difference in the ability to worship. Disobedience and a rebellious spirit erect barriers and

worship is withheld. All of man's strivings to come into God's presence "on his own" are to no avail.

(3) A person may be permitted to minister to human needs even though he is cut off from worship of God. However, without worship, man's spirit soon shrivels, and before long he finds that even the desire to worship has withered.

Mark well! When one's spirit is infected with rebellion or disobedience, real worship is impossible. Anger, envy, materialism, and spiritual pride are but a few of the active foes.

Mark well! One is free to minister to the people — give out tracts . . . pray for the sick . . . build churches . . . counsel . . . preach — *but ministry to the people does not constitute ministry to God.*

Yes, God desires that His people enter and enjoy worship. He has placed road signs along the way into His presence and He has provided abundantly for the pleasure of those who seek and find that way. ☞



A native of Alameda, California, Nancy Clark moved to Fort Lauderdale in June of 1972. She presently serves as receptionist at Christian Growth Ministries and is involved in sharing with other singles how God has brought fulfillment to her life.

# The Single Woman

By  
Nancy  
Clark

Discovering  
that fulfillment  
in the body of Christ  
is not limited  
to the married.

**C**an a single girl find contentment and happiness? This question may not seem that important to most people, but for the single girl it is *the* \$64,000 question.

At the age of 30 I have had a lot of time to experience the frustration and confusion of not having an answer. In the past two years, however, God has brought me to the place where I can honestly say that I am fulfilled and content as a single person. This did not happen overnight or painlessly, for it was worked in my life day by day. Let me share with you some of the struggles and victories that have been mine in the search for this answer.

## WHERE DO I LOOK?

In thinking back over my life the

most outstanding problems that come to mind are loneliness and feelings of inferiority. For as long as I can remember I have been waiting for the day when the wedding bells would chime and all these negative feelings would dissolve. Marriage was the magic formula that would change my world to one of bliss.

When this didn't happen right away, I found myself in the typical "single girl" role — independent and fancy free, with a job, an apartment, and my own life to run. The only problem was that my loneliness and insecurity moved into the apartment with me. The only way to lessen these feelings was to cover them up with activity, so I became active in a church, did volunteer work for hospitals and

handicapped centers, and went on outings with a singles' group almost every weekend.

At the age of 24, Christ became real to me in a personal way. After becoming involved in a Christian commune called Clayton House, and later moving in for a two-year period, I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and experienced a new direction and purpose for my life as well as a new love for the people around me. Within this framework of a close community I felt more fulfilled than I had ever felt before, but when the House broke up two years later, all the insecurity and loneliness came rushing back in on me.

Again, the only answer seemed to be to get involved in things and activities to try to fulfill my life. I



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began to pray constantly that God would give me a husband. Although I wanted God's perfect will for my life — even if it meant never marrying — it seemed that marriage was the only way to contentment and fulfillment.

### SOME NEW INSIGHT

A year later, God brought me to Florida to be with Dick and Lydia Key, who had been the directors of Clayton House. God definitely confirmed that He had brought me here, but I didn't know why. Soon, it became evident that He wanted to work on changing me — from the inside out! The process of seeing yourself as you really are isn't much fun and it often involves time and patience, but it is a step toward maturity in God and toward finding peace and contentment.

Two days after arriving in Florida, I started a full-time job at Christian Growth Ministries. Rather than living alone in an apartment I chose to live with the Keys, even though I knew it would require an adjustment in learning how to live in a family.

Being on my own for several years had forced me to become quite independent. In the past, doing whatever I wanted to do had been easy. Now my life wasn't so simple. In my new home there were needs such as babysitting and housework that took away from my time. Inside I would react, feeling that because I worked all day and paid rent, Dick and Lydia shouldn't expect me to work at home. Nurturing the attitude that I was nothing more than a babysitter and a maid to them, I wanted to run . . . to go back to California. Yet, something held me.

Finally, one day I blew up and all these attitudes and feelings came out.

In the discussion following the episode, Dick said that they considered me a member of the family and not a paying boarder. This struck a responsive chord inside of me — I belonged somewhere! At the same time it brought the realization that the very things I resented doing were part of being "family." When needs arise everyone in the family has to assume a part in meeting those needs — whether it is extra laundry, cooking for guests, or consoling little girls. I was beginning to see that "belonging" carried with it some responsibilities. It meant not thinking just about "me" anymore. Now I had to consider the other people in this new relationship.

Getting a new frame of mind was not easy. It involved the realization that if God were going to bring me to a place of contentment in Him, He was going to have to change many areas in my life. In this process He has used one major means — submission to authority.

### LEARNING ABOUT SUBMISSION

At the time I moved to Ft. Lauderdale, God was beginning to emphasize submission to authority and right relationship, especially between husband and wife and also between shepherd and sheep. Having had some previous wrong teaching on submission, I was confused as to the real purpose and function of it for my life. I thought submission meant that you did what you were told by your husband or elder and kept your mouth shut!

Seeing the relationship between Dick and Lydia as husband and wife, and others who were under Dick in a shepherd/sheep relationship, helped to clear my understanding about submission. One evening after a meeting, I saw the need for a spiritual covering in my life. On the way home I verbally submitted to Dick as my elder. Saying it out loud helped to confirm it to both of us, and opened the door for God to exercise more authority in my life through Dick.

God showed me that submission really benefits the one submitting

more than anyone else. Dick is responsible for me to God. He is responsible for keeping me on the right track in my relationship with the Lord and for leading me into the kingdom, whatever pain and change that involves.

In my desire to be in right order and under authority, I went to the extreme in that I wanted Dick to lay down certain prescribed laws and regulations, as well as give me all my answers. This really was an escape so that I wouldn't have to make decisions myself or seek the Lord on my own. Also, I could point the finger of blame at him if something went wrong, and thus be able to avoid the consequences.

Dick finally had to explain to me that I had a responsibility to go to God and seek answers for myself. As my shepherd, he was always available to advise and to confirm the answers but not to constantly give them.

There is a real sense of security in knowing there is someone to help me find God's will — that I don't have to stumble around, go by my emotions, or guess at what God is trying to say. My shepherd and I *together* can discover what God is saying. There is also a real sense of security knowing that my shepherd is in relationship to his shepherd and is himself under authority. If something arises that he does not have the answer for, he will go to the other men in the fellowship and together they will seek the Lord for the answer.

Another important benefit of submission is the avenue it opens to developing deep relationships. In submission you are actually committing yourself to your shepherd and he is committing himself to you. This commitment doesn't happen overnight — it grows through all the problems and trials and misunderstandings that develop out of relationship.

When I first came to live with Dick and Lydia I was afraid to let out my feelings or show my ugly side for fear they would reject me as a person. There was also the fear that if I didn't perform (i.e. do the things I thought they expected me to do) they might



ask me to leave their home. Finally, it came to the point where I was willing to risk all. I had to know if they loved me for "me" or for the things I did for them. Were they really committed to "me" — the real person inside or the exterior me who helped around the house and babysat? To test their love and commitment I just sat around being lazy for a period of time. The result — they just kept loving me! And I began to love them in a new way.

As our relationship deepens, God uses them to root out the rebellion, the stubbornness, and the independence in my life. They love me and are committed to me in a way that causes me to accept their correction. Often they can see things in my life that I cannot see. One day Lydia had to confront me with my laziness. Because of our relationship I knew she wasn't out to get me, but rather, she was trying to help. Thus, I was able to accept what she saw and ask God to change me. Also, they can often sort through all the confusion of a situation and point out what God is really after. There is a real joy coming in my life as I see and experience God changing me into what He wants me to be.

One of the most difficult areas for me has been communication. In real submission there is a freedom to express my feelings, not hold them in. Dick and Lydia have helped me in this area by encouraging me to get things that bother me out in the open. They know me so well by now that they can sense when something is wrong. Once the problem is out in the open, feelings and fact can be sorted through and we can determine if the struggle is my own selfishness, etc., or if it is a valid complaint they need to hear about.

Just recently God has revealed more clearly to me that Dick and Lydia are the functional authority over me for this time in my life. They love me, protect me, encourage me and push me on to maturity in Christ. This, in a nutshell, is the function of an elder to the single person.

The more secure and loved I feel, the happier and more content I am. A

great part of my struggle about wanting to be married centers around the need to feel loved and accepted. When my relationship is right with Dick and Lydia, I don't need to escape into the future with "marriage thinking."

I believe that it is God's will for me to eventually marry because He has put that desire in my heart and because He has placed me in a perfect situation to learn how to become the kind of a wife He wants me to be. However, He wants me to become fulfilled in my single life and serve a purpose in His Body *now*.

### FINDING THAT PLACE

Even though we may feel secure and loved in a relationship, we also need a purpose for our lives. Ever since my childhood I have considered the ultimate goal of a woman to be that of a wife and mother. But since this is still in the future for me, how do I find contentment now, day by day in my life? And how do I fit into the Body of Christ, especially since the majority of ministry seems to be from those who are married?

Shortly after moving into the Key household, a cell group of Christians began meeting regularly in our home. The purpose of the group was to learn to open up and share ourselves with other brothers and sisters in Christ. As the only single in the group at that time, I often felt all alone. Most of the talk seemed to center around marriage situations, which made it even more difficult for me to relate. Feeling that no one understood or cared what I had to say, I just sat in the meeting and said nothing.

As I listened, however, I began to see that many of the struggles that the married people were having were the same struggles I was going through — overcoming rebellion and stubbornness, learning to communicate, etc. The only difference was the set of circumstances God was using to work these out. While this was the marriage relationship for them, it was often my job or relationships with other people for me.

It was also a shock to realize that whereas my main struggle was wanting to be married, each of the married couples had just as real a struggle in some other area — wanting to have a baby right away, or wishing they were single instead of being tied down to a house and children. Discovering that God was working in me as well as in the married couples, has helped me to feel a part of the Body of Christ.

Even though I felt a part, it was still difficult to see exactly how a single person fits in regard to ministry. I have often heard some of the wives express that they felt like second-class citizens because all they were needed for was to serve their husbands. Well, sometimes I felt like a third-class citizen — tossed about with no definite purpose, just waiting for my husband to come and rescue me. I saw that the wife was to minister to her husband, but what about the single? Does God have a place and ministry for me now, before marriage?

One day it dawned on me that I was actually freer than the wives to minister. They were tied down mainly to their husbands and families, but I could minister to many different families and people. Then God began to show me that the way to minister to the Body was through *serving*. At first, *serving*, like *submission*, was just another bad word. Then He began to open up my understanding to what it really means.

### FULFILLMENT THROUGH SERVING

I first began to learn the principles of serving at home — in my relationship to Dick and Lydia, and then God began to show me that these could be expanded to include His whole Body.

Serving is something one doesn't learn once and for all — it is a continual yielding to God. As I am learning to yield more and more I am becoming more satisfied with life. When asked to do things now, I don't react nearly as much as I did in the past. Serving Dick and Lydia is a joy because it is done out of love and not because it is a duty.



One of the first principles God taught me was that of "going the second mile." Many times I have felt I didn't have the strength to go on serving in a situation. Often this is just an excuse, and when I push beyond the tired point I am physically and spiritually uplifted.

Let me share one of the first situations where this principle worked for me. Late one evening Lydia asked me to unload the dishwasher. I was tired and ready to go to bed. Inside I reacted, and at the same time cried out for God to change me. Determined to test this principle, I not only unloaded the dishwasher but cleaned the counter and loaded the dirty dishes. By the time the job was finished I felt great!

Knowing that this really works — that we can move into God's strength — is a valuable asset. This principle applies in relationships also, for serving involves people. It is actually the doorway to relationship. For example, someone may just need me to listen while they unload, but I've had a hard day at work and I want to go to bed early. Or someone may just need fellowship and suggest we go shopping. Being willing to go that second mile brings real blessing.

One of the most difficult areas of learning to serve for me has been getting involved in the lives of other people — especially other single girls. Naturally a loner, I much prefer to stay at home and escape in busyness rather than get involved. As God pushes me more and more into others' lives, my loneliness and insecurity are dissolving.

One Saturday not too long ago, I agreed to go to the beach with a girl from our fellowship. There was some apprehension on my part, not knowing exactly how to relate to her or what to talk about. On the way she began sharing some of her struggles with submission and relationship and with wanting to be married. I was able to share with her what God was doing in my life and how He was bringing contentment and fulfillment. As a result she was really helped and I was

encouraged to see that God could use me to minister in this way.

God is constantly teaching me new things about serving. Another incident that taught me something about the nature of serving occurred one hectic Saturday. Both Lydia and I had our minds on the Hawaiian luau party we were to attend that evening. We were both wrapped up in our own little worlds — trying to get our duties done so we could spend time getting ourselves ready for the party.

There were many needs, with the children and the house, but instead of finding out what things really needed to be done that day I started helping in the way I wanted to help. I was afraid to ask what Lydia needed done for fear that she would give me a job that would require too much time or energy.

About midway through all the confusion we stopped for a talk and I realized that I had not really been serving, for serving is doing what the other person needs, the way he needs and wants it done. Lydia also realized that she had gotten caught up in all her needs and had not considered mine. The results were frustration, irritability and a lack of peace. From that point on we decided to try to wake up every day with the attitude of putting others first and trusting God to meet our own needs.

This is not an easy goal to attain, for it means dying to self. It may sound great at first . . . *until* God starts asking you to do it in little practical ways! Learning to find fulfillment in serving and laying down one's life is not just a goal for single people. In marriage, too, each partner must be willing to serve the other. In the Body of Christ we are all called to serve one another and lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. In fact, Jesus made it very plain that only as we lose our lives for one another in serving do we find them.

One scripture that means so much to me is Psalm 68:6, "God setteth the solitary in families; he bringeth out those which are bound with chains; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land." Where once I felt independence and

developing my own interests were the answer to a fulfilled life, now I *know* the answer for me is learning how to serve. My ministry first of all is serving Dick and Lydia so that they can be free to serve each other and those God has placed under them. Second, it is to serve my single girl friends and help them to realize that they too can have a satisfying, fulfilled life before marriage. Third, it is to serve anyone else, inside or outside the Body of Christ, whom God shows me to serve.

In learning all this now, I will go into marriage with a much more mature attitude. Instead of using marriage to escape from the unpleasant things in life, I will go into it with an attitude of serving my husband, of being a helpmeet to him. I am so thankful for this time of preparation, through Dick and Lydia's example and through God's personal dealings in my life.

Yes, I am thankful God is bringing me out of the dry land of independence, rebellion and selfishness into His kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy. I can truly say that I have never been happier in my life! ♡

## Reprints

The following articles from this *Best of New Wine* issue are also available in individual reprints from Christian Growth Ministries:

DAD—R — The Dating Dilemma  
(Bob Sutton)

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# GIFTS OR FRUITS?

For too long it has been an either/or argument.

by Don Basham

**S**ome months ago I was one of the speakers at a charismatic teaching conference in Alabama. One night I taught on the use of the inspirational gifts of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy. In the course of my message I relied rather heavily on scriptures from 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 and 14, carefully drawing a distinction between the use of tongues as a devotional prayer language which

requires no interpretation and their use in the assembly as a public utterance to be followed by the gift of interpretation.

After the session I was confronted by a young woman who was most upset. Grabbing me by the arm she pulled me aside, then flipped open her Bible and jabbed her index finger down on chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians.

"Do you see that chapter?" Her voice was shrill and accusing. "I want

to know why you quoted from chapter 12 and 14 but ignored 13?"

"I didn't 'ignore' chapter 13," I replied, "I was teaching on the gifts of the Spirit which are discussed in 12 and 14. Chapter 13 is a beautiful discourse on love, but I wasn't teaching on love, I was teaching on spiritual gifts."

"Aha!" my accuser exclaimed. "That's the trouble with you charismatics. You never talk about anything



but speaking in tongues! Don't you know that love is the most important gift? We don't need all that stuff about speaking in tongues! Why don't you people ever talk about love?"

That Christian woman's objection concerning the charismatic Christians' emphasis on spiritual gifts highlights a problem in the church which deeply affects the charismatic and non-charismatic Christian as well. For while her objection was largely unjustified on that particular occasion, and even though she demonstrated a singular lack of the love she insisted was so important, still there is no little truth in her complaint.

It is a fact that while non-charismatics may have overemphasized the fruit of the Spirit at the expense of the gifts; charismatic Christians have been equally guilty of a preoccupation with the gifts of the Spirit while ignoring the fruit. We intend in this article to examine briefly both sides of the problem and to offer some practical suggestions toward a solution.

Let us state our problem clearly: *How are Christians to grow into a maturity which manifests a healthy balance of both the gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit?*

### PROPER DEFINITIONS NEEDED

A part of our problem stems from fuzzy and often imprecise definitions of the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit. For adequate understanding we desperately need scriptural accuracy in our definitions. For example, the woman who criticized my teaching that night in Alabama exposed her own inadequate grasp of scriptural terminology when she referred to love as a gift of the Holy Spirit. By scriptural definition love is *not* a gift of the Holy Spirit; it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. So before we go further, let us list both the nine gifts (or manifestations) and the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by

the Spirit the word of wisdom to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ (1 Cor. 12:7-12).

From that passage we recognize the nine spiritual gifts are:

- I. Inspirational gifts
  - a. speaking in tongues
  - b. interpretation of tongues
  - c. prophecy
- II. Revelation gifts
  - a. word of knowledge
  - b. word of wisdom
  - c. discerning of spirits
- III. Power gifts
  - a. faith
  - b. miracles
  - c. healings

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23).

From that verse we list the nine fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Perhaps the most helpful way to define the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit is to recognize that both are representations of the divine life of God in our human experience. The nine supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit represent the divine *ability* of God; while the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit represent the divine *character* of God.

It should be obvious that for full maturity in Jesus Christ we must experience, not merely the ability of

God, nor merely the character of God, but both the ability and the character.

Divine ability without divine character is dangerous; while divine character without divine ability can leave one without power to engage effectively in spiritual warfare against a supernatural enemy.

Jesus, of course, is our perfect pattern. In Him were manifested fully and perfectly both the divine *ability* of God and the divine *character* of God. Had He manifested only the divine ability without the divine character, He would have never humbled himself in love to submit to the cross ("Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matt. 26:53).

Yet had He manifested only the divine character of God he would have been relatively powerless to meet the desperate needs of the people who thronged Him ("But that ye may know that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, [then saith he to the sick of the palsy] Arise, take up thy bed and go into thine house" Matt. 9:6).

Paul tells us that our goal as Christians is to come "unto the measure of the stature of the *fulness* of Christ . . ." and to "grow up [mature] unto him in all things" (Eph. 4:13, 15).

Gifts and fruit: we need them both!

Perhaps the danger of emphasizing either to the neglect of the other can be seen in the two following illustrations.

### ABILITY WITHOUT CHARACTER

A minister I know had this unhappy experience. A healing evangelist came to his church for a series of meetings that proved highly successful. Many people were saved, healed, and baptized in the Holy Spirit during the revival. Yet the minister of the church suffered real agony of spirit during the meetings as he sat on the platform each night listening to the evangelist deliberately and repeatedly exalting himself, making exaggerated claims about his own greatness and telling lies



that both he and the pastor knew were lies.

"He seemed determined to mock the holiness of God and the sacredness of the ministry," the pastor reported. Then he added, "I don't care if that man can raise the dead, he will never disgrace my pulpit again!"

How do we evaluate the ministry of a man powerfully operating the gifts of the Holy Spirit, yet whose unsavory character indicates an instability which foretells impending tragedy?

### CHARACTER WITHOUT ABILITY

Years ago while I was pastoring in Toronto, Canada, the church I served also retained an elderly associate minister whose main responsibility was to visit the sick and shut-ins. A gentle, loving person, he exhibited many Christ-like qualities. Yet by his own admission his 40 years in the ministry had been powerless, marked by one frustrating, ineffective pastorate after another.

I loved him and often tried to share with him my convictions concerning the dynamic power available to us through prayer and the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. He never offered any argument against my exhortations; he merely smiled and shook his head in his gentle, resigned way. And when some of our people received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and dramatic healings and other powerful manifestations began to occur in the weekly prayer meetings we conducted in the church parlor, my associate minister carefully stayed away. It was a frustration to watch that gentle Christian man continue to plod his way imprisoned in resignation and powerlessness.

I believe both illustrations are tragic: On the one hand, a man whose powerful charismatic ministry was tainted by a perverted personal life devoid of the character of God; and on the other hand, a man whose character seemed godly, but whose ministry was so devoid of spiritual power that he was more tolerated than appreciated by those he sought to serve.

Gifts or fruit — which is more important? The constant danger before us in the Christian life is the tendency toward over-specialization. To concentrate on only one aspect of divine life and truth to the exclusion of other aspects is to become guilty of error by emphasis.

Let us list some common misconceptions held by the advocates of each emphasis. The Christians who reject or resent the reappearance of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church often base their attitude on these points:

1) Charismatic gifts are not meant for today; they were valid only in the first century.

2) Charismatic gifts are like toys for baby Christians; mature believers don't need them.

3) Charismatic gifts are a divisive factor in the church.

4) Charismatic gifts are a source of spiritual pride.

5) Charismatic gifts are unnecessary for the mature Christian life.

Without attempting to refute each argument, let us simply note that they represent a strong unscriptural bias which tends to hinder balanced spiritual growth.

In similar fashion, gift-conscious charismatics in their pre-occupation with supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit, have arrived at some equally unscriptural and dangerous assumptions.

1) The bestowal of charismatic gifts indicates God's approval.

2) Charismatic gifts are a measure of spiritual maturity.

3) Charismatic gifts eliminate the need for the fruit of the Spirit.

Since most readers of *New Wine* are charismatic Christians, I believe we are justified in not only listing these three misconceptions, but elaborating on them as well.

### DANGEROUS ASSUMPTIONS OF CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS

1) *The bestowal of charismatic gifts indicates God's approval.* I can think of no more dangerous assumption for

a Christian to hold. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not given as an indication of God's endorsement or approval. Today, many Christians are trespassing on God's grace; engaging in unscriptural ministries, ignoring basic Christian ethics and morality, even flouting their rebellion and their sinful behavior as if they were exempt from the judgment of God, even while God continues to pour miracles through them.

How can this happen? Paul provides the answer when he says, "The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29 RSV). God gives charismatic gifts and ministries *not* as an indication of His approval of the personal life of the minister, but in order to meet the needs of *His* people. Even when the man through whom the gifts flow goes astray, God continues to honor *His* ministry in that man. But this in no way excuses or justifies disobedience. In Matthew 7:23, certain followers of Jesus who have ministered miracles in His name are themselves rejected by the Lord as "workers of iniquity."

It is true that God will bless those people whose lives He endorses; but God also blesses things He does not endorse. We live in a day when the miraculous blessings of God are falling like rain upon the earth. But the Scriptures soberly remind us that God "sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

2) *Charismatic gifts are an indication of spiritual maturity.* This mistaken assumption, somewhat akin to the previous one, stems from a constantly recurring problem in Christian thought; namely the belief that we are saved by good works which is often the subtle holdover of an unscriptural childhood belief that "if we are good we go to heaven when we die." Even born-again, Spirit-baptized Christians fall prey to the trap. "Be good and you will go to heaven" is easily altered to "be good and God will give you spiritual gifts."

But the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not bestowed like spiritual merit badges for our good behavior. Rather they are given in response to faith. The



Corinthian Christians had moral problems which certainly precluded them from "deserving" spiritual gifts. Nevertheless, Paul recognized that God had blessed them with an abundance of spiritual gifts in spite of their many faults. "I thank my God always . . . that ye come behind in no gift" (1 Cor. 1:4,7).

3) *Spiritual gifts eliminate the need for the fruit of the Spirit.* Understandably, most charismatic Christians would be reluctant to admit such prejudice. Nevertheless, our continual preoccupation with spiritual gifts is often matched by a corresponding neglect of the fruit of the Spirit. We will drive 500 miles to attend a miracle service, but there's nothing exciting or dramatic about additional evidences of God's grace such as patience, meekness or temperance. This imbalance is a clear indication of the spiritual immaturity God is seeking to correct.

Reverend Bob Mumford relates an incident which powerfully illustrates the point. Years ago Bob was pastor of a church in Wilmington, Delaware, where the Holy Spirit was moving in a powerful and miraculous way. One night, Bob recalls, when the worship service was vibrantly alive with the power and glory of God and the people were caught up in worship and wonder at the supernatural evidence of His presence in their midst, there suddenly came a prophetic utterance: "The Husbandman doth stand in the midst of His vineyard feeling through the leaves, searching for fruit — and He findeth none!"

#### HOW DO WE GROW FRUIT?

As we seek to be open to the Holy Spirit in a manner that will enable us to become "fruit-bearers" as well as "gift-wielders," there are several things which, if we keep them in mind, may help us to endure.

1) *The fruit of the Spirit, like the gifts of the Spirit, are products of God's supernatural nature.* When we speak of the fruit of the Spirit we are not referring to pleasant human traits. It is a mistake to equate affable, likeable characteristics of the carnal

human nature with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The true fruits of the Holy Spirit, which are genuine evidences of God's divine character being formed in us, appear only out of the refining fire of God's dealing in the midst of adverse circumstances.

Fortunately, God is as ready to provide the quietly-miraculous assistance necessary to form His character in us as He is to bestow instantaneous supernatural gifts such as prophecy or healing. Only it's best to bear in mind the vast difference in the time required. Gifts can be given in an instant; fruit takes time to produce!

2) *Growing fruit is a painful process.* Jesus said;

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit (John 15:2).

The simple truth is; there is no way to become a fruit-bearing Christian without undergoing purging and pruning. It is a disturbing fact that when a nurseryman prunes a tree in order that it bear more fruit, he doesn't merely trim the dead branches, he cuts back many of the live ones as well!

I suspect that many times our crying out for God to alter our circumstances, rather than being an earnest effort to win a victory by faith, as we suppose, is in reality an effort to escape His pruning shears. Where else can we experience pruning except in adverse circumstances?

I believe the Holy Spirit is deliberately pressing us into harder circumstances these days for the purpose of divine pruning. Only then will our lives bring forth the fruit He desires. It is obvious that the present emphasis in the body of Christ on such matters as submission to authority, divine order in the home, obedience and discipleship, is not designed to increase the miraculous manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as needful and wonderful as they are. The gifts of speaking in tongues, prophecy and

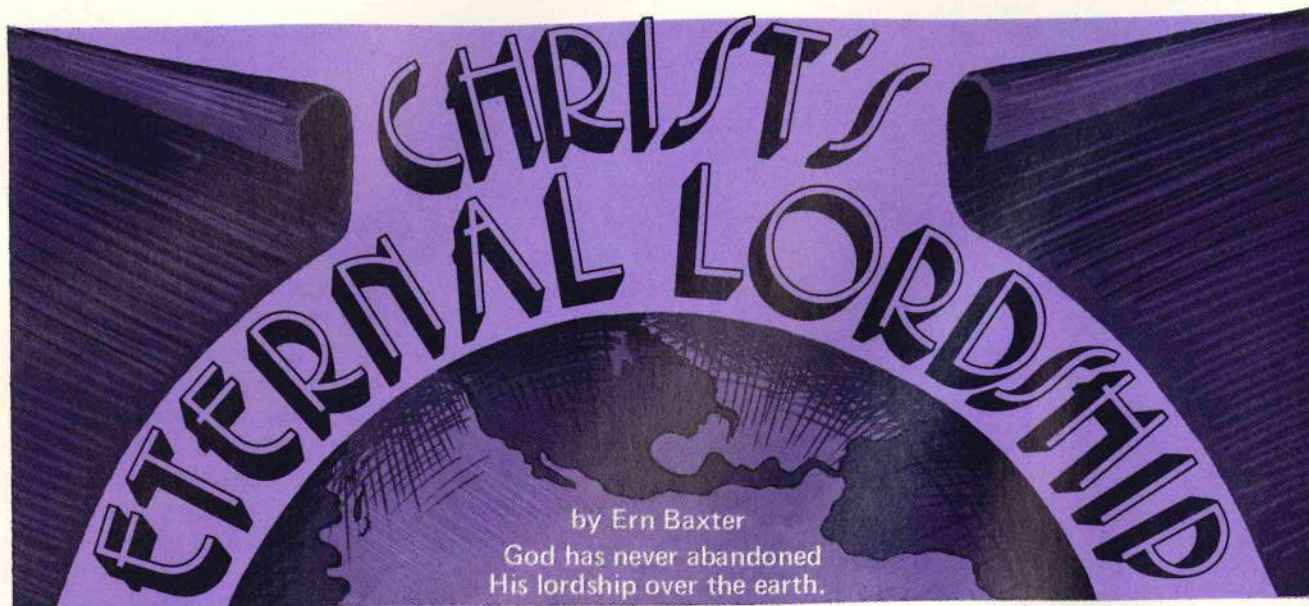
healing will contribute but little in holding a troubled marriage together. But the fruit of love, patience, and gentleness, born out of the process of God's loving but unrelenting pruning will contribute immeasurably toward that end.

3) *Whatever it may cost us to reach the mature balance between the gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit; it's worth it.* Looking back over my own Christian experience, I have to confess that as deeply grateful as I am for the many evidences of God's miracle-working power I've seen appear in and through my ministry, the times of my greatest spiritual growth have been times of trial and adversity. Miraculous gifts rightly abound on the mountain peaks of our spiritual experiences. But those mountain peaks, for all their life-changing significance, are always joined by valleys. In fact, you can't have mountain peaks without valleys. That's an inescapable fact of geography; physical and spiritual!

The writer of Hebrews seems to sum up what God has set about to do in the lives of many of us today as He pressures us into fruit-bearing union with Jesus Christ.

... "My son, do not think lightly of the Lord's discipline, nor lose heart when he corrects you; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves; he lays the rod on every son whom he acknowledges." You must endure it as discipline: God is treating you as sons. Can anyone be a son, who is not disciplined by his father? If you escape the discipline in which all sons share, you must be bastards and no true sons. Again, we paid due respect to the earthly fathers who disciplined us; should we not submit even more readily to our spiritual Father, and so attain life? They disciplined us for this short life according to their lights; but he does so for our true welfare, so that we may share his holiness. Discipline, no doubt, is never pleasant; at the time it seems painful, but in the end it yields for those who have been trained by it the peaceful harvest of an honest life. Come, then, stiffen your drooping arms and shaking knees, and keep your steps from wavering. . . . (Hebrews 12:5-12 NEB). 🍷





**T**he one true God, whose name is Jehovah, is the ultimate source of all life, authority, and power. He is the self-existent, supreme, and incomparable "I Am." He is the God who created the worlds of space (Gen. 1:1) and time (Heb. 11:3), who Himself "inhabits eternity" (Isa. 57:15). Attempts to describe and define God can only be made in terms understandable to finite minds. God's underived and beginningless life is spoken of in terms of time, as the Psalmist declares, "From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psa. 90:2). From the infinite past (as men speak) into the infinite future, thou art God, the God of sovereign power.

God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, describes Himself in terms suited to their capacity to understand. "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isa. 43:10). All other claimants to deity are no match for Jehovah who has eternal priority. The God of Israel is superior to them, for He has no beginning nor ending.

Remember the former things long past, For I am God, *and there is no other*; I am God, *and there is no one like me*, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, "My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good

pleasure"; . . . Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it (Isa. 46:9-11 NAS).

God being who and what He is, it follows that we are totally dependent upon His grace for a revelation of Himself and His plans and purposes. This He has granted, saying, "Truly I have spoken."

### THE LORD OF CREATION

In the first two chapters of Genesis we have the account of creation. The climax of God's creative work was the making of man.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them *rule over* the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and *over all the earth*, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and *fill the earth*, and

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*subdue it*; and *rule over* the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and *over every living thing that moves on the earth*" (Gen. 1:26-28 NAS).

Adam was to be God's king, reigning over the earth "with his consorted Eve." And his "court" must have been indescribably beautiful for "the Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed" (Gen. 2:8 NAS).

God had made the earth "and the fulness thereof" (Psa. 24:1), to display His glory in all its varied forms, and man was the most magnificent part of the display. "For *since the creation of the world* His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, *being understood through what has been made* . . ." (Rom. 1:20 NAS). David "understood," and through nature, acknowledged nature's God. In Psalm 8 he expresses the overwhelming awe that gripped him as he beheld "what has been made."

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him? (Vs. 3-4 NAS).

Yet, as David "considers" the wonders of creation, his understand-



able reference to human insignificance gives way to an inspired declaration of man's God-ordained purpose and destiny. Human dignity has been marred by sin, but implicit in David's words may be heard the assurance of faith in a redeeming God, who will restore man to his place of dominion.

Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, And dost crown him with glory and majesty! Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou has put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the sea (Vs. 5-8 NAS).

"The beauty of God's plan" (Rom. 3:23 JBP) is clear. He had made a beautiful earth, in which He had planted a beautiful garden, to be the beautiful home for two beautiful creatures, Adam and Eve, who would reproduce beautiful children, who in turn would reproduce, until through the process of reproduction, the world would be full of beautiful people. All of this would, of course, be done in obedient submission to the sovereign authority and supervision of Jehovah God. Even the redeemed and sanctified imagination has difficulty envisioning such a world of morally, physically, and spiritually magnificent rational creatures, living in an unsullied and uncontaminated earth of divinely ordered splendor.

It is obvious we do not live in such a world. Our world is not the orderly and beautiful place we have just attempted to describe. Something has made it otherwise. Volumes have been written to record the account of human misery and disorder, and volumes have been written suggesting ways and means to remedy the situation. However, all remedies that have not rightly diagnosed the disease, are doomed to failure. Some superficial and temporary measures may reduce the pain, but the patient is doomed to die if the disease is not accurately diagnosed and properly treated. The malady is universal, and all men, unless they have discovered the proper

remedy, are afflicted. The Bible gives us the correct diagnosis. "For there is no distinction to be made anywhere; *everyone has sinned, everyone falls short of the beauty of God's plan*" (Rom. 3:22,23 JBP).

Genesis 3 contains the painful account of Adam's defection. Adam's authority to rule over the earth was delegated. He ruled under God's ultimate authority. He must not make decisions independent of his Creator and Sustainer. The continuation of his authority depended on his obedience to the One who had placed him in power.

Satan, who himself had disobeyed and been punished by God, deceived Eve, who in turn was successful in getting Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. The serpent, Satan's agent, and Eve, were both meted out punishment for their part in the disobedience of Adam. However, Adam was the one held totally responsible for his defection. He was God's king, and answerable to God for his conduct. And so we are told, that "by *one man* sin entered into the world, and death by sin," and, "by *one man's* disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom. 5:12, 19).

Adam forfeited his authority. The sovereign of the soil became the slave of the soil (Gen. 3:17-19). Driven from his beautiful garden headquarters, this deposed monarch with the sentence of death hanging over him, paid dearly for his disobedience. The price was terrible. An immediate reduction of spiritual awareness, the reluctance of the hostile earth to provide him subsistence, the irrevocably altered relationship with Eve, the tragedy of turmoil and murder in his home, together with the nagging memories of Edenic bliss, all combined to make his act of disobedience incomputably costly.

#### DELEGATED LORDSHIP

But now the question arises, If Adam is no longer king, who is? The earth is made to be ruled, and its ruler has been dethroned. Obviously the authority reverts to the One who gave

it. The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God reigned, delegating authority to whomever He chose, awaiting the time when man should qualify to assume the universal authority forfeited by Adam. The Old Testament writers repeatedly affirm the kingship of Jehovah over the earth, and His delegation of authority. (See Ps. 22:28; 24:1; 47:2,7,8; 66:7; 96:10; 59:13; 103:19; 75:6,7; Dan. 4:34-37).

It is evident from these scriptures, and many others which could be cited, that God reigned over the earth by delegating authority to kings and kingdoms, both Israelitish and Gentilic. His medium for delegating and dealing with earthly authority was the prophet. A prophet is "one who speaks for another." (See Heb. 1:1, Lk. 1:70).

Many names come to mind, such as Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Melchizedek, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob's twelve sons became the fathers of a nation, being named Israelites after Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, after wrestling with the angel. As a nation, the Israelites went to Egypt in time of famine and enjoyed security under the delegated authority of their brother Joseph, who had become second in command only to the king. In Egypt they became a sizeable nation. After the death of Joseph, "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8). The new king, alarmed at the growth of the Israelites, subjected them to servitude to keep them from possibly overthrowing him.

God raised up the prophet Moses to be His voice to the Israelites, and also their deliverer from Egypt. He was able by the mighty power of God to lead the people out of Egypt, and bring them into the wilderness where God could prepare them for going into the land of Canaan. While in the wilderness, God entered into covenant with the nation (Ex. 19:4-6; 24:1-8). In spite of God's blessing and provision, the Israelites established a record of disobedience. They rebelled against Moses repeatedly, and eventually in the days of Samuel, they



declared their desire to be rid of the divine kingship mediated through prophets and have a king like the other nations. Samuel was displeased with the people for their attitude, and "prayed unto the Lord" (1 Sam. 8:6). God's response to Samuel is most enlightening. It makes clear that He had indeed been reigning over Israel through the prophet Samuel. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but *they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*" (1 Sam. 8:7).

While Israel thought they were being governed by their new king Saul, the fact was, that Samuel continued to be the one through whom God mediated His authority. Samuel anointed Saul as king, and he also delivered the message of God to Saul pronouncing his fate. So, while the people thought they were being ruled by Saul, they were still under the kingship of God, Samuel the prophet being His deputy in the earth.

Israel's next king was David. Although he was "a man after God's own heart," he was still subject to God through the prophet Nathan. He also was himself a prophet, so God could speak to him directly as a prophet concerning his kingly duties. And so it continued through Israel's history. God sent them prophets to direct them, warn them, and often be killed by them. But God never dropped the reins of government. Also, whatever authority Satan had was limited by the will of God. He was only permitted to do such things as fitted in with the plans and purposes of God, as in the case of Job.

When Satan is spoken of as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), it is well to define his territory. The "world" over which he is "god" and "prince" (John 14:30), is that number of moral intelligences willingly submitted to his sway. The "world" of Satan's dominion consists of that part of mankind organizing its life apart from God, thus leaving itself vulnerable to Satan's manipulation.

From the time of Adam's forfeiture

of authority, God began to speak of another Man who would be the woman's "seed" (Gen 3:15), and who would assume the sovereignty lost through disobedience. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, "filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied," saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as *he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began*" (Luke 1:67-70).

We cannot deal with all the prophetic references to the coming of the new Ruler. However, three things are declared about Him from the human standpoint. He would be a man as was Adam, thus a member of the human race (Luke 3:38). He would be Abraham's "seed," blessing the world with redemption from sin (Heb.2:16). He would be David's "seed," restoring the lost royalty to man according to God's purpose (Matt. 1:1). And from the divine side, He would be no less a person than God's Son (Luke 1:32).

