

Magazine New Wine®

November 1985 \$1.95



How to be joyful in tough times
You can experience the joy of Jesus
Why you lose your joy and how to keep it



July 18th '85

God Bless!

Arrived the day b-4 we start vacation - which is what I was praying for. Can you picture a group of Christians - a family gathering together in the great North Woods of Minnesota - (Itasca State Park) and playing this music to worship God? WOW and double WOW! This music has power. It draws you into praise and worship. Thank you. And God Bless you.

Sincere love in Christ
Kathy Knuth

(A COPY OF
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LETTER WE
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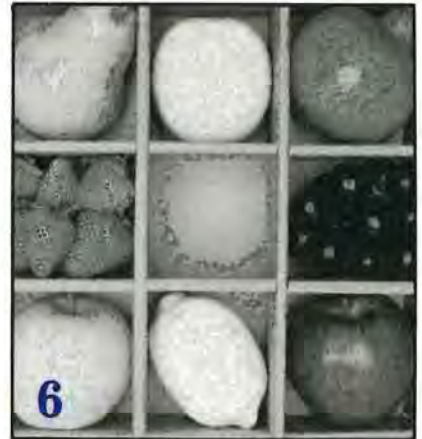
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Ern Baxter tells how we can find that elusive fruit of the Spirit, joy.



Why does the Lord want His Church to be a "lost and found department"?



Larry Lea gives the final keys to an exciting time with the Lord.

A significant key to the joy of the Christian

"Infinite Distance"

BY BRUCE LONGSTRETH

Why this uproar among the nations? Why this impotent mutterings of pagans—kings on earth rising in revolt, princes plotting against Yahweh and his Anointed, now let us break their fetters! Now let us throw off their yoke! The One whose throne is in heaven sits laughing, Yahweh derides them (Ps. 2:1-4 Jerusalem Bible).

In this Psalm, God sits in the heavens and laughs at His enemies' frantic attempts to dethrone Him and unshackle themselves from His divine reign. Their petty rebellion is humorous for only a brief moment; then suddenly He addresses them in His anger, saying, "This is My King, installed by Me on Zion, My holy mountain. Fear Him!" (v. 6, free translation).

At first it may seem strange that God laughs at the "impotent mutterings of pagans." But, "God laughs," says Franz Delitzsch, a nineteenth-century German theologian, "at the defiant ones, for between them and Him there is an infinite distance."

"Infinite distance" is the significant key not only to God's laughter but also to the Christian's joy. The impotent mutterings of pagans often infiltrate our homes through television, newspaper, radio, and magazines. If we successfully resist the mutterings of the various media, a well-meaning friend may offer to bring us up-to-date. "Have you heard about the..." is usually the way

it starts. Whether it's the threat of nuclear holocaust, the spread of terrorism, or the increase in the national debt, we may soon lose our joy if we do not put a great distance between our spirit and the "spirit of this age."

When we are able to distance ourselves from what appear to be life-threatening problems that rob us of our joy, we often see that they aren't so terrible after all. In fact, many times a new perspective makes them downright funny. God's eternal perspective causes Him to laugh at the mutterings of pagans. But we are often robbed of our joy and happiness because we lack His perspective; we fail to see the way God does. He sits on His heavenly throne and views the rage of the finite. At first, He is amused, but soon angered, He reveals His King and kingdom, and the raging ceases.

The distance we must have between the problem and us for our joy to abound is the "infinite distance" we experience in fellowship with God around His throne. Paul says in Ephesians 2:6 that we have been made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Our joy is based upon our viewpoint, which in turn depends upon where and with whom we sit. "Keep looking down" is good advice for the believer who desires God's perspective.

The view from the King's throne is hopeful, victoriously optimistic, and causes not only joyful praise but occasional side-

splitting laughter. Abraham and Sarah laughed when God foresaw a child for them in their old age. But it must have been okay to laugh because they named him Isaac, which means "God has made us laugh." For them, the essence of God's kingdom was "righteousness, peace, and joy (expressed in holy laughter) in the Holy Ghost."

In this issue we focus on the joy that we have as we walk with Zion's King. Ern Baxter starts us off with a fresh look at the definition and source of the Christian's joy. Then, Bob Mumford, in his unique way, gives us the secret to keeping our joy. And you'll read in my feature article how our joy abounds as our ministry of reconciliation brings others into fellowship around the throne.

And finally, we want to present the second part of Larry Lea's series on prayer. Forgiveness, protection, and praise are the final notes for the Christian to sound in his daily prayer life. Larry once again brings us back to the need for a deeper prayer relationship with the Lord.

The King of Zion must laugh often as He views life's over-serious participants. Yet He freely shares His perspective with His people, and as we walk with Him in "infinite distance" and in the unchanging covenant He has made with us, we can laugh and be joyful as well. And perhaps our joy will cause a sad world to wonder about the King whom God has placed in Zion. □



Bruce Longstreth is editor of New Wine and Fathergram.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Taking Care of Business

I very much enjoyed the September issue ("Working 9 to 5") on business. In my travels all over the United States, I've become more and more convinced that the future and the responsibility for this nation do not rest in the White House, the Congress, or the Supreme Court. They lie squarely upon the shoulders of those who run the companies that constitute the backbone of this nation's economy, which in turn is the backbone of the world's economy.

George W. Brown, Jr.
Fellowship of Companies
for Christ
Atlanta, GA

Awaiting His Arrival

As we read the article "Working With God" by Charles Simpson (September), we couldn't help but reflect back to the early 1970's when we were so eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord

that we didn't have time to seek careers or plan long-term goals. We had to learn how to balance a healthy desire to see the Lord return with the wisdom to occupy until He comes.

In this present decade we have learned how to willingly labor to provide for a growing family. Out of the increase we are now able to financially minister as the Lord leads. Thank you for addressing the biblical work ethic. We take joy in being a small part of God's plan, working with the master craftsman to accomplish His purpose on the earth.

Mason and Nancy Fletcher
Jackson, MS

A Healthy Checkup

Thanks so much for your September issue. I only just started reading it, and it's off with a bang. "Time for a Check-up" by Don Litton was just great. In the past five years, the Father has been showing me that

from His viewpoint there is no separation of life into secular and sacred. He is the Lord of life, *all* of life. My employment or my unemployment, my riches or my poverty are all for His glory. September's theme is really a word from the Lord. Many of us need "occupational redemption." God bless you for *New Wine*!

Lyndon Robinson
Brooklyn, NY

The Winner—By a Nose

September's "Homespun" ("God Knows Noses") about the little three year old's prayer and how his father was healed of sinus problems is precious. If we adults could trust God in a like manner, this would be a different world.

Also, I have been so touched by recent letters from prisoners who have been brought to the Lord through *New Wine* and have used it to bless others.

Mrs. Ellen Agre
Roseville, MN

Keeping the Home Pure

While reading Don Basham's article ("Spiritual Warfare in the Home," June), I started thinking about our three-year-old daughter, who had been tormented with fear for months. She was having nightmares and becoming rather rebellious.

God directed my attention to a wall hanging we had, and I really looked at it close for the first time. In the center was a lion's head surrounded by a two-headed eagle crisscrossed with swords—a symbol used in pagan worship! I began to pray in the Spirit, and I felt God's protection covering me. I removed the hanging from the house, and my husband destroyed it that evening and anointed the house.

Since that day, our house has looked lighter, felt lighter, and

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cessors for America, *BusinessGram*, *Vino
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New Wine Magazine seeks to promote the unity
and maturity of the Church and individual Chris-
tians by presenting sound biblical teachings and
testimonies from a variety of Christian authors.

New Wine will carefully consider all unsolicited
manuscripts, although we cannot return them
unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped
envelope. (Please note we do not publish poetry.)

our daughter has become a gentle, obedient little girl who is no longer filled with fear. From now on, we will screen every little thing that comes our way. God bless you, Don Basham, for obeying God's voice and writing this article when it was most greatly needed.

Cheryl Walters
Bowie, TX

A Good Witness

Thank you for your creativity in graphics and photography. I often read *New Wine* on the commuter train and catch fellow commuters checking out a bold heading or colorful photo.