### CHRIST'S LORDSHIP

Since it is our purpose to consider the scope of Christ's lordship, we will confine ourselves to some of those passages which deal with His rulership, emphasizing two points. First, He was to be God's Son, and second, He was to be of "the seed of David." We will look at three Psalms which establish the character of the coming One as God's Son, Psalm 2, 45 and 110.

To David, in Psalm 2, are revealed the declarations of God and His Son, concerning rulership of the earth. The first three verses describe mankind in rebellion against God and His anointed King. Then comes the response of God, followed by the Son's report of His Father's "decree."

He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury: "*But as for me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.*"

"I will surely tell of *the decree of the Lord*: He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and *I will surely give the nations as Thy inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession*'" (Psa. 2:4-8 NAS).

The fact and scope of Christ's lordship are here clearly delineated. God will install His King in the midst of the nations, and "decree" that His Son-King shall have the earth with all its inhabitants as His rightful "possession." The early Christians understood this Psalm to apply to God's installation of Christ as King at His resurrection, and appealed in prayer to God to confirm His promise in the Psalm, and establish Christ's lordship, through granting success to the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 4:24-33). For them the Psalm was fulfilled in the enthroning of the King, and was being fulfilled in His moving out to conquer the nations through the Gospel.

The relevant passage in Psalm 45 is quoted and interpreted for us by the writer to the Hebrews. The inspired interpretation leaves no doubt who the Psalmist is referring to or the time of this One's reign. Hebrews 1 tells us how God spoke "in *time past* unto the fathers by the prophets," but *now*, "hath in these *last days* spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1,2). He then proceeds to speak of the absolute supremacy of the Son over all things and creatures, including angels who are servants and not sovereigns, as is the Son. But let us put the two scriptures together.

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom (Psa. 45:6 NAS).

But of *the Son* He says; "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His Kingdom (Heb. 1:8 NAS).

God's Son is the One spoken of by the Psalmist, and He is the One according to Hebrews who has a "throne," a "scepter," and a "Kingdom."

Psalm 110 is the most frequently



quoted Psalm in the New Testament. When Jesus used the Psalm to counteract the wrong teaching of the scribes, He made it clear that David had spoken of Him by divine inspiration, saying, "For David himself said *by the Holy Ghost*" (Mark 12:36). By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David was permitted to hear the word of the Lord to One whom David called "my Lord." This One of course was Jesus Christ, David's Lord, and the Lord of all who have bowed the knee to Him in total surrender. Let us hear the Holy Spirit speaking through David.

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet." The Lord will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, saying "*Rule* in the midst of Thine enemies." (Ps. 110:1-2 NAS).

Thus we clearly see that the "last Adam" who would assume the sovereignty over the earth is God's Son.

The second point is, that earth's ultimate Ruler was to be of "David's seed." God had promised David that He would build him a "house," telling him that "your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). This pledge is incorporated in two Psalms.

"I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to *David My servant*, I will establish *your seed forever*, And build up *your throne* to all generations" (Psa. 89:3,4 NAS).

The Lord has sworn to *David*, A truth from which He will not turn back; "*Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne*" (Psa. 132:11 NAS).

Does the Word of God tell us when this promise to David was fulfilled? Turning to Acts 2, we listen to Peter giving a Spirit-inspired explanation of the happenings on the day of Pentecost. Commencing at verse 22, Peter gives a brief but graphic statement covering the life of Jesus through to His resurrection from the dead. Then at verse 25 he speaks of a Psalm of

David, (Psa. 16:8-11), which Peter declares, "David says of *him*." He then goes on to quote the last four verses of the Psalm in which David states a promise of God. "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay" (vs. 27). Peter has already assured his audience that David was speaking of *Him*, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, he patiently points out, that this could not be said of David, since David "both died, and was buried, and the tomb is with us to this day" (vs. 29). David could not have been speaking of himself. Peter then gives us the Spirit's interpretation of the Psalm.

And so, because he [David] was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants upon *his throne*, he looked ahead and *spoke of the resurrection of the Christ*, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore *having been exalted to the right hand of God*, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which ye both see and hear. For *it was not David who ascended into heaven*, but he himself says: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet'" (Acts 2:30-35 NAS).

The "decree" of God in Psalm 2, to "install His King" was fulfilled at the time of Christ's resurrection and ascension. The "throne" of Psalm 45 was occupied by "the Son" whom we now "see crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 1:8; 2:9). And Peter, quoting Psalm 110, assures us that the King-Priest is now seated "at God's right hand."

Paul says the same thing in his first recorded sermon delivered at Antioch in Pisidia. Making reference to the second Psalm, he says:

And we declare unto you the glad tidings, how that *the promise which was made unto the fathers*, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that *He hath*

*raised up Jesus again*; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee (Acts 13:32,33).

Then let us hear the words of Him who is "the true witness," even our Lord Jesus. Addressing the Father in the prayer recorded in John 17, He acknowledges that the Father had given "*Him authority over all mankind*" (vs. 2 NAS). Another rendering reads, "For thou hast made him *sovereign over all mankind*" (NEB).

Hear Him again after the resurrection as He speaks to His disciples, saying, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (Matt. 28:18 NAS). In the light of His "*all authority in heaven and on earth*," He issues a commission which is possible of fulfilment. "Go *therefore* and make disciples of *all nations*" (vs. 19 NAS). It is only as we apprehend the scope of His lordship over the earth, that we can with genuine faith and God-inspired confidence expect to "make disciples of all nations."

It was the Spirit-imparted knowledge that Jesus Christ was "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36) that fired the first Christians to invade cities, provinces, and nations with the Gospel. Their Lord had "*all authority . . . in heaven and on earth*," and He had delegated them to affirm and establish that authority "in all the world" (Mark 16:15), by word and by deed.

The universal lordship of Christ is not just a doctrine to which we give mental assent, but the basis of all sound Christian conduct, personal and corporate. Could it be, that we as individual Christians, and as the redeemed community, have lost sight of the significance and purpose of Christ's lordship? If so, would this not account for our devastating disunity and debilitated discipleship?

Let the conquering cry of the first Christians, who "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), be heard again as the unanimous affirmation and commitment of the people of God, until the world hears and sees and knows that "*Jesus Christ is Lord!*"



# LORD OF THE DOLLAR?



## Christ's lordship and our material possessions.

by Don Basham

**A** preacher had conducted a revival and was baptizing his converts in a farm pond not far from his church. One of the converts was a prosperous farmer, known in the community for his tight grip on the dollar.

When his name was called, this farmer, clad in overalls, left the bank to wade slowly toward the preacher. As the water reached his knees he suddenly turned back for the shore.

"Wait a minute, preacher," he said. "I forgot to take my billfold out of my pocket. I don't want it to get wet."

"Leave it where it is and come back out here," the preacher replied. "Your billfold needs to be baptized too."

Unfortunately, many a Christian's conversion and baptism seems never to have reached his pocketbook. In fact, most Christians appear bound by an inadequate concept of the lordship of Jesus Christ in relation to their finances.

By examining the Scriptures about the Lord's claim on our possessions, we may encourage some to forsake the materialistic stand that "What I have is mine," in favor of the scriptural stand that man is *not* owner, but steward of

what he has and that "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

Essentially what we seek is to come into a greater realization of the lordship of Jesus Christ over our material possessions. How do we accomplish this? At least three necessary steps seem indicated: (1) We must abandon our selfish ambitions in regard to achieving wealth and property. (2) We must learn to trust in God's ability to meet abundantly all our material needs, and (3) We must be willing to put all that we have at His disposal.

### REORDERING OUR PRIORITIES

First, we said it is necessary to abandon our ambition to achieve wealth. Recognizing the almost universal desire to acquire wealth and property, Jesus said to his disciples in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Then He related the parable of the rich man who stored up his wealth so that he could live in luxury the rest of his life. There was only one problem: he died before he could enjoy it!

Jesus said, *God considered the man*

*a fool* (Luke 12:20) and then added that so is anyone else who "layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Jesus' indictment of the rich man who hoarded his wealth so he could retire and take it easy is even more striking when we realize that *this is the obvious, unabashed goal of most American Christians!*

Yet the Bible is replete with warnings against placing top priority on material gain. (See Matthew 6:19-21; Matt. 13:22; Mark 10:23-25; 1 Timothy 6:6-10).

It is no coincidence that when Jesus reprimands everyone who "layeth up treasure for himself" he adds the phrase "and is not rich toward God." What a man devotes his time to becomes his master and his God, and Jesus knew this when he stated that: "No man can serve two masters. . ." (Matt. 6:24).

What is required to accomplish this first step of giving up our ambitions for wealth? A decision of the will. We must *decide* to take the Lord seriously in this matter. Unfortunately, we are bombarded day and night by a multitude of voices insisting that we do the very thing Jesus tells us not to do. We are told to earn! Be ambitious! Acquire wealth! Invest! Earn more!



Re-invest! Acquire more wealth! The so-called "good life" is almost totally equated with the acquisition of money and material possessions. Not one of us has completely escaped the brainwashing of such influences. Not only do television, newspapers, radio and magazines drill such a philosophy into us, but parents, teachers and friends add their voices to the din.

While we would wish hard times for no one, nevertheless our present economic crisis does have one spiritually healthy side effect. It has pressed home to millions the danger of relying on material possessions for ultimate security. With financial investments being steadily devoured by the twin monsters of inflation and recession, many people are confronted with the plight the prophet Haggai describes concerning those who have been preoccupied with their own welfare while forgetting their responsibility to God.

Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes (Haggai 1:5-6).

Our first responsibility then is a re-ordering of our priorities; an adjustment of ambitions in obedience to Jesus' instruction that we "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness and [then!] all these things shall be added . . ." (Matthew 6:33).

### TRUSTING GOD TO MEET OUR NEEDS

But in what way are "all these things" to be added? *That* is the pivotal question, and answering it brings us to our second step: learning to trust God to meet abundantly all our material needs. Strangely enough, over against the clear and repeated warnings of God about preoccupation with material possessions are the equally clear and eloquent promises of

God's desire to bless and prosper us materially.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, *if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it* (Malachi 3:10).

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom (Luke 6:38).

Beloved, I wish above all things *that thou mayest prosper and be in health*, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2).

How do we explain what seems to be a contradiction? How do we answer the hard-driving businessman who says, "I believe God wants me to prosper so I'm working as hard as I can to make myself prosperous"? If God is so interested in blessing us materially, why should He object so strenuously to our seeking to acquire those blessings for ourselves?

Basically, the problem is one of motive. God does not object to our being prosperous, or even wealthy. *What He objects to is our putting our prosperity ahead of Him!* He objects to our relying on our ability to provide for ourselves instead of relying on His ability to provide for us.

We are to seek *first* (not second or third) His kingdom and His righteousness. *Then*, "all these things" will be added.

We are to "bring all the tithes into the storehouse" *first*; then in response to our faithful stewardship, God will "pour out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive."

We are to give (as unto Him) *first*; then "it will be given unto us."

We are to prosper *first* in our souls (i.e. spiritual prosperity which comes from putting God first); then we will "prosper [materially] as our souls prosper."

All the promises of God's material provision for us are conditional upon

our *first* acknowledging, worshiping and obeying Him. God and His will are to have preeminence. Then, as a result of our putting Him first, He in turn begins to bless us, even abundantly. Seeking the material abundance first is idolatry; whereas, seeking God first and through faithfulness receiving His abundance, is pleasing to Him.

God knows the deceitfulness of the human heart. He knows that the more materially successful we are without Him, the more independent we become. But God wants us neither independent nor self-sufficient . . . He wants us continually dependent upon Him. To prosper without God can cost you your soul! That's what the rich man who built bigger barns discovered.

As a matter of fact, not only does all our material prosperity come from God, but even our ability to make money comes from Him. God spoke sternly to the children of Israel just before they entered the Promised Land, warning them not to forget the Source of all their blessings:

Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt . . .

And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

*But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth . . .* (Deut. 8:11-14, 17-18).

To make Jesus Lord of our material possessions then not only requires recognition of our dependency upon God, but also our acknowledgement that even the very ability to acquire wealth comes from God. But today, how many wealthy would sincerely give God the glory for their fortune-



making ability?

Moreover, how many Christians who profess the belief that God can meet their financial needs actually have little or no personal testimony of God moving sovereignly to meet some personal need of their very own?

One of the most gratifying things which can happen to a Christian is to experience God's *tangible*, miraculous assistance in a time of financial need. But countless numbers of God's people have never experienced such blessings because they never dared to trust God by undertaking service for the Lord in some manner which would require His miraculous grace to supply the money or material they may need.

My own case may not be untypical. For nearly fifteen years I was a denominational pastor whose material provision was supplied every two weeks when the church treasurer handed me my salary check. Although I believed in God's ability to provide financial help and frequently encouraged my parishioners to look to God as the source of their blessings, neither I nor they were undertaking any kind of spiritual ministry which required us to trust God for finances. We all ran our lives and managed our affairs very well by ourselves, and we didn't really need God's help in financial matters, thank you very much!

Then seven years ago, the Lord catapulted me and my family out of the pastoral ministry into what is commonly called a "faith ministry." I resigned my pastorate to become an itinerant Bible teacher with no regular income. The first three years of my new ministry proved to be the most trying, yet the most amazing years of my life with regard to financial support. I learned to appreciate first-hand the appropriate definition of the "life of faith" as "living in the midst of a miracle on the edge of disaster."

Time and again our finances would dwindle until I had only small change in my pocket. No cash, no money in the bank, and for a while no prospects for ministry which would generate income. In such times, with a wife and five children to support, I had a crash

course in trusting God's ability to provide!

Time after time, God proved Himself faithful, even though He often stretched our faith until we wondered if we had been deserted. At times His provision didn't appear until what we felt was later than the "last possible moment." During those testings I discovered that our faith grows the most in that eerie interval between the time we feel God must answer and the time — usually days later — when He finally does answer!

Without fail, we found that He *does* answer. He never let us down. We never missed a meal (although my wife, on occasion, served some rather unusual menus!) And we never failed to meet all our financial obligations, although I learned during those times of testing that God doesn't get particularly upset over the second reminder about a utility bill!

For those three years of testing we were like the children of Israel in their journey through the wilderness, where their physical needs were met day by day in miraculous fashion. Often God's timing in our situation was so precise and the amount sent by Him so specific that we knew beyond question that He was giving intimate, personal attention to our particular need. And the assurance of God's unfailing love, engendered in our hearts as a result of such providence, became tempered mortar in the foundation of our faith.

All Christians need to learn to trust in God's ability to provide for their financial needs. We'll never have the courage for the third step unless we've proved Him in the second.

### JESUS, LORD OF FINANCES

Beyond letting go our preoccupation with material possessions and beyond learning to trust in God's ability to meet our material needs, a third, and still more radical step must be taken: we must be willing for God to have His way with all we have. The longer I walk with God and the more I resolve to be faithful to Him, the more I realize that Jesus is not just inter-

ested in meeting my needs. He's determined to end up in complete charge of my life! And that entails being Lord over my finances.

When we teach about learning to trust Jesus to meet our financial needs, we are moving in the realm of His *saving* ministry. His material provision is included in His ministry to us as Savior. But when we speak of giving over total control of our lives (including finances) to Him, we move beyond His *saving* ministry into the realm of His *lordship*.

To acknowledge Jesus as Savior is commitment based on *grace* or what He can do for us. To acknowledge Him as Lord is commitment based on *obedience* or what we can do for Him. Many who are learning to trust Jesus to *provide* have not yet come to trust Him to *rule*. When we truly decide to make Jesus Christ *Lord*, any number of dramatic, unexpected, and often painful things begin to happen. They happen because the Lord quickly sets about to see if we mean what we professed in our commitment. The story of Jesus and the rich young ruler in Matthew chapter 19:16-22 is a profound study in this very principle.

The young man came asking Jesus what was required for eternal life. Jesus' first answer was more or less perfunctory: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

But the young man was surprisingly insistent. He knew he had been largely faithful in the matter of the do's and don't's of ethical behavior, yet some deep hunger in him had not been satisfied by obedience to external commands.

What he was experiencing, of course, was the effects of the divinely-engineered flaw built into each one of us. God made us in such a way that we cannot be saved or satisfied by "what we do." "Earning our salvation" is the futile attempt to run our own lives satisfactorily; a method which inevitably proves dissatisfactory.

The rich young ruler knew he needed something more. "All these things have I kept from my youth up: *what lack I yet?*"



Although he didn't understand it, what he was asking for was *lordship over his life*. He was admitting that *his* attempts to run his life had failed to produce the right results.

Jesus, sensing his deep heart cry, decided to show him the barrier blocking fulfillment of his heart's desire. "If thou wilt be perfect [mature], go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me!" (vs. 21).

This was an eloquent invitation to discipleship: Jesus, offering His rule and lordship in behalf of a man who claimed to be seeking life's highest good. But spelled out in the invitation was the cost! Jesus was requiring not just the young man's wealth, *but also the right to decide what to do with his wealth*. Not just the money but the very freedom to run his life was being required. And the young man turned Jesus down.

So many of us are like that. We seek spiritual advice from Jesus Christ (or one of his ministers) and sound counsel is often forthcoming. But because we know Jesus as Savior, or Healer, or Baptizer, or Deliverer, or Provider, *but still do not acknowledge His lordship*, we feel free to reject His advice. And Jesus reminds us that to reject His counsel is to deny His lordship.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord,  
and do not the things which I say?  
(Luke 6:46)

### ARE WE WILLING TO MAKE HIM LORD?

Any time you say, "Jesus, I surrender my life totally to you," *watch out!* You can be certain He will quickly put an authoritative finger on certain areas of your life where, up to this point, you've not allowed His lordship; areas where you've remained "independent." (Usually, what we refer to as "independence" the Lord calls "rebellion.")

"Oh Lord, I surrender everything to you. I want you to be Lord over every area of my life!"

"All right, son; I accept your offer. Now since I'm Lord over all, I'll take control of your wealth and your property, and all your salary. Quite a bit in that area needs adjusting!"

"But, Lord! That's not quite what I had in mind. I'm not quite sure I'm ready to . . ."

Is Jesus Lord of all or not?

The rich young ruler backed away from discipleship because Jesus would have assumed lordship over his finances. And any concept we may have of the lordship of Jesus Christ over our lives which ignores or slights His right to control our material possessions is a superficial and inadequate concept.

### BUT ISN'T TITHING ENOUGH?

Would you have believed we could come almost to the end of an article on the subject of Jesus as Lord of Finance without mentioning tithing even once? Believe me, the omission has been intentional. Tithing (giving 10% of one's income to the Lord's work) should be a settled matter for anyone who calls himself a Christian. The mandatory 10% is merely a proper beginning for Christian giving. Certainly as we strive to abandon our preoccupation with material possessions and learn to trust God's ability to provide for our financial needs, it would be little short of ridiculous to be disobedient at this point.

But one of the deceptions which can come with stressing the necessity of "giving a tithe" is the mistaken assumption that if the 10% belongs to the Lord, the other 90% is "my money."

Not so! Basic to the concept of stewardship, as we said at the beginning of this article, is recognition that *God is the owner*, and man is but a steward (servant) responsible for proper use of what he has been given.

So for this article we have by-passed the subject of tithing, not because it is not significant, but because we are considering Jesus as not only the recipient of our 10%, but as Lord of *all* our possessions.

### WILL GOD TAKE AWAY MORE THAN HE GIVES?

Basically, the only reason we don't want Jesus to be Lord over our finances (or Lord over many other areas of our lives as well!) is because we believe we will end up deprived in some way. We continue to believe one of Satan's most blatant lies: that God will take away more than He will give.

I want to close this article with a reminder of the loving nature of the God who seeks to be Lord of our finances. Jesus Christ is neither miserly nor pinch-penny. Why should He be? He is Lord over the wealth of the universe! He is the Lord of abundance. He is not in the *depriving* business; He is in the blessing business.

Once we fully acknowledge Him as Lord, it is His intention, *after we've been proven and tested* to bring us into abundance. His ultimate intention is not just to help us "get by"; He intends to *prosper* us. God is not glorified by poverty; the glory due His name springs from abundance, both spiritual and material!

In the wilderness the children of Israel were miraculously provided for. All their needs were met on a day-to-day basis. There they had ample opportunity to discover that God was able to deliver them from all their enemies and out of all their need.

But the wilderness was never intended as a place of permanent residence. The destiny of Israel lay not in the wilderness but beyond the Jordan in Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey; a land of abundance; a land whose bounty was so rich it took two men to carry a single cluster of grapes.

We have an extravagant God. We have a God who desires, yes, who even intends to bring us into a land overflowing with both spiritual and material abundance.

But full inheritance God wisely keeps beyond the grasp of immature, untested hands. It lies on the far side of the wilderness, beyond Jordan, to be appropriated only by those who not only know Jesus as Savior, but who also have covenanted to make Him Lord of all. 🍷





**W**hen I try to decide in what capacity I should claim the audacity to write this essay, I am at a loss to settle on any one fixed identity, other than my identity as a sinner redeemed by Christ: one in spirit and struggle and joy with all who claim him as Lord of their lives and who strive and stumble, regress and return, defy and defer to the patient molding of the Potter whose desire it is to turn us into strong and beautiful vessels of his Spirit.

I am a psychologist (for whatever that is worth, and it feels like less and less all the time), a junior academic, a babe in Christ of less than two years, a single woman who, like the prodigal son, somehow needed — or chose — to do a lot of personal “field work,” sex-wise, politics-wise and head-wise before finally responding, at the age of twenty-seven, to the patient knocking of the Master. All of this will bear importantly on what I choose to say about sexuality and how I say it, for I cannot make a separation among the functions I have just mentioned. They are all me. They interact. They argue

among themselves. They grow, together and separately. They yearn to be brought into a total, consistent harmony with God’s will, yet realize that such a goal can only be progressively approximated, never totally realized, this side of heaven. For now, my hope is only that in writing about what must be the most hotly debated functions of human existence, what I say will reflect biblical truth, in spirit and in consequence, if not always in one-to-one congruence.

### THE POLITICS OF SEX

I believe the phrase “the politics of sex” points to an essential contrast between the sexual culture into which we are socialized as North Americans and the purposes to which, as Christians, we are called by God. I am not implying that there is no overlap whatsoever between the world’s conception of sexuality and the Christian one, or that the best Christians are those who have put their sexuality into cold storage. Such either-or thinking, while it may at times have been used by the church, simply

cannot be supported scripturally. But I do maintain that, married or single, male or female, gay or straight, “where your sexuality is, there will your heart be”; and by this I mean that the extent to which we have really given over to God *all* of our human functions, talents, strengths and weaknesses will determine whether or not our sexuality becomes, on the one hand, a bondage, obsession and never-slaked thirst, or, on the other hand, a gratuitous joy which has nothing whatsoever to do with the number of orgasms per week we have, the complexity of our sexual fantasies or the fidelity with which we read from the stereotyped scripts labelled “masculine” and “feminine.”

*Politics*, in its broadest sense, refers to the ways in which power is distributed and used, and the ways in which rights are defined and claimed. By this criterion, the sexuality of North Americans in the 1970’s is indeed a highly politicized human function. We hear a lot being said and written about how to maximize our sexual powers and go about claiming our sexual rights. Best-selling how-to books, such



as *The Sensuous Man, Any Woman Can* and *Human Sexual Inadequacy*, remind us that by learning the right demeanor and jargon outside the bedroom, plus the right technical skills once we are inside, we can ensure ever bigger, better and more frequent orgasms for ourselves. It would seem that "orgasmic rights" have become an implicitly assumed part of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, with the result that no one has the "right" to prescribe for another person what should or should not lead to sexual gratification. "Whatever turns you on" is becoming the only implicit guideline, and an inevitable one, once one has accepted the premise that getting turned on is a human function as necessary and natural as eating and drinking, and that being able to enjoy variety in your diet is a sign of flexibility and broad-mindedness.

By this criterion, what good reason is there *not* to culminate each and every date with a roll in the hay? What good reason is there *not* to spouse-swap? What good reason is there *not* to encourage your children to masturbate, or even teach them how? After all, practice makes perfect, or so *The Sensuous Woman* tells us, and the better practised you are at turning yourself on, the better you will do it with someone else. What reason is there *not* to explore the options of homosexuality or transvestism or sex with animals or children (provided, of course, that you have due regard for their orgasmic rights as well)?

Really, there is no obvious reason to write off any of these choices once you have accepted, as our society appears to have, the notion of orgasmic rights distinct from any other moral standard. In such a thought-context, adherence to Christian sexual morality becomes as arbitrary and anachronistic as insisting that we should still use the horse and buggy when we now have so many more, and so much faster, modes of transport.

Besides being thought of in terms of rights to be claimed, there is a second way in which sexuality is highly politicized in the North America of the 1970's, and this has to do with the

power that active sexuality has to create dependence in one person towards another. Our sex manuals seem to keep telling us that, besides ensuring gratification for ourselves, the function of sexuality is to "hold" the other person, to keep the partner so dependent on your pleasure-giving and approval-giving capacities that he or she is ideally tamed into a posture of servitude, willingly supplying material security or domestic services in return for sexual pleasure or social status. In this context, the bargaining lever may be sexual gratification, the threat of social isolation or a combination of both, but either way the rule of thumb is clear: The most powerful (and by implication the best) position to be in is one which leaves the other person more dependent on your sexual and social resources than you are on his or hers. Thus the formula for a "successful" relationship is essentially an exchange model, with implied contracts, conditions, threats of withdrawal and a balance of power which is constantly up for grabs.

### THE AUDACITY OF GOD'S WORD

In the face of these apparently sensible ways of protecting one's own rights and securing one's own power in the sexual arena, what does God's Word have the audacity to proclaim? That husbands are to love wives to the extent of being willing to die for them and that wives, in turn, are to submit to and respect their husbands (Eph. 5). That spouses' bodies belong to each other and are not to be withheld for purposes of emotional blackmail or any other reason besides a temporary coming apart to concentrate separately on God (1 Cor. 7). That there is only one sanctioned context (heterosexual marriage) for the expression of genital sexuality and that such marriage is for life (see Mt. 19; Mk. 10; Rom. 1; 1 Cor. 7). That marriage is a good thing, but so is celibacy (1 Cor. 7). That it is not enough just to refrain from adultery and fornication with your body, but that God asks for your fantasies to be turned over to him as well (Mt. 5).

Now really! How outmoded, repressive and unscientific can you get? How preposterous and arbitrary! How patently contrary to the obvious need and behavior of the whole human race throughout the whole of history. Will that kind of line ever draw people to Christ? Well, probably not—or at least let me say that if at the time I came to Christ I had known and acknowledged as God-given all of these constraints, I probably would not have gone a step further in my walk with him. If I had known the extent to which he would "put his spirit within me and cause me to walk in his statutes" (Ezek. 36:27), patiently, gently breaking down the accumulated habits of twenty-seven years and gradually replacing them with exactly the constraints (or, as I now see them, *freedoms*) I have just listed—well, I would have thought twice about going on this Christianity trip.

Because, you see, I was a very liberated young woman at the time. I had had a rich sexual fantasy life almost since I could remember. I had learned to masturbate efficiently at a very young age. I had almost lost count of the number of men I had slept with in a serially monogamous fashion. I had taken advantage of the spirit of the Women's Movement (in which I was quite active) to begin exploring my own bisexuality. And I had no intention of giving any of that up. When I accepted Christ, I figured that it was the spirit of the law, not the letter, that mattered, that "love" was the overriding principle, and that I could witness in bed as easily as anywhere else.

But to my progressive astonishment, I found all that changing. Not quickly. Not all at once. Not by anyone's prying into my personal life or trying to send me on a guilt trip (although I am sure I had lots of people praying for me). It was totally a process of God's working on me, one item of behavior at a time, over many months, like patiently peeling one layer after another off an onion.

He accomplished this in two ways. First of all, much like some of David Wilkerson's ex-addicts who really *tried*



to return to drugs and found they could not get high any more, I found that I was getting progressively less satisfaction from my sexual behavior. The various pleasures simply started to be less and less worth the effort and hassle associated with them. Second, I began to sense a correlation between my own behavior and thoughts, on the one hand, and the closeness and reliability of God's peaceful presence, on the other. Gradually, the nature of the correlation became clear: To the extent that I indulged in my "liberated" sexual behavior any given day or week, to that extent did I find myself, in all other areas of my life, thrown right back into the feelings of anxiety, rush, fear and turmoil that had been so dominant a part of my life before coming to Christ. To the extent that I *did not* indulge (even if it was only because I was too busy doing other things), to that extent did I find God's energizing and peaceful presence available to me.

In a nutshell, God's Spirit and presence had become the ultimate positive reinforcer for me, and the more I had of it, the more I wanted. If maintaining that presence meant that other (now less satisfying) reinforcers had to go, then I was willing to let them go. I am not saying that there was not at times struggle or ambivalence, or that the process has not included a lot of prayer and a lot of stumbling. My overriding feelings, however, are *not* ones of being "deprived" or "punished," but rather of being progressively liberated, gentled and strengthened. One of Peter's epistles tells us that "a man is the slave of whatever has mastered him" (2 Pet. 2:19). In other words, to the extent that the caprices of my sexuality dictated my thoughts, motivations and actions in my pre-Christian life (which was all too often the case) rather than my controlling my own behaviors, I was a slave.

### SLEEPING AROUND

Not surprisingly, the first layer of the onion that the Lord set to work on

was my sexual behavior with other people. I began to see (and again, without any other person prompting me) that the need to be always in a sexual relationship with someone really did not have that much to do with the release of sexual tension. Rather, it was a desperate fight against a rarely admitted loneliness and isolation; it was the best (or only) way I knew how to approximate some reassurance that somehow, for a little while anyway, there was a semblance of commitment, caring and communication. Very simply, it was an attempt to fill that "God-shaped void" of which Pascal wrote. Over the weeks and months that I still tried to get the best of both worlds, that is, tried to be a Christian and still sleep around, I reached two conclusions. The first was that while I had never had any trouble *attaining* that desired commitment and communication, I was never able to *maintain* it. It was always the same way: A fellow and I would start out with a tremendous euphoric closeness which sooner or later became empty and ritualized. We would go along playing the game for a while, but finally one or the other of us would pull out, determined that next time it would be different. It never was.

The second thing I learned was that feeling isolated has little to do with whether or not one is sharing a bed with someone, or even trying to share a life. I cannot count the nights I have lain awake, sometimes muffling sobs in a pillow, beside a satiated, soundly sleeping male, wondering why I was feeling so alone. It was not that the men in question were doing all the taking and no giving—I did not specialize in relationships like that. Mostly they were people who themselves wanted a real and pretty total relationship. But somehow, just because we were trying to get it all from each other, we ended up having even less than we started with, feeling only constraint instead of communication. Somehow we were running the relationship on the wrong fuel.

On the other hand, I will never forget the tremendous liberation I felt the first night I had enough strength in

the Lord to say no and not feel any need to apologize for it or rationalize it. I remember how good it felt to fall asleep *alone*, in my own bed, by myself, and how overjoyed I was to wake up in the morning and confirm that no one was there beside me. I have never felt *less* isolated in my life—then, or ever since.

### SOLO SEX

As if it were not surprise enough to find myself quite happily foregoing sexual contact with other people, I found the Lord starting to convict me about having it with myself! Now, the Bible does not have anything very explicit to say about masturbation, and there seem to be lots of Christians who endorse it as a good safety-valve behavior and as a way of getting in touch with your own sexuality. But aside from the fact that the fantasies which almost inevitably accompany masturbation clearly constitute lust and hence (if we take the Sermon on the Mount seriously) are tantamount in God's sight to the act itself, there are quite sound psychological reasons why masturbation is neither "good practice for the real thing" nor even a good safety-valve. I will try to explain them.

Sexual arousal has tremendous conditioning potential; it can attach itself to whatever stimulus it has been associated with in the past, and if continually paired with that stimulus, it will ultimately *require* that restricted stimulus pattern in order to be evoked at all. This is the way the more peculiar sexual anomalies got built up. For example, a boy whose first stirrings of sexual arousal came in the context of seeing women's underwear may thereafter call up the image of women's underwear whenever he wants to re-evolve the original sexual "rush," and in order to aid masturbation. Ultimately, after years of such restricted associating, he finds he cannot get turned on *unless* he has women's underwear around. Hardly a liberating state of affairs.

I began to realize that a similar, if somewhat less exotic, process



accompanies masturbation. Most people enhance and catalyze this behavior with specific, favorite fantasies whose content gradually comes to be closely associated with orgasm. As a result, the goal in sexual contact with another person becomes approximating the content of these fantasies as closely as possible. Now, no earthly reality can compete with a fantasy. Reality just is not that conveniently flexible. Sometimes it may be better, sometimes worse, but for sure it will almost never be the *same* as the fantasy. The best you can do is *use* the other person as the means of approximating the "perfect" experience that you conjure up in your head when you are alone, and as a result the act becomes little more than mutual masturbation—no contact other than the physical, and probably poor even in terms of mere bodily, let alone psychological, gratification.

So, surprising as it may seem, and contrary to the canons of most of our present-day sexologists, I would maintain that the more sexually "naive" you are coming to the marriage bed, the more *eventual*, reliably mutual psychic and physical satisfaction there will be. These are some of the thoughts that came out of that period of weeks and months when the Lord reoriented my thinking and behavior about masturbation, and the ultimate result was the same as it had been regarding the issue of sleeping with others: I eventually stopped—again, not without struggle and stumbling, but I stopped. I wanted God's Spirit more than I wanted transient physical titillation, and, over and above that, I began to see that abstinence made sense in terms of optimal preparation for *real* sharing with a *real* person.

## FANTASIES

Finally, as if I was not surprised enough to have happily abandoned both fornication and masturbation, God began to prompt me to relinquish my casual thoughts and fantasies even when they were not linked to specific behaviors. At first this seemed like too

much. Sexual fantasies are one of those things that almost everyone indulges in constantly. (One study found that students of both sexes, by self-report, spent up to a quarter of their work time sexually fantasizing.) Fantasies are a way of coping with boredom, fatigue, frustration and anxiety, and as such seem very functional. So why not fantasize?

Why not indeed, if the events and contingencies of our real world are merely random happenings, "full of sound and fury signifying nothing," as Macbeth put it. If God does *not* "work all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28), and if he *does* let chance bring us its share of purposeless boredom, irritation and pain, then it would seem that the most healthy and functional reaction would be to withdraw temporarily into a world of pleasant fantasizing, sexual or otherwise.

But on the other hand, if he is as good as his Word, if he is the God of history (both the history of the world and of each of his reborn children in it), if he desires to work *all* the realities (pleasant and unpleasant) of a Christian's life together in a meaningful way with the end result that we are conformed to his image and co-partners in his purposes for eternity, then to me it seems that grappling with *whatever* reality confronts me will in the end be infinitely more exciting than a retreat into any kind of fantasy. I myself am finding this to be gloriously so. (That is a nice thing I have discovered about God: If you test out his promises even hypothetically and conditionally, he lets you know he means business.) In fact, I do not want to miss out on *any* good things he has in store for me, even if it sometimes means doing spiritual calisthenics when it would be easier to grab onto an immediate, pleasant fantasy in order to evade or postpone some boring task or anxiety-provoking commitment.

Again, my batting average is not perfect. My trust in the Lord is still shaky at best, and there are times when I still prefer to believe that my

solutions are better than his. Invariably, though, he proves me wrong, and I am learning fast. That is why I have abandoned even my fantasies, and that is why I do not even miss them.

## THE JOY OF LIFE

The amazing thing about this whole process of progressively giving over to God all my sexual behavior and thoughts is that I have ended up precisely where Scripture says I should be: a single woman, sexually quiescent, but not feeling the least bit unsexed—even though I myself would never have voluntarily submitted to the housecleaning process in the first place had I known what it would involve. The Lord is a very gentle school master. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. He never came down hard on me or required me to work on more than one area of behavior at a time. He never withdrew his Spirit capriciously or arbitrarily, but was always there, merely waiting for *me* to move closer back to *him* after each stumbling and seeming always to rejoice at my return. He provided the most wonderful Christian brothers and sisters to share my struggles and to pray me through to each new plateau—always with love and never with condemnation.

Furthermore, I found that he never shortchanges anybody: For each "toy" he asked me to give back to him, he had something better in return in terms of the fruit of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, purpose and a progressive integration of all aspects of my life. To some people, particularly those who are single or those who feel that they can never be fully heterosexual, these may seem like inadequate substitutes for those great sexual "rushes" that come from calling up mental fantasies and seeking out physical contact; but to those readers I would simply say: Don't knock it till you've tried it and given it a fair chance in terms of time and consistent effort.

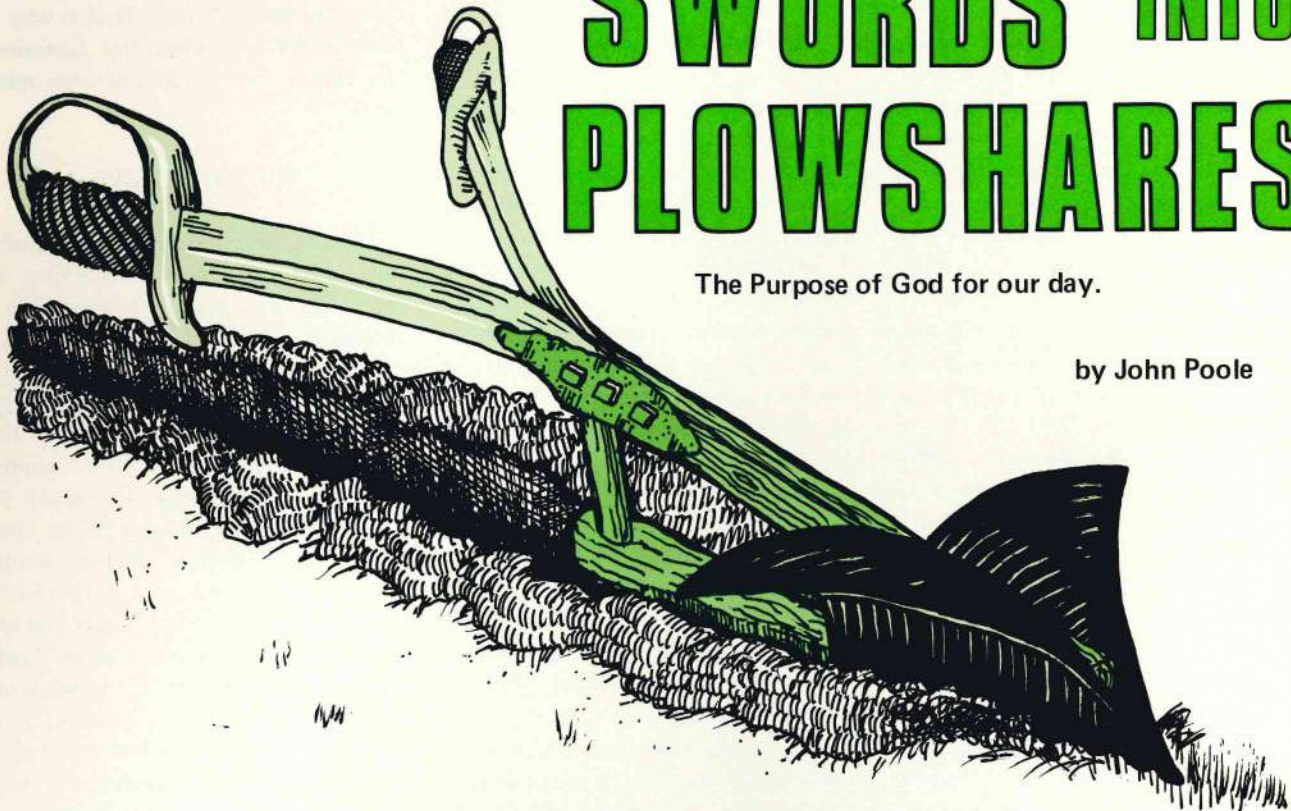
(continued on page 38)



# SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES

The Purpose of God for our day.

by John Poole



It has always been important that the people of God keep before them a vision of God's eternal purpose, for the Scriptures tell us "without a vision the people perish." This is just as true in our own day as it was in Old Testament times. We need to understand how God's working in these last days is part of an eternal plan and purpose.

Isaiah, the prophet, gives us such a vision for the day in which we live.

The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths, for the law will go forth from Zion,

and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war (Isaiah 2:2-4 NAS).

I believe we need first to understand what the Bible means when it talks about the last days. Over and over again we have taken the scriptures that refer to the last day period, along with all of the events that are described as taking place in this period, and confined them to a time just prior to the second coming of Christ. This time period we have called the "last days." If we look in the Scriptures, however,

we find that the last day period is that great epoch of time between the ascension of the Lord and His second appearing.

Along with this misunderstanding of the last day period, many Christians have developed a strange theology which says that this period is to be sort of a "parenthesis" when God is going to take a rest and not much is going to happen. But Scripture reveals that this time is to be filled with Holy Ghost activity. "In the last days, saith God, the mountain of the house of God will be established upon the top of the mountain" (KJV). This does not sound like a "parenthesis" to me! It sounds as though we are dealing with a God of purpose; a God of eternal purpose.

## THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

It was God's plan from the beginning of time to create in this world a house for Himself that He could fill with His glory. His glory fills the heaven; His glory fills the firm-

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ament; and He is now going to have a house on this earth that He can do the very same thing with — fill with His glory!

Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it (Isaiah 2:2).

I do not think that God is here talking about building a tabernacle on top of a mountain. I think we need to be careful that we don't interpret Old Testament scripture *only* in natural terms. Whether or not there will be a literal rebuilding of the temple is not the issue I wish to discuss; rather I want to emphasize another interpretation — the one I believe the early Church understood.

Let's look at Acts 15:1–20. At this time the Gentiles were pouring into the Kingdom of God by the hundreds and thousands, and there arose a dispute over whether they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas made the trip to Jerusalem to submit the problem to the elders and apostles. This great issue that could have torn apart the Church in its infancy was resolved by James when he stood up with the word of wisdom from the Old Testament.

"I'll tell you what's going on here," he proclaimed. "This is the fulfillment of what Amos prophesied hundreds of years ago. He told us that the tabernacle of David would be built once again, and it would be raised up in the last day period. This is the fulfillment of that great prophecy; the tabernacle of David is being built once again."

May God cause us to begin to break loose from a theology that somehow wraps us in and ties us to something that is small, defeated, frustrated, confused, weak and lukewarm. We have become so blinded to our own little group, to feeling that we are the "elect of the elect," the "remnant of the remnant," that we can't see what God is doing in the earth!

Jesus says in Matthew 16:18, "I will

build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He's saying the same thing as Isaiah 2:2.

Sometimes we forget what Jesus unloosed when He came to earth. There was only one nation at that time that had any light and that light had been so covered by tradition and misinterpretations of what God had said that it was barely shining. The rest of the world was in total blindness, total darkness and total satanic dominion.

After His death and resurrection, Jesus declared that all authority in heaven and earth was given to Him. He proclaimed that He had broken something at Calvary; that He had taken the hold that Satan had had over us and the nations of the world, and had smashed it. "Now you can go and preach the Gospel; now you can go and make disciples of all nations, for I have broken something in my death and resurrection, and the Gentiles will now see the light of the Gospel and will begin to stream into the house of the Lord."

#### "COME LET US GO"

And all the nations will stream to it. And many people will come and say, "Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways."

It is a tremendous thing to see many people stream into the house of the Lord. But it is a little frightening when we begin to see what kind of people God causes to stream into His house. They are always different than we think they should be. God is not confining this stream to those who agree with our pet doctrines or our limited perspective.

Many people will come and flow into His house, and we had better be prepared for them. They may not always appear to be in the condition we think they should be in, but I have learned the hard way that God is looking for one thing — *thirst*. And when he finds people with hungry and thirsty hearts He will pour water upon them. He will pour water on people

with funny doctrines. He will pour water on people with strange traditions. When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, He will open up rivers in the desert, and streams in the wilderness (Isaiah 44:17–18). He will cause them to flow to the house of God.

God could have said, "Let us go up to the house of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." But He said, "the house of Jacob." The God of Jacob is the God of *change*. He is the one that can take a deceiver and change him to be a prince.

People are saying today, "Let us go to the God who can get past all the outer things and change us deep down within where it really counts; who can deal with personality, who can deal with character, who can deal with us as we really are." This is the cry that is in the hearts of people today.

Five, ten, fifteen years ago you did not hear God's people praying this prayer. You did not hear God's people crying out, "Teach us concerning your ways." This cry has come up with intensity in the last several years. There has come an understanding that if we are going to meet the God of Jacob and be changed, our ways have to change. We have to learn His ways if we are going to walk in the fulness of joy.

But there is a problem, and it is basically the problem expressed in Isaiah 55:8 — *His ways are not our ways*. It is difficult to learn His ways because He always does things differently than we would.

For example, I have often thought that if Jesus had had some of the advantages of 20th-century evangelism, He probably could have done a much better job. Surely Jesus could have chosen a better public relations man than a guy who hung around in the wilderness with animals and chewed grasshoppers! Or can you imagine Jesus healing people and then telling them, "Don't tell anybody about it."

Consider blind Bartimaeus. If I were Jesus I might have said, "Just a minute, Bartimaeus, hold it."

"Hey, fellas, will you get the



cameras over here . . . there's going to be a miracle."

If we can truly, in the power of the Holy Spirit, come back to the way Jesus functioned — "He will not lift up his voice in the street, He will not raise up a cry" — there will be an outbreak of the power and the glory of God such as we have never seen in all our lives!

When you get a company of people that are learning to walk in the ways of the Lord, who are learning how to walk in His paths, there will be no need to run out and beat the bushes trying to get people to come to church. There will be something about the quality of their lives that will make the world jealous. And when this happens, Zion is going to become a school. "Instruction will go forth from Zion." The church is going to become what it was supposed to be in the beginning — a teaching institution!

People ask me over and over again, "I understand the Lord is moving in your church, what do you do?" I tell them that basically we have tried to teach our people two things: (1) How to worship Jesus and (2) How to live. Christians are tired of hearing over and over, "Jesus saves; Jesus heals." They want to hear more! They don't want to know what the fourth toe on the right foot of the beast really means. There used to be a day when that was important teaching! We knew Revela-

tion backwards and forwards, but we couldn't get along with our wives! God wants to teach us how to live.

"Instruction will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." God is going to raise up a people and the word of God is going to go forth ministering direction, life, power and healing!

#### INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE

And He will judge between the nations and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.

In this day God is taking away from us our desire to set things right between denominations. He is more interested in bringing us into a spirit where we understand that if we learn to love one another and worship Jesus, He'll do the job.

A couple of years ago God took away my weapons of war. He spoke to me and said, "The time has come when I am not going to allow you to speak disparagingly about any of my people. I am going to demand that you take out of your vocabulary the jokes, the funny sayings, the putting down of other people who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord."

I don't have any weapons left! Jesus

took my sword and turned it into a plow. Now, instead of fighting, I'm farming!

God is not going to allow us to learn war anymore! The war is over. The weapons are either going to be changed into plowshares and pruning hooks or we are going to find ourselves fighting against God. And when we fight against God, it doesn't matter how many weapons we have, we are bound to lose.

There is a responsibility upon us to begin to become in God's hands instruments of peace. For there is something in the mind and purpose of God that is greater than any of us have imagined. God said, "I am going to build a house, and I am going to put it on top of the mountain and it will be raised above the hills and all the nations will flow into it." There is going to be a final conclusion to that which God purposed back in the beginning — and that will be the creation of a house that can contain His glory. No man can build it; it is too big for human hands. Only God can do it. And He is doing it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's allow God to change our weapons of war into tools to produce fruit and grain to feed the people of God so that in this world there might again be a demonstration of the quality of life lived under the lordship of Jesus Christ. ♡

#### SEXUAL FREEDOM

(continued from page 35)

Jesus came to give us life and to give it more abundantly (Jn. 10:10). He has never said that sexuality was bad; he only asks that we trust him with that function of our lives no less than with our material welfare, our vocation, our social interactions or our family relationships—all of which are equally and awesomely significant reinforcers that we would all, in the flesh, dearly love to control by ourselves. Until we can open our tightly clenched fists, he cannot fill our hand full to overflowing. Unless we can trust his rewards to be better than anything we could possibly

provide for ourselves, we will be settling for second-best nourishment and wondering why we still feel deprived. "I desired all things, that I might enjoy life; God gave me life,

that I might enjoy all things." ♡

Reprinted from the pamphlet, *Sexual Freedom*, 1974 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Used by permission from Inter-Varsity Press.

"To what extent iniquity abounds in the world, to such an extent the kingdom of God, which brings along with it perfect righteousness, is not yet come."

— John Calvin

"Just as water ever seeks and fills the lowest place, so the moment God finds you abased and empty, His glory and power flow in."

— Andrew Murray





# BREATHING ROOM

A study in  
Christian liberty

by Bob Mumford

**A**ll parents, sociologists and educators know the absolute necessity of providing breathing room for the growing individual — and that includes most of us! The child must have room to become acquainted with new experiences in order to develop abilities and skills. The adolescent must, likewise, have a certain amount of freedom in which to evaluate and make choices. In the social and educational spheres, room for develop-



ment must be permitted for the betterment of all concerned. What about in the spiritual realm? Any need here of "room for growth"?

The apostle Paul was certainly thrown into every type of social and educational situation of his day. He was, also, one of our first and most able educators in the field of Christian principles. He took the Gospel of Jesus Christ into territories where the laws of love, peace and liberty were almost unknown. Certainly, they were not an accepted way of life.

The people with whom Paul chose to cast his lot as an itinerant missionary were the products of their society, just as is true in every generation. We want to investigate how Paul, through the leadership of God's Holy Spirit, handled some of the problems which he faced as he introduced men and women to a brand new concept of living and loving. His constant source of strength, his example, and his guide was that One who had authored these laws of Kingdom living — his Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Paul often spoke of himself as a "pharisee of the pharisees." He had to learn how to move from the "jot and tittle" type of lawkeeping into the freedom of living in the liberty afforded by King Jesus. He knew it wasn't easy, but that it was possible. This made him desire that every believer should come to know this same freedom. That is why he could teach so effectively on "breathing room."

Here is an excerpt from his letter to the believers in Rome. Rome was a center of might and majesty. It was a veritable melting pot of humanity. And here the Gospel of Jesus Christ began making inroads from palace to prisons. Little wonder that problems kept cropping up. Meat offered to idols and holy day observances may seem like trivia to us today, but if we will honestly consider these words, we'll see that the principles they stress are as much needed today as in that first century.

Paul began this letter: "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as

an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God . . . to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints . . ." Chapter 14, verses 1 through 15, brings this word to the saints: (NAS).

(1) Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for *the purpose* of passing judgment on his opinions.

(2) One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*.

(3) Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.

(4) Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

(5) One man regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.

(6) He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

(7) For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself;

(8) For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

(9) For to this end Christ died and lived *again*, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

(10) But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God.

(11) For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God."

(12) So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

(13) Therefore let us not judge one another any more, but rather determine this — not to put an obstacle or a stumbling-block in a brother's way.

(14) I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

(15) For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer

walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.

## CONSCIENCE — OUR COMPUTER DATA

Teaching on Christian liberty often causes blood pressures to mount today, just as it must have when Paul penned these words. Within each one of us is ingrained certain "rights and wrongs" that determine much of our actions. Through early teaching, practice, perhaps even ritual, we form ideas of acceptability. Then along comes teaching which causes us to feel threatened if we should even think of change. And once we do change, how hard it is for us to see that not everyone else has to make these same changes.

Before we consider some of the differences people have, we must try to understand God's dealings with us in this area of our development. First of all, we somehow feel duty-bound when God deals with us on a certain plane, to start dealing with others on this same matter. We just naturally feel the necessity to put our convictions on them. Our attitude is, "If the Lord deals with me about this, He had better deal with you about it! If He doesn't, perhaps I could help Him out." Away we go . . .

We must learn that God *seems* to let other people get away with things He doesn't let us get away with. How come? We are told that God is no respecter of persons. He isn't; but He *is* a respecter of each person's conscience. Everyone's conscience needs renewal and restoration after he comes to know Jesus Christ as Lord. God works one way with one man — another with a second. He knows the what . . . when . . . how and why of bringing conscience into a right relationship with His will and way in each individual life.

John Calvin has said, "Conscience is like a thousand witnesses." When a man violates his conscience, something rises within him and keeps saying, "You've done it wrong . . . That just isn't right!"



God designed the conscience and it has a very important function. Its use is often misunderstood, which is why we want to examine how God desires that it operate; and how He wants us to realize that care is needed in our relationships to others regarding their consciences.

When an individual first comes to the Lord, he has a very delicate, tender conscience in relation to new truths. There is a tendency to be super-sensitive or overly-scrupulous in every detail where an opportunity to please God is concerned. He doesn't want to offend the Lord by doing something wrong. At first, what is likely to determine our "rights and wrongs"? That inner instrument (conscience) into which we have fed "data" from childhood right on up. Our computer gives out the information which has been in-coded. This is where basic teaching and loving understanding is vital.

Suppose all of your life you had been taught that eating bacon was wrong. Would something rise up within you if a person offered you bacon with your eggs? Would a mere reminder, "But God says in Romans 14:14 that nothing is unclean of itself," immediately free you to eat bacon? Or would reminders that pigs crawl in the mud and have trichinosis keep you in bondage and prevent you from breaking tradition and teaching? Can you see a possible struggle? People with a scrupulous, sensitive type of conscience have serious difficulty with Christian liberty. This is the person Paul refers to as a "weak brother."

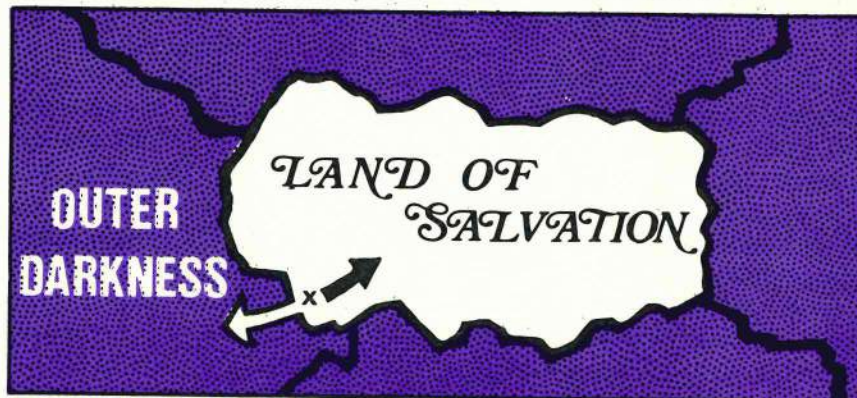
The descriptive term "weak" used here means actually sick. It means that one is spiritually ill. Or we might say that person is "over-anxious." Have you ever had this kind of trouble? I have. For the first year after I was saved, I was a very "careful" man. When my alarm clock buzzed with the news it was time to get up and pray, I was out on my knees . . . groaning and falling back to sleep. Then I would wake up all condemned for falling asleep when I should have been praying. I'd repent and the next day

try all over again. When a more mature Christian said to me, "My prayer life is one directed by the Holy Spirit," I was absolutely scandalized. I thought — how can he do this? Daniel prayed three times a day! Little did I know that there are Christians who have come to so enjoy their walk with God that their lives are almost constant communication with Him. Stated simply, a prayer life has turned to a life of prayer!

This is the "strong brother" about whom Paul was writing. No longer any laboring or sweating. There are liberties they "allow" themselves because they have replaced the struggles of keeping up with self-generated computer data with God-ordained and scriptural liberties. We need to realize that Paul is not chastising either the weak or the strong brother — he is stating that there *are* differences; and that we need to be aware of them in handling situations as they come our way. Let's look at some of the differences that come our way today.

### BORDER-LINE ANEMIA

To help us understand what I mean by border-line anemia, let's use a diagram.



At the time we are saved, we move from "outer darkness" into the land of Salvation. Some believers never progress much beyond the border of that land. They have come out of the world, but not very far out! They just get over the line and keep looking back. This is the believer with border-line anemia. There are others who

want to find out where the capital of the new country is and make it a point to get there. They want to get to *know* the King and *enjoy* His presence.

Military strategists know that most armed conflicts begin at the border — where there are enemies desirous of taking (by force if necessary) that which belongs to you as a new citizen of this land of Salvation. Living so close to the world sets up struggles and internal conflict. Double-mindedness, with its consequent spiritual instability, is very damaging to spiritual progress. People who just "get inside" the land are in constant temptation to go back across the border.

Paul is writing to a people who are seeking God's very best. So am I. When I am approached with the question, "Can I dance and still be a Christian?" — or, "Show me in the Bible where it says it's wrong to smoke," I recognize here is one of whom Hebrews 11:15 (Amplified) is speaking: "If they had been thinking with homesick remembrance of that country from which they were emigrants, they would have found constant opportunity to return to it." We must come to realize that there is more to our new relationship than continual border conflicts.

### LEARN TO DISCERN

So here we are — weak, strong, and in-between. The hang-ups, or problems, we mention may not be yours. But, surely, this will give you an idea of the troubles others may face. Please realize that some weak brothers and sisters have been destroyed by *things that are indifferent*. What do I



mean by that? *Indifferent* covers situations and subjects that are neither good nor bad of themselves. They are unimportant . . . immaterial . . . trivial . . . insignificant.

One of the indifferent things is *money*. It is neither good nor bad in itself. It depends upon how we use money — whether we hurt people with it or help them.

*Make-up*. Are you aware that there are entire congregations which do not permit their lady members to wear facial make-up? For them, this is a real and critical issue.

*Hair*. Long hair . . . short hair . . . curled hair . . . braided hair. I was in a meeting once where a person was refused the privilege of coming up on the platform to sing because of having "curled" hair.

*Dress*. Women shouldn't wear slack suits? Yes, I realize that the confusion in male and female roles is a very serious one. But we are speaking here of acceptable styles of clothing.

*Colors*. How many of you know that red is sinful and black is holy? Why has ministerial garb been conservative navy blue or black for so many years? Did God create all colors?

*Neckties*. These are considered "worldly" by certain groups.

*Mixed Bathing*. This is a real issue in some localities. It is thought to be creating temptation unnecessarily — that is sin!

*Movies*. Because of my religious background, for many years after my salvation I never attended a movie. Maybe a Billy Graham film on a Sunday night. But not even a Walt Disney production. One day while seeking the Lord, I said, "Lord, I am prepared to do anything for You." To which the Lord responded clearly: "Go to the movies." Upon which I promptly rebuked the Devil.

For three days I battled the implication of this subjective leading. I was exercised in my conscience to the point of not being able to share it with anyone. When the leading persisted in spite of my resistance, I went to my wife and told her. She exclaimed, "That couldn't be God!" Because I was convinced that it was from the

Lord, I was finally able to convince her. So we turned to the entertainment section of the newspaper. After plowing through blood, thunder and assorted love affairs, I noticed down in the right-hand corner of one page, *The Sound of Music*. The Lord seemed to say, "That one."

So, off we went with much trepidation and dark glasses. The beautiful music . . . the magnificent photography . . . the unfolding plot . . . besides the obvious absence of any thing suggestive or sinful, all contributed to the feeling that I had been robbed. What joys I had missed simply because I was taught to classify all movies as "sinful." The next evening we returned, taking our children, who enjoyed it as much as we had.

Does that mean that all movies are worth our time and money? Or does it mean that *we must learn to discern*? There are realms in which we must learn how to tell the good from the bad from the indifferent. If our heart is set on "seeking God and His righteousness," we are guaranteed that all good things will be added to our lives. We must learn to obey the checks and workings of the Holy Spirit.

Here are some more "indifferents."

*Jewelry*. Some groups believe that all jewelry is sinful. Others believe gold is sinful. While preaching to one of these groups, I simply removed my wedding ring during my stay with them. Why? Because I didn't need it to remind me that I was married and it happened to offend my brothers in a situation where I felt God had called me.

*Meat*. There are many sincere Christians who believe that eating any type of meat is wrong. So, you see, we have the same problems that Paul had — meat or herbs? Both can't be right. And yet both are. For the matter in question is "indifferent."

*Holy Days*. We still have this problem to which Paul alluded in verses 5 and 6. If a brother feels a certain day is more holy than another, give him breathing room to observe it as he feels right. You? Do something

that you believe is fitting for *your* day.

*Fasting*. Some people fast every Wednesday. For others, it is every Friday. Everyone close to one friend of mine knows which particular day is *his* fast day because of the ugly disposition which accompanies his "sacrifice." They try to stay as far from him as possible! Do you see where this type of "holiness" can be a handicap to some people?

In deference to our brothers and sisters who hold to one belief in these matters of indifference, while we hold to another, what is to be our response?

## STUMBLING — A TWO-WAY STREET

Paul uses the word stumbling-block in verse 13. From this, the expression "stumbling our brother" has evolved. We are told not to put an occasion to fall in our brother's way. Now, stumbling can occur in two ways. We can offend another and we can take offense. So there are offenses *given* and offenses *taken*.

In verses 3, 4, 10 and 13, Paul stresses "judging" others. Very often we judge out of our own "computerized" conscience. Just because I do not think a situation is right, I feel that makes it wrong for everyone else. Also, we usually do not know all the circumstances surrounding a situation which may be "stumbling" us.

One Sunday morning while driving to church we saw a young woman hanging clothes on the line in her yard. One of the passengers in our car made this rather caustic remark: "You would think she could find another day to do her laundry, wouldn't you?" The person making the remark *took offense* at our neighbor's activities. Perhaps there was really no intent to cause anyone to stumble. There might have been illness during the night and need for clean linens before another night. We need to have care in being judgmental, as well as taking offense. Paul says, "So then every one shall give account of himself to God . . . let us therefore not judge one another any more . . ."

He also says, "For none of us lives and dies to himself." We are all in this



thing together. We must learn to give our brothers breathing room. Do you see that both the weak and the strong are seeking to glorify the Lord Jesus? The weak brother doesn't want to hurt the Lord. In fact, he feels by acting as he does, he is honoring Him. He may give offense to the strong brother, while honestly trying *not* to offend the Lord by doing what he does.

It is very possible for the strong brother to offend the weaker by his actions, too. Those who feel they have come into liberty in matters that are indifferent must be especially cautious not to give offense to the weaker. Paul makes it very clear what we are to do and not to do.

Remember the controversy I had with myself over going to the movies? Once I had settled it to my satisfaction, what about my attitude toward those who haven't? If you don't believe in going to the movies, what should you do? Don't go. If your conscience doesn't permit you, however, don't despise those who do. I don't go to the movies often, but there is a liberty, and the ones carefully selected usually prove to be profitable.

Both the strong and the weak can stumble or cause another to stumble. Paul has issued an alert to all of us. How do we go about resolving our own particular responsibilities in this predicament?

### NEEDED INGREDIENTS — LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING

Before we can hope to resolve for ourselves the lesson Paul is dealing with in regard to breathing room, we must consider the two essential ingredients necessary for coming to a satisfactory solution. *They are love and understanding.* One without the other cannot suffice. We may love another person and desire to help him, but until we come to some understanding of *why* he does some of the things he does, we will be unable to meet his needs. Love alone is not the answer. Neither is just understanding. Love is the "plus" that embraces difficulties arising out of "things that are indifferent."

It will help to read in entirety the eighth chapter of 1 Corinthians. The Living Bible paraphrases verse one this way:

Next is your question about eating food that has been sacrificed to idols. On this question everyone feels that only his answer is the right one! But although being a "know-it-all" makes us feel important, what is really needed to build the church is love.

Yes, love creates the climate in which we can come to an understanding within ourselves as to our own attitudes and actions. We do not want to put ourselves in bondage through trying to please everyone at all times. Experience proves this is impossible. Going back over Paul's words of advice to the strong believer, let's list some to-do's and not-to-do's.

(1) Receive the one who is weak in the faith. He is your brother.

(2) There are to be no "doubtful disputations" . . . passing judgment on his opinions. Religious and doctrinal arguments are seldom beneficial. We may win the dispute and lose our brother.

(3) Don't despise or judge another because of your own "spiritual maturity."

(4) Be fully persuaded in your own conscience, which is checked and aligned by the written Word of God. Remember you, too, will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Jesus said, "To whom much is given, much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

(5) Do not put an occasion to fall (stumble) in your brother's way.

(6) Don't forget — nothing is unclean of itself. There are indifferent things.

(7) Deny yourself privileges and pleasures if you know it might injure another. Surrendering your liberties in God for the sake of your brother is what it means to walk in love.

If we adhere to these seven suggestions, we are walking in true liberty. Then, if someone comes to us and says, "You offend me . . .," we can, with a clear conscience, reply that this was not our intention. Then we are

free to probe into the matter to see if there might be a need for us to continue in our given action. There are occasions when our "stand" might prove the breaking and opening of the bondage which is upon our brother. Yes, there are times when our treatment of a situation can provoke a brother to the point of his looking at himself to see *if he could be in error.* This takes an extra measure of love and understanding for both of them.

Two such instances recorded in the life of Jesus show this means of helping through purposeful opposition. When He saw a pharisaical attitude or a harsh spirit, He stumbled the guilty deliberately.

Upon one occasion (Mark 2:23-28), Jesus was able to teach that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. He had scandalized the Pharisees by plucking corn on the Sabbath.

Another time (John 2:19), Jesus stood in front of the temple in Jerusalem and proclaimed, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." This infuriated the Jews. Hadn't it taken their fathers forty-six years to build that temple? But Jesus was trying to get across truths about His death and resurrection. Later we read (vss. 24, 25), that "he knew all men" and "he knew what was in man."

We need to be certain we have this kind of divinely appropriated knowledge about men when we take it upon ourselves to help our brothers. Our understanding must be administered in love.

Breathing room is necessary for growth. Growth is necessary for coming into spiritual maturity. If you are needing to sort out some of your reasons for doing and not doing certain things, ask God to help you to evaluate and eliminate, if necessary.

If you are walking in the liberty afforded by Christ, thank Him and enjoy that liberty — but not to an occasion for "stumbling" others. In Paul's words (1 Cor. 8:13), "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth . . ." Christian love is the final and determining factor. ♥



# DECEIVED? WHO, ME?

by Bob Mumford

Being wrong when we think we are right.

**T**he words of the title of this article form the natural reaction of most of us when the subject of *deception* is mentioned. Deception may be defined as "being wrong when we think we are right." To *recognize* deception is often difficult. To admit it is even more so. And to determine to do something about it, takes courage. We need to be alerted to the fact that there is a possibility of deception in our Christian walk. Listen to this warning from Revelation 2:7 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the church."

As members of the Church — the Body of Christ — we need to evaluate and judge everything we hear. Understanding and caution are important facets of *hearing*.

Certainly we would all agree upon this one thing. Our God is a God of purpose. No possibility of deception here. But as to His exact purpose . . . where He is going and what He is doing to accomplish His purpose — well, there may be differences of opinion. This opens us up to the possibility of deception. Everyone can't be right.

Perhaps, even considering ourselves as a possible target for deception seems unlikely. Me? I'm not harming anyone. Why should Satan pick on me? *Because he is the deceiver!* You may need to take a new look at God's purpose in saving you as well as His desire for all of us. Then you may change your mind about deception.

## GOD IS PREPARING A PEOPLE

A primary purpose of God from the very beginning of His dealings with man has been the preparation of a people with whom He could fellowship, and through whom He could reveal Himself. That God is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh in our day is evident. This is an eternal issue which brings with it many problems, as well as many blessings. It places a responsibility upon the people of God.

This is not some "drill" or "game" that He is playing. God is getting down to bedrock. Recall Paul saying to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:1), "Now concerning the spirituals, brother, I would not have you ignorant."

The baptism in the Holy Spirit, that great outpouring of our day, is in reality God's draft call to warfare. This moving of the Spirit, with its signs, wonders and gifts, causes an uprooting from past ideas . . . a breaking off of traditions . . . a launching out into the realm of the Spirit, where many of us have never traveled before. This is serious business!

One problem which has been with us for a long time is that of presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ as if it were totally free. While the grace which prompted the gift of God's Son to bring about reconciliation between man and his Maker, is free and unmerited, there is a cost involved in accepting that gift. For when we open that gift, we find a call to commitment — commitment of personality . . . time . . . money . . . life relationships. In fact, we find demands in every area of our lives. Finally, the realization dawns that God is requiring *everything* from us. Often this is a rude awakening and may bring resentments, rebellion, and doubts. However, when there is competent and loving leadership, the believer comes to grips with the claims of



Christ and draws upon the supply He provided to make the transition into maturity.

There is a parallel experience in the receiving of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As God's Spirit comes pouring out upon a person, it is spontaneous and free. We realize that God has done something magnificent for us . . . we did nothing to work for it or deserve it. We are apt to feel that *now* we are truly "free" — no need for leadership or controls — just sit back and enjoy our new relationship to our Lord.

But, again, God doesn't waste His gifts. He isn't in the goose-bump-giving business — at least not just simply for our personal exhilaration and enjoyment. God's purpose becomes increasingly evident. We see that God is requiring some divine order in our spiritual travels. There must be a coming under leadership and some form of government whereby God can bring us into a useful, functioning body — rather than a nebulous pile of stones. This latter situation eventually creates spiritual anarchy, confusion, fear and their related problems.

When God visits a group or an individual, we need to understand that that visitation contains God's purpose! It is a permanent part of what God is doing in a progressive plan. Yes, He is preparing a people — not only for fellowship and service; but also to come into a relationship with other believers. This includes preparation to accept and understand such principles as submission, divine order, and *usefulness in the Kingdom of God*.

### WHEN WE BECOME DANGEROUS

When we become useful to God, we become dangerous to Satan. Why? Because we are now prepared to pick up the weapons which God has provided and enter into warfare with principalities and powers. When we finally realize the implications of God's purpose and are ready for a place of usefulness in combating Satan and his strongholds, then the enemy comes against us. And one of his most effective strategies is *deception*.

It isn't easy to come down from the

stratosphere where we have been floating after our baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is much more enjoyable to live without any thought of danger or responsibility. But once the initial thrill is over and we come to see a possibility of usefulness in the Kingdom, our perspective changes. We see that what God is going to do in our world, He is going to do through His Church — which is His Body — which includes you and me!

When the honeymoon was coming to an end for me, I met the heavenly Bridegroom one day and He said to me, "Wasn't that wonderful?"

"Wasn't it wonderful? What do you mean?"

To which He replied, "Well, *now* you and I are going to get down to some serious business. I had a reason for coming into your life. I need your help to carry on My work here on the earth."

Please note that I said, "When the honeymoon was over . . ." and not when the *love affair* was over. The latter goes on and on. And as to the help God needs from us — well, we are all the help He has (Eph. 1:10-23). He intends to express His purpose to principalities and powers through the Church. The moment that we become aware of this purpose and desire to become part of it, that is when we become dangerous.

One day when I was still in the pastorate, a member of my congregation came to me saying, "Brother Mumford, the Devil has been after me all day." Kindly, might I say, this woman was probably the most spiritually useless member in our fellowship. She loved the Lord, and I loved her; but in the sense in which we are speaking of being useful to the Lord, she was useless.

Therefore, I had to reply, "My dear, would you understand if I told you that I don't believe you know enough truth to cause even a second-hand, reconstituted demon to bother you?"

And do you know, she got the message! She began to come into an understanding that it wasn't merely saying, "Hallelujah . . . things are bad . . . the anti-Christ is coming . . .

the communists are going to take over soon . . . but the Lord is coming back to take us out of this mess . . . I can hardly wait . . . won't that be wonderful?" With such a philosophy, no wonder she was no danger to Satan or satanic purpose.

But when we see that God has meaning and purpose in His work and that we are part of it, *then* Satan goes to work. Deception becomes an active tool in his attacks. Deception comes to leadership . . . to a denomination . . . to individuals (both young and old). It comes to anyone who is seeking to come into God's usefulness.

### SEEING OURSELVES IN BATTLE

The apostle Paul was extremely aware of this aspect of spiritual warfare. Here is one of his warnings written to believers in Corinth — 2 Corinthians 11:2-3:

I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Do you catch some of the passion which Paul was expressing? The Greek literally says, "I am jealous over you with the jealousy of God." He loved these people and wanted to spare them all possible dangers. He wanted to somehow get across to them that deception would be encountered in their walk. They had come into the spiritual realm of operation (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13, 14)) and were now vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Paul wanted to warn them that *it was not just starting on the Christian walk, but it was finishing it*.

During my Bible college days, one of my professors said to me, "Mumford, you remind me of a freight train going 90 miles an hour. If the track ever turned, you wouldn't be able to make the turn. You would just go right on off . . ."

And he was right. At that time I was



determined to live for Jesus — regardless! But little by little, God got a message across to me. I hope that if you haven't got the message that there is a difference between "running" the Christian life as a runner of a 50-yard dash and running a 50-mile race, that you will catch it right now. We are in a cross-country race, not a "watch-out-for-me-here-I-come" competition. Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare? Some of us took off like the hare and have ended up sitting under an oak tree waiting it out.

When I was still in the swirl of the dust of the take-off, I picked up a certain doctrine that got me into trouble. It was, "Jesus may come tomorrow. I don't have time to go to Bible college Lord Jesus! I have to get everything done today. You might come tomorrow!" I lived all psyched up. Now it isn't that I don't believe in the second coming of our Lord . . . or that it really might be tomorrow . . . but we have to learn to pace ourselves to His purpose. For He is coming!

Ever since the time of the early Church, the word has come: "The day is at hand!" But we must learn that if He doesn't come in 1975 . . . or 1985 . . . or 2005 — well, we've got to keep running. If He doesn't come while I am in the race, I am going to run right on out into eternity! If He doesn't come in my day, He may come in yours.

No one can live successfully for the Lord all psyched up — at least not forever. We need to learn to enter into the rest of God . . . to see His purpose . . . and permit Him to order our lives. As the Christian makes this kind of peace with God, he makes war with Satan. As he makes this peace with God, he enters into what both Old and New Testaments refer to as "spiritual warfare."

### HEEDING PAUL'S WARNING

Listen again to Paul's words, ". . . for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Keeping yourself "chaste and a virgin to Christ," is warfare. From the time God calls us

and saves us, we are to walk the rest of our lives as a spiritual virgin. We are to be preserved for God's purpose as one who is espoused to Christ in love. It may turn out to be a long walk, and there are some snares along the way.

If this is so, how are we, under God, supposed to preserve this chastity? Is it possible to walk with Jesus all of our lives and go on out to meet Him victoriously? Yes, it is.

Here is a story which pictures in a present-day setting what Paul was warning against. Shortly after my salvation, which occurred during one of my shore leaves from the Navy, I was standing at the rail of our ship praying and worshiping. A machinist's mate came alongside me and asked, "What are you standing here for?" Now this was unusual, for many of the men treated me as if I had leprosy when I had come back aboard the ship, avoiding my misdirected zeal for the Lord.

Follow our conversation:

Mumford: "Oh, I was just praying."

Mate: "I used to pray."

Mumford: "Used to?"

Mate: "Yes." Then he asked, "Are you married?"

Mumford: "No, I'm not married."

Mate: "I'd like to tell you something that I have never told anybody in my life. In World War II, I was on a ship in the Pacific, when suddenly, under secret orders, we were sent to Panama. From there I returned to Norfolk where my wife was living. I couldn't let her know of my coming, so when I got ashore, I went directly to our house. I knocked on the door — and a strange man answered. He was wearing some of my clothes. I looked at him, so shocked I couldn't say anything for a moment. Just then, I heard my wife's voice coming from the kitchen, 'Who is it, honey?' Somehow I managed to say, 'I'm sorry, I must have the wrong house.' I went back to the ship and never returned home again."

This man's story so hurt me that I believe God used it to help me understand what it means to be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you catch some of the pathos and parallels?

Consider with me another scripture — Ephesians 1:13-14:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Do you know that when a bride and groom come down to the altar and give their lives to each other, it is a picture (or symbol) of Christ and His Bride? That is why sexual infidelity is so serious in the eyes of God. For it breaks the tie that joined the two as one. We want to paraphrase Paul's admonition to the Ephesians: "You heard the word of truth. Jesus, the bridegroom, has sent forth His message of love to you. When you heard that, you responded and said, 'Lord, I love you.' He replied, 'If you love me, I will wash away the sin in your life in My blood. As you follow me in water baptism, when you come up out of the water, I will slip a ring on your finger that will let everyone know that you and I are engaged.'"

How many of you see that this is a love relationship? And you have the ring on your finger (the baptism in the Holy Spirit), sealing it. Now I am His bride and belong to Him. He is coming back for me. But I am charged with the responsibility of keeping faithful to Him while He is away. I must walk in spiritual, moral and ethical honesty before God and man.

A lot of things can happen between the engagement and the fulfilment of that contract. I am apt to go around saying, "Glory to God! I want everybody to know, Lord, that I am engaged to You." To which He may respond, "Then your conduct, your actions, all that you do is going to reflect on Me." Bearing the name, *Christian*, means that we are betrothed to the Lord Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of that betrothal lies out in the future. In the interim, the Bridegroom has a function for each of us in His Body.