Cindy Randles
Daly City, CA

Singing to the Lord

I was in Pittsburgh visiting my daughter last week when she received her first Hosanna! Music tape. We practically wore it out the next two days. It's beautiful! I've heard lots of beautiful music, but *the worship is there*, which is what's really important.

Julie Oldach
Erie, PA

Reaching Poland

I've been receiving your magazine for several months already and I thank God for your great ministry. Since I'm an English teacher in a grammar school, many young people have access to your magazines through me. You have already helped many in this country and you'll help more people soon. My church recently bought printing machines, and I'm going to translate many of your articles into Polish.

The personal testimonies as well as deeper studies of God's Word are very helpful. I'm especially grateful because as you know I can't pay you money for

the issues, but I am still receiving them.

I love you brothers and sisters and pray that your ministry is strong and fruitful.

Name withheld

Baptized in the Spirit

After reading your article "Signs and Wonders" (May), the interview with John Wimber, I sat near my reading desk and started crying and crying for about half an hour. At the same time I was praising God in a new tongue!

At first I did not know what had happened to me. Then I began to realize the Holy Spirit was convicting me of my secret sins and shameful past. The Spirit of Christ had also given me a new language to worship and praise Him in!

After the experience I felt a tremendous sense of the cleansing power of Christ and freedom from the burden and guilt of my sins.

Charlie Hai Yoon Chin
Setapak Jaya, Malaysia

"Dear New Wine" is your platform to express your point of view about a *New Wine* article, to pose a question, or to disagree with a point we've made.

If you'd like to respond to a specific article, to question a writer, or to share how God spoke to you or challenged you, this is your opportunity to do it. Send your letters to "Dear New Wine," P.O. Box Z, Mobile, Alabama 36616.

THE WORD

November 1985

I Believe in the Universal Church Because...

I. God's Government Reaches to the Ends of the Earth

A. The Lord possesses the heathen	Ps. 2:1-12	Nov. 1
B. The Lord is worshiped by the nations	Ps. 22:22-31	Nov. 2
C. The Lord is feared by the peoples	Ps. 67:1-7	Nov. 3
D. The Lord commands all to be saved	Is. 45:20-25	Nov. 4
E. The Lord's salvation is seen by all	Is. 52:7-15	Nov. 5
F. The Lord's greatness is known by all	Mic. 5:1-5	Nov. 6
G. The Lord will govern the earth in peace	Zech. 9:1-10	Nov. 7
H. The Lord redeems from every kindred and nation	Rev. 5:1-14	Nov. 8

II. The Church's Commission Is Universal

A. To all nations and every creature	Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:14-20	Nov. 9
B. From Jerusalem to the remotest part	Acts 1:1-11	Nov. 10

III. The Church's Response Was Directed Outward

A. "In one place"	Acts 1:12-2:4	Nov. 11
B. "From every nation under heaven"	Acts 2:5-41	Nov. 12
C. "At ease in Zion" before the persecution	Acts 4:23-37	Nov. 13
D. The scattered Church at work in Samaria	Acts 8:1-25	Nov. 14
E. The gospel extended to Ethiopia	Acts 8:26-40	Nov. 15
F. The first Gentiles baptized	Acts 10:1-48	Nov. 16
G. The church at Antioch	Acts 11:19-30	Nov. 17

IV. The Church's Growth Extended Throughout the World

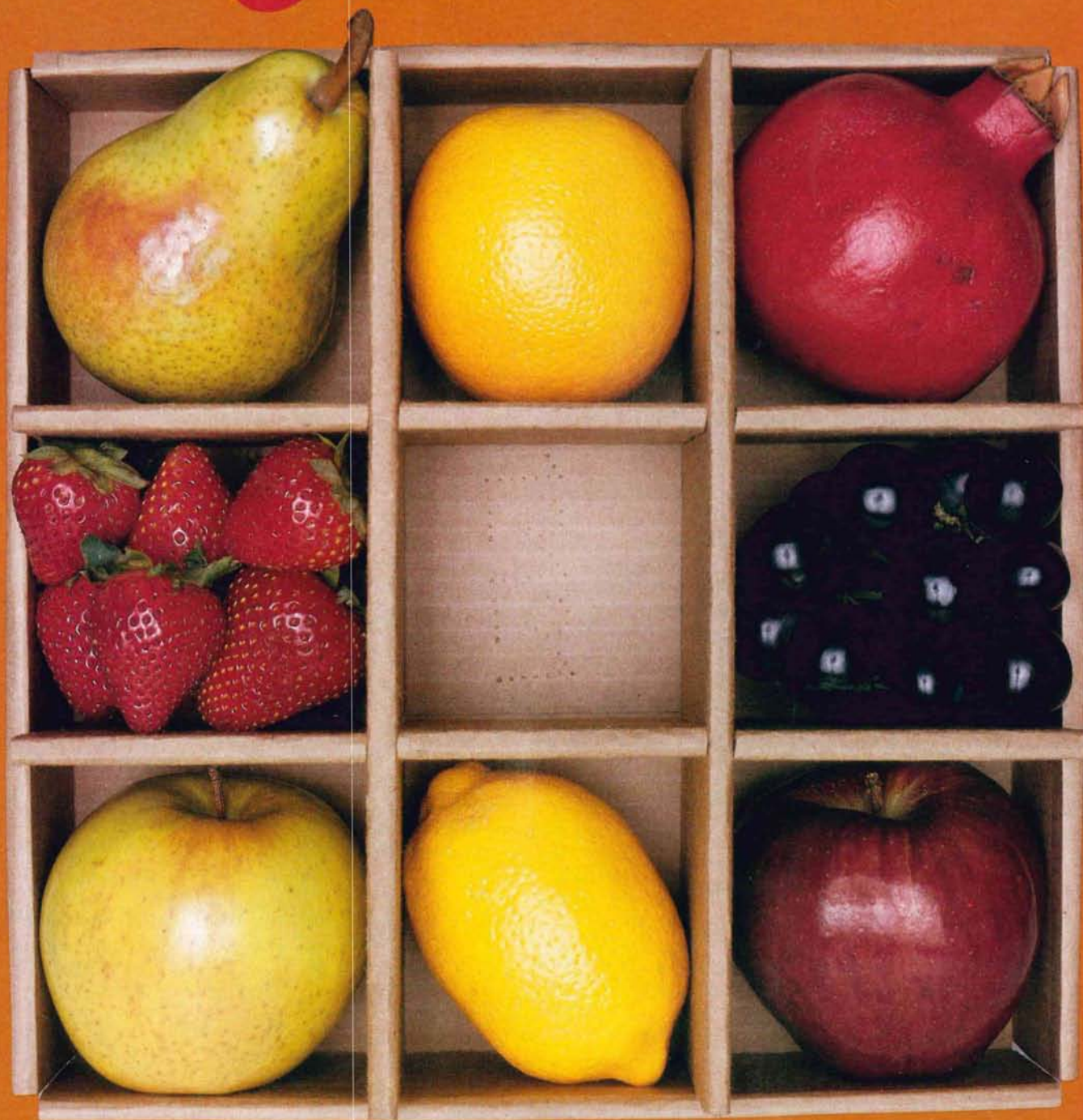
A. Cyprus and Pisidian Antioch	Acts 13:1-52	Nov. 18
B. Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe	Acts 14:1-28	Nov. 19
C. Philippi	Acts 16:1-40	Nov. 20
D. From Thessalonica to Athens	Acts 17:1-34	Nov. 21
E. Corinth	Acts 18:1-17	Nov. 22
F. Ephesus	Acts 18:18-19:7	Nov. 23

V. Apostle Paul Had a Global Vision

A. "I must see Rome also"	Acts 19:8-22	Nov. 24
B. "I must finish my course"	Acts 20:17-38	Nov. 25
C. "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die"	Acts 21:7-40	Nov. 26
D. "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense"	Acts 22:1-21	Nov. 27
E. "I obeyed the heavenly vision"	Acts 26:1-32	Nov. 28
F. "Keep up your courage . . . I believe God"	Acts 27:1-44	Nov. 29
G. "Salvation has been sent to the Gentiles"	Acts 28:1-31	Nov. 30

A monthly Bible study by Bruce Longstreth

JOY



Is this choice fruit of the Spirit missing from your life?

BY ERN BAXTER

Joy is not an easy word to define. As the old Scottish woman said, it is "better felt than telt." Yet that is not totally true, for joy has to do with the mind and conviction as well as the emotions. Like the Scottish woman, many Christians would be amiss in their explanation of joy. We know we are supposed to have it, but that's about as far as our understanding goes. More than having a good working knowledge of joy, however, we need to be able to experience it every day of our lives. That experience comes through understanding.

In our attempts to explain joy, we sometimes try to draw a contrast between happiness, as men generally understand it, and joy, as we Christians understand it. Although it is true that there is a difference between them, the difference is not in the emotional nature of the joy but in the source and stimulus of the joy. One may experience considerable happiness and pleasure from something that is completely illicit, and we would not think of this as being Christian joy. Yet the same set of emotions when stimulated by sheer righteous ecstasy are the means of expressing holy joy. The ultimate nature of joy is determined by its source and that to which the emotions are responding.

Two Kinds of Joy

There is a joy and a happiness experienced by non-Christians and there is a joy and happiness experienced by Christians. It is interesting that *Webster's Dictionary* uses a scripture to provide an example of joy: "I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:18).¹

To the Christian who has experienced both kinds of joy, the joy of his life before conversion, and then the joy of his new life in Christ, there is no question about which is the superior kind of joy. Beyond all argument the joy of the Lord is incomparable!

These two kinds of joy might be related to the descriptions of joy in the Scripture, where it is referred to as being "in the Lord" (see Philippians 3:1; 4:4) or "in the flesh." Any joy that comes from the realm of the flesh or self-gratifying behavior is referred to as "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). Obviously the pleasure that comes outside the Lord is seasonal and transitory and has no essential permanence. The joy of a Christian, on the other hand, goes on forever. Paul writes, "Rejoice evermore" (1 Th. 5:16). One essential difference between the joy under the lordship of Christ and the joy under the lordship of self is the difference between permanence and impermanence.

Joy or pleasure generated by self-indulgence is connected with

the kingdoms of this world, which are "passing away." Joy in the Lord is connected with the kingdom of God, which shall never pass away. This joy springs from basic well-being. As Paul says in Romans 14:17, "The kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is obvious that joy is the fruit of righteousness and peace. Therefore to experience this pure kind of emotional and situational well-being is to know righteousness, which results in peace and finds its emotional expression in joy.

Impaired Joy

Often, when Paul addressed churches that were in serious trouble from either indulging in gross sin or coming under the bondage of legalism, he found that their joy was impaired. When our basic understanding of and participation in righteousness is faulty, our peace will be disturbed and the result will be joylessness. To the Corinthians who had allowed gross sin to come in and contaminate the church, Paul says that while their faith remains valid their joy has been affected, and that he wants to help their joy (see 2 Corinthians 1:24). The manner in which he helps their joy is by correcting their unrighteousness.

Joy cannot be helped until the causes of its absence are dealt with. Therefore, Paul addresses



When our basic understanding of and participation in righteousness is faulty, our peace will be disturbed and the result will be joylessness.

the fornication, the division, and the doctrinal error as well as the other irregularities in the Corinthian church, all in an attempt not only to restore them to righteousness, but to joy as well. Their recovered joy will be a clear manifestation of restoration to righteousness.

As we look at the nature of biblical joy we find that although it is emotional, it must be soundly based on a clear understanding of one's right relationship to God. No superficial stimuli serve as adequate substitutes for the deep foundations of genuine joy. Genuine Christian joy is able to express itself in the most adverse circumstances because it originates in the historical acts of God, which affect us in our relationship to Him.

Paul, speaking to the Romans, prays for them:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13 NIV).

Joy here is based upon trusting

God. One cannot trust what he does not know about. Through the hearing of the gospel we have the revelation of God's plan for the forgiveness of our sins and our acceptance before Him in Jesus Christ. When we embrace this truth and make it our basic conviction for living, then we have put ourselves in line for that pure permanent joy that cannot be interrupted by lesser circumstances.

Our Lord Jesus puts this joy based on conviction above the joy based on accomplishment, for when His disciples returned from a mission rejoicing that the spirits were subject to them, He replied, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Lk. 10:20 NIV). What He seems to be saying here is that while the use of our authority and gifts may be intermittent, our relationship to God through Jesus Christ is unchanging. Therefore, although we may rejoice in what God does through us, our primary base of joy is our relationship with God. The joy of a Christian is firmly fixed in the unchanging fact of his relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

Three-dimensional Joy

This firmly founded joy appears to be three-dimensional. First, it has historical roots. Writing to the Romans, Paul says, "Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11 NIV). Our joy is based on the fact of Christ's completed redemption on the cross and in the resurrection, which provides our reconciliation to Him. Our joy rests solidly in that great historical event.

The second dimension is the present. Paul urges the Thessalonians to "be joyful always" (1 Th. 5:16 NIV). Because the basis of our joy is unchanging, the expression of our joy should be equally unchanging. Therefore, no matter what our circumstances may be at any given time, they shouldn't affect the basis of our joy. There are a number of scriptural examples of men who rejoiced in God even though their physical circumstances were adverse and painful.

The third dimension is the future. Addressing the Romans again, Paul says:

Through our Lord Jesus Christ...we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1-2 NIV).

When our Lord Jesus was going to His cross, He said to His disciples in the upper room, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (Jn. 16:20).

Although His death would cause the disciples great sorrow and the world would celebrate His punishment, in the resurrection their sorrow would be turned to joy. They may not have fully understood it, but He was providing a future ground for joy in the midst of the most terrible calamity. When He reappeared among them in resurrection, joy was the chief characteristic of their gatherings. But at the ascension when He announced He was to go away again, He provided the promise that He would return and that at His return, joy would know no bounds.

During the in-between time we must endure all of the varied experiences of life, many of which bring with them pressure and sadness, but in it all we have cause to rejoice, for the certainty of His glorious return. It is said of Him that He "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). On the cross, our Lord Jesus, in the midst of all the inexplicable agonies of body and soul, was upheld by an inner exultation that looked past His ordeal to the endless glory that would be His in the new order. He saw that the fruit of His suffering would be "a great multitude, which no man could number" (Rev. 7:9). Too often we become so engrossed with the pressure and pain of the moment that we miss the great

value of this future dimension of joy.

Despite Our Circumstances

This future dimension of joy provides one of the major differences between joy "in the flesh" and joy "in the Lord," as it relates to the whole matter of circumstances. To the carnal man, Christian joy is a mystery. He sees Christians who are experiencing physical and environmental pressures and yet by some secret source of happiness are able to rejoice in the midst of their trial. It must be very difficult for him to understand how "the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41 NIV).

A carnal man may endure such suffering stoically and philosophically. Certainly, there are records of men enduring suffering in this manner. Enduring it with joy, however, is reserved for the person whose source of joy is "independent of circumstances" (Phil. 4:11 Twentieth Century New Testament). The apostles were men who had been abused in every way, including physical punishment; yet they came out of their ordeal with great joy, because their joy was based on their relationship to the Lord Jesus.

Paul, describing the nature of his life and ministry, says that he is "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10 NIV). This is certainly paradoxical, and yet the Christian rightly instructed and related to truth can know the permanence of joy that comes from his relationship with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. On another occasion, the apostle says, "I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds" (2 Cor. 7:4 NIV). Here he is witnessing the success of the gospel and the growth of the young Christians.

Did You Know?

Did you know that we pray for our readers every day?

Each morning members of our staff meet to pray for requests sent in by readers. During this season of giving thanks, we want to thank the Lord for His response to those prayers and to share with you some of the answers we've received:

It's been some time now since I wrote you requesting prayers for my niece. Everything was wrong with her, but God has been kind and has heard the prayers you made for her. Today she's out of the hospital and has started school for this new term. Her illness had affected her whole being, but we have seen the goodness of God at work in her.

—J.M., Jamaica, West Indies

Had to take a minute to drop you a quick note to let you know my brother called me—after twenty months! He has been running from God, but was under such conviction to call home, so he did! Thank you for your prayers.