This brings us to a basic principle in



this matter of deception. *There is one whose purpose it is to seduce and beguile us.* The purpose begins at the moment of our salvation and accelerates as we come to understand God's purposes for our lives.

How many of you believe that God cares where you go . . . how you run your business . . . if you are sexually faithful or unfaithful . . . how you dress . . . talk . . . think? As a Christian, you belong to God; and once He slips that ring on your finger, He expects you to conduct yourself as His betrothed.

## BRINGING DECEPTION INTO FOCUS

Here are three areas in which Satan is doing his dead-level best to cause problems for believers:

1. *The confusion of the role of male and female.* When there is a confusion in this area, extremely complicated problems arise in the Body of Christ. One verse of scripture often used to propagate confusion is Galatians 3:28b: "There is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." *Positionally*, in Christ, there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, Jew nor Greek. But, *functionally*, in the Body of Christ, there is a very clear distinction between male and female. In our day there is a concerted, diabolical, intense, driving force, both inside the Church and outside it, to obliterate the distinction between the sexes.

2. *The establishment of spiritual authority in the Body of Christ.* "I'm free! Glory to God!" "No man tells me what to do!" A person who is free indeed, doesn't need to talk that way — or have that attitude. Can you understand that we can be in bondage to freedom? Desires for relationship and unity preclude any "lone ranger" attitude. God is raising up strong spiritual leaders — apostles, prophets, shepherds, evangelists. These men must be recognized by the Body. God is able to both raise up men to places of leadership, and to place within us the ability to recognize those whom He calls to places of responsibility.

3. *Deception — using men to*

*propagate Satan's desires.* I believe that we are entering into the greatest outworkings of deception that the Church has ever known. When Jesus was asked about some of the signs of His return, He answered (Matthew 24:4), "Take heed that no man deceive you." God uses *men* to persuade you of His truth, and Satan uses *men* to deceive you. It is a war! It isn't a clean war; it is guerilla warfare on the part of Satan. You can't always tell who is the enemy.

During the warfare in Vietnam, a newcomer asked of an old Marine, "How do you know when a person is a Viet Cong?" The response was, "When he shoots at you." Now in the Revolutionary War, the enemy was more distinguishable. Remember the warning, "The Red Coats are coming!" Satan's troops and attacks are not so easily detected. They are meant not only to destroy, but to deceive. As the Spirit of God moves toward fulfillment of His purpose, there is another spirit working overtime to attempt to avert the accomplishment of His plans.

Coming from the first century, to early in our twentieth century, I want to give you, for your consideration, these seven items which a man of God, G. H. Pember, prophesied would come to pass as signs of the approach of the end of the age. These were written about 1900. Read them carefully and add your own deductions to mine.

1. *There will be an increase of religion which is different from and apart from the gospel of Christ.*

*Let me ask:* What about today's increase of the Eastern religions: gurus, maharajas, yogis, transcendental meditation, etc. plus many others that are fascinating and luring American people into traps.

2. *There will be a rejection of the headship of the man over woman.*

*Let me ask:* Is this evident today? What is the response of our generation — on a large scale?

3. *There will be disillusionment in the marriage relationship and its resultant breakdown, destroying the solidity of the people and affecting the younger generation.*

*Let me ask:* Have you ever read Alvin Toffler's book, *Future Shock*? There is a chapter on marriage that will startle and shock you.

4. *There will be the rejection of capital punishment.*

*Let me ask:* Has this come to pass? What results?

5. *There will be a revival of the occult, Satanism, and all of the related sciences.*

*Let me ask:* How many shows are there on television which propagate witchcraft? In the area of education what is happening? And I mean from college level right on down. Several universities now offer a credit course in Satanology and Witchcraft.

6. *There will be an emphasis upon, and prevalence of, sexual perversion and its related effects.*

*Let me ask:* What about a recently published book, *The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I Am Gay*. Here we find over 200 pages defending homosexuality in the most blatant terms. And this is only one of the tools Satan is hurling at our society in this area.

7. *There will be a breakdown of ethics, morality and integrity in government, among leaders and professional men, including ministers of the Gospel.*

*Let me ask:* Does the word "Watergate" fulfill this prophecy? Does every issue of our daily papers carry such reports? Almost.

We began by saying that deception was thinking we are right when we are wrong. Now are you almost wanting to ask, "Is it possible to keep free from deception" — rather than stating, "It isn't possible for deception to affect my life." Are you beginning to sense the strength and subtlety of deception? Do you wonder that Paul was so concerned that he agonized over the possibilities of deception in those lives for which he had accepted responsibility?

From the beginning of our walk in the Lord Jesus Christ to the end, we can walk in victory. But only if we know the possibility and power of deception and constantly seek His wisdom, guidance and sure defense! ☞



# THE SALT OF THE COVENANT



by Charles Simpson

Binding God to men;  
and men to other men.

**C**ovenant is a relatively new word in my vocabulary. Recently, I was reviewing a basic theology book used in my seminary curriculum. The word covenant did not even appear in the subject index. How strange that so many of us have so underemphasized a word that God so forcefully emphasizes. The very name given to our Holy Scriptures is the Old and New Covenants. Within these general designations are numerous covenants and reaffirmations that God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.

Error is not always a lie, but rather, truth out of balance. To be more balanced should be the prayer of every teacher and Christian. What could be more erroneous than to overlook the foundation of all God's dealings with man, and the basis of all man's dealings with other men — love that is loyal. What other foundation can hold us, and stabilize us until we do come to maturity? Thank God for His covenant loyalty. May it be ours!

He has told you O man what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness [loyalty] and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8, NAS).

To show kindness is good in the

eyes of God. The King James Version uses the word mercy. Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Being merciful pleases our Lord. Notice that in the NAS margin for Micah 6:8 the word loyalty is used. Why is loyalty and mercy equated? Israel was a covenant nation. When a neighbor was in need there was a *covenant* brother in need. Covenant means to "bind together." Every Israelite was bound together by covenant. To show kindness to a brother was proof of loyalty. The greater the need — the greater expression of loyalty.

This is good in the eyes of God because it reflects His own nature. He is faithful to those to whom He has made a commitment — even at His own expense. He has "bound Himself together" with His people. He desires that they love one another with the same kind of love (1 John 3:16). God's people are unique in all the earth in that they have a covenant with God — i.e. they are bound together.

God's love is not a "trial marriage" — or love of convenience, it is a covenant relationship. "For better or for worse — till death do us part." Those terms used in the marriage vows, reflect the covenant love of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. (See Deuter-

onomy 7:7-9). God's love is covenant love. It's His love that is shed abroad in our hearts. Therefore we should love one another with covenant love.

"I love you, dear. You are so beautiful. I want you so."

"I'm glad you feel that way. Is that a proposal?"

"Oh . . . uh, well no. I love you, but I don't want to get tied up to just one person. Let's love each other and be *free*."

That's not God's love. God says, "I love you. I want to make my covenant with you."

Among the middle eastern nations, salt has historically symbolized loyalty and endurance. Salt was necessary for use in daily food as well as use in sacrifices (Leviticus 2:8-13, Numbers 18:19). When people ate together they became friends. Salt was always present in the sharing of meals together. A friend might refer to another friend by saying, "There is salt between us." That meant they had regularly eaten together and passed salt. (Bear in mind that practically all meals were shared in the home in those days. "Passing salt" was also sharing one's home as well as food and friendship.) One may say, "He has eaten of my salt." That would be like saying, "Yes, we are close friends."



(See *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* – Covenant of Salt). A person brought up in such a covenant environment would never think of “passing salt,” then betraying or dealing treacherously.

Salt has holding power. Salt blocks can be left in the weather and licked by the animals, but will maintain internal cohesion. Sand is quite the opposite. The slightest jar will cause each individual grain of sand to stand apart.

It is its flavor, cohesive quality, and preservation power that has made salt historically valuable. The word salary comes from the word “salarium.” (See *Webster’s New World Dictionary*). A salarium was the part of a soldier’s wages given him to buy salt. “Salarium” – comes from the word salt. Hence our word “salary” is rooted in the word salt. A man who is “worth his salt” is worth his wages. A man who was worth his salt was as valuable and high quality as the salt paid him (a person of loyalty and endurance).

An exchange of salt among some people has traditionally meant a pledge of loyalty or faithfulness to keep one’s word. The sealing of a covenant was usually celebrated by sharing a meal; salt was always present and passed among the participants. Our covenant, or mutual loyalty to God and His people has been celebrated by sharing a covenant meal for nearly 2,000 years. We call that meal, the Eucharist, Communion, or the Lord’s Supper. When Michelangelo painted His famous “Last Supper,” where Jesus made a covenant, he carefully portrayed each disciple’s character. Judas is portrayed in two special ways: he is holding the bag of money and has knocked the salt over onto the table. Michelangelo understood, even in his day, the scriptural attitude toward salt. He could portray Judas’ disloyalty by his mishandling of precious salt. Judas was unsalty – worthless. He spilled his own blood upon the ground in stunned disbelief of his own worthlessness. Judas was also religious and dealt with religious leaders.

## BETRAYAL COMMON IN THE LAST DAYS

Jesus warned His disciples that when they entered into covenant with Him as Lord, that every other relationship would be tested. While Jesus gives us peace in our hearts, the sword is put to every relationship that does not acknowledge His lordship. Even family relationships are tested and often destroyed (Matthew 10:34–40).

In Matthew 24 Jesus describes some of the end-time tribulation that will come upon true disciples because of social decadence.

But all these things are merely the beginning of birthpangs. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, it is he who shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come (Matthew 24:8–14, NAS).

In the midst of the pressure of such tribulations many who name the name of Jesus will find it convenient to fall away or remove themselves from fellowship and betray their former relationships. The fire of persecution will try every man’s character. Only those who are truly godly will maintain loyalty to the brethren in the face of self-sacrifice and even death. I am reminded of God’s chiding when Jeremiah complained of social upheaval, “If you have run with the footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of Jordan?” (Jeremiah 12:5, NAS).

If Christians cannot be loyal to each other now when it costs very little to do so, what will we do when it gets expensive? Loyalty is of little value when it’s unnecessary. Loyalty, like salt, becomes more precious in

scarcity. The Scripture prophesies a loyalty shortage.

Daniel characterizes the last world society in Daniel 2:43 by saying, “They shall combine with one another . . . but they will not adhere to one another” (NAS). Paul characterizes such men as “covenant breakers” (Romans 1:31). Covenant breaking is listed with such sins as homosexuality, greed, murder, gossip, hating God, boasting, inventing evil, disobedience to parents and unmercifulness. The choice in the latter days will be to either break covenants or learn how to keep covenants.

## SALT IN THE SACRIFICE

In Leviticus 2:8–13 God instructed Israel that no grain offering should be made with leaven. Leaven is used in the Bible to symbolize insincerity or hypocrisy (1 Corinthians 5:6–13). Paul warned the Corinthian church that they were boasting beyond their actual spiritual condition. Their church had leaven in it. It appeared to be more than it was. Its true moral and spiritual condition was less than they advertised. There was malice and wickedness among them. Ananias and Sapphira lied about the size of their sacrifice and dropped dead at the altar.

Leaven is the cause of air holes in the bread. As a loaf, the Church has too much hot air in it. During Passover Israel had to remove all leaven from the house. God will accept a small offering, but not an inflated offering. Ecclesiastical or religious bragging under the banner of testifying will be put to God’s breadknife to see if it’s all bread.

In Leviticus 2:11, God ordered that no honey be put in the grain offering. When the offering was burned He wanted natural incense, not artificial sweetening. Flattery or drawing nigh with our mouths doesn’t please God, if our heart is filled with greed or unforgiveness. God did require, however, that every offering have salt in it. It was called “The Salt of the Covenant.” Every offering was to contain salt. At God’s table in His house, salt was always passed – a



reminder of the loyalty of His friendship.

I am reminded that Paul begs us as brethren to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. That sacrifice must also be salty.

### SALT IN THE NATION

In 2 Chronicles 13, the story of Abijah, King of Judah, David's grandson is told. Abijah is being attacked by Jeroboam, King of Israel. Jeroboam is an ungodly rebel king who has led Israel astray. His army outnumbers Abijah's two to one. Abijah delivers a message to Jeroboam in the presence of the opposing armies. Abijah reminds Jeroboam that he had formerly been the servant of Abijah's own father. They had grown up together, but Jeroboam led a rebellion against the lineage of David.

"Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?" Somehow God and David had passed salt. God would never be disloyal to the covenant of salt that He had made with David. Abijah knew that he knew God. Though Abijah was outnumbered two to one, he had the courage to remind Jeroboam that he was an "unsalty man." Abijah also pointed out that Jeroboam, a rebel, was followed by rebels. These men, Jeroboam's soldiers, Abijah called "worthless men" and "scoundrels."

Even while Abijah indicted Jeroboam before God, Jeroboam's armies were preparing to attack him from the rear. When the men loyal to Abijah and David's lineage saw that they were outnumbered and surrounded, they "raised a war cry." When they raised a war cry God routed Jeroboam's army and Judah killed 500,000 chosen men of their enemy. Disloyal men have not the courage to stand in the day of judgment.

God's nation, Israel, and His spiritual nation, the Church, are not characterized by the size of their armies, but by their quality of commitment. Any nation benefits in

times of stress from the cohesiveness of its citizenry. Most nations, denominations and institutions were born in a genuine commitment by founding parties. Nations, denominations and institutions require continuing commitment in order to survive. The Hebrew designation of the United States is "the land of the covenant." Indeed the U.S. was born in covenant relationships among committed men.

As the Mayflower lay at anchor in Cape Cod Harbor November 11, 1620, forty-one of its pilgrim passengers signed the following compact, known as the Mayflower Compact:

In the Name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Christian Faith, and the honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia; do by these present solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politick, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

The circumstances which surrounded the struggling band of Pilgrims all but devastated their number and mocked their purpose. Disease, starvation, exposure to weather, and the ever present fear of hostile Indians were but a few of the obstacles. Internal dissention would have provided an internal ally to those obstacles. But covenant relationship brought about true unity and community. God honored their salt. Many times since the "war cry" has gone up and God has routed the

enemies of their descendants. Nothing gives us more cause for national concern than the disunity and disloyalty that has characterized more recent years. Time has come to renew the covenant. Since loyalty is derived from God's own nature, and Satan is the original Antichrist, there can be no doubt that our choice is God or national disintegration.

Loyalty is not total agreement, but it is total commitment. It is maintaining a commitment to another's welfare in the face of any circumstance to the contrary. Webster says loyalty is "to defend and support." Loyalty will defend when defense is lonely, and support when support is costly.

### SALT IN THE CHURCH

The Sermon on the Mount sets forth the principles of the Kingdom of God — God's Nation. The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12, set forth the kind of men that will be blessed of God to walk in Kingdom principles: humble, meek, hungry for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted, but happy and blessed. In verse 13 He says of these men, "You are the salt of the earth." Such men will walk in covenant loyalty with God and each other. They are unique in the earth. They will be men of God's character, merciful and cohesive. Men and women of such character will overcome together the obstacles of natural and spiritual origin. But those, who in the face of pressure lose their cohesion, will be separated and scattered as sand and be trodden under by natural and spiritual enemies.

There is a sober note expressed in verse 13. People who have never known covenant loyalty can receive from God His nature to love, but having known loyalty and character, then turning aside to betrayal is a most serious condition. "How will it be made salty again?"

Mark 9:50 expresses the same thought. Salt is good; however, loss of flavor, once having been salt, seems almost irreparable. One is reminded of Hebrews 6:6,7 as to the seriousness of

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falling away. Hebrews 10:39 also speaks about drawing back to destruction. Hebrews as a book is concerned with covenant relationship. Covenant relationship is the deepest and most privileged form of interpersonal relationship with God or men. Violation of such trust, having once known it, is a serious manifestation of unworthiness. We can all be grateful for grace and must be careful to be gracious while we learn to walk in covenant.

Mark 9:50 admonishes us to have salt in ourselves and be at peace with one another. God's own character in us will cause us to be faithful toward one another. Loyalty is the environment of peace. The attitude of mutual trust is founded in the nature of mutual commitment. Trust in the immutability of God's faithfulness prevents the adversary from disturbing our peace with God, even in adversity. Likewise, the knowledge that our friends are committed to our well-being prevents difficult circumstances from destroying our peace one toward another.

For years I thought of being loyal to "truth" over and above loyalty to people. Of course, loyalty to truth meant loyalty to my own particular brand of truth and doctrine.

In the name of Jesus, I could "gun down" a "heretic" quicker than you could say, "Bible." I could whip out a scripture and literally shoot him down — in love, of course.

Bang! "Gottcha, Fred!" I hated to do it, but he was in error. I had to protect God from that guy.

Then not long after, I would be praying and reading the Bible . . . looking for bullets. "Charles," . . . that still small voice.

"You shot Fred . . ."

"Yes, Lord, I did it for you . . ."

"But Charles, Fred was telling the truth. Look at this verse . . ."

"Lord, I never saw that before . . . Poor Fred. Lord, I'm sorry . . . From now on I'll defend Fred's position . . . and if anybody ever says anything against Fred I'll . . .!"

"CHARLES!"

It dawned on me, God's covenant is

not with doctrines, as important as they may be; God's covenant is with people. God's faithfulness is to people. Jesus died for people.

Men do not exist to serve truths. Truths exist to serve men. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

If the measure of peace among Christians is a measure of our saltiness, the Church is in dire need of a good salting. "Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another."

## SALT IN OUR SPEECH

When God speaks, He commits Himself to His words. In 2 Corinthians 1:18, Paul points out that God's word is not yes and no, but yes and amen! You can count on what He says. His words do not return void or empty. God never talks just to make conversation. Idle words, or words to no purpose will be judged of God. He warns us that where there is excessive speaking there will be offenses.

Jesus exhorted His disciples not to swear, only affirm yes or no and mean it. If it is necessary for us to affirm our utterances by oaths and constant reassurances, then it indicates a lack of confidence in our words. "Let your yes mean yes and your no mean no."

"His word is His bond." That was once a common phrase. It characterized the loyalty of man to his own word, and therefore to himself. With such a man a contract was unnecessary.

Because of excessive conversation and a shortage of commitment, society has developed the art of "non-committal communication." It is the ability to talk a lot without being committed to any point of view. Non-committal communication leaves the talker free to reverse himself at a moment's notice, or the minute he sees that his views are unpopular or erroneous. Noncommittal communication enables the speaker to avoid the humiliation of being wrong or the cost of defending what is right.

Jesus said, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matthew 12:34, NAS). Since that is

so, and observing the prevalence of noncommitted speech, one might conclude that there is a great deal of reluctance in the hearts of men to commit to any cause. The integrity and confidence of our speech will reveal the condition of the fiber of our heart.

"My next secretary is going to be a one-armed man!" Theodore Roosevelt was supposed to have said on one occasion. When asked why, he replied, "Because I'm tired of my present secretary saying, 'On the one hand this — but on the other hand that!'"

The art of "almost saying something" is not pleasing to God. We need some "one-armed Christians" and "one-armed leaders." We cannot live on insinuation and innuendo.

I read a sign recently which said, "I cannot go into details. I've already told you more than I heard."

"Let your conversation be always gracious, and never insipid; study how best to talk with each person you meet" (Colossians 4:6, NEB). The *New English Bible* translates, "Let your speech be . . . seasoned with salt" (KJV), "as never being insipid." Learn how to respond honestly to each person. Covenant relationship will cause us to throw out phony, stock answers that hide our real condition and feelings. Trust and truth will dwell together.

A salty Church will be the light of the world, a city set on a hill. The loyalty of God's people to Himself and one another is the clear evidence of genuine discipleship and godly character. Covenant love one to another is the unmistakable evidence that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Covenant love is the foundation that is unshakable when all else is shaking. It is the strongest testimony that Jesus was sent by the Father and is our Lord at His right hand.

"That they may be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send me" (John 17:21, NAS).

"Greater love hath no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). ☞





**I**xhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1).

Paul tells us that the first priority of a Christian assembly is prayer. He mentions various forms of prayer, of which one is intercession. To intercede means literally "to come in between." The intercessor is one who comes in between God and those who deserve His just wrath and punishment. The intercessor lifts his hands to God and says, "God, these deserve Your judgment; You have every right to smite them; but if You smite them, You will have to smite me first, because I am standing in between You and them."

In the Old Testament we find various accounts of cities and nations being spared divine judgment through

the ministry of an intercessor. We will study some of these examples, but first, let us consider the ministry of intercession in the life of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

### INTERCESSION IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

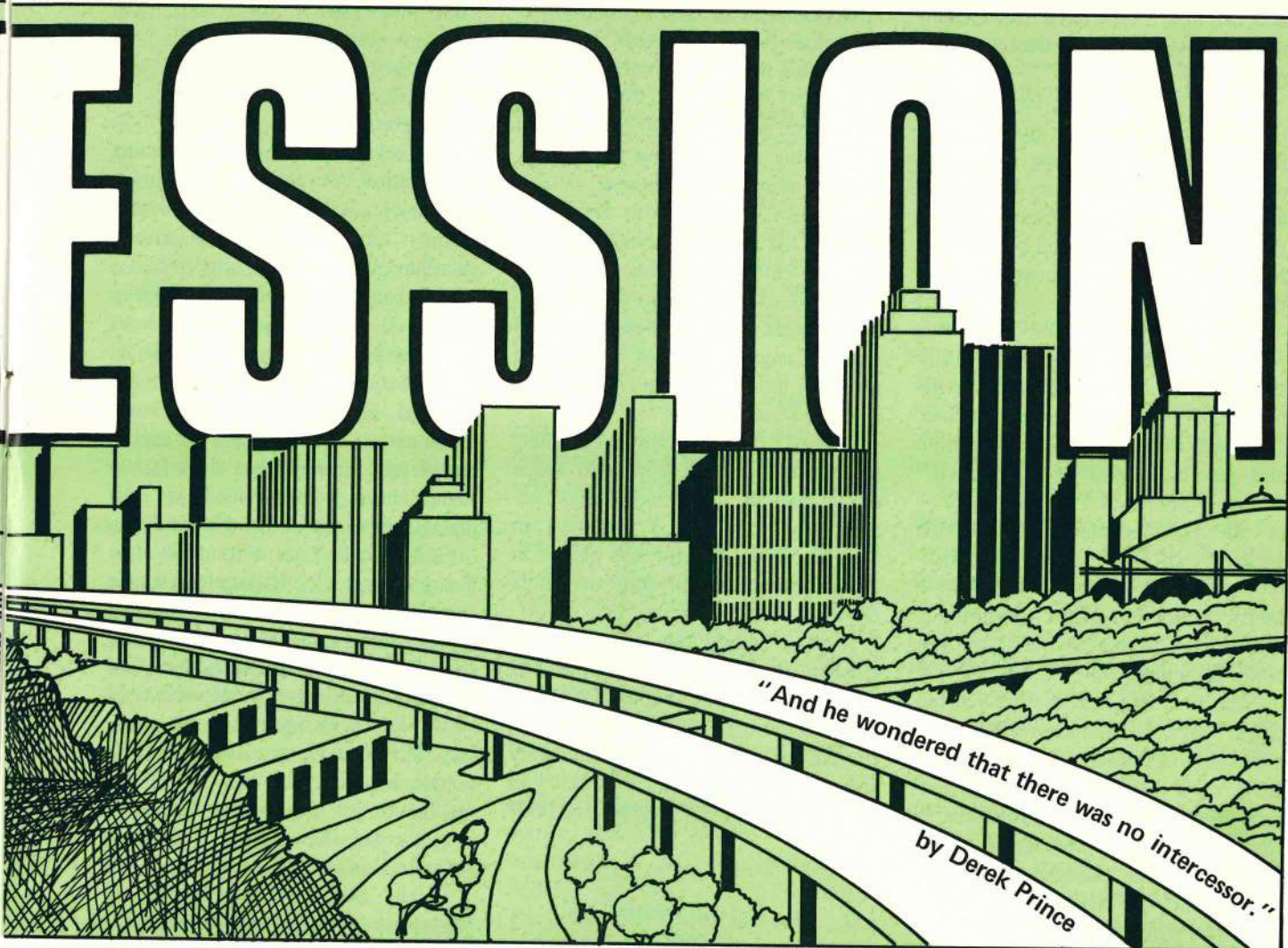
Intercession was one of the great marks of the ministry of Jesus. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah gives a description of His atoning work. The concluding verse says:

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

There are four things recorded there of Jesus. First, *He poured out his soul unto death*. Leviticus 17:11 says that the soul of all flesh is in the blood, so Jesus poured out His soul unto death when he poured out every drop of His blood. Second, *He was numbered with the transgressors*; He was crucified with the two thieves. Third, *He bare the sin of many*; He became the sin offering for us all. Fourth, *He made intercession for the transgressors*; He did this from the cross when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He was saying, "The judgment that is due to them, let it come upon Me." And it did.

Hebrews, chapter 7, speaks of Jesus after His death, resurrection and ascension. We are told that Jesus is our high priest at God's right hand. Because He has an unchangeable





priesthood, one that never passes from Him, "he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth *to make intercession for them*" (Heb. 7:25).

If we do a study of the life and ministry of Jesus, we arrive at a rather interesting time comparison. We discover that He spent thirty years in obscurity, in perfect family life; three and one-half years in dramatic public ministry; and nearly two thousand years in intercession, unseen by the natural eye. That is what He has been doing since He ascended — interceding for us before the Father.

#### OLD TESTAMENT PATTERNS — ABRAHAM

I believe the greatest saints were often the greatest intercessors, for

they were the men who were the closest to the heart of God. The Old Testament contains examples of some great intercessors. Our first example is Abraham.

In Genesis 18 we find the Lord, with two angels, coming to visit the tent of Abraham. Abraham kills the calf and entertains his guests with great hospitality. At the end of this scene the Lord says, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" In other words, the Lord sees Abraham as His close personal friend with whom He will share His thoughts and plans. And then the Lord unfolds to Abraham his purposes: "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me;

and if not, I will know" (Gen. 18:20–21).

Abraham was much concerned about Sodom because his nephew, Lot, was living in there. Abraham knew that if judgment came upon Sodom, Lot and his family would be part of the judgment.

The scene continues: "And the men [angels] turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but *Abraham stood yet before the Lord [to hold Him back]*. And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the



wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (vv 23-25).

It took some courage for Abraham to speak to the Lord in that manner. However, Abraham knew the divine principle behind his argument — that it would be totally out of keeping with the character of God, and contrary to His justice, to let judgment fall upon the righteous.

Psalms 91:7-8 sets forth this principle: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked." Whatever comes as "the reward of — or the just judgment upon — the wicked" will never touch the righteous. The righteous may be in the very midst of such judgment — a thousand may fall at his side — but it will not come upon him.

Note, however, that there is a difference between judgment and persecution for righteousness' sake. The Bible says the righteous will experience persecution. The difference is that judgment for wickedness comes from God upon the wicked; whereas persecution for righteousness comes upon the righteous from the wicked.

So Abraham comes before the Lord reminding Him that his justice is pledged that judgment shall not fall on the righteous. With holy boldness and intense conviction that God has to be absolutely just, he sets forth to challenge the Lord upon this principle. "Lord, if there are fifty righteous in that city, will you spare the city?" The Lord answers Abraham that He will spare the city if fifty righteous persons can be found. "What about forty-five? Will you spare it for forty-five righteous?" And the Lord says He will spare it if forty-five righteous persons could be found in it. And so goes the conversation . . . forty . . . thirty . . . twenty, until finally Abraham arrives at his last challenge: "Suppose there are only ten righteous persons in that whole city. Will you spare it for the sake of ten?" And the Lord says He will spare it for ten righteous persons.

That is a tremendous revelation! If my calculations are correct, I believe Sodom was a major city with a population of no less than 10,000. For the sake of ten out of 10,000 persons God was willing to spare the entire city. That is *one out of a thousand!*

Job 33:23 records this same proportion: "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, *one among a thousand*, to shew unto man his uprightness. . . ." Ecclesiastes 7:28 similarly records: "Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: *one man among a thousand.*"

One out of a thousand! The Bible apparently uses this phrase to single out a man of outstanding righteousness. God says, "If I can find in Sodom one such righteous person in every thousand, I will spare the whole city."

Shall we apply this proportion to modern America, with its population of approximately 210,000,000? It would require 210,000 persons of outstanding righteousness to obtain mercy for the whole nation. Would you qualify as one of those 210,000? Would I?

### THE INTERCESSION OF MOSES

Our second example of an intercessor is Moses. Turning to Exodus 32 we find the story of Moses ascending Mt. Sinai to receive the covenant from God. After he had been gone many days, the people became impatient and turned to Aaron and said, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (v 1). So Aaron took all their golden earrings, melted them together and made a molten calf, around which Israel began to dance and worship.

As this was occurring in the camp, God spoke to Moses on the mountain and said, "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I

commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it. . . ." (vv 7-8).

Even at this tense moment, with the fate of Israel hanging in the balance, there is a note of humor in the ensuing conversation between God and Moses. Speaking to Moses of Israel, God calls them "thy people." But Moses, unwilling to accept this responsibility, casts it back upon God and says, "thy people." Neither God nor Moses wished to be held responsible for Israel at that moment! Meanwhile, at the bottom of the mountain, Israel continues to dance around the calf — completely unaware that their fate is even then being settled by this dialogue between God and Moses.

God then declares His intention to destroy Israel: "Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them. . . ." (v 10). Note that God would do nothing unless Moses would allow Him to. He says, "Get out of my way, Moses, and let me deal with these people as they deserve!" But Moses would not get out of the way. As an intercessor, he remained standing between God and the people.

Finally, God states how He will use Moses to redeem His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had promised to make a great nation out of their descendants. He now says to Moses, "I will make of thee a great nation." Would that not appeal to Moses' ego? Why not let God start all over and make of him a great nation? After all, these people had been nothing but a burden to him since leaving Egypt. But Moses did not react that way.

And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt. . . . ["They are not mine," Moses says. "They are yours."] Wherefore, should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people (vv 11-12).



Moses' concern was for God's reputation, not for his own ego. He said, "God, if you bring these people out and they perish in the mountains, the Egyptians will say you had evil intentions against them when you brought them out."

We see this same concern over God's reputation in Numbers 14:13-16. The people provoked the Lord by refusing to believe the positive report of the two spies sent into the Promised Land, choosing instead to believe the negative report of the ten. God was so angry with their unbelief that He again sought to destroy them and to make of Moses a great nation. But Moses here reminds the Lord that the nations which have heard the fame of the Lord will think that He was not able to bring this people into the land and therefore slew them in the wilderness. Moses' concern, in both instances, was not for personal reputation or stature; his only concern was for God's glory and reputation in the earth.

Returning to the close of Exodus, chapter 32, we find the consummation of Moses' intercession. After he had returned to the camp and set things in order, he speaks to the people:

Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord, peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin; and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written (vv 30-32).

That is intercession! "God, they deserve your stroke; forgive them. But if not, Lord, let their judgment come upon me." The intercessor is the one who stands in between God and the object of His just wrath. Psalm 106 provides a divine commentary on this incident:

They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; Wondrous works in

the land of Ham and terrible things by the Red Sea. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, *had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them* (vv 19-23).

Moses stood in the breach made by the sin of God's people and said, "Lord, I am stopping the gap. Your blow cannot fall upon them unless it first falls upon me."

Numbers 16 records another example of intercession. Here it is Moses and Aaron together who are the intercessors. God had sovereignly dealt with the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram by causing the earth to open and swallow them alive. But the people turned against Moses and Aaron and blamed them for the incident: "But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces" (vv 41-45). That is the position of the intercessor — prostrate on his face before God, knowing that judgment is about to fall.

Personally, I marvel at the grace of Moses and Aaron. The people had turned against them without any reason. Yet for these who criticized them, they were now willing to offer intercession — even at the risk of their own lives.

Moses speaks to Aaron and directs him:

Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath

gone out from the Lord; and the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people, and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. *And he stood between the dead and the living;* and the plague was stayed (vv 47-48).

The language in this passage emphasizes the *urgency* of intercession. Moses said to Aaron, "Go quickly . . ." Aaron did not walk, he "ran." Every moment of delay cost lives.

The word "plague" suggests something highly infectious, transmitted by contact from one person to another. To make atonement, as Moses had commanded, Aaron had to deliberately expose himself to that contagion. He risked his own life. Standing there he swung the censer; and as he swung it, the beautiful, fragrant smoke rose up in a white line and divided between the dead and the living. And where that white smoke went up from the censer the plague stopped. That is intercession: coming — at the risk of your own life — between the dead and those who are due to die, then offering up fervent prayer and supplication, like that white smoke from the censer, until the plague ceases.

### THE LACK OF INTERCESSORS

Ezekiel 22:23-31 records for us a different scene. The scene is not unsimilar to the last two in that it portrays the sins of God's people. However, in one aspect it is different — there was no intercessor found to stand between the sin of the people and God's judgment.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her [the land of Israel] Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof . . . Her priests have violated my law . . . Her princes in the midst thereof are like



wolves . . . The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy . . . *And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.* Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them . . .

All sections of the population had utterly failed — prophets, priests, princes, people. Each of these stands for a certain element in society. The “prophets” are those responsible to bring a message direct from God. The “priests” are the leaders of institutional religion. The “princes” are the secular rulers. The “people” are the rest of the population, the common people. The order in which these four elements are listed is significant. The process of decay began with the spiritual leadership; then the secular government was corrupted; finally the whole nation was affected. (This has been the order in modern America — and many other nations.)

Even though every section of society was thus corrupted, the situation was not yet hopeless. God looked for one man, an intercessor, to stand in the gap and make up the hedge so that He could spare the whole nation. But because He could find none, He poured out upon them His indignation and consumed them in the fire of His wrath. One man — one intercessor — could have saved an entire nation from final judgment! (Dare we believe that this too applies to modern America?)

Isaiah chapter 59 presents one of the most fearful pictures of failure and backsliding to be found in Scripture. Yet the people described in it are essentially *religious* people. Here is their confession:

For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And

judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment. *And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor* (vv 12–16).

Mark the climax: “There was no intercessor.” Even God Himself wondered at it! It was the final, damning evidence of unbelief and selfish indifference in the hearts of His people.

### THE NEED FOR INTERCESSORS

The United States is surely overripe for divine judgment. The Bible reveals that judgment is according to the light that has been granted. The greater the light, the more severe the judgment. When we consider the media by which the truth is being spread today — television, radio, books, tapes, etc. — I would say that in all the history of the human race there has never been a generation on the face of the earth that has had greater spiritual light made available to it than this generation in the United States.

Four years ago I became an American citizen. I carefully weighed my decision, realizing that when I became a citizen I was identifying myself with this nation for good or for evil. I saw the tremendous possibility of divine judgment falling on the nation. But God had spoken to me audibly in 1953, when I was still a pastor in England, and said: “There

shall be a great revival in the United States and Great Britain.” For this, God laid down one basic requirement: obedience. I believe that great revival is coming — if God can find intercessors to stay His judgment and call down His mercy.

In closing let me give you four qualifications that I see in every true intercessor. First, an intercessor, like Abraham, must have an absolute conviction of God’s righteousness: that God will never bring judgment on the righteous, which is due only to the wicked. At the same time, he must have a crystal clear vision of the absolute justice and inevitability of God’s judgment upon the wicked.

Secondly, he must have a deep concern for God’s glory, like Moses, who twice declined God’s offer to make him the ancestor of the greatest people on earth. God’s glory was more important to him than his personal reputation.

Thirdly, an intercessor must have an intimate acquaintance with God. He must be a person who can stand before God and talk with the utmost frankness, yet with reverence.

And finally, an intercessor must display great personal courage. He must be prepared, if need be, to risk his own life, like Aaron who ignored the contagion of the plague to take his place between the dead and the living.

There is no higher calling than that of an intercessor. When you become an intercessor, you have reached the throne. Man will not see you because you will be out of his sight, beyond the second veil; but in the Kingdom of God your life will count for time and for eternity. ☞

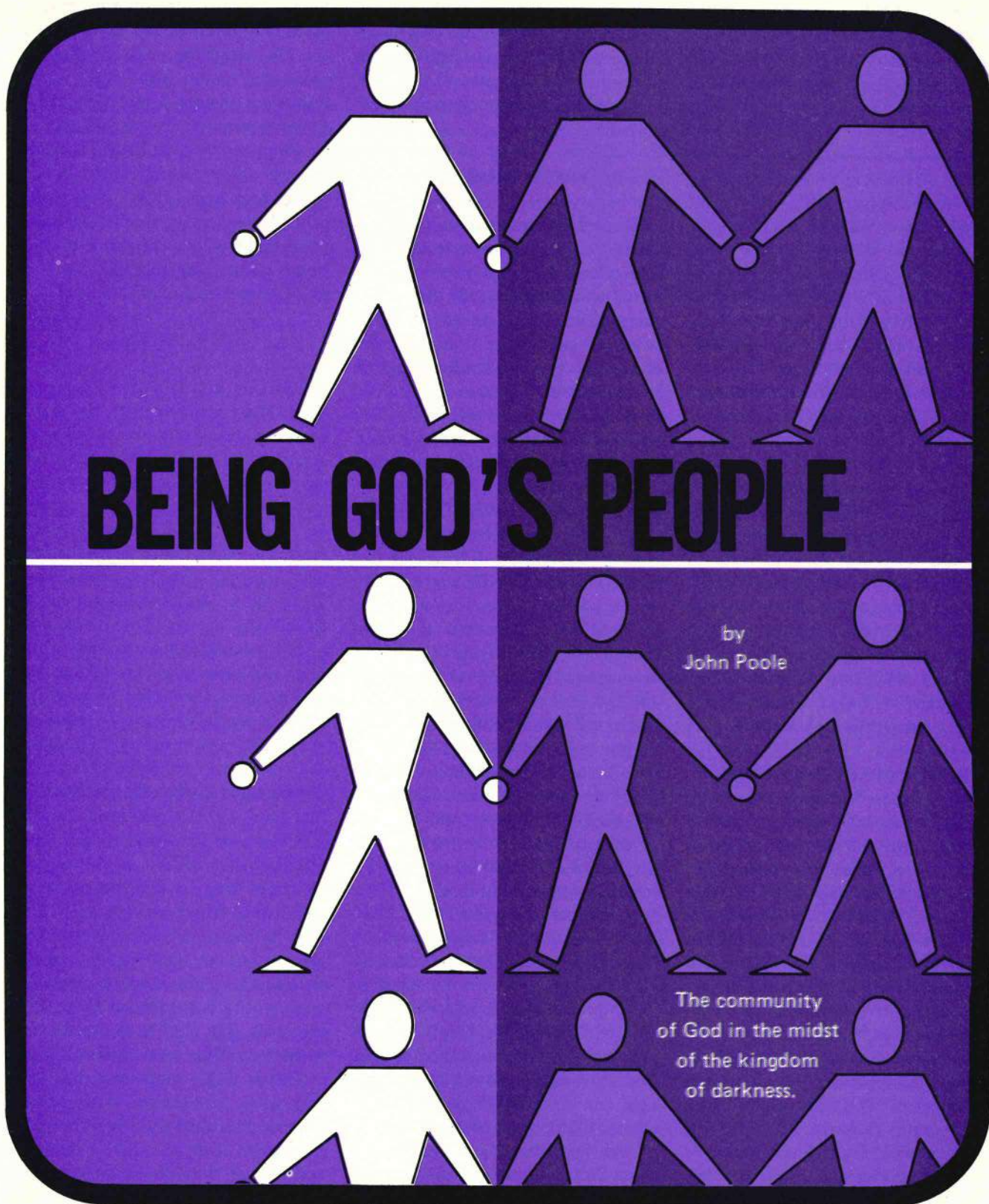
**“God does not look at how fervently we preach the gospel or how willingly we suffer for Him; He looks to see how obedient we are.”**

**— Watchman Nee**

**“People imagine that dying to self makes one miserable. But it is just the opposite. It is the refusal to die to self that makes one miserable.”**

**— Roy Hession**





**G**od has a sovereign purpose for His creation, and He is steadily moving today to accomplish His objective among very common ordinary people like you and me. Before the world was, He planned that

through His Son, there would be on this earth a people who, under no coercion, in the face of an open choice, would choose to love and serve Him, allowing His glory to be reflected in their lives, as opposed to

serving Satan and becoming the replica of all that is evil.