—K.M., Moorpark, CA

We're here to promote your spiritual growth, and praying for your needs is an important part of that mission. When you have a need, write us. We're thankful to the Lord for answering our prayers for our readers, and we thought you'd like to know. □



Charles Simpson on the Incarnation

Next Month in New Wine: The Mystery of Christmas

Charles Simpson urges us this Christmas to cut through the glitter and tinsel and to celebrate the essence of the season: the mystery of the Incarnation.

Don Basham looks at the lives of two little-known biblical characters who, although they appear only briefly in the story of Jesus' birth, set the stage for His life and ministry.

Charles Green, chairman of the Network of Christian Ministries, shares the exciting signs of unity he's seeing.

Also, our annual Christmas story, along with other features to help you celebrate the joy of the season.

All in the December *New Wine*

Although it is accompanied with much suffering and persecution, his joy knows no bounds because the source of his joy is not in circumstances.

On yet another occasion, Paul congratulates the Thessalonians, writing:

You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit (1 Th. 1:6 NIV).

Here, obviously, we are in the presence of a joy that man cannot know unless he is related to God, the source of such joy. The Thessalonians were enduring suffering, yet they were filled with joy because of the glorious stimulus of the Holy Spirit's witness to the truth of the gospel.

Relationship to the transcendent enables people to be joyful in the midst of trial. The writer to the Hebrews says:

You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions (Heb. 10:34 NIV).

This is strange ground for the man who is an earth dweller and bound by earth's horizons. But for the person who has entered into a relationship with God and is not bounded by time or circumstances, and who is an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, it is possible to suffer with joy the loss of the temporary and transitory as he tightens his embrace on those things that are eternal and unchanging.

There are many other scriptures that point to this paradox, and undoubtedly many of us who are Christians could write our own list as we think of the times

when disappointment and adversity could have crushed us if we were not joined to God through Christ. But in the midst of the adversity we know that God has redeemed us, that He is caring for us, and that He has ensured our future. Therefore, we experience great joy as we consider and realize how blessed we are to be a part of God's community of redemption.

Corporate Joy

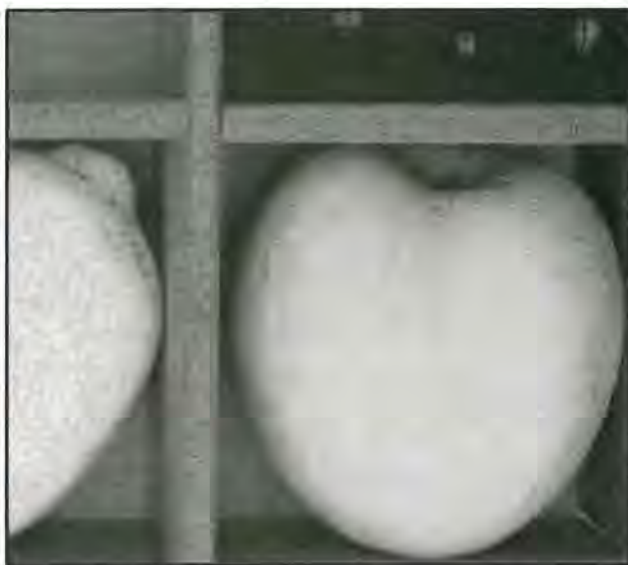
One final aspect of Christian joy often overlooked is that not only is it highly personal and private but to be fully orbbed, it must also be relational, or corporate. The Scriptures seem to make it clear that we do not rejoice alone, but that we belong to a community of joy.

We belong to a fellowship of happiness, and in this blessed company we share our situations and "rejoice with those who rejoice" and "mourn with those who mourn" (Rom. 12:15 NIV). Mourning is probably the exception, as joy is the rule of the Christian life. But there are times in the Christian life when a fellow believer is enduring distressing circumstances, as in the loss of a loved one, that we enter relationally into his temporary sadness, knowing that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

Therefore, our joy is not a selfish joy but a shared joy, and probably we can all testify to times of great spiritual exhilaration found in the company of fellow believers. At such times we experience heights of corporate joy that seem to be foretastes of the great ultimate intention of God in bringing His people into His presence, glorified and complete in Him. As we speak of relational joy we are probably touching on a legitimate joy source that we have not sufficiently appreciated.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 7,

The redeemed community must be careful to maintain righteous relationships and the pursuit of peace among its members, that joy might be in constant and full manifestation.



Paul speaks about the return of Titus after his visit with the Corinthians, and says that he and his companions were comforted not only by the joy of seeing Titus again

...but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever (2 Cor. 7:7 NIV).

It was a great joy to Paul to have his young associate Titus back with him, but even greater joy was experienced as Titus brought expressions and affirmations of love for Paul from the Corinthians.

Personally, I can think of no greater joy than that of seeing men and women coming to Jesus Christ and becoming a part of the community, and then watching them grow in God. There comes to mind at this moment the names of many who have been a source of great relational joy as I've witnessed their steady growth in God, and have felt the joy of knowing that God used me to

play some small part in their lives. Perhaps we underestimate the joy of our fellowship with one another and need to cultivate it more, not only for the sake of increasing the joy of others, but for the great corporate joy of the Christian company that in turn brings joy to the heart of God.

Paul makes reference to this kind of joy in a letter to the Thessalonians:

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? (1 Th. 3:9 NIV).

A great source of Paul's joy was the people whom he had been instrumental in bringing to Christ and nurturing toward Christian maturity.

Writing to the Philippians, he shows the place that joy should play in the corporate community when he exhorts them, "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord!" (Phil. 3:1 NIV). Unquestionably, a major component of the character of the Christian community is its togetherness in joy. When joy is missing, peace has been

disturbed, indicating a flaw somewhere in the corporate righteousness. The redeemed community must be careful to maintain righteous relationships and the pursuit of peace among its members, that joy, the end product of the kingdom of God, might be in constant and full manifestation.

Likewise, in our individual lives, we must maintain a righteous relationship with the Lord to experience His joy.

"The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." □

Footnote

¹Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1973), p. 989.



Ern Baxter, a long-time leader in the charismatic renewal, is a member of the Integrity Communications Board of Directors. He and his wife, Ruth, live in San Diego, California, where he is involved with South Coast Christian Fellowship. His time is divided between working with the fellowship and traveling in ministry.

"How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!" (Ps. 89:15 NAS).

And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people" (Lk. 2:10 NAS).

The joyful sound of the psalmist and the good news of the angel was the prophetic announcement that God's government had been established on the earth in the person of His Son, Jesus. Those who receive the proclamation and submit to the rule of the Son have truly heard the joyful sound. Through their holy living—not merely their salvation—they live a life full of joy.

All Christians have access to this joy, and many have experienced it, but the key issue for us is once we have it, not to let it get away.

An Everlasting Covenant

God makes an everlasting covenant with all who joyfully receive the announcement of Christ's government and submit to the commands of the King. Psalm 89 tells of the covenant that God made with David and his sons, which is a prophetic foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus and those who would believe in His name. The most important aspect of this covenant is God's promise that it will last forever. Even if we break the terms of the covenant, God promises to remain faithful to it:

"If his sons forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, if they violate My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, nor deal falsely in

My faithfulness" (vv. 30-33 NAS).

The scripture doesn't say, "If his sons forsake My law, I will cut them off and send them to hell." But God is often pictured as a kind of a big bearded ogre with a huge hatchet in His hand, who stands waiting for us to fail. And if we do, He's ready for us! He cuts us off, and we are finished. Over the years I have counseled literally hundreds of people who felt they had committed the unpardonable sin and were forever cut off from God.

I'm glad that the people who don't understand God's grace aren't in charge of the Lamb's Book of Life. I can hear them now: "I saw what you were doing. I saw you smoking. That's all for you! I'll take your name right out of my book!"

But notice that the scripture says, "If his sons forsake My law...I will visit their transgression with the rod" (a rod, not a hatchet). God says He will bring discipline, but He won't take His mercy from us. The body of Christ needs to understand that God's discipline does not cancel His covenant but corrects unrighteous behavior so that we can walk in the "righteousness, peace, and joy of His kingdom!" (see Romans 14:17). When we submit to His discipline, we once again receive the announcement of His government with great joy.

We Must Love Righteousness

When God disciplines us, He's trying to teach us something about His joy and its relationship to righteousness. Hebrews 1:9 says, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." The word *iniquity* makes us think of bank robbers and grandmother beaters. But that is not what is involved here.

Lawlessness means going our own way. It means acting as a man without law: "I don't want anyone to tell me what to do. I don't want to be restricted. I want to be free!"

Lawlessness is a real issue we face in our society. But Jesus, the King of God's kingdom, has another way: His yoke.

"See this hole?" He asks me.

"What is that?" I ask.

"Just put your head in the hole."

"I don't want to put my head in the hole!" I protest.

"Now, Bob, this is My yoke."

"Yoke?"

"It's all right. My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

"But it's a yoke!"

"Put your head in."

The yoke is a symbol of God's law. One of the great problems of our generation is that we have not understood what Jesus meant when He said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17 NAS).

The oil of joy, or the oil of gladness, spoken of in Hebrews 1:9 is given without measure to the person who learns this important lesson: to hate lawlessness and to love righteousness. I don't mean we should *tolerate* or *endure* righteousness. I mean we should *love* it and at the same time *hate* lawlessness. When I say, "Lord, I love righteousness," the Lord's response is, "If you continue to do that, I'll pour My joy all over you."

God's Proposition

To help us further understand how discipline and joy are related, let's take a closer look at the covenant God makes with each of His children. When I received Christ as my Savior, I came to God and ratified a covenant. He offered me a proposition, saying, "If you believe My

DON'T LET YOUR GET AWAY!



How to capture and hold on to it
BY BOB MUMFORD

When sin comes
into our lives, out
go our
righteousness,
peace, and joy.
The result is that
we're more
miserable than
ever.



Son died on the cross for your sins, you will be saved."

To this proposition, I enthusiastically responded, "It's a deal! I do."

And the Lord said, "I do."

My covenant with the Lord was like a marriage. I've never seen an unhappy marriage ceremony—they've all been wonderful. It's living together afterward that gets a little rough!

When we make our commitment to the Lord, He slips a ring called the baptism in the Holy Spirit on our finger. It's a sign and a seal (see Ephesians 1:13-14) that lets everyone know we belong to Him.

"Wow! Look at that ring!" I lovingly gush in the enthusiasm of the marriage ceremony. "It looks like the bottom of a soft drink bottle. Seven carats, glory to God!"

I've made my commitment. I've got my ring on. But now the adjustment starts.

"Bob," the Lord says to me, "now we've got to work out how you and I are going to relate and, Bob, I am the Lord, and I don't change."

I think if I had known about

that, I would have approached my commitment with a little more caution! But like most others, when I got saved I jumped in with both feet. I said, "I'll take it all, thank you—salvation, water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and whatever else has been provided!"

A Big Rubber Band

As the Lord begins to work in me and make certain adjustments in our relationship, it's important for me to remember that the covenant He made with me is binding. He's going to keep His Word, and I can't get away.

"That's scary. I don't want to be a Christian anymore!"

"That's all right," the Lord says. "I'll be waiting for you."

Some people have known the Lord, gone away from Him, and are now back with Him. They didn't go back because of *their* faithfulness, but because God's covenant love is like a big rubber band. When we made our commitment to the Lord, He took the rubber band from His heart and stretched it around our heart—and we were linked. We may try to run off, but one day we'll come

snapping back home again.

We need to understand this rubber band as it relates to backsliders. Our hope is in God's eternal covenant. Every parent with a wandering child and every mate with a backslid partner needs to see and pray for the big rubber band! It will snap people back, out of the direction and bondage in which they are snared.

Once while I was talking to a minister's son, he graphically described for me how God's covenant love functioned in his own life. He spoke of a dedicated dad and mom who trusted God for him. One evening while at a rather wild party, where he had been drinking and had smoked some marijuana, the presence of the Holy Spirit came down over him. Suddenly, he heard himself speaking in an unknown language, and tears and repentance followed in floods of joy. Others at the party were undisturbed—"like he was doing his own thing!" He told me that the continuous sense of God's love was what finally broke him. The rubber band of God's covenant love brought another prodigal home to the joy of the Father's house.

Kingdom Living

Some people might say, "Bob, you're teaching people to presume on God's grace." No, I would never do that. Actually, the challenge is to learn how to *rest* in His grace if we're ever going to go on in God. We have to have a good, clear foundation in the covenant love of God Almighty given to us in His Son. His covenant says, "My love is built to last forever."

God's unshakable love and His virtually unbreakable covenant exist to bring us into Kingdom living, which is a consistent walk with Him in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Our flesh, our will, and our per-

sonal desires are the biggest obstacles to our walk with Him and that is where He must make the necessary adjustments in our lives. Notice what Paul says to the Galatian Christians:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please (Gal. 5:16-17 NAS).

That means there are restrictions; there are laws. It means that God has a will, a purpose, a revelation, for our lives.

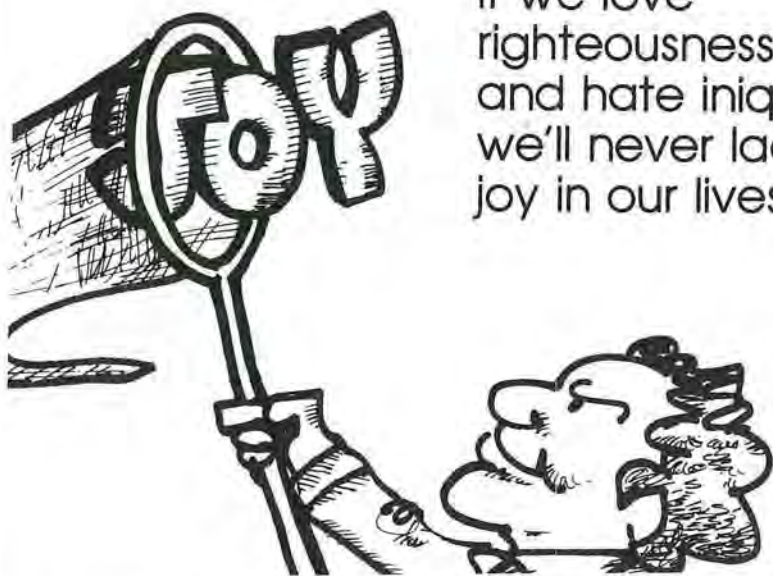
But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (vv. 18-21 NAS).

The scripture doesn't say, "...shall not go to heaven." Some people may not like this, but if God sends everyone to hell who has jealousy in their heart, only a few of us are going to be left.

Flesh Is Flesh

After so many years of preaching the gospel and ministering to people with problems, I have come to the conviction that human beings are adept at getting themselves in jams so complicated that only God could get them out.

Flesh is flesh whether it's



If we love righteousness and hate iniquity, we'll never lack joy in our lives.

saved or unsaved. When a Christian gets angry and kicks the grill out of his neighbor's car, his sin is no different from that of his unsaved neighbor who gets mad and kicks the grill out of the Christian's car. If a Christian commits adultery, his sin is no different from that of the unbeliever who commits adultery. If a Christian is jealous, angry, or tells lies, his sin is no different from that of the unsaved person who does those things.

It took me years to finally admit that Christians lie. I didn't believe that Christians would ever lie. I thought that when people got saved, they went to the altar, and the Lord reached down and pulled their "liar" out.

There is no question that He does reach down and pull some things out. Before I met the Lord, I smoked nearly three packs of cigarettes a day. When I met the Lord, He reached down in me and released me from the desire to smoke. I now wish He would have pulled some other things out as well. Others with whom I have talked wish He would pull their "smoker" out.

Paul writes, "Those who prac-

tice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He's not talking about heaven. If we're Christians with jealousy in our hearts, we'll still go to heaven when we die. There's no place else for us to go. We're redeemed by the blood of Jesus, saved by His grace. We are not talking about going to heaven; we are talking about Kingdom living, the joy experienced when we're walking under the government of God. The issue is hating lawlessness and loving righteousness, and receiving an abundance of His joy poured out upon us. When we walk under God's government, we have righteousness, peace, and joy resident in our lives.