Because God desires such a people, everything that has happened since creation has been linked to the production of that kind of a people. The



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calling of Abraham; the raising up of Israel, delivering them to Egypt, bringing them out; the production of the Messiah; the rise of the early church; the falling away; the restoration; all of this is geared to one end — that in every nation under heaven, God might have a company of people who would demonstrate by their lives that there is a quality of life under the reign of Jesus Christ far superior to anything else that can be found anywhere on this earth.

It is significant that God describes such a people in His Word as a nation, a Body, a Church, a generation. His purpose is not just for a *person*, but for a *people* — a company of individuals developing and maturing together as one unit. And that, in a word, means relationship. It is only in the context of close fellowship and community that God can cause us to check, strengthen and correct each other in order to come into full maturity. Relationship causes growth.

The purpose of becoming God's people begins with some preliminary measures that God requires us to undergo, to adjust and prepare us. There are three main scriptures that outline these initial steps: (1) Galatians 1:3-5, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (2) Colossians 1:13,14, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his own dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins . . ." and (3) Romans 12:1,2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your

reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

## FREED FROM SIN

We read first in Galatians chapter 1 about God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ *who gave himself for our sins*. That is a tremendous thing! How many of you know something of the power of guilt, what it does to you physically, and the tension it brings into your body? Do you know something of the burden of shame that people carry when they have that kind of guilt inside and all of a sudden feel that they are probably the worst person in the world? That is the condition we were in because of sin.

God sent Jesus that He might give Himself for our sins. He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Jesus became the answer for the sin question. He sacrificed Himself for our sins, and when a person accepts that and is willing to admit that there is nothing he can do about his sin, but there is something that Jesus has done about sin, guilt and shame can go and freedom can come. And what a psychiatrist may not be able to do in fifty visits at \$35.00 an hour, Jesus can do in a moment of time.

He can set you free from guilt and shame, because the Gospel, the Good News, is the power of God. In Romans 1:16, Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God." When the Good News is preached and that word is received, God's power is ministered to individuals, and there can be a breaking of chains, a destroying of yokes, a lifting of the burdens of guilt and shame. Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins.

Now the tragedy is that many of us have stopped there. The danger in Christianity is stopping anywhere! For anyone who has stopped at the principle of salvation, let me say that the idea that God saves you *only* to forgive your sins is something that

deserves a very decent and proper burial. My brother and sister, that's not the stopping place; that's the beginning point. Paul told us in Philippians chapter 3 that God had a reason, a purpose, why He laid hold of us. From the time Paul met Jesus, his goal was to apprehend that for which he had been apprehended. Now that's a little play on words, but he said, "God laid hold of me for a reason. Now I want to lay hold of the reason why God laid hold of me."

## THE REASON

Galatians 1:4 says that Jesus was given "for our sins that He might deliver us out of this present evil age." This isn't the total picture of why God sacrificed His son, but it is certainly a part of it. Now I believe in the coming of the Lord, and I believe there are many scriptures that refer to the fact that Jesus will appear a second time. This scripture, however, has nothing to do with the coming of the Lord. Paul is not talking about the day when Jesus will come down and take us out of this present evil age; he is talking about a people who will be delivered out of this present evil age now. *Now!*

Jesus' prayer in John 17 was, "I don't pray that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them in it." Not that the Father might come and take them all out of it, but that He might keep them in the middle of it. That is where the glory is! The glory is being kept in the world. The glory is to be holy around unholy things. The glory is to be righteous when you are surrounded by unrighteousness. The glory is to live straight when everything else is crooked.

This is God's purpose in the here and now. You know, some people have an idea that it's either the sweet by and by or the sour here and now. I really don't think that's the way God wants it to be. Jesus gave himself that "he might deliver us out of this present evil age."

Now, to confirm that, let us again look at Paul's writing in Colossians 1:13, "For He delivered us" or "He hath delivered us." Galatians 1:4 was:



"He gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us." That was the purpose, what God wanted to do. Colossians 1:13 looks at it from a past standpoint: "I want you to rejoice because the God who wanted to deliver us *has* delivered."

"He hath delivered us!" He has done it. It is something that He has accomplished, transferring us from the tyranny of darkness into the Kingdom of His own dear Son. Now, that is contingent on the fact that you have received the proper Gospel in a proper way. I don't want to split hairs, or minister any kind of doubt or condemnation. But I trust that you understand we are not talking about some kind of an emotional response to an emotional meeting or some kind of intellectual decision to an intellectual, philosophical presentation. A genuine response to the Word of God, the Gospel, which is the power of God to produce something, causes a person to know from the depths of his being, "He gave himself for our sins that He might deliver me, and He *has* delivered me out of the kingdom of darkness into His Kingdom." God's desire is to form a people who are living in a new Kingdom.

### THE KINGDOM OF THE SON

Christians are people who are living under the benevolent reign of good King Jesus. Aren't you glad you have a Sovereign like the Lord? This realization so gripped the hearts of early Christians that they even began to talk about themselves with terms that are foreign to you and me. They became so conscious of that Kingdom that they described themselves as aliens in this kingdom. They called themselves foreigners, strangers, wayfarers, citizens of another land, some of them even stepped into a little higher rank of boldness and said, "I'm an ambassador of that land, seeking to reconcile you to the King."

But most of that is lacking from our ideas and our way of thinking. We are very comfortable where we are. Most of us feel that because we have made certain outer adjustments and changes

in our lives, that this is basically all that God is looking for to mark us out as a different people.

In the epistles of Paul, as he talks about putting off the old and putting on the new, you will notice that very rarely, if at all, does he mention outer habits. He deals with inner attitudes. When God talks about a generation of people who are living in the Kingdom of His Son, He is not talking about a people who are merely distinguished by where they go, what they do, or how they dress, but a people who are distinguished by attitude — by something that's happening within the heart. That is why Paul says to the Colossians over in the 3rd chapter, put away immorality, impurity, passion, greed, abusive speech, anger, malice, slander, and put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness. When he distinguishes between old and new, that's where the distinction comes.

### DOING VERSUS BEING

God is interested in a people who will *be* something. Now, I am much more interested in *doing* than I am in *being*. It's much easier to be a doer, because that is when folks can *see* the good works you are performing. But who can see you when you are just being? Like one fellow said, "If you really want to know how a man is doing spiritually, ask his wife." At home is where he is *being*. In church is where he is *doing*.

If we go back to Exodus 19:3,4, God, speaking to Moses as he is bringing the people out of Egypt, says: "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I *did* to the Egyptians . . . Now if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant then you shall *be* . . ." God said, "I'll do the doing, you do the being, and we'll get along fine," and from that day on, God's greatest concern for Israel was that they *be* His people. He said, "You just *be*; I'll *do*."

Who knocked down the walls of Jericho? Who opened up the river

Jordan? If we will just be the people God wants us to be, He will do all the doing that needs to be done.

Throughout church history, we have relegated God's ability to do to the past. What has been uncovered today is that the God who used to, *still does* now. God's burden for us is that we simply become the people He is calling us to be. That means our attitudes have to be dealt with and deep inner changes have to take place. We are not talking simply about God cleaning up the outside, although that will undoubtedly happen. We are talking about God getting deep inside of us, right down where we live, so that our wives and our children and our closest friends begin to see that something is happening to us.

### DON'T BE CONFORMED

In Romans 12:1,2 Paul says, "Present yourselves a living sacrifice to God, which is your reasonable service, and don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In our three scriptures, Galatians 1:3-5, Colossians 1:13, 14, and Romans 12:1, 2, there is a progression. Galatians 1 says Jesus gave himself for our sins that He might deliver us. Colossians 1:13 says that God has delivered us out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of his own dear Son. Romans 12:1,2, while not negating the fact that we have been delivered out of the world, urges us not to allow the influence of that from which we have been delivered to mold us into its particular form. Now I believe beyond any shadow of doubt that God meant exactly what He said in Romans 12:2, when He said, "Be on guard lest that from which you have come influence you and conform you to its mold."

A few weeks ago, our family had the privilege of going to England, and to the country of Wales where we are from. One of the things I try to avoid when I go to another country is to look like a tourist. I said to my wife, Lorraine, as we were packing, "I don't want to take any clothes that are extravagantly American. I don't want



to look like some kind of American evangelist flying in from Hollywood, California, with white shoes and a white suit. I just want to be me." How many of you know that you can be transferred to another kingdom and still be influenced by the one from which you came. I went to Buckingham Palace wearing white levis and sneakers, with a camera around my neck, and I somehow got the impression that everybody knew I was a tourist. There wasn't a whole lot I could do about it, because in being myself, the influence of where I had come from was upon me, even though I had transferred locations.

I think one of the most difficult places in all the world not to be influenced by the pressure of this world is Western civilization. Why? Because the pressures of this world as we see them are more subtle than they are in other cultures. If, for example, you go into a country of Asia or Africa, you might see there the absolute, bald-faced confrontation between the God of the universe and the gods of this world. In some countries, idols are publicly displayed, sometimes on the roadsides or in homes. The gods are there and the choice is obvious: you either serve these gods or you serve the unseen God of the Christians.

But in our culture, not just America, but Western civilization in general, things are more subtle. For our gods, though they are just as real, are hidden gods. Our idols are more hidden, and they come with different names — names like Thunderbird or Mustang, or a certain section of suburbia, or the brand name on your suits, or the fact that you only buy the best in the best places. That kind of god or idol seems to us to be a little more acceptable.

But we forget that there is as much anti-Christ spirit in everything in this world that appears on the surface to be good as there is in those things that are overtly evil, for the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one. And if he can't use drugs or booze, or any of those type things to snare you, he might try to get you with nice things:

*anything* that will compete with your affections for the unadulterated pure worship of the living and true God.

When God talks about His people being delivered out of this present evil age, yet exhibiting in the midst of the world's corruption the quality of life lived under Jesus' lordship, He is talking about a people who must view themselves in exactly the same way as early Christians viewed themselves: aliens, strangers, foreigners, citizens of another land, who are not influenced or molded by the societies of the world.

What I am saying is that we must get back to a Gospel that is like the Gospel Peter preached. When they repented and were baptized and were filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter's first words to them were these: "Save yourself from this perverse generation." Not just the perverse boozers, nor the perverse cigarette industry, nor the perverse people in Hollywood. He said, "The whole thing is corrupt."

Paul told the Philippians in the second chapter of his epistle, verse 15, that the will and purpose of God is that you shine as lights in the middle of a wicked and perverse generation. He didn't just single out part of it. He said, "It's the whole thing you have to watch out for." Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 17:17: "How long will I be with you, faithless and unbelieving generation." That is what we are dealing with; that is what God is dealing with. Out of that generation, God is going to produce a people whom He has delivered and released from the influence of the world in which they live. Released from the fear of what people think, released unto what God thinks. Released from the compulsion to do exactly the right thing at the right time in the right place. Released from the attitudes that surround us all over the world. Do you think that is possible? It has to be possible, because that is what God is after — that kind of a company of people.

### GROWING TOGETHER

Now, here is the clincher. Here is the thing that God's Word says that all

of us at one time or another are going to have to learn. I can never become the person that I have just described, the kind of person that has been delivered from the world and is being delivered from its influences past and present — I cannot become the kind of person God wants me to be *alone*. *Never!* I cannot become that kind of person in some nicy-nice, goody two-shoes fellowship.

"How are you?"

"Fine."

"How's your wife?"

"Good."

"How are the kids?"

"Wonderful."

"How's the puppy dog?"

"Fine!"

"Isn't it grand that we can have this nice fellowship in the Lord?"

"Yes, Amen."

"Well, see you in church next Sunday."

We are not going to make it alone, and we are certainly not going to make it in some kind of "I scratch your back, you scratch mine" kind of fellowship.

I'll tell you something else. We are not going to make it in some knock-you-down, drag-you-out kind of legalistic fellowship either. "Well, we certainly are glad to see you in this fellowship, and in about four weeks we'll get you straightened out!" As the Church of God, we have not been called to hurt, but to heal. We have not been called to injure, but to make whole. What we are talking about is loving, supporting, yet honest, confronting kind of fellowship. That is essential if you and I are going to be the people that God wants us to be.

It has taken me a long time to learn that regenerate John Poole can't be fully trusted. I need people around me. There is something about being in relationship with God's people and being in their presence, that helps me to keep my heart and my mind fixed on Jesus. Fellowship with one another is supporting and helpful, but also that kind of confronting thing that causes us to grow.

Can't we begin to face up to the

(continued on page 65)



# HUSBANDS LOVE YOUR WIVES

by Larry Christenson

Following Christ's  
example of self-sacrifice  
and sensitivity.

**H**usbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself . . . (Eph. 5:25-33).



Sitting in my study one day reading this text I suddenly saw something that lifted me right off the chair. "Husbands, love your wives *as Christ loved the church* . . ." That's the taproot of God's order for the family! The key to a family's life is the love that the husband has for his wife, because the husband's love is patterned after the love that Jesus has for His Church. And Christ's love for His Church is its very life!

This led to a very simple question: "How does Christ love His Church?" If I could find the answer to this question then I would also have an answer to the question: "How does a husband love his wife?"

"Love," as we are using it, is not simply a feeling within ourselves, but rather, something that transmits itself into specific action. Thus we must ask, "In what specific way does Christ *manifest* His love and make it concrete and practical?" I believe we will find some answers as we consider the various roles in which Christ relates to His Church and apply these roles to the husband/wife relationship.

### THE HUSBAND AS LOVER

The first role in which Christ manifests His love toward His Church is as a *lover* or *bridegroom*. Commitment is the key to this relationship. Jesus doesn't simply love the Church because the Church is so lovable. He loves the Church because He has set His *will* to love the Church.

Paul Venghese, a bishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church, has pointed out that our romantic notion of love by which a man and woman are supposedly attracted, fall in love, and live happily ever after does not come from the Bible, but from the French troubadours of the 11th century. This view of love is inadequate; it goes on feeling instead of commitment. There is nothing wrong with feelings or "falling in love," but when love sinks its root structure down into the subsoil of the will, it gains a strength and stability. There will be emotions, feelings, and desires, but they won't be subject to the mood of the moment.

There are many times when we don't feel like loving, but we can set our will to do so, nevertheless.

Once on a TV talk show, the Italian movie actor, Ricardo Montalban was confronted with the challenge: "We know Latins are great lovers, and you have a reputation as a great screen lover. Now, tell us, what makes a great lover?"

The commentator perhaps expected some ribald comment, but Montalban answered, "A great lover is someone who can satisfy one woman all her life long, and be satisfied by one woman all his life long. A great lover is not someone who goes from woman to woman. Any dog can do that."

That's the love that Christ has for His Church. It is a mystical concept, and yet it is that basic relationship of total, unqualified commitment.

Ephesians 5:28 shows us in a practical way how the husband is to love his wife. The scripture says that a man should love his wife as his own body and that he who loves his wife loves himself. How does a man love his own body? One way is that he is *careful for its needs*. He feeds and clothes his body, and he is sensitive to how his body functions. He wouldn't go outside in below-zero weather with only a T-shirt. Likewise, if a husband is to care for the needs of his wife, as he cares for his own body's needs, he must become sensitive to what those needs are. He must become as sensitive to the feminine mystique as he is to the senses of his own body.

There is the story of an old Norwegian farmer who had been married twenty-five years. In the morning he would go out and do three or four hours of chores before coming in for breakfast. One morning he returned from his chores to discover that his

wife had not prepared breakfast. When he went to question his wife about the matter, he found her crying.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, I just got to thinking, Hans, you never tell me that you love me. Twenty-five years we've been married, and you never tell me that you love me!"

He responded, "Look woman, I married you twenty-five years ago and I told you then that I loved you, and if anything changes I'll let you know!"

That may have been enough for him, but it wasn't enough for his wife — she needed to be told that he loved her. A man and woman have different needs. (I'll never understand why a woman goes into happy orbit when you bring her flowers! There's just something about flowers and women that go together!)

Secondly, a man is sensitive to the *hurts* of his body, and a husband also needs to be sensitive to his wife's hurts. That means that he doesn't come home from work, flop down in front of the television and tune out the family. He cannot become sensitive to the things that are hurting in his wife's life unless he is willing to listen to her and share in her experiences of the day.

God is aware of the needs of the wife, and he is aware of the needs of the husband. His very purpose in bringing together a man and woman is that they might complement and complete one another. One of the needs of a wife is to realize how she completes her husband and how he completes her. This applies to many different aspects of their relationship.

One aspect is the sexual relationship of marriage. This relationship is meant to be one in which there is the deepest kind of giving between the man and the woman. One of the needs that a woman has is to give herself to him and have him give himself to her. This deep giving of oneself reflects the giving of Christ for His Bride, the Church.

Satan hates sex. He hates sex because he sees that it is something that God has created as a great gift for man and woman to enjoy within the

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circle of marriage. That is why he does everything he can to get that gift operating outside the confines of marriage — in adultery, free love, perversion, lust, etc. Whenever a man and woman come together in marriage Satan trembles because it is a symbolic reminder to him of the love that Christ has for His Church, which spells his downfall.

### THE HUSBAND AS SAVIOR

The second role in which Christ relates to His Church is that of *Savior*. Ephesians 5:25 says that a husband is to love his wife "as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." He is Savior of the Church and that pattern is repeated in the husband/wife relationship. As savior, the husband demonstrates his love in that he sacrifices for her.

Some of the notions of free love that are abroad in our culture today suggest that this is the love that really liberates: to love with no ties, no commitment to marriage. Actually, that is the most conservative, selfish kind of love one could imagine! It is a love that wants to give nothing. It will not risk a single thing. The most daring kind of love is the love that commits itself totally to marriage.

There are four words in the language of the New Testament for love. There is the word *storgé* which is the affection within a family and is expressed primarily within the family setting. That word is seldom used in the New Testament. Then there is the word *eros* from which we get our word "erotic." That is the kind of love we refer to when we speak of "falling in love." It is strong, passionate feeling between a man and a woman. This word isn't used in the New Testament, but it is in the Greek language. The next word is *phileo* from which we get such words as "philosophy" and "philanthropy," meaning the love of friendship and common interests. It is used sparingly in the New Testament. Finally, we have the word *agape*, which is the love of John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 13, and Ephesians 5:25 — "Husbands, love your wives . . ." It is

the love that causes one to sacrifice himself, to give himself up. All four types of love are demonstrated in the relationship between a husband and wife, but the love that undergirds and supports the others is *agape*.

What does it mean to "give oneself up for something?" Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Luke 9:23). This is the principle of discipleship. A husband must sacrifice his rights as an individual in order to be a disciple to Christ. He says, "I have no rights, I give myself up the way Jesus gave himself up." Jesus had a right as a Jew living in that society to a fair trial, but He gave that right up. He had a right to call legions of angels to His defense, but He gave up His right. He gave up His rights and it was out of that surrender, that deep way of the cross, that God was able to establish His authority.

After the crucifixion Jesus said, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and earth" (Matt. 28:18). After the cross Jesus was given authority, and after a husband has entered into the way of the cross, God can entrust him with the authority to rule over his family. It is only after he has learned something of the way God deals with the ego, the self, that he is able to help his wife and family into the ways of God.

There is a beautiful type of this in the Old Testament in the prophecy of Hosea. Hosea married a woman who was an adulteress. In the third chapter, the word of God comes to Hosea, "Go . . . love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress" (v. 1). He went down and found her being sold in the slave market for about the price of a common slave; he bought her back for fifteen shekels and a homer and a half of barley. And he brought her back home. Can you see the neighbors there in Samaria? "Here's that son of a priest, Hosea, coming home in the middle of the day from the slave market with that adulterous wife!"

"Why doesn't he have her stoned as the Law of Moses says!"

"Look at him, he's taking her back.

She'll just run off again; that's what she'll do!"

Hosea had to suffer humiliation; he had to give up his pride. And when he did that he was able to speak with authority: "Now you must live as many days and not play the harlot." And so far as the record shows, Gomer never left him again.

That is the husband in the role of savior, loving his wife, going the way of the cross, allowing God to deal with his own self-life so that he can bring to his family the help, the strength and the authority which it needs.

### THE HUSBAND AS SANCTIFIER

The third role in which Christ relates to His Church is that of *Sanctifier*. When I first compared this aspect of Christ's relationship with the Church to the husband/wife relationship, I hesitated because I had always thought that sanctification was the job of the Holy Spirit alone. Then I read the scripture again: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it, *that he might sanctify it . . .*" The parallel runs straight through the verse. It means that the husband helps his wife to become what God wants her to become.

First, he helps her to become *holy*. He has a concern for her spiritual welfare. He is fundamentally concerned that his wife have opportunities to grow and develop in faith so that she becomes all that God wants her to become. He intercedes for her, blesses her, and provides time for her to be alone with God.

Secondly, a husband is concerned that his wife becomes *wholly* the Lord's; that is, that she becomes a fully-developed person. I don't want my wife to become like some other wife; I want her to become the woman that God created her to be — intellectually, emotionally, culturally, sexually, domestically, and in every other way. When we realize that God has entrusted our wives to our care that they might become all that He wants them to become, we have discovered our calling as husbands.



## THE HUSBAND AS LORD

The word "lord" comes from a feudal setting in which there existed a relationship between the lord and the people who worked his land. The people committed themselves to him in return for his protection. Whenever invaders attacked, the people would come inside the lord's castle walls for protection.

As Lord, Christ guards His Church from attack. Likewise, a husband is responsible to guard and protect his wife. One of the basic things he protects her from is economic want. He is responsible to see that she, in committing herself to him, is set free from basic anxieties in this area.

In our culture this raises the question of working wives. Without going into all the "ins and outs" of this question, we can establish a basic principle. In considering this question, the husband and wife should ask themselves, "Is the job that the wife might take something which would fundamentally build up the *quality* of the family life (not simply raise the standard of living)? Is it going to minister to the well-being of our family and to our calling under God?" Sometimes we may have to lower our standard of living in order to raise our standard of life. Whether the wife works or not, the fundamental responsibility in providing for the family still rests upon the husband.

Another area in which a husband protects his wife is very obviously the physical realm. He guards her against physical attack. Every culture has written into its folkways protection for its womenfolk.

He also protects his wife from emotional attack. A wife is meant to live behind the protective shield of her husband in relationships outward to the community and also within the family. Especially where a child would mount an emotional attack against the mother, the father has to deal with it decisively. A mother should never have to battle for the respect of her children.

This came home vividly to me once when I was six or seven years old. I

was arguing with my mother about something, and as she went out of the dining room towards the kitchen I yelled after her, "You're a big dummy." In the meantime, my father had entered the dining room from the other door. I don't think I ever saw him move so fast! He came across to where I was standing, took me by the shirt front and lifted me right off the floor. "Who's a dummy?" he asked. "I'm a dummy, I'm a dummy, I'm a dummy!" I blubbered. I learned something that day: I learned that I could not abuse my mother without incurring the wrath of my father. He taught me more respect for womanhood in those three minutes than I could have learned through dozens of books and lectures. He protected my mother in that he constantly gave us children the impression of a relationship of total respect, regard and esteem.

One day I was talking with my wife about the protection that a husband provides, and I asked her what she considered to be some of the ways in which a husband protects his wife. She came up with something I never would have thought of, but which is right on target. She said that a husband protects his wife in that sometimes he says "No" to her. He recognizes when she is extending herself too far, getting involved in more things than she ought to be for her own well-being. He says, "No, you can't do that." That is a protection that a wife needs because by nature she is one who wants to give.

Finally, a husband protects his wife from spiritual attack. It is because of a woman's openness to spiritual attack that God has given the whole gift of covering so that she will not have her unique gifts subject to misuse, to deception, etc. We have, in our congregation, for instance, had many words of prophecy come through women. Also, some of the really creative thrusts that God has given us have come from the women. These have brought the greatest blessing when the woman has submitted it to her husband, and the husband has submitted it to the council of elders who in turn have submitted it to the

entire congregation. In this way the woman is protected from defending what the Lord has shown her. Her husband provides the spiritual covering.

## THE HUSBAND AS HEAD

Let's look finally at the husband's role as *head*. As Christ is head of the Church, so the husband is head of his wife and family. As head he directs his wife by giving her intelligent leadership. Whenever the word "headship" is mentioned, our natural reason associates it with such words as "authority," "rule," "boss," "laying-down-the-law," etc. However, the first word for the head of the house is not authority, but submission — submission to his head, who is Christ. "The head of every man is Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3). One who is not under authority himself is not able to be a head to his wife. In other words, you can't be a man as far as God is concerned unless you are under the headship of Christ. Only as a husband lives under the headship of Christ is he able to channel into the family the mind and authority of Christ.

I once coached a football team and early in the season I noticed something happening out on the field. There seemed to be a confusion that was taking place as the men would walk up to the line and run their plays. The word began to drift back to me in practice that everybody was offering his opinion in the huddle as to what play they should run. At that point I established headship: I told them that there was to be only one voice in the huddle — the voice of the quarterback. He was the man I was working with and he was to call the plays. If anyone else talked in the huddle the quarterback had authority to send him out of the game. The next game we ran the kickoff back to about the 20-yard-line. In the huddle the quarterback called the play, and it was the right play. He looked around and said, "Any objections?" No one said a word and they went for a touchdown.

In this context we see that headship functions simply to get a job done. No coach would say that the quarterback



is better than the end or more important than the halfback. All eleven men on the team are important. The quarterback simply has the *function* of headship in order that the team can move as a single unit.

One of the problems with the average family today is that there are too many captains! Everybody is pointing in a different direction. The wife has her idea, the kids have theirs, the husband has his idea, and they are all trying to run the ship in their own power and authority.

Christ chose to accomplish His will in the family through the principle of headship. He could have done it with a celestial loud speaker. "All right down there at 1603 W. 7th Street. Time for morning devotions! Get up! Everybody on the ball!" But He has chosen to do it through headship. At 7:00 a.m. the husband rings the gong. "Time for morning devotions." That is just as much the mind and the will of God for that family as if it came from the heavenly loud speaker. God

has simply chosen to channel it through this principle of headship.

The world's idea of submission equates headship with superiority and submission with inferiority. That may be true in the world. Jesus said that the Gentiles lord it over those that are under them, but He also said that it should not be so among Christians. As a matter of fact, among Christians it is going to be almost the other way around. "He who is great among you shall be the servant of all." That is the stance that the husband must take — not one of lording his authority over his family, but one of meekness and service.

The purpose of headship is to discover and express the will of God. It is not to inflict the will of the husband upon the family. If a husband is to speak for God, he first has to give up his own will. If he does that then the spirit in which he approaches his wife is altogether different. He approaches her not as someone he has to convince or steamroll over in order

to get his way. Instead, he realizes that if he is responsible to get the mind of God, then he needs to listen carefully to his wife, because God may use her as a channel of revelation.

Some people think that headship means the husband has the last word. The husband, however, doesn't *have* the last word; he simply *speaks* the last word. As head of the family, he is responsible before God to discern the will of God for the family, and when he has discerned it as best he is able (having listened carefully to his wife, weighing her counsel, her fears and misgivings, her insight and judgment) then he *speaks* the last word. But it is *Christ* who *has* the last word, if that family is living in divine order. And a family in which Christ has the last word is a family in which there is a contented wife, blessed children, and a godly husband. ♡

This article is adapted from the author's forthcoming book, *Husbands, Love Your Wives*, to be published by Bethany Fellowship, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota.

## BEING GOD'S PEOPLE

(continued from page 60)

fact that Christianity was never meant as an experience with God to be enjoyed alone. I have heard Judson Cornwall say, "When you start to come into God's presence, one of the first things you cry out for is 'Oh magnify the Lord *with me*, and let us exalt His name *together*.'" You want somebody to join you. You want to be related to somebody. One of the most important things God is revealing to all of us today is that unless we are related to one another in Christ, it is going to be impossible to stand in the immense pressures of the time in which we live. That is true of every member of the Body of Christ, whether they are in leadership or not, but especially if they are in leadership.

Can you imagine the apostle Paul riding on a white stallion into Ephesus, holding a few meetings, leaving his forwarding address, and riding on to Philippi. Somebody asks, "Who was that man anyhow?"

And some fellow answers, "He's the lone apostle, and that was his faithful companion, Timothy with him."

Somebody else says, "Where is his headquarters?"

"Nobody knows."

"Who's he related to?"

"He never tells."

"Where did he get his authority?"

"Nobody knows . . . I think he had a secret revelation while he was unconscious in the bottom of a canyon."

Paul wasn't a "lone apostle." He said, "I came from Antioch. The Church there sent me forth. The Holy Ghost spoke in a meeting of the brethren, we prayed and fasted, and then presented it to the whole Church. The whole Church said, 'It witnesses to us, brother.' They laid hands on us, sent us in the name of the Lord, and when we go back there, we're going to report to them all about the people we have contacted, and the Gentiles that have come to the Lord. And when we come to you again, we will be sent

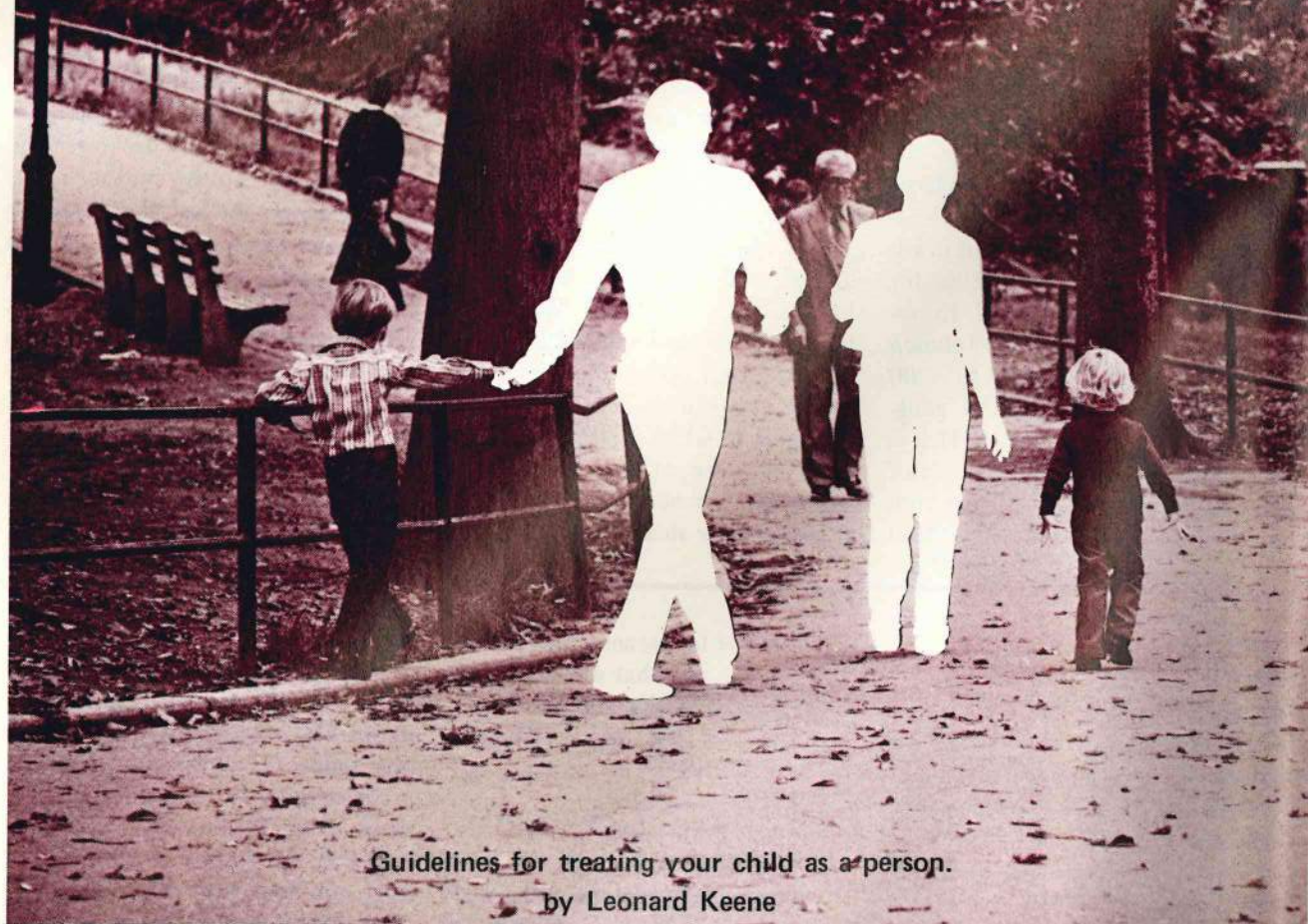
from Antioch the same way." Do you see the development of order that is there? That's not a bondage, but protection and safety. We will never be the people God wants us to be alone.

Christianity is a religion of plurality. It is a life lived together. Mark the times in the second chapter of Acts that you find that word "together." They were together! They loved to be together. Not because people were making them, but because they just wanted to be. It was a fellowship together. The will of God is going to be done, and no matter how things may appear to be on the surface right now, Jesus Christ is going to receive to himself a glorious Church without spot or blemish or any such thing. He is not coming back for a beat-up Bride. Hallelujah! He is coming back for a Bride that is gloriously at one within.

God's purpose is to have a unified Church, composed of a company of people who have been delivered out of the world to fit the mold of the Kingdom of God. ♡



# Where Have All The Parents Gone?



Guidelines for treating your child as a person.

by Leonard Keene

**P**lease help our children" were the first words spoken by a young couple who came to me for counsel. "Our seven year old is rebellious and throws tantrums. Our one-month-old baby girl screams, vomits and can't sleep. The doctor has both of the children on medication which is nothing more than tranquilizers. Please tell us what we can do. We need help badly."

Where have all the parents gone? Many parents are still physically in the home and yet they are gone. This *mysterious absence* has caused severe problems for our children. Generally

speaking, a child's problem is really a parent problem. Even though the parent is bringing food, shelter and clothing home for the child and often spending time in the house there is still a *mysterious absence* of the parent.

The parent-child relationship is a *life transfer*. It is an exchange of the parents' knowledge, wisdom, experience, attitudes, emotions, conduct and goals *to the child*. This transfer is often accomplished without the parents realizing the consequences.

For instance, while repairing the family automobile John's wrench slips and tears the skin off his knuckle. A loud burst of anger with cursing

springs forth from his mouth. His seven-year-old son is nearby and observes his father's behavior. A few days later, during Christian fellowship at home, the son repeats these words of anger and vulgarity. The parents are shocked. John says, "Where did he get that filth? He must be keeping bad company. Honey, we'll have to watch his friends more carefully."

Parents, we must become aware of our importance in this *life transfer* to our children. The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

To train means to show and to mold



the child. It is a *follow me process*: do as I do. Notice, there is a difference between teaching and training. If I only teach my child the "shoulds" and the "oughts" of life he may at some later time find a teaching that is more acceptable in his eyes. He may then reject my teaching and follow someone else's.

But training is a molding process. When I was in the army paratroops I spent three weeks in Jump School. The instructor both taught and trained me to jump out of the airplane. If I had only been taught, I might have been reluctant to step out of the open door into space. I would have stopped at the door and said something like, "Sir, let's talk about this a moment. Let's don't do anything hasty." But I was *trained* to be a paratrooper. An obedient soldier is one who has been shown "how" and "why" by his superiors. When it came time for me to jump out of the airplane the first time, I jumped. I didn't have to think about it. I was trained to jump. Parents, you should train your children by do-as-I-do; don't just teach them. As a parent or guardian we want to accomplish a *healthy life transfer* in our children. Observe the following ten areas carefully.

## TEN AREAS TO DEVELOP EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

### *I. Establish Realistic Rules of Conduct*

A rule to a child must be definite, easily understood and sensible. Our national and state legislatures spend hundreds of hours and many days formulating a law. They test its fairness and its clarity. They test the people's willingness to accept this new rule on the basis of good sense. Only then does the rule become law and is enforced.

We ought to give some of the same considerations to our children. Let them have a voice in the formation of the Rules of Conduct. Show them that some of the rules come directly out of the Bible.

I learned the importance of this principle while acting as legal counsel

for teenagers in trouble. These teenagers often had a bitter, resentful attitude toward their parents for making arbitrary and unreasonable rules on the spur of the moment — rules made by the parent without considering the child's needs and thinking. "It's unfair, my parents wouldn't listen to my point of view," they often declared.

Because of this, I determined to seek the Lord for an answer for our children who were then just infants. *Family Counsel* was a solution to this problem. We began to assemble weekly at the kitchen table for family counsel. As father I am the chairman. We all sit in a circle. We discuss rules, family finances, vacations and job allocations about the house. Problems that a child is having may be brought up at this meeting.

This method of communication with our children allows a freedom of expression without fear of a "put down" by the parent. Everyone is treated with respect and love. There is an openness about the meeting that allows a child to declare how he feels. I've heard my children say on occasion, "Dad, you are not spending enough time with us kids." or "Dad, aren't you being selfish about your sailboat." When I first heard this, I was amazed.

"Why do you feel I'm selfish and not spending enough time with you?" I asked. The children, with freedom and a sense of reverence toward me, began explaining their feelings. They were right. I had been too busy at work. I had deprived the family in order to purchase my sailboat. I changed my behavior. My children saw Dad's willingness to change. Later when I ask them to change their behavior they respond willingly. Remember, to accomplish the *life transfer* of fairness, mercy, teach-

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ability, forgiveness or such other good qualities we must train and show them these qualities in our own lives.

### *II. Speak Much Praise and Give Reward for Good Conduct*

Some parents neither praise nor give reward for good behavior for fear the child may stop or get a "big head." Others are worried the child may not respect them. It is humbling to praise and reward a child. However, a humble parent is respected highly by the child.

As adults we are motivated toward good conduct by praise and reward in our jobs, play and even our spiritual life. God praises and rewards our obedience, so let us follow His example with our children. Children tend to get discouraged easily. Praise and reward and encourage a child to *keep trying*.

Avoid rewarding and giving praise for beauty ("you are prettier than our others") or intellect ("you are a born genius"). These two characteristics are not within the control of the child. When children see praise and reward given for beauty and intellect they will do one of three things:

(1) Become proud and arrogant over their own beauty or intellect. This hinders their ability to develop genuine friendships.

(2) Withdraw and not participate ("I'm not pretty, I'm not smart, so why try?")

(3) Change values to be loud in speech, dress and conduct to get attention.

Conduct is within the control of the child. A child can dress attractively, and I can praise by such comments as, "My, you have good taste." A child can work hard for scholastic achievements. I should praise him for his diligence, but not his intellect.

### *III. Enforce Rules Consistently, Fairly and Uniformly*

The most frequent mistake made by parents is to be inconsistent in the enforcement of discipline. Inconsistency is simply enforcing a rule one day, and ignoring that same rule the next. Inconsistency breeds bitterness and resentment in the child. The child



is insecure, not knowing what to expect.

Suppose little John is misbehaving. Dad says, "John, straighten up or I'll spank you." John stops long enough for Dad to look elsewhere and then goes back to his misbehavior. Dad says, "John, this is the last time I'll warn you." John stops once more. As soon as Dad looks away he starts misbehaving again. Dad says, "John, for the last time . . ." On and on this may go until Dad either gets tired and leaves, or Dad gets so angry he attacks his son like a freight train. Whether John gets a spanking is determined by Dad's mood, and not by a consistent standard. It's like playing Russian roulette with a revolver. John never knows when the gun is going off. He thinks there's a bullet in the gun, but he's not sure when it will go off.

To avoid this problem, the *one warning rule* is recommended. The child receives one warning to correct his behavior. If he does not correct himself, the parent immediately corrects the child.

A child must be dealt with fairly to learn justice and mercy. Our daughter Joetta, at age two years, was playing in her bedroom with the neighbor girl, Betsy, age four years. I heard a suspicious giggle. Upon investigation I found black marks all along the walls of her room. There stood Joetta with a black crayola in hand and a silly grin on her face.

"Joetta! Did you do that?" I demanded.

"No, Daddy," she whimpered.

She had never lied to me before, so I searched for more evidence by asking Betsy. "Did Joetta do that?"

Betsy nodded her head in the affirmative.

That was all I needed. An eye witness is good proof on any legal issue. I knew all the elements of justice. There was no question Joetta was guilty. After all I was a lawyer, I've done police work, I've been in and out of court for several years, and I knew the look of guilt on a person's face. I decided to be trial judge, jury, district attorney and defense lawyer all in one. It took about four seconds to

have a trial and get a conviction. I grabbed her and began to vigorously execute the sentence on her bottom.

As she cried, Cloetta came running. (How many of you know that if a child cries the mother comes running?) She asked me quietly, "Why are you spanking Joetta?" I explained the evidence.

Cloetta replied with a soft tone, "She couldn't possibly have done it." She took little Joetta's hand and measured it to the black marks on the wall. Joetta's hand fell four inches short of reaching the marks. She was too short. About this time Betsy began to ease her way out of the room, heading for home.

I thought to myself, "Oh, my goodness. . . I had wrongly convicted and punished Joetta. How should I handle it now? How could I make it up to her? Buy her a doll, a tricycle, or a toy?" No, I had injured her little spirit. Gifts do not heal injured spirits.

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Proverbs 18:14).

With a strong spirit a person can sustain many problems. But with a wounded spirit the slightest problem (rudeness, criticism, coffee spills, late appointments and other such daily infirmities) in life becomes a mighty hurdle to cross. With a wounded spirit simple problems that otherwise would go unnoticed are now great obstacles. God showed me what to do about Joetta's injured spirit. I immediately dropped to my knees and repented.

"Joetta, will you forgive me? I wronged you, baby. I'm sorry. Please forgive me." This was very humbling for a father, but it was very necessary.

There were still tears in her little eyes. She looked me straight in the eye and replied, "It's okay, Fod . . . I forgive you." (Fod was her short-term meaning for Father).

Her little spirit was healed. Six years later, Joetta has no recollection of this incident. If the injury had not been healed correctly with forgiveness, her behavior could show symptoms of rebellion and inability to sustain and deal with daily problems effectively.

Only two people can heal an injured spirit. The one who created the injury (Dad in this case) and the other and more important, our Lord Jesus.

If you know of such an injury in your child that you may have caused, please use forgiveness to heal the spirit. It could change the behavior of your child. Ask Jesus to help you heal these spiritual injuries.

#### *IV. Immediate Corrections for Violations*

"When Dad gets home you are going to get it!" A lengthy time lapse between the misbehavior and the correction is dangerous for three reasons.

(a) *Moral justification* — A child will begin to immediately justify his behavior. If enough time passes, he will be "innocent" in his own thinking at the time of the correction. The parent then becomes the wrongdoer and the child the innocent martyr who is wrongly punished.

(b) *Distorted recall* — A child forgets details and the parents' correction may be wrongly interpreted by the child. Remember, we are molding attitudes that will build the spirit and promote correct behavioral patterns.

(c) *Imposes a fear atmosphere* — Fear is torment. Continual fear destroys nerve cells and often results in hypertension, nervous breakdown and illness in children. I've seen children so upset they become physically ill and vomit because of fear and anxiety begun by the parent.

If little Jeff misbehaves, Mother may say, "You just wait until tonight when your Father gets home . . . Boy, you are going to get it then." Mother's thinking is if Jeff worries about tonight that will help teach him not to repeat his misbehavior. She is doing harm by using fear, guilt and anxiety to correct her child. Mother should immediately correct Jeff to clear Jeff's conscience, thus disposing of his fear and guilt.

#### *V. Choose the Correct Method of Discipline*

A parent develops hate, fear, insecurity and rebellion in a child



when he does *not correct* a child, uses *excessive correction* or *improperly corrects*.

"The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15). "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest, yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (Proverbs 29:17).

Proper correction and discipline is an expression of love toward your child. Love your child enough to discipline him correctly. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24). How does a parent chasteneth him betimes?

The goal of all parent/child correction should produce three things: *obedience, respect, responsibility*. Let's examine several methods of correction and determine how these different methods mold the attitude of a child.

(1) *Loss of Fellowship* ("Go to your room") This method is to be avoided because a child develops a revenge spirit against the parent. As he sits alone in his room he thinks, "I'll get them one of these days." A child interprets this as rejection.

(2) *Public shame* (punish in the presence of friends) This method also is to be avoided. Humiliation and shame injures the spirit. It develops a rebellious and stubborn will in the child. The child will "bad mouth" the parent in an effort to recapture his public image.

(3) *Ridicule* ("You are dumb, you are stupid, you are lazy") This method of correction is the poorest of all, yet the most often used by parents. The child is struggling for a self-image that satisfies his basic needs of *identity, love* and *worth*. Ridicule gives him a defeated image of self. Ridicule does not satisfy his basic needs. Recently I asked Jeff, a 10-year-old neighbor boy, to join our ball game in the yard. His reply was, "I'd mess it up. I can't do anything right. You don't want me." Jeff had a poor self-image, probably fed by ridicule at home.

(4) *Loss of love of parent* ("Daddy and Mommy won't love you if you aren't good") This method of dis-

cipline is not acceptable. It teaches a child to use love as a weapon to manipulate people. A child who is manipulated by loss of love tends to use this same method when she or he becomes an adult to get their spouse to respond the way they wish. Real love is kind, endureth long, never seeks its own, and never faileth. (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

(5) *Loss of love of God* ("God doesn't like bad little boys") Desperate, parents may try anything to get a child to behave. *Don't* use this method. Teach your child that God always loves and forgives. Children are eager to please parents and God. Don't motivate good behavior by fear of hell or by casting guilt on the child.

While I was working as a traffic policeman several years ago, a lady ran out into the street to stop my patrol car. She was dragging a small boy behind her. Her first words to me were, "Officer, will you tell my son you will put him in jail if he doesn't obey his mother?" I looked at the small boy. He was terrified. My reply was, "Lady, we don't put five-year-olds in jail. You need to learn to love that little fellow. You set a good example with your own behavior." With a shocked look on her face she turned, and dragged the poor little fellow down the street.

(6) *Threats and yelling* ("If you don't straighten up I'll knock your head between your shoulders.") Threats designed to place fear in the heart of the child seldom work. Worst of all, threats such as this demonstrate to the child the immaturity of the parent. A child will seldom respect a parent who threatens and yells to correct.

(7) *Verbal reprimand* ("That's enough boys.") The one warning rule is very effective. A child needs to know what conduct is not acceptable and continuation of that conduct will bring immediate correction. When he understands these two things he will respond quickly to your one warning. When a child knows the boundaries he gains inner confidence from that knowledge.

I've heard the following statement by children hundreds of times. "I wish my

parents loved me enough to tell me No, and then back it up."

Children are not fools. Treat them as intelligent God-created human beings. Explain the "shoulds" and the "oughts" of life. What may be obvious and commonplace to you may not be known to them until you explain the facts, figures and consequences.

A parent who respects his child will find the reciprocal of mutual respect flowing back from the child. The child learns to "read your eyes" because he respects you and desires to follow your judgment and leadership. You are an important person. He is an important person. The child will strive to maintain a good flow in this relationship of parent/child.

(8) *Loss of privileges or rights* ("You can't ride your bike for two hours." "You must stay in the house for one hour." "You cannot go to the store for one day.") These are very useful and effective methods to mold and shape behavior and attitudes. The problem most of us have is we *over-punish*. "You are restricted for thirty days." This is not good. To a child you might as well have said a lifetime. You have made a federal case out of a city offense. Be merciful in your judgment. I often reduce the sentence if my child accepts the judgment gracefully.

Remember, it is the attitude we are forming. We are not trying to crush the child. We are developing a flow of love, respect and communication between parent and child that will last for years to come.

(9) *Loss of property* - If a child intentionally breaks a toy, the parent should remove that toy. He should be warned that abuse of property will result in loss of property. As a child learns to respect and care for his own property he learns to respect other people's belongings.

(10) *Spank on bottom with rod* - "He that spareth the rod hateth his son [child]" (Proverbs 13:24). Love and correction go hand in hand. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15).

A rod is a stick or a switch. I believe there are at least two reasons God wants



us to use the rod and not our hand. It allows a parent time to "cool off" while he searches for the rod; and, the hand is used for gentle caressing, loving and guiding the child. It should not be used to hit or beat.

Some parents say, "But I'll hurt little Mary if I spank her with a rod." "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge. Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (Proverbs 23:12-14).

Parents who do not follow the one warning rule, but wait until they become angry to correct, are the cause of many of the "battered children" who are injured each year by their parents.

Open your Bible and show these verses to your child before you spank them (even if they are four years old and cannot read). Let them know that you would be disobeying God and injuring them by not spanking them for misbehavior after one warning.

My son Randy, age eleven, was overheard telling an eight-year-old girl who was on the floor throwing a tantrum: "Mari you better get up from there and go tell your parents to get a rod and beat that foolishness out of you, so your soul won't go to hell." In bewilderment, Mari stopped screaming, got up and left. Many Christian parents have not taken the time to look up the scriptures on discipline of children, much less show these scriptures to their children.

Have you ever watched parents when a child misbehaves? The father often just sits there in his chair totally uninterested, acting as though "that brat is not my child." The mother gets up and tries to correct the child. Mother is usually unsuccessful because she has no authority. The reason she does not have authority is because Father is shirking his responsibility of leadership in correction and discipline. Mother's words are only advice when Father does not take his position as the ruling parent. Father's role is to physically take charge of misbehavior of children. The husband is the ruler and leader.

Father, the next time your child misbehaves, you get up and take care of

the child. Let Mother be the one who sits in the chair. You'll find the child will not misbehave often and your wife will be more relaxed and easier to communicate with.

#### *VI. Express Love Immediately After Correction*

Let your child know you are not angry at him. Proper correction has removed the guilt from his spirit. Show him you too have forgiven him. Accept him back into the good graces of the family circle. Don't talk again about his former misbehavior. Correct discipline clears the conscience of the child and brings peace of mind. Many small children after a spanking have such a new peace of mind that they will fall into a deep, restful sleep. Peace and security at last!

#### *VII. Express Love Regularly on Three Levels*

*A. Touch* — Hold a child on your lap, wrestle with him, hug and kiss him. In counseling people who have problems as an adult, I often ask, "Can you remember your father or mother touching and loving you?" Most reply, "No."

*B. Speak love* — Julie age twelve years, had been caught again running away with two eighteen-year-old boys. Because I specialized as a lawyer in family relations, the Juvenile Court appointed me to represent Julie's interest. In conference I asked her: "Julie, why do you let those boys sexually abuse you?"

She paused a moment . . . and as tears began to stream down her face she replied softly, "Mr. Keene, at least they take me in their arms and say they love me."

I replied, "But they don't mean it, Julie. They really don't love you. They were only saying that to take advantage of you."

She thought for a moment and then said, "I know they didn't mean it . . . but at least they said I love you. I've never had anyone ever say that to me before."

I was choked. I couldn't hide my watering eyes. "Oh, Lord, help us love our children," I prayed.

Tell stories to your children. Discuss family affairs openly. Let your children become part of you, and you become part of them. When your son says, "Dad let's play checkers" don't put him off. Stop whatever you are doing (generally men are watching television ball games) and play with your son.

Tell your children the story of your romance — how you met and dated. The struggle in your early years will let them see you as people. My children still enjoy stories of the lean college years when we sharpened razor blades in a glass of water, heated only one room to save fuel, rode the motor scooter for adventure and slept in the automobile as we traveled.

*Attitudes* — We must develop attitudes of love and warmth. When you enter a house you can sense whether this attitude of love prevails. In many Christian homes this attitude of love is *absent*. When the husband and wife are not flowing together in love it will show in the children's behavior. If the parents are using the home for a refueling station *to get* rather than *to give*, children will discern these attitudes of selfishness. The attitude transplanted from parent to child takes place within the home. Are you selfish? Are you quick-tempered and intolerant? Are you a "getter" or a "giver"? Whatever you are tends to be transplanted to your child.

Attitudes of love are fruits of the Holy Spirit. Love is not a gift. Develop a freedom of giving and the Holy Spirit will provide the fruit of love in your home.

#### *VIII. Provide Good Food, Exercise, Rest and Small Work Projects*

Fatigue is a major cause of breakdown in the relationships with God, others and self. Fatigue and exhaustion produce a sense of indifference. A regular diet of hot dogs, hamburgers, potato chips, soft drinks, candy, white bread and other such convenient foods produce poor health and fatigue. Feed your family correctly with fresh fruits, meats, dark bread and regular balanced meals and you'll discover an improvement in the family relations. People will



get along better because they will feel better.

Encourage family exercise that will be fun such as hiking, bicycling, swimming, jogging, tennis, roller skating, bowling and other such things.

God rested after six days work. You must also rest. In fact, God is so concerned about fatigue and what it will do for breaking down relationships, he made it a commandment that you rest one day a week (see Exodus 20:8-10).

Small work projects allow a child to succeed and sense the feeling of accomplishment. When little George builds a dog house, he can mentally visualize himself constructing a large "people house" in the future. Small work projects help a child overcome fatigue and boredom.

#### *IX. Limit Television, Radio, Comic Books and Fast Music*

We do not have space to deal with this subject completely, except to say that when you limit a child in these areas, you must substitute other activities.

If you just limit and do not substitute you will have a bored and bitter child. Here are some of the things you might consider. A family night at the library, a day at the zoo, a family game and play night, or family story telling allowing the children to also express their stories. Try gardening, plant life, nature walks and hikes.

Most important of all substitutions is what we call "Super Saturday." This is the day when I take our daughter and spend all Saturday morning doing things we like to do together as father and daughter. She learns how to interact with her father. I learn how to relate to her. She has her father all to herself.

At the same time father and daughter are having "Super Saturday," my wife takes our son and they have "Super Saturday." The son learns how a woman thinks and acts. They are learning to relate to people on a one-to-one basis. The next "Super Saturday" we switch. I take our son and my wife takes our daughter.

"Super Saturday" about once each

month, is one of the most rewarding activities I could recommend starting at your house, to build open, free-flowing relationships between parent and child. You'll find yourself easily and without embarrassment discussing with your children such topics as God, Jesus, school, taxes, friends, sex, marriage, the Holy Spirit, children, parents and on and on.

*X. Fathers, Provoke Not Your Children to Wrath: but Bring Them Up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).*

It is the father's responsibility to see that his children are brought up in the ways of the Lord. God revealed the seriousness of the father-duty to me one evening when He told me to picture myself at Judgment Day. So I did. This is how I saw it.

I'm standing before our Lord Jesus with a smile on my face, ready to receive a "Thank you, job well done" compliment and my many spiritual rewards.

But instead the Lord speaks, "Leonard, where is Randy?"

I reply, "Randy who?"

Without hesitation, the Lord says, "The son Randy I gave to you on earth. Where is he?"

I stuttered a bit . . . and answered, "Oh, Lord, you see it's like this. Randy got rebellious and got off on drugs. Actually, Lord, he ran away. But Lord, don't worry. I went right on with your work, saving souls and handing out tracts."

The Lord said, "Where is Randy? You are personally accountable to me for Randy's salvation. I gave you this son. You must account to me for his spiritual life."

I have since had a new awareness of my responsibility to God to teach and show my children the ways of the Lord. By the way, Randy was saved at age five years, called into the ministry at age eight, and baptized in the Holy Spirit at age nine. We are believing that Judgment Day will be different than I visualized.

Here are four areas you should consider in teaching your children the ways of the Lord.

(1) Teach and train by your *example*. As husband and wife do not envy and provoke one another. Instead love, give and forgive one another.

(2) Teach and train by your *leadership* in prayer, reading the Bible regularly, belonging to and attending church and by fulfilling promises to your family. You are no better than your word. If you break promises it is difficult for a child to believe that God would not also break promises. If Dad doesn't lie, it is possible to believe that God doesn't lie.

(3) Teach and train by *not condemning*. Don't pick at and harass your child, as he may become discouraged and give up. It's easy to kill the spirit and desire of a child to live. Build his spirit; don't tear it down.

(4) *Lead him to a personal commitment and encounter with Jesus*. Do not rely on your wife, the preacher, the Sunday school teacher or anyone else to introduce your child to salvation. Allowing the Holy Spirit to lead, *you* tell him about salvation. Tell him he can get God's love, nature, peace and eternal life, and ask him if he wants to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord of his life. If he says "Yes" have him repeat this prayer after you.

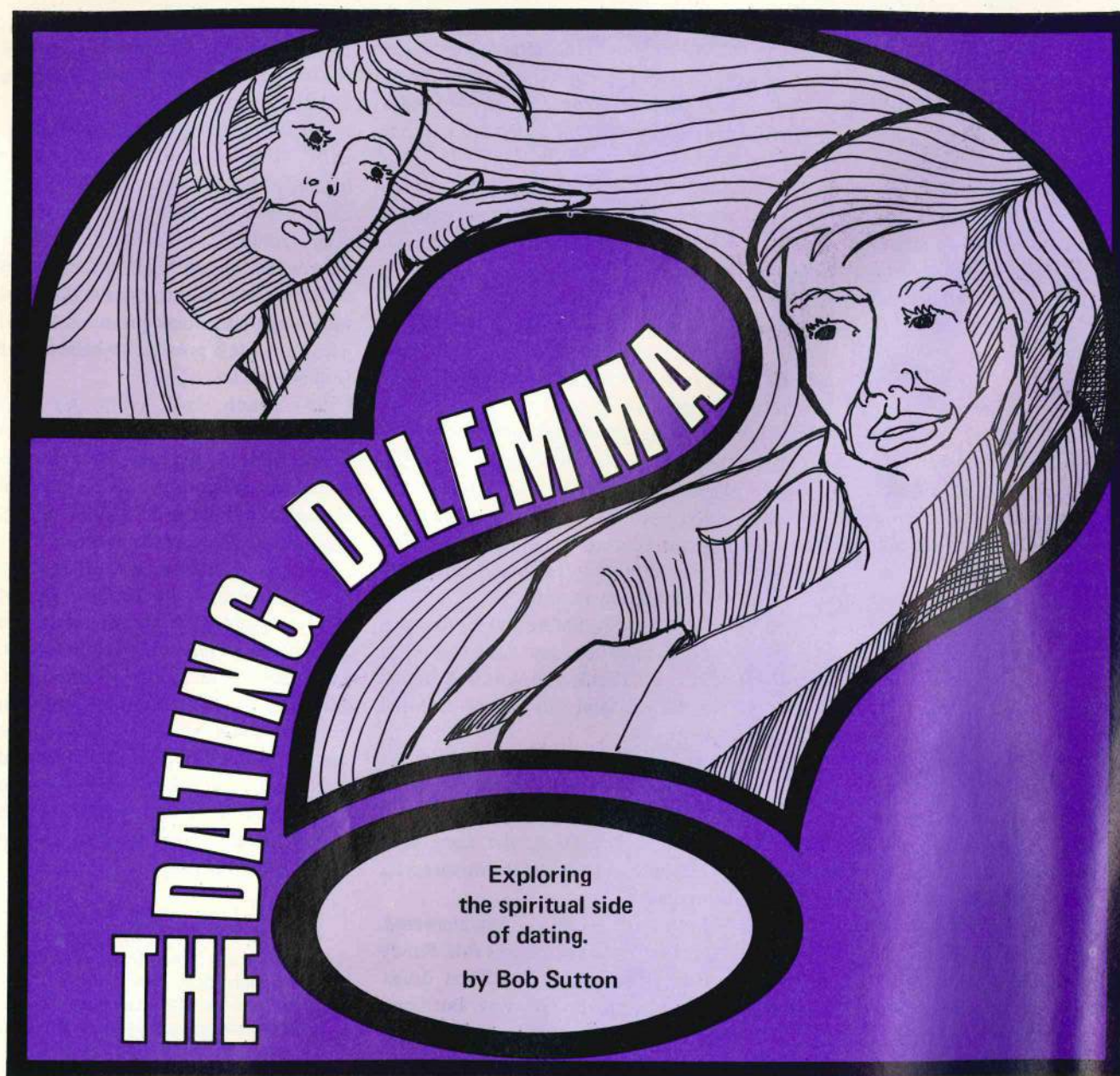
Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God; that you died for my sins; that you were raised from the dead. Jesus, right now I invite you into my spirit and my life as Lord and Savior. I renounce sin and Satan. I am sorry for my sins. Jesus, I accept you now as my Savior and as my new friend. Amen.

To sum it up, my advice is: Get your husband/wife relationship in order — the husband as head of the family and Jesus as head of the husband; make certain you are in a church body that has a good shepherd; study the Bible and allow the Holy Spirit to teach and apply His wisdom as you begin to flow in God's way; obey God's plan and you will see your parent/child relationship blossom into something beautiful. ♡

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Adapted excerpts from a book soon to be released entitled ". . . and They Shall Not Enjoy Them" by Leonard Keene, copyrighted 1975, Balanced Life Association, Fort Worth, Texas.





**F**or centuries society was fairly rigid about dating protocol. Every young man or woman who reached courting age knew exactly what conduct was expected of them and what their socially accepted limits were. But with the freedom of the twentieth century, the upheaval in traditional moral standards, and the changing understanding of marriage and family, modern young people have been thrown into a moral and philosophical dilemma that their parents and grandparents never knew. Whereas society formerly dictated

what was acceptable dating behavior, now the responsibility for conduct is dumped squarely in the lap of the young people themselves.

This presents a particular problem to young people who have lived with a free dating and moral standard before coming to the Lord and seeking to walk in His Kingdom. Because they lack a clear standard of conduct in social and dating relationships, they often have difficulty in this area, which in turn impedes their entire Christian walk. Normally, the standard that they lack should come from the home, but in cases where the parents are unsaved, or a young person is living

away from home, this standard must come from the Body of Christ.

With the counsel and help of the Body of Christ, a young person can determine the pattern for relationships with members of the opposite sex that is best suited to his own walk with the Lord, and then live according to that standard. Such discipline will develop a responsibility and maturity in this area that will be invaluable to the young person approaching adulthood and marriage.

One of the difficulties in drawing any conclusions about dating is the broad spectrum of ages in which it is carried on. We cannot expect the same



freedom and responsibility to be granted a 16-year-old that would be given a 26-year-old living away from home. No set of "dating rules" can develop the responsibility and maturity that this area of relationships demands. Therefore, the emphasis of this article is not to lay down rules, but rather to explore some principles or guidelines which can be applied to the many varied situations which exist.

## SOCIAL DATING

The term "dating" is a catch-all that covers a wide range of relationships all the way from casual time together between friends to pre-engagement. Somewhere between the age of twelve (younger in some areas) and sixteen, young people start "dating." They begin the social custom of having casual times to be together with members of the opposite sex. Other than the simple fact that this custom is a part of our society, there are three reasons generally offered for social or casual dating. First, for companionship with members of the opposite sex. Second, to learn to relate to members of the opposite sex. Third, to begin the process of selecting a mate.

Social or casual dating is different from what might be called "courting" or serious dating in that serious dating is usually limited to a single individual and carries with it some form of commitment, either to marriage or the consideration of marriage. Social dating is usually carried on with several individuals at one time, although exclusive relationships of going together, going steady and getting pinned do develop, usually for security or social status.

For the Christian seeking his or her full potential and happiness as an individual, it is very easy to be pressured into accepting dating as an inseparable part of reaching that fulfillment, simply because our society seems to regard dating that way. But seeking to walk in the Kingdom of God often forces us to change not only our conduct but our whole view of life. If indeed we Christians are an alien society under the rule of another

government, then we should not be surprised that the Sovereign of that Kingdom has ordained divine channels for fulfilling us individually and meeting the needs that the world seeks to meet by institutions such as dating.

As we look at the three reasons usually stated for social dating — companionship, learning to relate with members of the opposite sex, and mate selection — we find that God has provided for these three needs within the Body of Christ in such a way as to eliminate many of the pitfalls that accompany social dating.

Before going further, we must make it perfectly clear that this article is not meant to show that dating is "wrong" — Scripture never forbids it, either expressly or in principle. It is a matter which the individual must decide for himself. The purpose of this article, however, is to present an *alternative* to those who are looking for a satisfying way of developing proper relationship with members of the opposite sex.

The primary way in which a young person learns to relate to members of the opposite sex is in the home. Most warped understanding about sex and marriage can ultimately be traced back to a home where an unhealthy relationship existed between the parents. As a young person watches the way his parents relate to one another, and how the parent of the opposite sex relates to him, he learns the deepest and most lasting lessons on the meaning of sex relationships. A boy begins to understand what it is to be a man and how a man relates to a woman, not from dating or a sex education course, but by watching how his father relates to his mother. In the same manner, a girl will learn to relate to and view her relationship with men in the same way that her mother relates to and views her relationship with her husband. By the time a young person has started dating, he or she has already established, sometimes tragically, impressions of how to relate to members of the opposite sex.

Once these basic concepts have been developed, hopefully in a divinely-ordered home, entering and enjoying

relationships with members of the opposite sex can be most fully developed within the Body of Christ. Group situations eliminating the pressure and responsibility of solitary dates offer a freedom and covering for enjoying companionship with members of the opposite sex at whatever level is appropriate for the individual's age and maturity. Are we saying that a Christian should never go on a solitary date? Again, with no desire to dictate specific restrictions of conduct, we are seeking an alternative to what the world has established as the accepted way of relating to members of the opposite sex.

In the context of the Body of Christ, we see that within the normal routine of God's people being together in fellowship, in worship, in serving the community, in recreation, and in general everyday living, there are countless opportunities for single persons to interact with one another. The relationships that develop in this environment and context are distinctively marked with the stability, reality, honesty and covering that flow in the life of the Christian community.

## MATE SELECTION

Among older singles, especially women, the matter of finding a mate can easily become a continuous preoccupation. During the latter part of a single girl's senior year of college she becomes susceptible to a rather common disease known as "senior fever." Faced with the imminence of being thrust into a world where potential husbands are harder to meet, she begins to feel the pressure to "find one before it is too late." Christians, not immune to this malady, often fall into a game of mentally sizing up every member of the opposite sex they meet: "Maybe this is the one God has for me." Often, dating becomes a means of "being available for God's leading," with an accompanying tendency to feel that the more dates one has, the better the chances of running into "the right one." This attitude represents a lack of trust in God's faithfulness to bring the one He



has chosen in the proper time. God brought Eve to Adam; He didn't hide her and make Adam beat the bushes to find her.

Many Christian young people are beating the bushes rather than doing what Adam was doing — being where God wanted him, and doing what God had told him to do — and trustfully waiting for God to bring along a mate when He knows the time is right. The Holy Spirit is the perfect matchmaker. He is also well aware of the pressures and problems unique to single life. Jesus was single, too. Within the relaxed atmosphere of a Christian fellowship or community, the Holy Spirit will be free to move and draw together whom He wishes, as young people come together, not with the idea of being paired off for marriage, but with the desire to serve the Lord and be used for His purposes.

### THE LOVE TRAP

Many of the greatest heartbreaks and hazards of dating result from a misunderstanding of human make-up — its emotions and reactions. Somewhere our society developed the idea that the emotional experience of being "in love" is a sound basis for becoming serious about marriage. It is interesting to note that marriages in biblical times were based on less romantic foundations — politics, social status, economics, or convenience — and the divorce rate was substantially lower, as it still is today in most Eastern societies.

God's love, *agape*, begins with our will and ends with our emotions. Emotional love, *eros*, begins and centers in our feelings and tends to overrule our will. Being "in love" is usually *eros*, and although by definition this is sexual love, it is *not necessarily physical*. It is simply an expression of a deep desire to relate with a member of the opposite sex; a normal, healthy, and God-designed desire. However, it should not be misinterpreted as God's sanction on a relationship, or as the sole basis for marriage.

God has designed our wills, which

are to be subject to Him, to rule our intellects and our emotions. To allow our lives to be dictated by our emotions is to break divine order and invite deception and trouble. Emotions are God-given and to be enjoyed. More often than not, God's leading will be accompanied by the appropriate emotions — but they should *accompany* it, not overrule it.

Since God designed women as "feeling" beings as opposed to men, who tend to be more analytical, they are generally more susceptible to falling into the "love trap." God made the woman to be a responder to the love and initiative of a man, and she will often have a difficult time finding the mind of the Lord in her dating relationships if she goes strictly on feelings. A woman will inevitably begin to respond to a man she dates and eventually "fall in love" *because God made her that way*. For a woman to date a man and say, "Lord, don't let my feelings get involved if this relationship isn't of You," is like jumping off a cliff and saying, "Lord, don't let me hit the bottom." A woman responding to a man she is spending time with is a natural law, like the law of gravity, and to use her feelings as a form of divine guidance is to court disaster.

Strong emotional feelings for another person can be caused by many things other than the drawing of the Holy Spirit. Here are five of the most common:

*Someone showing affection to us.* Again, it is a natural law (Luke 6:32,33). It is natural for us to respond to love shown by another.

*Natural affinities.* We like back-packing and classical music. Good times spent together in activities we enjoy tend to build feelings of closeness and warmth. Personality similarities tend to do the same thing.

*Spiritual closeness and fellowship.* This is extremely important! There is something in the human make-up that causes us to become very open and receptive when in a spiritual atmosphere (worship, prayer, or fellowship). Not understanding this, many people have misinterpreted the

closeness and bond they feel together in deep spiritual fellowship as a God-given bond of love for their special relationship. Many sad cases of adultery or illicit relationships have occurred when a man and woman began to pray and fellowship together, even though they started out with sincere motives and a pure heart. Because of the spiritual closeness they experience, they believe that God has put His heavenly seal on their relationship. For this reason, single people should be cautious about the amount of time they spend together alone in prolonged prayer and worship.

*Sexual chemistry.* Often the pressure of single life and the normal desire for physical sexual relationships can become the motivating force in a relationship.

Christians then, should allow God, by the Holy Spirit, to guide relationships, and not make decisions based on their emotions alone.

### WHOM SHOULD WE DATE?

Paul stated very clearly in 2 Corinthians 6:14 that a Christian is not to be yoked together with a non-believer. Though most people try to apply this to marriage, a close examination of the passage reveals that marriage is not even remotely in the context of the passage. Being "yoked" is more likely to mean any relationship in which the non-believer can become a mixing or diluting influence upon our lives (1 Cor. 15:33). This consideration should be the first and most important criteria for judging any relationship — especially one that has the potential of emotional involvement.

Often the excuse is given, "If I go out with him, I will be able to witness to him and lead him to the Lord." God *has* used dating situations to win many young people to Himself, but when there are better alternatives available, the Christian would be wise not to stretch his luck in prolonged dating of a non-believer! Often, what happens in such situations is that the non-believer becomes the leading member of the relationship and the



Christian ends up either backsliding in his relationship with the Lord or becoming frustrated and confused. Evangelization is best accomplished in a group situation, not on a date. If a person is really hungry for the Lord, he will be willing to come to a fellowship to find Him.

A college girl in her senior year used to tell her Christian friends about the man she was planning to marry: "I know he's accepted Christ deep in his heart. He just hasn't had the opportunity we have to learn about Him. After we're married I just know God will bring him along." Some years later, after continued frustration because her lukewarm husband again and again put a damper on her hunger to move deeper into God, she remarked to one of those same friends, "I wonder if I made a mistake."

Before entering a relationship with a member of the opposite sex, a few simple questions will help a Christian discern the spiritual benefits or hazards that might be waiting in that relationship.

*First, is his/her commitment to the lordship of Christ the same as mine?* This is not an effort to judge anyone's maturity or sincerity; but a Christian with a hunger for God and a desire to serve Him at all costs would be laying out a welcome mat to trouble if he got involved with someone who will never desire more than to warm the back pew of a church for the rest of his life.

*Second, will our relationship cause us to grow spiritually?* God has purposed our relationship to be in some manner a revelation of Himself. It should be obvious to us and to those who come in contact with us that there is something of the love and beauty of Christ that is revealed in our relationship in a way that could not be revealed through either of us as individuals.

*Third, are we comfortable being open with our relationship before our parents or other mature Christians?* To submit a relationship to the authority over us and ask for examination is a good test of whether or not God is in it.

These three safeguards will usually

narrow the field considerably, but that is what they are designed to do. They will help eliminate heartbreaks, blind alleys, and wasted time. And for a relationship that grows under these guidelines, there will be the freedom to be open and to enjoy each other without fear or apprehension. There will be the freedom to candidly discuss each other's feelings and grow in God's purpose together.

Young Christians should be especially strict with themselves in their dating relationships during the first year of their walk with the Lord. When young people come out of the world their spiritual fiber is broken down from living by a standard of ethics and conduct that is different than that of the Kingdom of God. Having been "programmed" to react and think by that standard makes it very difficult to suddenly "change gears" and begin to react and discern as a child of God. This is one reason immature Christians are so often deceived by different emotional experiences — they are reacting by an old set of standards.

To help overcome this, a period of strict discipline will help to write a new set of principles on their hearts, rebuilding the spiritual fiber to react and perceive according to God's pattern for relationships.

### COVERING IN A RELATIONSHIP

Because of the ease with which feelings and emotions can be misinterpreted as forms of guidance, there is a need for covering in any serious dating relationship. This does not mean a chaperon who will scrutinize every move a couple makes, but rather a parent or shepherd who will be able to interpret what God is saying in that relationship. Especially for a Christian girl, there can be a great joy and comfort in knowing that she is not carrying the awesome burden alone of hearing from God to determine whether her dating relationships are according to His will.

A covering can be a protection and a blessing, not only in helping to hear from God, but also in helping to mold

the relationship. Many marriage problems are caused by situations that were not handled properly while the couple was dating. If during this time, when problems are less intense and the responsibility not as great, a couple can be shown how to function in their God-given roles toward each other, then many painful and frustrating situations can be avoided in their married life.

One of the unusual marriage situations that has begun to occur more frequently in recent years is the "we-knew-it-was-God-and-got-married-in-six-weeks" rush. The zeal that often arises during times when the Spirit of the Lord is working in their lives frequently causes young Christians to begin to get leadings about their relationships with each other, and in a moment of spiritual excitement, they jump into a quick marriage. Often there are tragic results, because they mistook a rush of spiritual zeal for the voice of the Lord, or they rushed their application of what God was saying and did in six weeks what God wanted done in a year. Too many young people have used quick marriage as an out for bad home situations, sexual problems, personal frustrations or the pressures of being single.

There are, of course, valid instances of God arranging and ordaining quick marriages. But most people fail to recognize two important factors usually present in most of these instances. First, both parties are usually fairly mature in their walk with God and have had some experience in knowing and discerning His voice. Secondly, they are usually a part of a body of believers who are also mature enough to discern the mind of the Lord in a situation. It is usually with this body's covering, agreement and blessing that the couple finally makes the decision to get married. One safeguard should always be kept uppermost in such situations: *If it is really God, it will wait!* If a couple has to wait six months or longer to be sure that they are hearing from God, it is a short investment to make in order to avoid years of pain



and regret because of a hasty decision.

## SEX IN DATING

The big question in sex and dating is "how far, how soon?" Many young people who lived promiscuous lives before they came to the Lord find that, having been opened up in this area, it is particularly difficult to walk pure in their relationships with each other. God designed sex to be enjoyable and fulfilling when entered into in the protective bonds that He has established for it. It is a hard and fast law in Scripture, both expressly and by principle, that sex is to be experienced in marriage. We cannot go into a lengthy discussion, but a few scriptures where God speaks plainly on the subject should be sufficient: 1 Corinthians 6:9,13,15-20; 7:1-9,36,37; and Hebrews 13:4.