A Closer Look

To see the real problem, let's take a closer look at the Christian with jealousy in his heart. Does this sound familiar? I've just finished reading my Bible and I'm all full of joy. I head out the door to go to work, and my neighbor drives by in a shiny new Oldsmobile Ninety-eight. I'm driving a 1952 Volkswagen, better known by some as a "little Nazi footlocker!"

New Orleans Conference Planned for July 1987

The North American General Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization will be held July 22-25, 1987, in New Orleans.

Ten years after the Kansas City Conference on Charismatic Renewal in the Christian Churches, which was attended by some 45,000 people, up to 75,000 believers will gather to hear well-known Christian leaders speak on the Holy Spirit and evangelism. The conference will attract Spirit-filled Christians from all backgrounds, including Catholic charismatics, classic

Pentecostals, denominational and nondenominational charismatics, and evangelicals.

Prior to the 1987 meeting, a leaders' congress will take place October 8-11, 1986, in New Orleans. Some 10,000 people are expected at that gathering.

The conferences are sponsored by the North American Renewal Services Committee. Vinson Synan is chairman of the steering committee organizing the meetings.

Further information on the conferences will be published in upcoming issues of *New Wine*. □

Suddenly, for some reason, all the joy I had just a few moments earlier is gone. My neighbor and I work at the same plant and draw approximately the same salary and yet....

When jealousy comes in, out go righteousness, peace, and joy. I stand there saved, but full of jealousy, and I say through clenched teeth, "Oh, I'm so glad for you!" Now, I have added a lie to my jealousy. The result is that I'm more miserable than ever. Saved, but miserable. I get in my little car, head for work, and in my frustration hit all the red lights. Suddenly there's an outburst of anger.

Beeeeep! beeeep! "Get that thing out of...."

Jealousy, lying, and anger have replaced righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—all, let me repeat, in a Christian.

Then, I arrive at work. For weeks I've been testifying to everyone all around the plant,

but now what do they see come steaming through the door?

But in spite of the lack of righteousness, peace, and joy in my life, I still haven't broken covenant with God. It's like a marriage: People can fight and still be married. They've got a covenant.

Anger doesn't break the covenant, nor does lying. The Lord didn't say, "Thou shalt not lie," because He wants to get us in trouble. Anyone knows that if we were allowed to lie, we could on many occasions stay out of trouble!

"Son, who dented the fender on my car?"

"I don't know, Dad. It must have been a demon."

The Lord says not to lie because He loves us. The Lord knows that if we tell one lie, we'll have to tell another one, then a third one to cover up the first two, and then a fourth one to cover up the first three. Then we've got to remember all four. When a lie comes into our life,

out go righteousness, peace, and joy. They just move outside and wait for us to repent, for us to say, "Lord, Lord, I have lost my joy. I feel miserable. My peace is gone. Please help me."

When we do, the Lord comes and says, "If you want your righteousness, peace, and joy restored, go to your father and say, 'I'm the one who dented the fender.'"

"But, Lord, that's not going to restore my joy. That's going to break my neck!"

"Well, that's the proposition."

"Then, I don't want it. You don't know my dad."

"Okay," the Lord says, and He steps aside, waiting, but taking His joy with Him.

As He walks away panic strikes. "On second thought, Lord, I'm ready....Dad, I'm the one who dented your car."

"I know, Son," he says. "I've been waiting for you."

"Dad, I really am sorry."

"Now, Son, it's not a matter of forgiveness. I forgave you before you even repented. What I want you to do now is a little thing called restitution."

"Resti—What?"

"I'm going to take the financial profit from your paper route for the next four months, and you can help with the repair bill."

"That's not in the Bible, Dad. The Bible says, 'Freely you receive, freely you give.'"

"That's one text. But the Bible also says some things about how to handle the property of others, and what it means to lie. You need to learn a lesson here about Christian character." It's not a matter of whether we're going to heaven or not. It's a matter of whether we're living in the kingdom of God.

I've learned not to trade my joy for a dented fender. I've learned not to trade my joy for the strong pleasure of getting jealous over a new Oldsmobile.

It's not worth it.

Some churches are miserable because of factions, envy, and jealousy. They're not going to hell. In fact, it has often puzzled me why every time a church splits, the Lord goes to both groups. I wish He wouldn't do that, but He does—because of His covenant love. Although we are unfaithful, He is still faithful.

"Holy to the Lord"

God disciplines us when we sin and yet remains faithful to His covenant for a reason. I believe that because of the Lord's discipline of His people, the day is upon us when the righteousness, peace, and joy of the kingdom of God will spread through us into the world. It should be evident that we need to *have* joy to *give* it.

In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the Lord." And the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the bowls before the altar. And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the Lord of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts in that day (Zech. 14:20-21 NAS).

The Lord is waiting for the day when "holy to the Lord" is inscribed on everything we do because He has written His laws in our hearts.

Some time ago I met a man named Gary who works for a rather large trucking business. I could see in my mind "Holiness to the Lord" inscribed on each one of those trucks. But I wondered what would happen if one of the truck drivers came to Gary and asked him to change the mileage on a report. "It was six-

teen thousand, but I need you to change it to fourteen thousand or I'm going to get in trouble."

But before Gary could say anything, the Lord would jump in. "Don't falsify that report, Gary!"

"I can't do it," Gary would tell that big burly truck-driver.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm more afraid of God than I am of you. And besides, I wouldn't trade my joy for anything!" In response to Gary's integrity, God stamps "Holiness to the Lord" on the truck and gives Gary an abundance of joy. It's God's Kingdom reward.

If we love righteousness and hate iniquity, God will pour on us the oil of joy and the anointing of gladness. We will never lack an abundance of joy as we continue to do His will. Joy, understood in Kingdom terms, affects us in every facet of life. All of us long to be able to take the message of Christ and His kingdom to a peo-

ple saturated with religion. Let the Lord take you into His gymnasium and train you in the ways of His righteousness, His peace, and especially His joy. □

Bob Mumford has served as dean of Elim Bible Institute in Lima, New York, and as a pastor, evangelist, and seminar teacher. Bob, who travels widely in ministry to Christians of all backgrounds, has also written a number of books about the Christian life. He is a member of the Integrity Communications Board of Directors and resides in San Rafael, California, with his wife, Judy, and their family.

For Further Study

If you are interested in more in-depth teaching on this subject, Bob Mumford has a four-tape series available that is an expanded version of this message. In it, he offers additional insight into the Christian's joy. See page 19 to order "Joy: The Mark of Maturity."



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Under the pressure of a new job and caring for her terminally ill mother, a woman finds God's joy.

BY EVELYN LAIRD

I tightened my grip on the steering wheel as I headed home from another difficult day at my new job. After seventeen years of being a wife and homemaker, I had begun a part-time job that required working on a computer. Learning to use it was the most frustrating experience I'd ever had. I had never

even been in the same room with a computer, and now I had to know how to work one!

As I drove along, in my weariness I asked God why He would choose someone as unqualified as me for this particular job. But this unanswered question had to wait as I got closer to my home and prepared myself for an even

greater task waiting for me there. My sister and I were taking care of my mother, who was extremely ill.

Eighteen months earlier the doctors had discovered breast cancer, and she went through surgery, radiation treatment, and chemotherapy. We were sure that she'd be fine, but our hopeful out-

look began to dim when the doctor informed us that the cancer had spread to her liver. There was no cure for this cancer, so it was only a matter of time before it would take her life. She continued chemotherapy treatments to slow the cancer's progress, but as the days passed, we could tell that the treatments were not helping, and her condition deteriorated rapidly.

Help Me, Lord!

The pressure of a new job and the stress of caring for my mother in the final stages of her painful disease left me physically exhausted. I began to cry out to God for an impartation of His strength to meet my needs. In the midst of this struggle, the song "The Joy of the Lord Is My Strength" once again came to mind, as it had so often during the past weeks. I thought about the scripture in Nehemiah 8:10 where the song came from, and determined to give it more attention during my prayer time with the Lord the next morning.