One would think that every Christian must be aware that sex is reserved for marriage, yet many couples who know better have been deceived into believing that God made an exception for their case, and thus they entered into sexual relations with tragic results.

For most people, however, the question is not one of whether or not to have sexual intercourse before marriage, but how far to go in necking and petting. Herbert J. Miles in his book, *Sexual Understanding Before Marriage*, defines necking as "kissing and embracing" and petting as "physical contact for the purpose of sexual stimulation." Many young people who would never dream of parking in a car someplace, engage in what one college worker called "the game of hands"; that is, having their hands every place it is "legal" under the guise of friendly squeezes and pats, yet with the underlying motive of sexual stimulation. The "brotherly" embracing of "sisters" in religious circles also begins to fall under the classification of petting when this is engaged in for the purpose of sexual stimulation.

For most couples the problem is a little deeper than friendly pats and squeezes. It often goes to the point of

deep petting and genital contact short of intercourse, with the couple honestly believing that they have maintained the scriptural command of not having sexual relations before marriage. Miles also points out in his book that petting is part of nature's plan for arousal which is designed to lead to intercourse. To engage in petting before marriage will produce many of the same emotional and spiritual effects as going all the way in intercourse. When a couple has entered into a process that is part of sexual intercourse, they have, as far as their psychological and spiritual beings are concerned, had intercourse. This, of course, is not to say that once a couple has been involved in heavy petting that they might as well go ahead and have intercourse because they have been there emotionally and psychologically. There is still a strong scriptural barrier around the act of sexual intercourse; and in itself, the act of intercourse has psychological, spiritual and emotional effects beyond that of petting.

There are five reasons why Christians should not get involved in petting before marriage:

First, it is part of a total sex plan that God ordained to be kept inside the marriage bonds.

Second, it usually tends to become a preoccupation that robs the Christian of the spiritual, emotional and intellectual growth that is needed in the relationship.

Third, it leads to guilt, spiritual drain, and frustration that makes living a victorious life in Christ almost impossible.

Fourth, it is dangerous. It is like lighting a fuse on a fire cracker and seeing how far you can let it burn before it goes off. A couple opens themselves to the possibility of going beyond their intended stopping point and having sexual intercourse.

Fifth, there is a loss of respect for each other that will dilute the relationship and generate problems, not only in the dating relationship, but later in marriage.

Some couples that are engaged or close to marriage deceive themselves by thinking that it is all right to go ahead and begin having sexual relations. Quite frequently, however, this is the place where problems in their relationship start, since all five of the above problems will still be present, no matter how close the couple is to marriage.

The years prior to marriage when relationships are being formed with members of the opposite sex can either be some of the most enjoyable and spiritually fruitful, or some of the most frustrating and wasted years that one can experience. In the long run, it is a person's commitment to the lordship of Christ that will determine the degree of blessing, learning, and preparation that can be encountered in these significant years. ♣

## NEW WINE IN SPANISH

We are happy to announce that *New Wine* Magazine is now being published in Spanish under the title *Vino Nuevo*. Through the efforts of Hugo Zelaya and the brethren at the Center for Christian Development (Centro Para Desarrollo Cristiano) in San José, Costa Rica, the teaching ministry of *New Wine* is now extended to our Spanish-speaking friends all over the world.

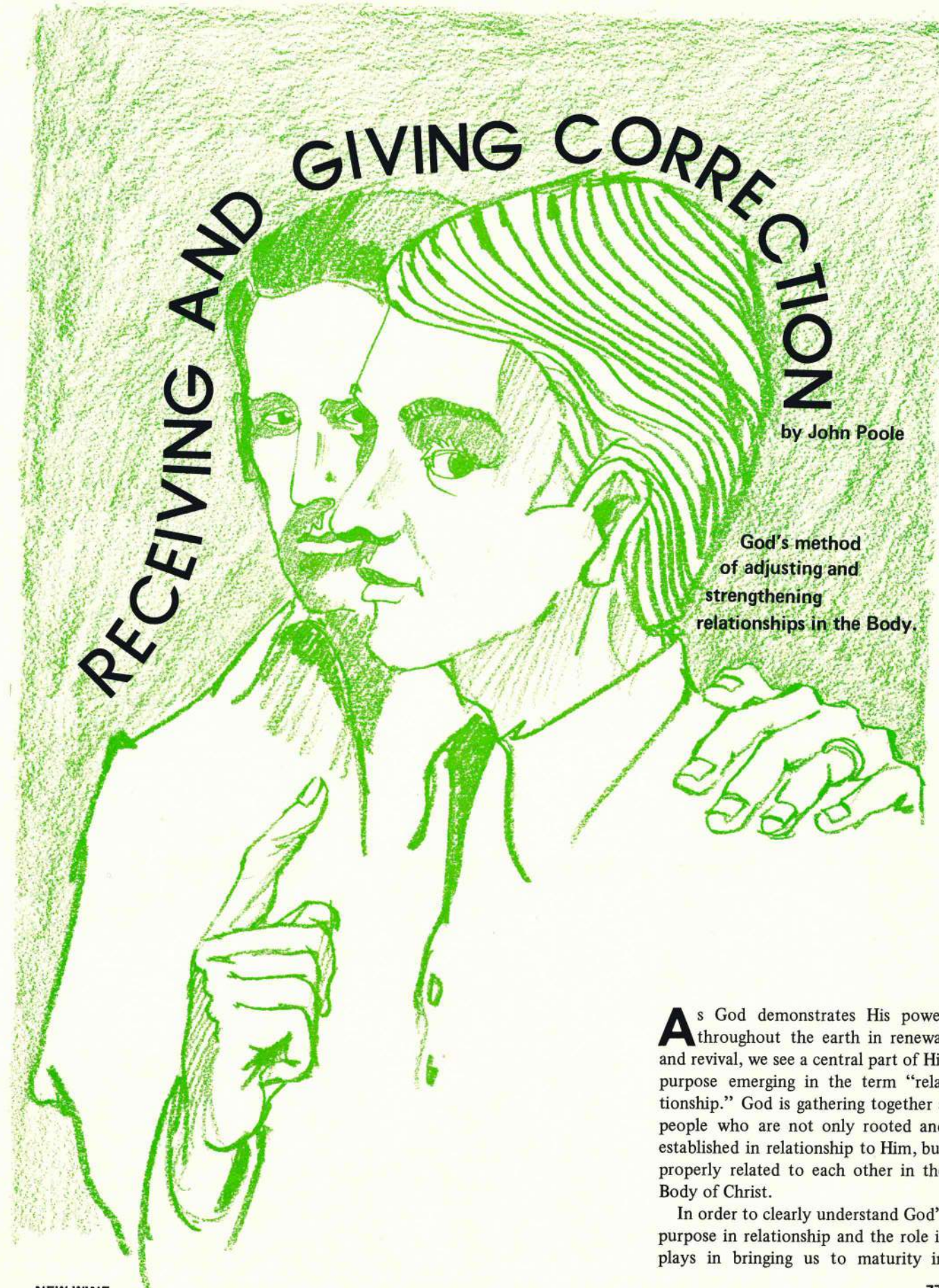
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**VINO NUEVO**  
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DECEMBER 1975





# RECEIVING AND GIVING CORRECTION

by John Poole

God's method  
of adjusting and  
strengthening  
relationships in the Body.

**A**s God demonstrates His power throughout the earth in renewal and revival, we see a central part of His purpose emerging in the term "relationship." God is gathering together a people who are not only rooted and established in relationship to Him, but properly related to each other in the Body of Christ.

In order to clearly understand God's purpose in relationship and the role it plays in bringing us to maturity in



Christ, we want to retrace the progression of teaching through our first two articles as it leads into our eventual goal — *being adjusted by one another*.

In Galatians 1:3 we saw that in the purpose of God, Jesus died to save us from our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age. In Colossians 1:13, we saw that God has accomplished this, delivering us out of the domain of darkness and transferring us into the Kingdom of His dear Son. But the problem that faces us in Romans 12:1,2 is that even though we have been delivered, we must not allow the influence of that from which we have been delivered to press us into its mold, but rather be conformed to the image of Christ. Now, the point to be emphasized is that God has designed us as new creation people to be incapable of escaping the influences of this present world *alone*. That is why God has called forth a many-membered Body, not just a group of individuals gathered in the same place at the same time, but rather, *a people* who are being knit together by the Holy Spirit.

In recognizing our need for a body of people who can help us to grow up in the Lord, we must face the fact that we have overestimated the power of the will of a regenerate person. First of all, we have taken for granted that a regenerate man possesses in some intuitive sense, all the knowledge that he needs to grow up and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. But we are discovering that just because you are born again does not mean that you automatically know what you are to do as a Christian.

Our second mistake in overestimating the power of the will of a regenerate person is taking for granted that because a person *knows* he will *do*; that because a person has knowledge, he will act on it. Over and over again, I discover in my life as an individual Christian, that no matter how much I know and how badly I may want to walk in all that I know, I cannot trust myself to actually do it. This is the basis for our need for the Body and for relationship. We need to

be related to people who will help us, either by encouragement or adjustment, to face up to the fact that we only possess what we actually walk in day by day.

Today we are very much in danger of becoming the most overinformed, underactivated generation of Christians that has ever been. Because of the available means of communication — books, tapes, television series, radio programs — there is more information available to people than ever before in history. The subtle danger is to think that because we have the knowledge, that we possess the truth, when we really don't.

What we eventually realize is that in order to start to *walk* in what we know, we have to somehow be related to people who will confront us with the gap between our information and our walk. God wants to bring us into this realm of fellowship. It is essential and necessary for each of us. We need to be in a relationship with people where we can receive the specific encouragement and adjustment we need to continue on as believers. That only comes in a relationship where you truly know people, and you know how to encourage them when they are weak or downhearted or depressed.

### THE NEED FOR ADJUSTMENT

Now, the specific area that we want to deal with in this article is a rather touchy and difficult area, yet an essential one for each of us in the fulfillment of God's purpose for the Body. It is the whole matter of learning how to admonish or adjust one another in the Lord. It is a hard thing to admit that I need the Holy Spirit working through other people to help me arrive at what God wants me to be. Deep inside, I really want to think that "me and Jesus" can really make it on our own, and that given enough time, I could grow spiritually by myself. But sooner or later, each of us must come to the end of ourselves. Norman Grubb says that you really don't start to make spiritual progress until you have become more miserable as a Christian than you were as an

unbeliever. That kind of pressure causes us to examine ourselves and admit our need for help and correction.

Some time ago, I read a little article published in *World Vision Magazine* about a renewal of the Holy Spirit that has been going on in East Africa for some thirty-seven years, and what struck me was the permanence and staying power of this particular move of God. In this article, eight reasons were outlined as to why the writer felt that this visitation of the Spirit had been so powerful and so long-lasting. Two of those reasons were especially interesting to me, and I want to share them as an introduction to what I want to give from the Scriptures. According to the writer, who has observed the renewal first hand, one of the first reasons the renewal has gone on for thirty-seven years is that "... there has been a *self-imposed* ruthlessness with any attitudes, habits, and actions that are not thoroughly Christian." But the follow-up to that point is: "There is a tremendous honesty linked with love between each person and his neighbor." Here are the two things: (1) an honesty and a ruthlessness with yourself: "I'm going to stop babying myself and start dealing honestly with myself," and (2) a relationship of honesty linked with love between people and their neighbor. With that background, let's turn to the book of Proverbs and see what the Scriptures say about the life that comes from a relationship with other Christians in which there is the giving and receiving of admonishment, reproof, correction, and adjustment.

Proverbs 10:17: "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth." Before we go any further, let's settle one primary issue. The Word of God is accurate and trustworthy. What it says will happen. When God says, "He who forsakes reproof goes astray," that is exactly what it means — not just sometimes, but *all* the time. When anyone forsakes reproof, he will go astray!

Proverbs 12:1: "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish



[stupid].” Now, I didn’t say that — Solomon did. He who hates reproof is stupid. Proverbs 13:10: “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.” In other words, presuming that I don’t need reproof only causes me to start striving with people. But if I accept reproof, then I get wisdom. Proverbs 13:18: “. . . he that regardeth reproof shall be honored”; Proverbs 15:5: “. . . he that regardeth reproof is prudent”; 15:10: “. . . he that hateth reproof shall die”; 15:31 (NAS): “he whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise”; 15:32 (NAS) “he who listens to reproof acquires understanding”; Proverbs 19:20 (NAS): “Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days.”

Now I haven’t extracted one questionable scripture and given it some questionable interpretation. It is obvious that the Scriptures give abundant evidence that receiving correction and reproof is essential to our maturing in Jesus Christ. The matter of allowing ourselves to be adjusted by fellow believers and to have the truth spoken in love to us becomes essential for our growth and development. If you forsake it, you go astray; if you hate it, you are stupid; if you presume you don’t need it, you will end up in strife; if you hate it, you will die. But if you receive it, there will be wisdom and honor; you will be prudent, you will come into knowledge, and you will be on the path of life. That is the kind of choice we face.

There are many other scriptures on this topic, and here is one that takes a lot of faith to believe. Proverbs 27:5,6: “Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” I thank the Lord from the depths of my heart for friends who are faithful enough to wound me when I need it. I’m not saying that it’s easy or that I like it; it’s a hard thing to realize that the wounds of a friend are faithful. It is hard to realize that the people you need the most are not the ones that continually smother you with kisses, but the ones that tell you

the truth. Now, you don’t need a whole lot of friends like that, but you do need some. There are some people that God puts in the Body to relate you to that are there for encouragement. Others God relates you to are there to wound you faithfully, and God knows exactly who to pick to do it. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

### SHARPENING EACH OTHER

Look also at Proverbs 27:17 (NAS): “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” That is a beautiful scripture. It is God’s intent that in our relationships with each other, we sharpen each other. There is a prophecy that says, “Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument . . .” (Is. 41:15). God’s desire is for people to sharpen each other. Unfortunately, instead of iron sharpening iron, our relationships for the most part have been more like jello sharpening jello. “Thank you for your message, brother. Oh, your prophecy was just wonderful. It’s so nice to love each other.” Loving relationships are nice, but we aren’t sharpened by them until we move into a measure of honesty in our relationships.

I’ll tell you, it was a scary thing the first time I sat down with my brethren in Philadelphia and said, “Listen — when we come together, I expect there to be enough liberty and freedom among us that when a brother or elder gives a prophetic word that is off, or a guy gets to preaching, and misses the mark, that he should hear about it. I expect us to be able to minister to one another in such a way that we will sharpen one another, that there will be a freedom in the communication of what is essential to the sharpening of our ministries and our lives.” God’s purpose is that we be like iron sharpening iron.

Psalms 141:3,4 (NAS) is one of David’s prayers: “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who do iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies.” He is praying that God

would help him with his mouth and with his heart. Then comes verse 5: “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me.” How many of *you* have ever prayed that? This must have been one of David’s really spiritual times — he must have really been deep on this occasion. “Let the righteous smite me in kindness [the margin says ‘lovingly’]. It is oil upon the head; do not let my head refuse it . . .” David knew that our trouble in accepting or rejecting reproof is right here in the head. We can almost hear David reasoning with himself: “If I will accept reproof, it is like oil upon my head. Now Lord, don’t let my head refuse it. Don’t let me start thinking, ‘I wonder if this brother really loves me or if he is walking in what he’s telling me about.’” Once we start thinking about it, we can find some reason to reject reproof. “His family’s not in order; his kids are rascals; I’m not sure he pays his tithes.” We can find some excuse for not submitting to it. David was saying, “Lord, don’t let me start thinking about it; don’t let my head refuse it.”

The statement in Proverbs 17:10 (NAS) is: “A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.” God says that if you can come to a place of understanding, you can learn more with one rebuke than with one hundred blows of chastening, and I want to be a candidate for that. Even though it is often painful and uncomfortable to be reproved, it is even more painful to be chastened. I think we all want to reach that point of understanding where we willingly accept correction, receiving it as God’s method of sharpening us for His purposes.

I want to tell you something: the eyes of all the religious world are now on the Charismatic Movement, and they are not just looking for a recovery of signs and wonders. They are looking to see if there can be produced in this company, a disciplined, mature people who walk day by day in the light of the Lord, loving one another, rebuking and reproving one another in order to grow up into



full knowledge of the Son of God. And they have every right to expect this to come, if we truly have what we say we have. They will not be impressed forever with the spontaneity of our joy or our enthusiasm. Even though it is impressive, they need to know that balancing the enthusiasm are deep commitments of individuals to individuals. They need to see communities and fellowships growing in such a way as to produce, by the power of the Holy Spirit, solid, grounded, established men and women who are ready to face whatever world situation confronts them.

### GIVING REPROOF

I have tried to show you scriptural reasons why you should be open to receiving reproof. Now I would like to close by giving some counsel and advice on how to *give* reproof, because frequently this whole matter has previously been shut off to many because people have not known how to give reproof. A man came up to me after I had given a message similar to this and said, "I've been waiting to hear a message like that for ten years. There are a few people in this church that I've had on my heart for ten years, and I thank you, brother, that you have just released me to straighten them out!" (And usually the first one on the list is the pastor.)

First of all, if Christians are to be involved in giving reproof, *you must not give until you are willing to receive!* If you are not willing to receive, you are not a qualified person to give. Now, *don't take that lightly.* Before you start giving, do some receiving to see if you can take it. Have a few trial runs. Let the Lord turn some folks loose on you to reprove *you* for awhile. He will! See if you can be a receiver. Then, if you find you can receive, you are ready to do some giving.

The second thing about giving reproof is that very often you will see in others things that are a reflection of yourself. Before you go to take the speck out of your brother's eye, make sure you have dealt with the log in your own eye. People ask, "Did Jesus

have a sense of humor?" If ever there was a passage filled with humor it is this one: the ridiculousness of a guy going over to help his brother with a tiny little speck, while a board is sticking out of his own eye. Remember that very often you are sensitive to what you see in other people simply because it is right there in you. Before you do anything, make sure you have dealt with your own problem in that area.

One of the ways God uses other people is to help us to see in *them* the things that He wants to deal with in *us*. I have heard David Edwards, one of our dear friends, say over and over again, that there was a reason why Jacob went down to Laban's house. There was only one person in the world, David says, that could out-Jacob Jacob, and that was Laban. Jacob, a deceiver and a crook, ran into a character who out-crooked him all the way around. Jacob *met* Jacob in Laban, and he saw himself for what he was.

Third, Proverbs 26:17 is a scripture that merits our consideration, but I want to preface it with this statement: Only deal in the area of reproof with people to whom God has related you. It is not some kind of general ministry where you walk through the entire Body of Christ reproving people.

"What's your ministry, brother?"

"Oh, I'm a reprover. Anybody around here need help? Your dress is too short. You there, your hair is too long . . . just functioning in my ministry."

Proverbs 26:17 (NAS) says: "Like one who takes the dog by the ears is he who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him." In other words, keep your nose out of what isn't your business. One of the things that is going to make people hungry to be related is when they see that in relationship, you are sharpened in a way that you are not sharpened when you are not related. If you are not related and joined by God to other members of the Body of Christ in some specific way, then you miss the opportunity of being sharpened.

Number four is in Ephesians 4:15:

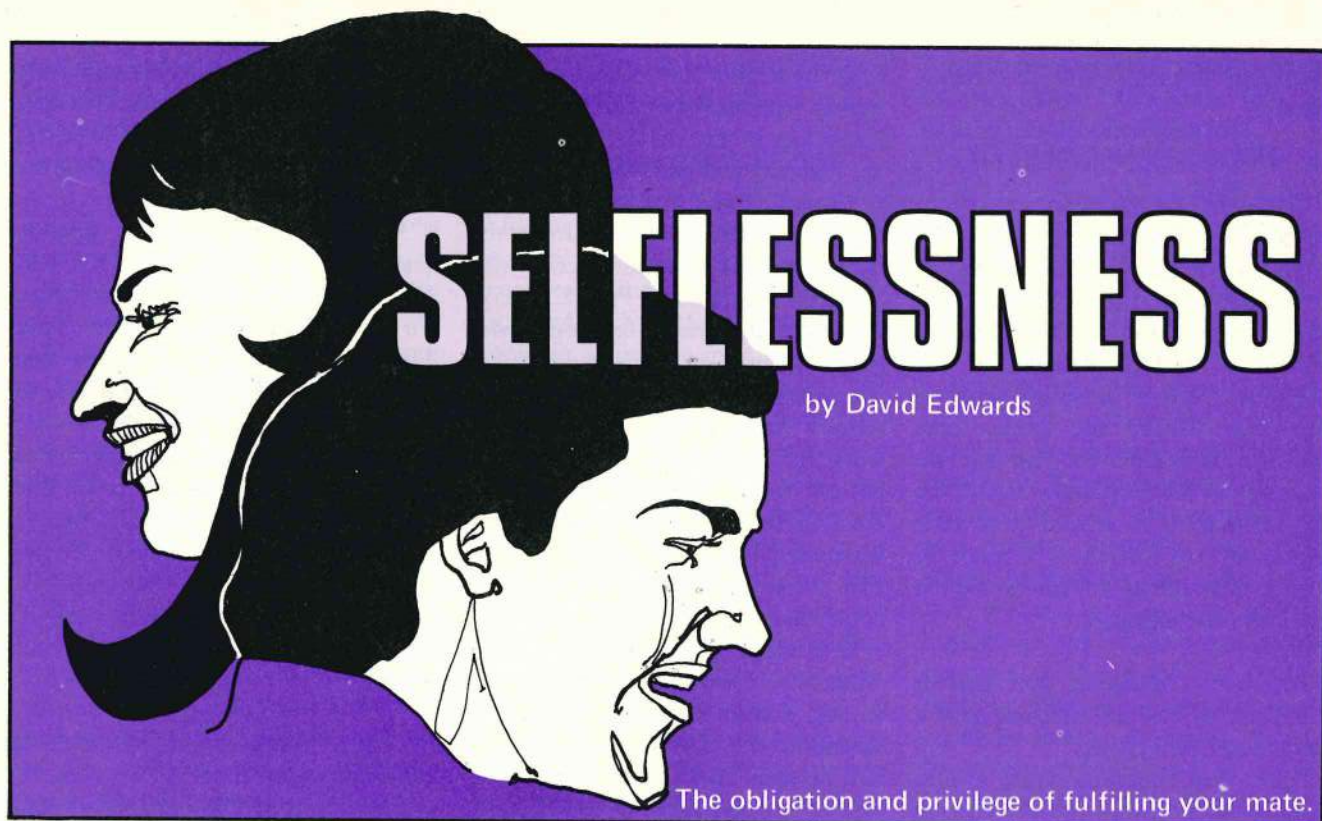
" . . . speaking the truth in love." *All reproof must be in love.* Nothing is accomplished without it. Reproof will never produce what it is intended to unless it is in love. Let me also emphasize that the heavier the area of reproof, the more certain you must be that its intensity is matched by the depth of your love for that individual. Don't try to put a heavy reproof on someone that you have not proven that you love. I know without question that I could go to certain brothers in our assembly and lay on them whatever was necessary, no matter how heavy. They know that I love them by my response to them when they were in trouble, because when they needed me I was there, even if it was three or four in the morning. Because they know that I love them, I can lay a word on them. But if you try that with someone that you haven't demonstrated your love for, you will probably get a smack in the nose. At best, it won't profit. Make sure that the scale is balanced: speak the truth in love. That is why David said, "Let the righteous reprove me lovingly." Reproof is hard enough to take — it will never be received if it's not in love.

Number five: Learn how to reprove in wisdom. Proverbs 25:12 (NAS) says, "Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise reprover to a listening ear." A wise reprover will know how to correct. Paul was a wise reprover. Did you ever notice how Paul set people up to be reprovved? He was a master at it. When he wrote his letter to reprove the Corinthians, he didn't say: "Dear Corinthians, it has been reported to me that you are in a backslidden state. You are lukewarm, and Revelation says that lukewarm Christians will be spewed out of God's mouth." Instead, Paul wrote: "Oh Corinthians, there's no church like you. All the gifts are functioning in your church. Every time I think of you, I get blessed . . ." And *then* he let them have it.

The goal of a wise reprover should be to counsel in a way that brings

(continued on page 85)





**T**here is no lack of information either in the marketplace or in any other area of current media on the subject of love, sex and marriage. But not all approaches present the gospel of a happy marriage relationship. I hope to add this dimension to your thinking, even as I try to interject it into every marriage ceremony I am called upon to perform.

When a man and a woman stand in the presence of a duly appointed representative who is vested with the authority to declare them "one," they usually take that stand fairly well acquainted with the consequences. At the time, the consequences may be tinted from wearing rose-colored glasses. The time soon comes however when the glasses are removed and they begin to become acquainted with formerly unrevealed aspects of each other.

As I say to the couple, "Here are four things which will contribute in some degree to your developing relationships," the advice may sound simple. But it is surprising how easy it becomes to overlook these four basic

suggestions: Walk hand in hand; see eye to eye; talk face to face; kneel side by side.

Within marriage, there is a longing for a personal union, of which sexual union is only a part. When both partners can say, "Honey, I want nothing more out of life than your pleasure, fulfilment and satisfaction," then they are on the way to an ideal marriage.

Many of the difficulties that arise and come to the attention of those of us who have assumed a measure of responsibility in solving the difficulties which arise after the "I do's" are sealed, do not necessarily arise out of illicit or biblically forbidden relationships. They may stem from fear, ignorance (not foolish ignorance, but uninstructed ignorance), guilt or

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incorrect instruction. There are frustrations that present themselves within marriage that can prove crippling emotionally, and to some extent, mentally and spiritually. Closing our eyes won't make the problems go away.

Both marriage partners have responsibilities in the area of sex — it comes as part of the package deal called matrimony. To succeed in the business world and fail in the bedroom is to fail. To succeed in the kitchen and to fail in bed is to fail. To succeed in the pulpit and to fail in the bedroom is to fail. Even to be a disciplinarian of one's children and a confidant of one's wife, but not to be her lover, is to fail. Each partner is obliged to see to it that the other finds sexual fulfillment in their relationships.

I have a suspicion that this kind of failure is bound to show sooner or later in some aberration. It might not show itself in sexual aberration; it may take other avenues. However, maladjustment in the husband/wife relationship carries with it a penalty — just as maladjustment in any other portion of the intricate and inspired



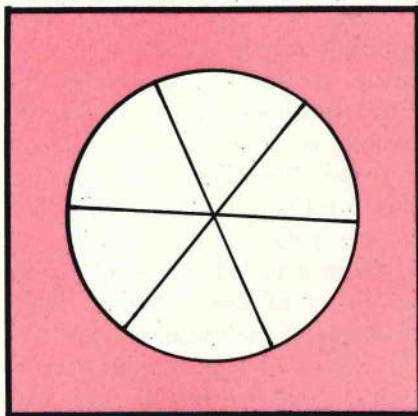
machinery of man's make-up carries a penalty.

### SEX — AS WAS INTENDED

All that God created was pronounced by Him as being "good." We shall proceed on His word of commendation. Therefore, I would like to suggest that sex is (1) designed by God; (2) it is designed to be desirable; (3) it is defended throughout the Bible; and (4) in some instances, it is depraved. The first two descriptions are scripturally sound; the third is evident to anyone who reads the Bible; the fourth is a result of man's mishandling of his God-given privileges and pleasures.

*First, sex is designed. See Genesis 1:27, 28, 31. We are designed after a pattern of God's choice.*

The first question that a new mother asks, "What is it?" usually comes even before, "Is it all right?" The most significant thing about a person is the answer that the doctor gives to that first "mother" question. There is nothing else which is going to so affect one for the rest of his/her existence than his/her sex. This difference shapes and colors every facet of the new human life.



Think of life as this circle. Let us arbitrarily divide it into various segments: physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual. However, if you want to draw a sexual segment, you are making a mistake — for sex is not a part of the pie, sex is the filling in the pie. The answer to the mother's question will reflect itself in all segments. Sex ought not to be regarded as a "segment"; rather it is

what undergirds the whole of these various sections. I continue to be awed in the face of the wonder of design in our sexuality and parenthood.

When God said that it was *not good* that man should be alone, this was the only part of His creation which He saw and did not pronounce "good." Everything else that He looked upon was good. When God remarked on the inappropriateness of solitude or solitary existence as a fitting framework for man's potential, it did not detract from the significance of His creation. In fact, it underlines it. There was such potential created within man that there was more in him than he could realize as long as he was alone.

God made woman out of a rib, a word more correctly translated "side," so that woman is man's other side. As Adam looked at Eve and appraised her, he said, "Here is self of my self." Woman is man's apposite, as well as his opposite. As Adam commented on this helpmeet which God had given him, his response, paraphrased in a colloquialism, might have been, "Wow!"

*Secondly, sex is not only designed, but it is designed to be desirable.*

God didn't make sex objectionable. It is not an accommodation to the fall or an afterthought. In all probability, there may have been some physiological repercussions in consequence of the fall, but sexuality is not one of them. Sex ought not to be merely tolerated or submitted to. It should be delighted in.

It is the humiliation of woman that she was made for man. It is the glory of woman that only woman can make man what he was intended to be.

It is the humiliation of man that he needs woman to be all that he was intended to be. It is the glory of man that God has made woman to make man all that he was intended to be.

"And they were both naked and they were not ashamed." There is no shame in the intimate relations of marriage. Nowhere does the Scripture teach that husbands or wives need to feel humiliated by their association. There are times when a man might humble a woman in his sexual

relations with her. This is a departure from what God intended. If God's intentions are properly understood, man will realize that he is to glory the woman in their relationship.

"And God said they two shall be one flesh." Some people teach that this Scripture is only fulfilled when the husband and wife have offspring. . . . that they become one flesh in their children. I would like to suggest that it is only as they become one, that the offspring results. It is one and one who make two. It is not one and one, plus one, that makes two. *It is in the joining that they become one person.* Children are the issue of marriage, not the occasion for it. Children are the fruit of marriage, not the root of it.

*We also mentioned that sex is defended in the Bible.*

Throughout Scripture we find references to problems and solutions . . . joys and sorrows . . . all of these inherent in the marital sphere. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 7, we find the apostle Paul discussing some of the problems that arose in one of the churches under his care. It is apparent that problems were complex in those days, even as they are today. It is encouraging to know that the believers then turned to their spiritual leaders for guidance.

We might begin by saying that only in the narrowest sense, and that as a temporary measure, do the Scriptures teach anywhere the superiority of the celibate state over the married. Paul does express a desire that others might consider the celibate state, even as he did; but he acknowledges the fact that "every man has his proper gift."

Paul covered many pertinent questions in his answers to the Corinthians. Among them were: Should the unmarried marry? Is divorce permitted when one of the partners becomes a believer? If one partner becomes converted, should relations continue? Should Christian fathers give their daughters in marriage? May a Christian widow remarry? Included in the answers is the fact that relations in marriage are



not the conferring of a favor, but the recognition of an obligation. Sexual intercourse should never be withheld as punishment; nor given as reward.

*Finally, we said that sex became depraved.*

I believe that our sexual experience and our sexuality are parts of our personalities — and the whole of our personalities have been affected by the fall. Some Christians seem to think that man's personality, as affected by the fall, is lacking something; and that in redemption that missing part is added. But I tend to think that the whole of man was affected by the fall, and the whole of man is redeemed.

Some Christian approaches maximize one part, to the minimizing of another part. They stress the soul and spirit . . . and consider the body as just something you wash once a week, whether it needs it or not . . . you feed it occasionally . . . it really is immaterial. My approach is that all of me is all I've got. I think my body is to be redeemed — not disparaged. Redemption affects the whole man — including his sexuality.

Our bodies are divinely made and God-glorifying. They are not necessarily carnal. Carnal and corporeal are not to be equated. Care should be taken that we do not make the mistake of equating "flesh" — when used in a judgmental sense in the Scriptures — with corporeality. This is a common error. The body is good and as long as expressions of mutual affection between the partners are self-sacrificing and intended to lead to the sexual fulfillment and pleasure of the other, they are not to be frowned upon or disapproved.

God was also aware of the ramifications in the two becoming one flesh. Scripture does not recognize non-sexual marriage. A view of marriage which would interpret it as being non-sexual is not an enlightened or redemptive view of marriage. It is a departure from God's design. He designed man and woman in such a way that they get pleasure out of their relationships. Orgasm and climax are intended. Man and wife are to be inter-

dependent. We are to understand each other's needs and obligations.

## NEEDS AND OBLIGATIONS

Returning our thoughts to the creation account, when God made creatures other than humans, He cataloged each portion as good. But when He made man male and female, He said that it was very good. The only thing that is added between good and very good is the delineation between male and female. God was well aware of His created design. He also knew they were intended to be interdependent. They were to understand each other's needs and the obligations involved in their differences. This is a vital part of marriage.

Marriage is intended to be organismic, whereas we are tempted to make it orgasmic. What does this statement mean? (1) Marriage is intended to be organismic, where the sections of the organism exist for the benefit of the other. They have no other purpose for existence other than the benefit of the other. (2) In our culture, at the present moment, we are under pressure to regard marriage, and the relationship of husbands and wives, as being orgasmic — with a view to organismic. The biblical basis is that marriage is organismic, with a view to its becoming orgasmic.

It is the biblical position that both husbands and wives have these obligations and privileges. Paul touched on three aspects of this truth in his Corinthian letter. He tackled problems brought to him in a straight-forward and frank manner. He stated that there is within marriage an equality of obligation. Then there is a mutuality of pleasure. A husband is obliged to see to it that his wife finds sexual fulfillment in their relationship. There is also a similarity of potential.

As far as I understand, there is no such thing as trial marriage, any more than there is such a thing as a trial birth. No options! Once you are married, that is it — as far as the sexual "trial" is concerned. Learning what is involved is important, for humans are different from animals in this area.

Animals meet to mate; whereas we live to love. This latter state calls for patient and self-sacrificing love.

We ought not to think of the difference between the male and the female stimulus and response as a difficulty or problem. We ought, rather, to think of it as being built in by the Creator. It was not an after-thought or repercussion because of sin — but part of God's plan to call out from both partners the maximum potential of self-sacrifice that they are capable of. He wanted them to have an understanding of self-sacrificing love and further intensify their sexual delight each in the other. We are the way we are, not because of some mistake in the evolutionary process, but because *this is the way God has made us*. What other kind of stimulus could He have so effectively provided as to cause a husband to be self-sacrificing? But, in the very sacrificing of himself, he finds that his own pleasure is heightened.

Each married couple should seek to work toward meeting their own unique needs. It is my understanding that there are no norms. As persons, we quite often are threatened by projected norms in many areas of life. Couples need have no goals other than those which they determine for themselves. One guideline might be — so long as it is not merely for one's own satisfaction, with the disapproval of the other — but is really aimed at the other's happiness, there should be freedom.

Learning to live together and enjoying mutuality of pleasure has a spiritual implication, too. In 2 Peter 3:7, we read, "In like manner, ye husbands dwell with them [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together as of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered." There are not only physiological, sociological, psychological and emotional values involved here, but spiritual advances and advantages. Had you ever thought of hindered prayer hinging upon having "knowledge" and applying it in the intimate relation-



ships of marriage? Peter evidently did.

## INTIMACY ESSENTIAL

What we, as individuals, must do is to strive for the most satisfying intimacy possible — which is a complete sharing of the whole person.

Now, husbands and wives have a unique communications system. Nobody asks questions and answers them in the way husbands and wives do — not even children and parents. Some communications are verbal; and the questions expressed in words are usually the simple ones. Other communications are expressed in the language of kinetics.

Are you familiar with that system? You may know it as nonverbal communication. Or you may recognize it better as . . . he holds your hand . . . you squeeze his hand . . . both get the message. If your husband kicks you under the table — there's a special meaning for you. If your wife lays her hand, oh, so gently on your cheek, that's kinetics. If she lays it not so gently, that is also kinetics! This particular language is often used because feelings are too deep to be entrusted to words. A slammed door or a plate slammed on the breakfast table can give out its own particular message. There may be a burned cake involved . . . or a forgotten goodbye kiss . . . or a plea for help.

One of the frightening, and at the same time exciting, things about marriage is that it is always alive and growing, for if a wife and husband aren't growing together, they are growing apart. The latter, in marriage, is crisis. If we are to achieve the level of intimacy which will make our marriage attractive to the world, we must do three things. (1) We must decide we want this type of relationship. It doesn't happen instinctively. (2) We must work at it. That's not instinctive, either! (3) We must make use of all the resources available. Marriage is potentially the most totally intimate of human relationships. It is the most difficult on the one hand and the most rewarding on the other.

Another thing we need to under-

stand is that sex is instinctive, but lovemaking is sophisticated. With our increase of sophistication, all of us are coming to a great awareness of the variety of delights that are available to us. Furthermore, I have a suspicion that the ultimate confrontation and disclosure of a man and a woman is not known in sex. It is known in lovemaking. It is not realized in the animalistic side of the experience — only in the sophisticated. We have to learn here, and we can learn. Ordinarily the man is the steersman; but that is not to say that he is obliged to be so on all occasions. As far as I am concerned, there is a place within a happily adjusted marriage for the woman to take the initiative from time to time.

The measure of fulfillment, release and pleasure that we are looking for can be attained by a recognition and acceptance, without restraint, of our bodies as sexual. It is also important that if this goal of release is to be attained between the partners, that communication be kept open. It doesn't have to be verbal communication. We must understand that communication depends more on the receiver than on the transmitter. Care must be taken that the right message gets across. Communication depends much more upon what is heard than what is said.

In considering the importance of intimacy in marriage, let me say that this element is more necessary because of the poverty of intimacy outside of marriage. Why is it that bartenders are traditionally the recipients of confidences and have the reputation for being marriage counsellors? Let's just admit that most of our "relationships" are only contacts. Our tastes and ambitions tend to separate us, and we are tempted to *use* rather than *relate* to others. Intimacy on any level takes time. It requires a face-to-face confrontation. And it must be with selflessness. It is called "nonmanipulative interaction" — a price tag which often proves too high.

A second reason why intimacy in marriage is so important is that intimacy within marriage is enhanced

by the influence of the other. Each partner has the power and ability to deprive or add to the total personality of the other. It seems to me there is nothing quite so destructive as when two partners are locked into a marriage from which there is no way out, and they are consuming each other. Marriage makes us vulnerable, as well as valuable to each other.

Marriage involves a commitment to a responsibility intended to be for fulfilling (or filling full) the other. The personal capacity . . . the personality . . . the totality is at stake. When a man takes a woman to be his wife, he says in essence, "I will lay down my life in order that your personality might come to its best under God." By the same token, that is what a woman says as she makes her vows.