To me, that scripture had always meant that my joy and my strength were somehow coupled together. I believed that if I could be joyful enough, I could obtain the strength I needed. But the Lord showed me something totally different about joy. "Look at the verse carefully," He said. "Does it say, 'Your strength is your joy' or does it say, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength'?" I reread the verse and was surprised to find that I had misunderstood it for years.

The Lord often uses diagrams to teach me, and He gave me a graphic illustration of the origins of joy. He showed me a circle with "hearing, faith, and obedience" written at the top. On the right was written "the joy of the Lord"; on the bottom, "strength"; and on the left, "personal joy." He showed me that when I hear Him



and obey Him, it gives Him joy. His joy then produces *strength* in me, which in turn produces *joy* in me. That brings me back to the top of the circle, where I am ready and eager to obey Him again. When I obey Him and experience new strength and joy, I have more faith to be obedient when He speaks to me the next time. I realized that to live in perpetual joy I had to be perpetually obedient to Him.

Shortcircuiting God

I knew I needed divine strength to get through this time in my life, and God showed me that the only way I could get it was by being obedient to Him. There was no way around it. After learning this principle, I discovered if I tried to develop joy on my own, I would have to cut across the circle or go counter-clockwise around it. In so doing I would be choosing my own path and shortcircuiting God's strength in my life. He would not be joyful, and I would lose His strength and begin to operate in my own. As a result, I would experience depression, a lot of negative attitudes, and exhaustion.

It made good sense to me, and I knew of a perfect situation to try it out on—learning how to use

the computer at work. The first thing I did was repent of my lack of trust in God's direction and lack of faith that He had given me the ability to learn. In that simple act of repentance, my confidence was restored. I discovered when I returned to work the next day that my mind had a new capacity for learning. God had put me there to serve Him, and in obeying Him, I was freed forever from the frustration and intimidation of the computer.

God graciously taught me this important lesson about joy because He knew I would soon need it more than ever. One month after the computer conquest, a series of events occurred that could have left me devastated. My husband, Sam, had a heart attack, and I needed an extra dose of divine strength to get through that time. A month later my mother passed away, and shortly after that my grandmother died. And to top it all, just before my son graduated from high school, he developed a severe case of mononucleosis. I could have stoically stood in my own strength, or tried to muster my own joy to get through that intense time, but applying God's lesson of His joy and strength brought me through.

I have learned the importance of listening to and obeying the Lord's direction in everything—both large and small. When the Lord rejoices in the midst of His people, He gives to them His strength to accomplish every impossible task. □



Evelyn Laird is financial secretary for Gulf Coast Covenant Church in Mobile, Alabama, where she and her husband, Sam, live with their family.

Any of us can learn from those Jesus called the

"Least of These"

BY TOM GOETZ

The "least of these" is a term used by Jesus to describe people who are normally considered deprived. The naked. The hungry. The outcast. They are the ones to whom we give, not from whom we receive. That they are able to bestow upon us unique and valuable gifts never occurs to many. As a recipient, I know differently. In ways so subtle and subjective they are difficult to describe, our son—one of the least of these—has taught me some of the most profound lessons I've learned.

Treg was born July 4, 1974. My wife, Jeanne, and I adopted him when he was six days old. He was our first, and after waiting ten years for a child, we were so thrilled and in love with him we never noticed what was obvious to others. He wasn't developing like other children his age and was, in fact, a brain-damaged child.

When we first heard the diagnosis, we determined to do everything we could to give him a full, happy life. We wanted to affect him in a positive way and to develop his full potential. Little did we realize how much that small, vulnerable boy would affect and challenge our lives.

An area where he has challenged me is one that most Christians find quite difficult: letting the spirit rule the mind. Although it is a struggle for me, I've seen it happen easily in him.

I first became aware of Treg's spiritual sensitivity when he was

two or three years old. We would place records on the stereo and he would climb into his favorite chair to listen. Frequently, the records would be Christian music performed by a variety of artists. Some of it was worship music; some was simply entertainment.

I began noticing a pattern. When Treg would hear one of the worship albums, he would immediately go to his chair, where he would sit, rocking through the entire record. If the next record was worship, he would stay and listen to it as well. If it wasn't, he would go elsewhere to play. When another worship album would begin playing, he would return.

Intellectually, he had no way of knowing one album or artist from another. His only guide was his spirit, and in almost eleven years he hasn't failed to distinguish between worship music and entertainment.

We have a standard joke around our house that explains another way my son has challenged me. It goes like this: Marcus, our other son, gets the toy; Treg gets the box.

Watching him play contentedly with a piece of wrapping paper reminds me that satisfaction comes from within, not from the latest gadget or style. It reminds me that peace is not found in possessions but in simplicity, that covetousness and greed are their own punishment. His contentment makes me painfully aware of my own lack of it.



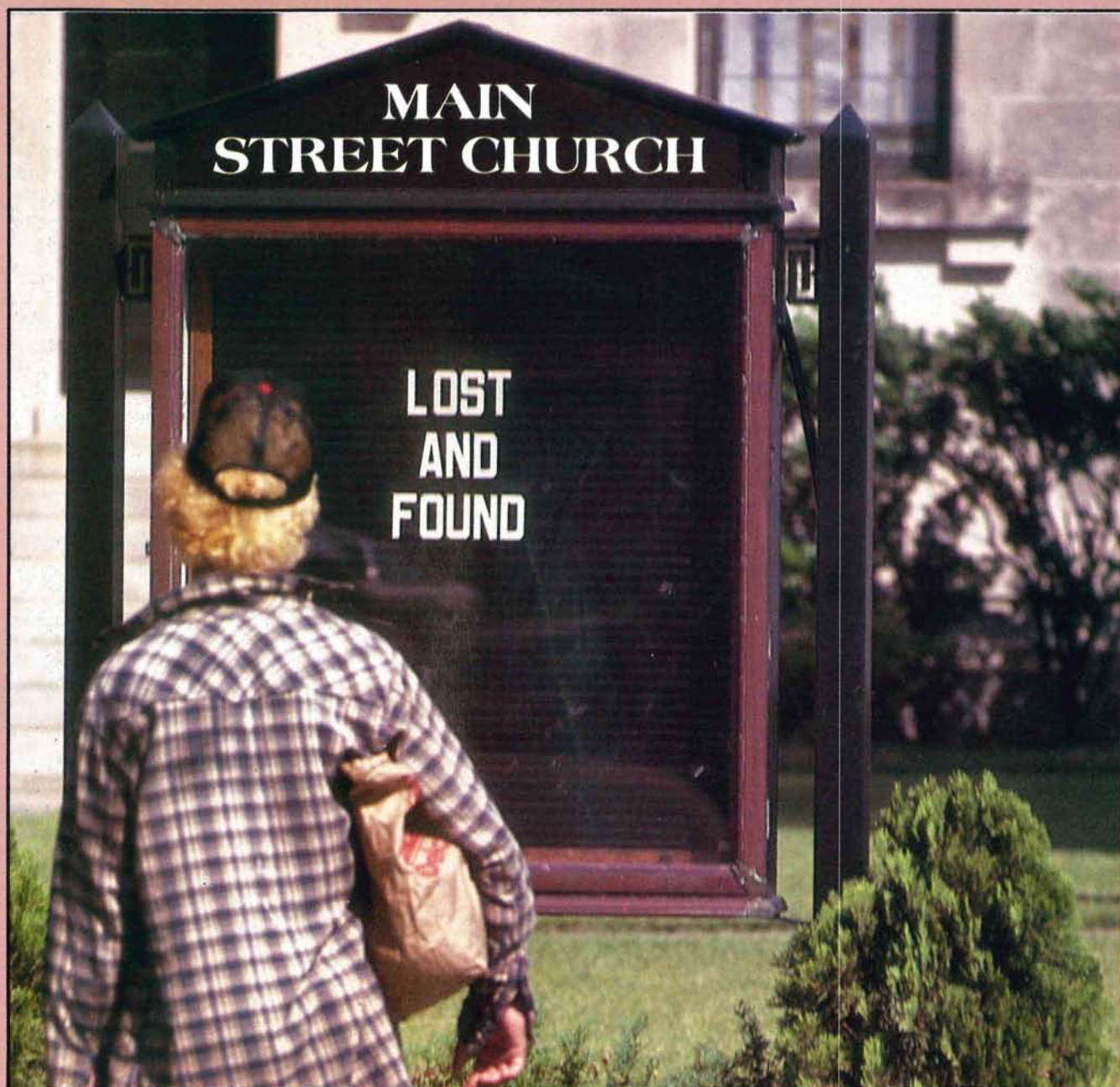
The Lord has used young Treg Goetz, right, to teach his family much.