It is fortunate that our biological impulses are as strong as they are, and that our awareness of the nature of our commitment is as limited as it is when we take our vows. Do you understand what I mean? We make a terrifying commitment when we engage in marriage. To the extent that I deprive myself of my own fulfillment to insure my partner the benefits of marriage at their intended level, to that extent am I providing the necessary satisfaction for the God-designed "personality appetite" of my mate. We are meant, not to consume, but to consummate the other.

Intimacy is intensified as couples dare to confront each other. There are some couples who live under the same roof . . . share a common bed . . . purse . . . table . . . even common church and prayer. But there is no real interchange. This can be veiled antagonism.

Other couples only maintain peace by avoiding certain issues and subjects. Thus, little by little, the transparent window, which represents the relationship a man and wife should have, becomes blurred. They become strangers to each other. Remember, there are no secrets in marriage; only things which are not talked about. You know, and you suspect that she knows. And she knows that you suspect that she knows. But you don't



talk about it, and for that reason you grow apart. The only thing that I know to do under these circumstances is to drag it out into the open and deal with it.

Intimacy deepens as we learn to be emotionally, as well as physically, present to each other. Wives, have you ever felt that your husband was a thousand miles away even though he was in the same room? Intimacy grows as couples care. Affection and intimacy are deepened by commitment. There are many avenues for joint commitment in the marriage relationship. Added to sexual intimacy there are: emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, creative, recreational, work crisis, and spiritual intimacies. Each can prove profitable and pleasurable.

### GOOD NEWS

The word "gospel" means good news. As I mentioned earlier, I attempt to present the gospel of a happy marriage to each couple with whom I am privileged to share before the wedding ceremony. I also make it

basic in my counseling of those who come to me with their problems. The commitment in marriage is deep and of lasting duration — at least it was intended to be so when God ordained it for the mutual benefit of His created ones. It was good news to Adam when he was presented with Eve as a helpmeet. It is that relationship between man and woman in which the independence is equal, the dependence is mutual, and the obligation is reciprocal.

The criteria in every relationship is what effect the action has on their mutual relationship. Anything that is damaging to either partner, or which offends the integrity of either party (physically, morally or spiritually) is subject to question. And only the individuals themselves can come up with answers to those questions. Sex is meant to be enjoyable, profitable and God-glorifying.

Speaking in general, absolute purity consists in our offering of actions, impulses and thoughts ever more fully to God; not so that He may necessarily remove them, but that He may govern

them and give us the grace to use them according to His will. However, it demands great courage on the part of both husband and wife to venture forth into this freedom. The words which we have shared have been intended to lead the reader into freedom in all areas of sexual relationships. God intended this freedom in His creating us male and female. In intended interdependence there is mutual benefit.

As we learn to enjoy all that God intended for us as husbands and wives, we have an obligation to share this good news with others. This, too, is part of God's intended plan for His created ones.

Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." One of the first evidences about salt is the fact that it makes one thirsty. Does your marriage make others desire to take the same step? It should. It is my hope that you will be able to, both verbally and non-verbally, express to others with whom you come in contact the intentions of God and the scriptural foundations for a happy marriage. ♥

### RECEIVING AND GIVING CORRECTION (continued from page 80)

strength and help. The combination of a wise reprovener and a listening ear produces growth. Proverbs 12:18 (NAS) says, "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Have you ever been reproved by a sword carrier? "You ought to get your life straightened out!" Learn how to be a wise reprovener, because the tongue of the wise brings healing, but rash words are like the thrust of a sword.

Number six: One last thing — *be patient!* Proverbs 28:23 (NAS) says this: "He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue." Now the key word in that whole sentence is "afterward." Be ready for the fact that what you have to say may not be immediately received and welcomed. But an honest approach to individuals will afterward be more appreciated than flattery with the tongue.

God's purpose and desire is not just to have a people who enjoy themselves

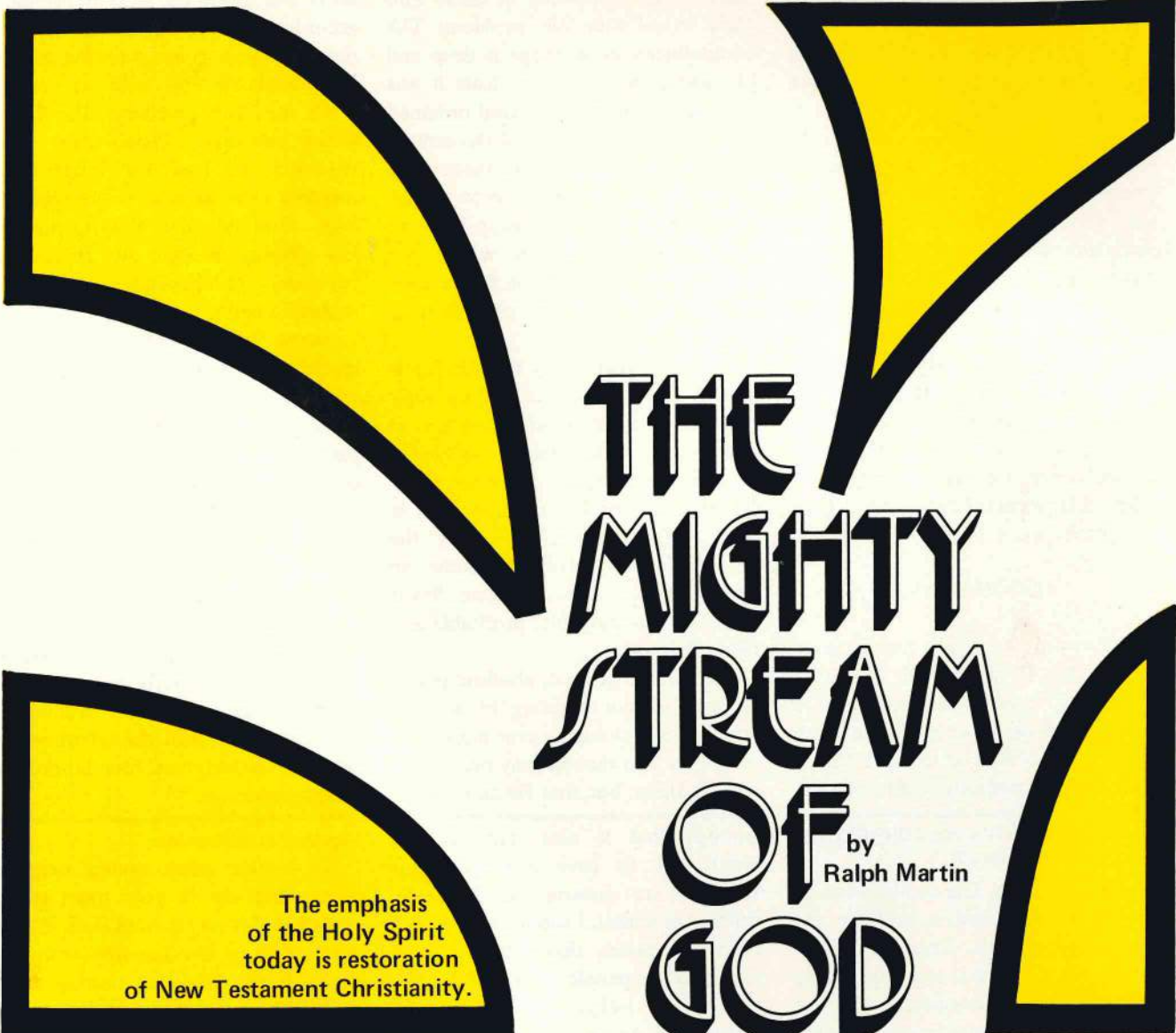
(though that is also important to Him), but to have a people who together are growing up into the fullness of Christ. I submit to you, as I close this series, that God wants to join you to people who can be His means of helping you come to maturity. I know that many of you shy away from that because of prior hurts and wounds. But I have discovered that God has so constructed us spiritually, that in spite of all that we may have experienced in times past, there is still something within us that cries out for the kind of relationship in which we can be specifically encouraged and specifically adjusted. On several occasions, in our own experience of fellowship, as we have muddled our way through some relationships, tremendous hurts were placed on members of my own family, sometimes to the extent that I have said to myself, "Well, I doubt if my wife will ever again open herself up to anybody." Yet invariably, after a time of healing, she begins again, because all of us are created spiritually to live

together in fellowship.

No matter what wound may be there, that cry in your heart to be related in this way is from God. He has made you to live together with the Body. More than just sharing some kind of superficial social relationship, God wants to bring us into a place where we are sharing our lives — a place where we are not just talking about the Bible or about what God is doing in the world today, but about what God is doing right here in our everyday lives. Unless we, as a corporate people, reach that point, we will never have attained to what God has destined us to be.

But it is my deep feeling that we are on the way. The bones are coming together. It doesn't take a large group of people to experience this type of fellowship. As a matter of fact, if you are a couple, all it takes to begin is just one other couple. And God can cause you to come into an encouraging, admonishing relationship where you grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. ♥





# THE MIGHTY STREAM Of GOD

by  
Ralph Martin

The emphasis  
of the Holy Spirit  
today is restoration  
of New Testament Christianity.

*This is the edited text of the final main address given at the 1974 International Conference on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Reprinted from NEW COVENANT, September 1974, with permission.*

**S**even years ago, at the first international conference on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Lord gave us a passage from Isaiah which He brought back to my mind during the last couple of days:

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the

desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise (Isaiah 43:19-21).

That word gives us a perspective about what we are involved in: the Lord is doing a new thing, and He wants us to notice it as it springs forth.

## THE DECLINE OF CHRISTIANITY

The last 400 years of Christianity has seen a process of disintegration. Where there used to be at least some measure of unity in the body of Christ there has been an incredible fragmentation. There are hundreds and hundreds of groups of Christians that

don't talk to one another; that have split again and again because they can't agree on certain things. This fragmentation has had an effect on the world's being able to perceive who God is and who Jesus the Messiah is. It's shattered and fragmented something of the image of Himself which God intends to be in the world so that the world can come to faith.

It's also had a tremendous effect on society. Nation after nation that still has the name of Christian is being unmasked as spiritually bankrupt and lacking any vital truth or power at the heart of its national life. Just the other day, I read a report from a Catholic bishop in France. He reported that during the last seven years, 20 percent



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of the French priests had left the active ministry, and over the last four years there was a 68 percent decline in seminarians. He said that the situation of the Catholic Church in France in 20 years would be catastrophic.

This decay isn't just true in the Catholic Church. The Church of England has 28 million members in the British Isles. On Easter Sunday last year 1.8 million showed up at church, little more than 5 percent. In 1963 in the Anglican Church, 636 men entered the ministry; 10 years later 373 entered. That isn't a picture of the church of Jesus Christ. That's a picture of churches that are badly in need of the action of God.

What we are seeing isn't the result of a few years of negligence, but a process that has been going on for a long time. In the middle of the 19th century Nietzsche, the German philosopher, saw that something had gone out of the heart of Christianity. He said something had died in it and hardly anybody could perceive it yet, but in the 20th century it was going to be manifest. He proclaimed "God is dead." He also said, "You Christians are going to have to look more redeemed for me to believe in your Redeemer." That's the world speaking to us. Something has got to happen to the body of Christ to bring it to that place of overflowing vitality of life where a world which is rapidly growing dark can begin to see the light.

Jesus tells us what needs to happen in John 14-17. He is talking here directly to His disciples. He promises to send the Holy Spirit upon them and He prays for their unity so that "*the world may believe*." We need to take with utter seriousness God's Word through Jesus just before He dies. I believe that God has begun to do something significant in our day to

accomplish His purpose of unity, and I want to describe how I see it.

### THREE STREAMS

Although God has been working in a variety of ways to renew and unite His people, I think He began to move in a centrally significant way at the turn of the century, when the Pentecostal movement broke out. In that farmhouse in Topeka, Kansas, when a small group of people were baptized in the Spirit, a stream of God's life broke forth that has since gone on to become a mighty river. There are now about 13 million classical Pentecostals around the world.

But when they came with their message to the historic churches they were told: "Our theology has already taken care of this problem, and these things can't happen today. They were just for the early church, we don't need it." God, do we need it! The stream went forth with power and might, but it was cut off from the institutional churches. But that didn't stop God, because wherever the message of Pentecost has come, millions of people all over the world have come to a living relationship with Jesus Christ and have received the power of the Spirit. Praise God for the classical Pentecostals!

The second stream began in about 1957. People in the historic churches began to be baptized in the Spirit and felt like they could hang in there; they didn't need to leave their churches. It wasn't a happy relationship; there was a lot of hurt and a lot of pain. The churches weren't particularly happy, and the people who were staying weren't particularly happy. But God was honoring the hanging-in-there, and from 1957 to 1967 another stream broke forth that we now call the neopentecostal movement. Many of the people who stayed in their churches during this time stayed because of strategy. They believed that would be a good place to be to help the whole church come into the experience. Groups like the Full Gospel Businessmen and various Christian centers are expressions of this stream, and now

millions of people are flowing in this river of God's Spirit.

The third stream broke out in 1967 among a very few people and now is a mighty river with hundreds of thousands of people involved in it around the world. God has been moving and working for a long time to lay the groundwork for what we are experiencing in it now. On the very day at the turn of the century that we now recognize as the beginnings of the classical Pentecostal movement, Pope Leo the 13th issued a letter to all the bishops of the world begging them to encourage their people to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At Vatican II, one of the cardinals stood up and said, "Let's not have any references to the gifts of the Spirit, because they aren't for today." But Cardinal Suenens read the Scriptures, talked with theologians and came back the next day and said, "*Charisms* are for today; leave the references in the document," and they were left in the document.

The fact that the first group of Catholics involved happened to be theologians; or happened to be connected with Catholic universities, was providential. They were in a unique position to articulate to the church what was happening. Another significant thing is that the first group of Catholics didn't come to Christianity for the first time then. They had experienced a vital Christian life in the Catholic Church for a number of years. They were Catholic, not out of tradition, not out of strategy, but because they perceived and discerned in the Catholic Church the body of Christ and the anointing of God. They were able not only to "hang in there," but to know that what had happened was something for the whole church of Christ.

### CATHOLIC RENEWAL

The growth of the renewal in the Catholic Church has been extraordinary, with about 350,000 involved now worldwide. This year our directory of prayer groups lists over 2,400 groups from 54 different



countries. The charismatic renewal has become quickly and significantly international. There are now 10,000 Catholics in France baptized in the Spirit. This is happening in country after country.

Also, over the past year almost every American cardinal has made a positive pastoral response to the charismatic renewal. Cardinal Medeiros of Boston and Cardinal Manning of Los Angeles have both encouraged priests to get acquainted with the movement. Cardinal Carberry of St. Louis meets every month with a group of leaders in the charismatic renewal to talk about how it is developing in his archdiocese. Both Cardinal Dearden of Detroit and Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia celebrated special Pentecost charismatic liturgies in their archdiocese this year. So much is happening that you don't even notice it. God is moving in an active, powerful way to renew the whole Catholic Church.

A group of Canadian bishops have prepared a document that goes beyond the 1969 statement of the American bishops. It is even more positive and more encouraging about the charismatic renewal. They expect to have it adopted in the course of the summer. Just a few weeks ago some of us were in Malines with Cardinal Suenens working on a document that will be made available to the bishops of the whole world. It will help them to know how to respond when the charismatic renewal breaks out in their diocese, and how to respond to it in a creative way.

But we're not just seeing a growth in numbers, we're seeing God doing something in those who are getting involved. About a month ago, during the liturgy at a meeting of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service Committee, somebody prophesied. I turned around, and who was it but Bishop McKinney giving a prophecy. In Malines we were celebrating the Eucharist and all of a sudden somebody started singing in tongues. It was Cardinal Suenens. As I see the kind of thing that God is doing, I just want to bow my head in awe before

God our Father who is doing amazing things and preparing amazing things to happen in the church.

This past Friday night of this conference was a historic moment for the modern Catholic Church. It was the first time a large group of Catholics with their pastors prayed to God for the healing gifts of the Holy Spirit to be manifest and saw God heal before their very eyes. "The Spirit of God is upon me. He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives, to give sight to the blind" (Isaiah 6:1). That prophecy of Isaiah, applied to Jesus, is now applied to the body of Jesus Christ — the church. We have been anointed by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to the poor, to make the blind see and the deaf hear and to make the sick well. It is this power of God which is breaking out in the body of Christ today, and we saw the first fruits of it Friday night. Gifts of healing and prophecy aren't to happen just at Lourdes and just through canonized saints, but through the whole people of God. God has brought us into a new realm of freedom in His Holy Spirit where we can with confidence know that, as we preach the gospel, Jesus wants to reach out His hand and confirm it with signs, and He wants to do this in every city where His people gather to praise Him.

### FLOWING TOGETHER

We are just at the beginning. The breadth of God's plan is beyond our imaginations. I think that these three mighty pentecostal rivers that are flowing in separate channels, God is bringing together. I see Him beginning to do it.

What is happening among the classical Pentecostals today is something we can call an ecumenical shock wave. It is a shock to the Pentecostal churches to see what God is doing in the Catholic Church. When all your life you have been trained to look at the Catholic Church as the whore of Babylon, and when the whore of Babylon preaches Jesus, what are you going to do? It shakes up your whole world view. Among the leaders in the

classical Pentecostal churches now, there is a tremendous reassessment taking place. They want to see how to flow into the new thing that God is doing.

Something is also happening in the neo-pentecostal movement. With men like Derek Prince, Bob Mumford, Don Basham, and Charles Simpson, new things are beginning to happen. They are teaching important things like unity in the body of Christ and authority and submission. For a tradition of Christianity that is very individualistic, it's a new thing to have the Spirit of God talk to you about submission and authority. Along with that, a tremendous spirit of openness and friendship to the Catholic charismatic renewal is beginning.

God is opening a new door for us in the Catholic charismatic renewal. We are moving from an apologetic phase into a prophetic phase. Over the last five years God has given us great wisdom about how to relate to our fellow Catholic laymen and our Catholic bishops so that we can all move together as a church. God has spoken to us about loyalty as Catholics and commitments of obedience and submission to our bishops. That has been a very important thing. Now with that as a foundation, I believe that God is saying that it is time to speak out His Word boldly. He has a word to speak for the church and for the world through what we are experiencing. Renewal is too weak a word for what needs to happen in the Christian church. "Renewal" can give us a sense that we will just polish something up a little bit. Rather, I think God is moving to *restore* New Testament Christianity to all His people — that is more than renewal. Restoration means reform as well as renewal for everything that God wants to happen in His people. Much has been lost, much has been distorted. He wants to change the face of the church and the face of the earth.

### MOVING ON

I was talking with some reporters yesterday, and they asked: "Why did

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you have to blow it Friday night by having a healing service? You were just getting respectable. Last year you reached the point of respectability, and this year we were ready for more of that." Praise God for the surprises of the Holy Spirit.

God is directing the movement of the Spirit to accomplish His personal aims and designs in our time. We need to be in a personal union with him, wanting to hear His voice and wanting to move on with Him. I believe that He is leading us as He led the people in the Exodus. He is as sure a guide as the pillar of fire and the clouds were to the Israelites in the desert. We run the risk of wanting to go back to Egypt. We run the risk of wanting to stay where we are. We're happy with our prayer group as it is right now. We're happy with our Catholic Church as it is right now. Let's not rock the boat. To stop short of God's full purpose is to run the risk of us being left behind to die in the desert. A good thing of God can be the enemy of the next thing of God. If we clutch on to today's gift and say it's so nice, I want

to stop here . . . we are going to become the enemy of the next thing that God wants to do.

In the past, even the Bible became for some people the thing with which they defended themselves against God. Jesus spoke to Jews who loved the Bible and said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). If we love the Catholic Church as it is so much that we won't let Jesus make it what He wants it to be for today, we become the enemy of the Catholic Church.

#### A UNITED WITNESS

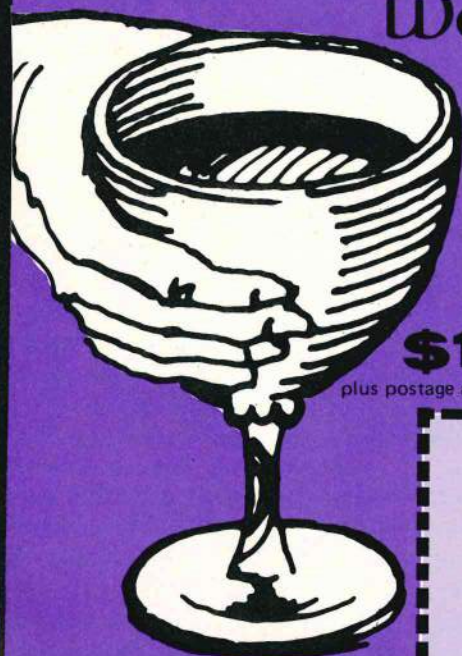
I believe that in a very deep way God is moving to change the course of these mighty rivers. They have been flowing separately, but God is working on the riverbeds to enable them to flow together, to present a united witness to the church and to the world. I don't know *how* God is going to do it, and I don't know *when*, but I

know He's begun, and He'll complete it. I don't necessarily think we ought to do one thing differently than we've been doing because of this. But I hope that this will make us want to listen to God more, and look for the movement of the Spirit so that when He gives direction for our local situations, we will be ready to move. What we're experiencing in the Holy Spirit is not something that's private and personal, just for us; it's something that's cosmic in scope. What's unfolding is a mighty plan from God. The darkness is growing darker, and the light must grow brighter.

The spirit that we've received as a movement is not a spirit of timidity and not a spirit of fear, but a spirit of sonship; we're sons and daughters of God. He wants us to live in that and to walk in boldness and confidence as His sons and daughters.

God is moving to bring His people together in the bonds of deep love and commitment so that the world may believe. Let's follow Him and not be left in the desert. Let's go on with Him and enter the promised land. ☞

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Catching sight of the nature and function of the local church.

# The Vision of the Local Church

by Bob Mumford

**D**id you ever have the experience of seeing something and almost wishing that you hadn't seen it? Something so tremendous . . . of which the implications are so great . . . the view so mind-expanding! *But once you see, it is impossible to close your eyes and block out the sight.*

One of my teachers in Bible college was a man of deep insight and distant vision. He traveled extensively and was the envy of many of us students. One day this man said to me, "Bob, the day will come when you will wish you didn't see what you are beginning to see." At that time, I couldn't imagine such a possibility. But since then there have been occasions when I wished I

could just sit under my little fig tree and enjoy the things I see, instead of feeling as if the Fourth of July were exploding inside me.

Always there are people who "see" and others who don't. This is true in realms of science, medicine, economics, etc., as well as in the spiritual. When Jesus walked this earth, there were those who saw Him as the Son of



God. They were captured to His cause because of what they saw in Him. Others saw only one more Jew making claims to messiahship . . . only a carpenter's son . . . a Nazarene.

Churches have been guilty of being blind, too. Revelation 3:17 tells us of one: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked . . ." This church of Laodicea didn't know that she didn't know. This is the epitome of not knowing . . . of not seeing.

For years I felt that there was something about the Church of Jesus Christ that we were not seeing. Something was missing. Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 5:32 as "a great mystery."

#### PAUL'S VISION AND OURS

Paul, along with his fellow-laborers, was privileged to establish many of the early churches of which we have any record. His letter to the Ephesians covers numerous aspects of these local churches. He also unfolds to us some of the majesty and might of the *Church of Jesus Christ*, of which each local church formed a part. What was this "great mystery" which Paul saw? Have the centuries obscured or changed his message?

First, Paul saw the Church as the Body of Jesus Christ — not like His Body — *but His Body!* He saw it glorious . . . filled with God's glory! We need to see this, too. But, do these conceptions coincide with our view of the Church? If we are honest with ourselves, we will have to admit that we have been more apt to look upon the Church as a group of timid saints who don't smoke or drink, or go with those who do . . . waiting here on earth for the Lord Jesus to return and snatch them out of this wicked world . . . before the anti-Christ overpowers them.

Listen again to Paul: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of

times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him" (Eph. 1:9,10). God is going to sum up everything in Christ, in His Church — both in heaven *and on the earth*.

Now what about our picture of His purpose? No one ever taught me about "earth" salvation. I only learned about "heaven" salvation. No one ever told me about economic salvation — that God wanted to save me economically and heal my finances. No one ever told me about political salvation — that the Kingdom of God was an "alternate society," the most important political entity on this earth.

Paul saw this glorious Church moving toward the consummation of the age, a powerful force in the earth — a people redeemed, fitted together and magnified because of the glory of Christ which rests in that Church. When we begin to see the magnitude of God's plan, *we see the Church as the answer to the world's problems*. When we can couple this vision with the fact that when God starts out to do something, He doesn't stop until He finishes it, we begin to catch a glimpse of this glorious mystery which so inspired Paul. Even though he was writing to the Christians at Ephesus from a prison cell in Rome, he saw down the corridors of time this alternate society . . . God's people being brought together in a redemptive community, rightly related to God and each other.

My seven-year old son recently made a remark to us along these lines which had all the earmarks of a theological dissertation:

*Eric:* Mother, I don't think God is going to come tomorrow.

*Mother:* How come you don't think He's coming tomorrow?

*Eric:* Because there's too much work to do yet.

When we study Ephesians in the light of Paul's enthusiasm, we see that there is more to God's purpose than just the salvation of the soul. For years we have been laboring under a limited concept of the work of Christ. We tend to think in terms of merely the

translation of our souls from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God. There we sit on the Kingdom borderline, never realizing that Jesus wants to save the whole life — never claiming our full inheritance, either as His children or as His Church.

#### JESUS VISION OF HIS CHURCH

Jesus only mentions the Church twice in all of His recorded teachings. Both references are in the Book of Matthew. In the first (16:18), Jesus tells of His vested interest in the Church; and in the second (18:17) He gives an example of the Church in one of its many operations, a spiritual fortress. Let us here examine Jesus' words about His Church in relation to Himself.

(a) "*I will build my church . . .*" It is His Church! He is going to build it! This is not an organization, but an organism. He left no hard and fast rules or dogmatic diagram for its establishment. He did not even define exactly what He was planning on building or when it would evolve.

(b) "*. . . the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" He is going to protect His investment. Neither the atheists nor the communists, nor any other force upon the earth will ever prevail against it! He said so.

Looking at the Church from Jesus' position as Builder, we note that a body is a living organism made up of living cells. It has the ability — even the necessity — to change, adapt, and flow with other cells as it grows. Together, these cells can withstand forces which alone it could not.

Thus, the Body of Christ can thrive anywhere, in any society, and under any circumstances. It is able to flow and function in all ages and cultures. It is supernatural, and it is fortunate that it is — for man has tried to capture it for himself . . . construct it according to human plans and specifications . . . and even tried to kill it. We have managed to put all kinds of rules on it . . . restrict it to buildings . . . reduce it to cold storage tactics. But the Church of Jesus Christ just bends



and rolls and pops up again; at times, where we least likely expect it to appear.

Looking at the Church from Jesus' position as Defender, history records that the forces of hell have been unleashed against this establishment which He is building. There have been pressures, abuses and persecutions throughout every century since its inception. But His Church continues to withstand and prevail. If we are not for it, we are against it, according to Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:30. This means that if we don't get into His Body, we are going to get left behind. Jesus loves the Church and it exists only because of His protection. It is His Body and those who persecute, malign, and tamper with its progress will have to reckon with God.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Simply stated, in the structure of the local churches, those geographical expressions of the Body of Christ, there are three foundational basics. These are found throughout the entire Word of God, for God has been planning for this Church from before the foundation of the world. *These basics are: pattern, principles and power.*

**PATTERN:** In Exodus, chapter 40, we find Moses conforming his work according to the pattern God had given him for the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness. This was to be a dwelling place where God would meet with His people of that generation. There is one phrase repeated many times, "... just as the Lord had commanded Moses." Then, in verses 33 and 34, we read, "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

When we build according to pattern, the glory of the Lord fills that place. That is why we need to search the Scriptures for the pattern given for establishing a New Testament church. For when we see the pattern and build

accordingly, then the glory of the Lord rests upon that place.

**PRINCIPLES:** In both Old and New Testaments there are basic principles which will work in any society and age. These are not laws, remember, but principles. Consider a few of them with me.

*Matthew 7:12* tells us: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them . . ." We often refer to this principle as the golden rule. Men have perverted it, in some instances, to read, "He who has the gold makes the rules." But God's principle stands firmly against all attacks or misrepresentations.

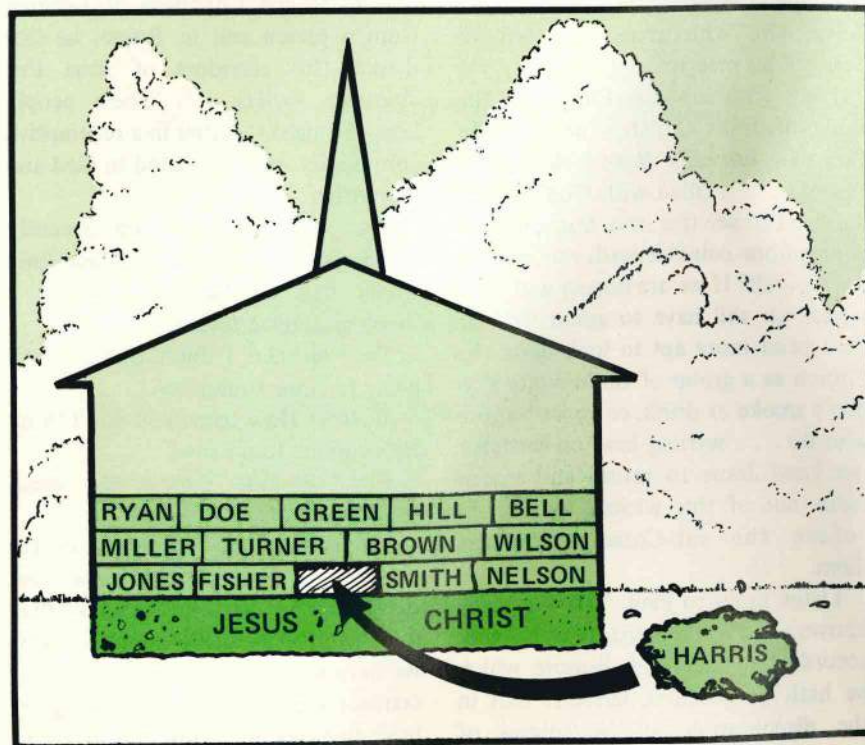
*Galatians 6:7* says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If you sow criticism, what do you get back? Criticism. You give it, you get it back.

*Matthew 6:33* states, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." One man who was learning to accept this principle, wrote me, "I have just discovered something. He that seeks the Kingdom first will have problems. But if he seeks it second, he will have greater problems." Principles always work.

There are principles on tithing, praying, fasting, judging, avenging ourselves. *These are inviolable absolutes.* In all of my years of counseling, I have seen them in operation and seen many who tried to go against these principles and found it impossible. But when you can see these principles, and God's purpose in placing them before us, we can begin moving into a right relationship to God and our fellow believers; as well as showing to the rest of the world the validity of these principles which can revolutionize civilization.

**POWER:** Paul saw the essentiality of this basic in building a local church, as well as in "building up" the individuals who formed that Body. In Corinth we hear him stating his case: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4,5).

Without this power, we cannot even know Him, let alone have a faith which will be able to stand. If we do not have the power of God in the local church, we have a club. It is the power of God, through His Holy Spirit,





which brings into being the Body of Christ in any locality and makes it a living, breathing, flowing, yielding organism.

Could we safely say that some churches are trying to get along without this power? Would some keep on with "business as usual," even if God died? Would they have to read it in the newspaper to learn about it?

One young woman, upon returning from the mission field, was attending a business meeting of her denomination. After sitting through hours of reports and recommendations, she finally burst out, "Let me ask you a question. What do you do any differently than the world does? You don't need the power of God for this!" What a sad commentary.

Without the power of God moving through the local "business" proceedings, and without His redeeming and restoring, there would be no Body of Christ. There might be a structure labeled "church" — but the Church which Jesus is building must lay hold upon this power. It is the sap of the Vine, of which we form the branches.

The power of God enables us to build according to His pattern and to apply the principles He has placed within His Word.

## SEVEN ASPECTS OF THE NATURE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Using the Book of Ephesians as a guide, we look at seven aspects of this structure which Jesus Christ is building — His Church. Paul is teaching the believers in Ephesus, a local church, about requirements and expectations for their church. They apply to every church of every age, for only one structure can be built which will stand against the forces of the world . . . that which is built according to His pattern, incorporating His principles and utilizing His power.

*(1) The local church is a dwelling place for God — 2:19–22:*

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are

built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

When we come together as a local church, we are builded together in God. This means that every man, woman and child should find his place in the Body of Christ. A house built of living stones! What a sight to behold! Can you almost hear God saying, "Oh! A house where I can go and dwell with my people!" This means these stones are going to have to love each other enough to come into proper relationship to each other. Learning to "fit together" isn't always easy. Building with living stones is costly, but commanded. *We come together to form a dwelling place!*

*(2) The local church is the Body of Christ — 1:22,23:*

And [God] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

*Body* — the very word has "earthly" connotations. Applying it to the local church, this means that the local "body" is for the purpose of extending Christ's redemptive work to the ends of the earth. It is the uniting of physical bodies that God has in mind. From these, He forms a working unit, empowered and equipped for service. The gifts of the Spirit form a portion of this equipment. Note that in every instance in which the gifts of the Spirit are mentioned (1 Cor. 12, 1 Pet. 3 and Rom. 12) they are in the context of the Body of Christ. These gifts are given, not as toys, but as tools. They are instruments placed in the hands of the local members of the Body of Christ to do His work in His ordained way and place. The restoration of these gifts to the churches today shows us that God desires that we be properly equipped to carry

forward His work. *We come together to function!*

*(3) The local church is an assembly for corporate worship — 3:17–19:*

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

This is true worship — being filled with all the fulness of God! So often we withhold parts of ourselves. If we would only open our entire beings to God's fulness, we would experience His cleansing and restorative powers. The local church is that place where we come together and worship together. It is not enough to worship alone. There is a benefit derived from corporate worship which cannot be approximated by oneself — rewarding as private worship is. There is an expression of worship coming from the joining of "bodies" which God honors in a very special way. It pleases Him and He responds. He finds Himself at home among worshiping people. This is portrayed in Psalm 22:3, "But thou art holy, *O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*" *We come together to worship!*

*(4) The local church is a spiritual school — 4:17–21:*

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.

Most of us have had many years of practice in how to be a sinner. Then,



upon being saved, we think immediately we are going to be transformed into an instant saint. That isn't how it works! We must *learn* Christ. We must be taught in the school of discipleship. There we learn how to redeem our minds, pocketbooks, marriages. Every part of our lives comes under His control. *We come together to learn Christ!*

(5) *The local church is a spiritual hospital* — 4:11, 12:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

What is the purpose of our military hospitals? To welcome home wounded military personnel and do all that we can for them physically. We put decorations on them . . . give them ticker-tape parades . . . house them in our finest institutions. What about spiritual casualties? If one gets wounded doing battle for the Lord, the saints at home usually "finish him off." We may have maternity wards in our "local" hospitals, but what about provision for the weary, wounded Kingdom workers? We label them backsliders and whisper, "Did you see that . . .?" "Do you know what I heard . . .?" It is true that we need discipline and correction, but these must be administered in love and understanding.

Literally, Paul is saying that God gave ministries for the equipping of the saints for the work of the Kingdom. And *equipping* is the same word that is used when Peter and John were "fixing" or "mending" their nets on the shores of Galilee. Have you ever known saints who needed repairing? Have you ever needed fixing yourself? When I minister overseas, I spend much time working with wounded soldiers — missionaries who have fiery darts stuck in them — who have been wounded, hurt, betrayed. As a rule, we don't provide tender, loving attention and intensive care units; but these are

needed! *We come together to restore and heal!*

(6) *The local church is a spiritual deliverance center for POW's* — 6:10-12:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Do we need a place where we can reclaim and rehabilitate our prisoners of war? Spiritual warfare is "for real." Paul continued in chapter six to delineate the weapons we are to make use of in this deadly warfare. It is not an easy task to free prisoners of the rulers of the darkness of this world. But God has provided for this much needed ministry and we need it in every local situation. Let me construct a hypothetical, but often repeated, scene.

*Frank:* Hallelujah! I'm saved and delivered. Now I'm going out to rescue those other fellows who are still in the clutches of Satan!

*Bill:* My son, you had better grow up a little first.

*Frank:* Who needs to grow up? I can manage. (And off he goes to seek out some of his former friends.)

*Friend:* Hey, Frank, how would you like a little grass while we talk about this new high of yours?

*Frank:* Me? Never! I rebuke you, devil! Uh . . . what was that you said about some grass?

There is our "deliverer" back on grass — captured by the enemy. Demonized? Perhaps. But are POW's still citizens? Yes. We need a local church which has a deliverance ministry flowing — not as an emphasis, but a part of the whole spectrum of services to the saints. *We come together to recapture prisoners of spiritual war!*

(7) *The local church is a spiritual home* — 3:14-15:

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Is there a difference between a house and a home? Certainly. We can tell the difference, and God knows and appreciates this, too. A home is where the family gathers in unity and love. There one feels loved, accepted and confident in that love and acceptance. There he can kick off his shoes, should he be so inclined! We need a local church where we can feel "at home." We need a genuine spiritual family. This is where we have a sense that we are not performing, not a spectator, not an outsider, not the whole show — just one of the family . . . and when Father's family gathers together, we want to be there! When we enjoy each other, God enjoys us. We experience His peace and presence. *We come together to enjoy each other and God!*

## IN CONCLUSION

We need the first six aspects of the local church in order to be able to experience the seventh. We need to:

(1) find our place in the dwelling of God;

(2) be a part of a functioning, working body;

(3) assemble for corporate worship;

(4) receive instruction — have a spiritual training school;

(5) have a spiritual hospital where we welcome home wounded soldiers;

(6) provide a deliverance center for our prisoners of war; then — we will enjoy our "spiritual" home.

However, this involves being willing to be built together into one divinely ordained organism — the local church. If we want to become a part of that spiritual home, each must find his place, fit there, and become conformed to the Builder of that local body. There will be someone over us . . . someone under us . . . and someone beside us. And God will cement us together by His Spirit. This completes the structure in any given geographical location — the Church, which is His Body! 🍷



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Francis McGraw
- Pray, and Do Not Lose Heart  
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### MAY

- The Wall of Resentment  
An Interview
- Being Properly Related  
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- Where Have All the Parents Gone?  
Leonard Keene
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Mrs. William Radcliffe
- Parents, Accept Your Children (essay)  
Mrs. John Manchester
- The Dating Dilemma  
Bob Sutton

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V. Mary Stewart
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David Edwards
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