More than anything else, my son has challenged me to see that true value is found not in productivity but rather in being. To an age enamored with superstars and intelligence, his existence is a slap in the face. To a society that considers the removal of the nonproductive as a right, he is a stinging reminder of genuine worth and dignity. His life is a statement from heaven. He stands as a prophet in the midst of moral chaos and proclaims the heart of God.

Who could ask more of a son? Not I. My wish is that I might stand by his side and do the same.

The world calls my son handicapped and decides that he will never produce much of value—certainly, that he will never teach another. But that isn't true. I know that God chooses the foolish to confound the wise, the weak to shame the strong, the vulnerable to touch the hardened. I know that if we choose to, any of us can learn from those whom Jesus calls the "least of these." □

Tom Goetz is a New Wine reader who lives in Spokane, Washington.



Heaven rejoices when the Church becomes

The Lost and Found Department

BY BRUCE LONGSTRETH

And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble..." (Lk. 15:2 NAS).

When we invent a word by imitating the natural sound associated with the object or action involved, it's called onomato-

poeia. *Tinkle* and *buzz* are good examples—the tinkle of a bell and the buzz of a bee. The verse above has a classic example of onomatopoeia. It's the Greek word for "grumble"; notice what the word *grumble* does to your face when you speak it. It tends

to wrinkle the forehead, compress the eyebrows, and turn down the corners of the mouth.

It's not a very pleasant word in English but in the Greek it's worse. The Greek word is *goguzo*. Imagine the scribes and Pharisees as they murmured

against Jesus: "This man receives sinners and eats with them, and He's supposed to be the Messiah? *Gogguzo, gogguzo, gogguzo....*"

Jesus' response to the scribes and Pharisees was to tell them three short parables. The first was about the lost sheep:

"What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one

sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Lk. 15:4-7 NAS).

He then tells them the parable of the woman who rejoices upon finding the coin that was lost, and says, "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v. 10 NAS).

Finally, there is the parable of the father and prodigal son. Notice the words of the father to the elder brother:

"But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours [and I imagine Jesus using a sweeping gesture toward the tax gatherers and sinners] was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found" (v. 32 NAS).

The grumbling of the self-righteous stands in stark contrast to another more important aspect of these scriptures: the joy of Jesus. His joy is the reason the sinners and tax collectors were attracted to the one Isaiah called, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3 NAS). If our goal as Christians is to become "like Christ," then we must exemplify His joy. Rather than grumbling and murmuring like the scribes and Pharisees, we must find the joy that overcomes circumstances and display it to those around us. We find that kind of joy in the life of Jesus.

The Joy of Jesus

As we examine the Scriptures, we find that Jesus often spoke of joy. One of the most remarkable passages is at the conclusion of His teaching in John chapter 15, where He teaches that He is the vine and we are the branches. He says, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (v. 11 NAS).

What is interesting is that Jesus spoke this as the most difficult hour of His earthly sojourn approached. The disciples were competing for the number 1 slot; Peter was sulking because the Master had questioned his commitment; Judas had gone out into the night, clutching the price of betrayal in his fist; Thomas was still doubting; Philip was questioning; and no one seemed to have a clue as to what was going on. But Jesus said, "I have said these things to give you My joy."

As I read these words, I'm puzzled. "Lord, how can You possibly be joyful? What gives You that inner conviction that this wretched place, this barren wilderness, this trying time, this disappointment, is the opportune moment to talk about joy? I don't understand, Master. Please

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The Source of His Joy

To understand the source of His joy, we need to expand the context of these words a little more. In John chapter 14, Jesus tells the eleven about a place He is preparing for them—a place where He once lived, a place where He will soon return. He calls the place "My Father's house," and says He is going there to make room for them. This is a secure place, a heavenly place. It has always been so for Jesus, and now He's making room for many more guests. He is saying, in effect, "What I'm about to do for you will forever make a place for you."

Then, John chapter 15 talks about the vine and the branches, a grafted place in the Lord Jesus. The disciples would be like Him; His life would flow through them; and their growth and productivity would be supervised by the Father Himself.

These two figures of speech, the Father's house and the Father's vine, speak of the Lord's joy in relationship. What He was about to do would bring those He loved into an eternal relationship with Himself and His Father. What He had always enjoyed with the Father, He was bringing His eleven friends to enjoy as well. In all this we see the source of the joy of Jesus: relationship.

In John chapter 17, our understanding of His joy increases as we overhear His prayer to the Father for the disciples. In verse 13, He says, "These things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves" (NAS). He is returning home by way of the cross to receive a crown of glory. He will soon enter the presence of His Father and now He prays "that they may have My joy made full in themselves."

Most social clubs are organized to keep the joy contained and uncontaminated; not so with the Father and Son. The fullness of their joy was based on "the more the merrier."

Again, Jesus' joy is connected to the relationship He had with His Father. But it didn't stop in knowing that He was returning to His Father; His joy was also in declaring that those who were now with Him could enjoy the same kind of relationship with the Father He had known.

"Father, I have declared My relationship with You in the world that My joy—the joy of what I have with You—will be made full in those who get to know Us" (verse 13, free translation). He also prays for those who will come to know the joy He has with His Father through the word of the disciples (see verse 20).

Joy to the World

The joy of Jesus was joy He had through unbroken fellowship with the Father, but it went much further than that. He found eleven men to share His joy and that increased what He had with the Father a thousand times.

But the vine was even larger than those eleven shoots; the house had room for more than eleven additions. Jesus was saying throughout the Gospel of John, "I have declared Your holy, righteous name in the world that joy might abound—not only here, but in the whole earth!"

The fullness of joy shared by Father and Son was the joy of their fellowship expressed in the earth in a way that would bring an innumerable host of redeemed sinners home to the Father. Jesus' joy was the joy of reconciliation. Paul writes: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19 NAS). God was bringing a lost world into a fellowship that was previously known only by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They weren't stingy about it, and didn't feel threatened by it. Most social clubs are organized to keep the joy contained and uncontaminated; not so with the Father and Son. The fullness of their joy was based on "the more the merrier."



Man was lost and the creator groaned until He could stand it no longer and sent His Son so that He might find and bring back that which was lost.

It pleased the Father to bring many sons to glory (see Hebrews 2:10).

Lost and Found

Man was lost and the creator groaned until He could stand it no longer and sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, not counting their trespasses against them so that He might find and bring back that which was lost (see Romans 8:3). The pain of losing something precious is something most everyone can identify with. It's much stronger and intense than the emotions we feel when we merely misplace something. I misplace my car keys, sunglasses, pens, and such on a regular basis. But I lost my wallet once. I get mad when I misplace something. I get close to being physically sick when I lose something I treasure.

We ran an article in the February issue of *New Wine Magazine* by William Watts, who told the story of the loss of his wife's wedding ring in the surf along the shore of an ocean. The feelings of despair, the tears shed at night, were for more than "just a ring"; this was a family treasure, a symbol of a precious covenant.

It was gone!

"Weeping may endure for a night," but for the Watts family "joy came in the morning" as they spied two men with metal detectors standing in the surf examining the ring they had found buried under several feet of water and half a foot of sand and silt. "Rejoice with me; that which was lost is found."

I remember a friend sharing about the panic he felt when he lost his youngest son in a shopping mall in Dallas. There were endless shops and hallways and thousands of people—all of them "kidnapers." His son was missing! As he searched frantically, he suddenly spied his lost, crying little boy. "Rejoice with me; I have found my son."

Jesus said, "I have declared these things in the world for the sake of My uncontainable joy" (Jn. 17:13, free translation). "These things" are more than the discussion with the eleven at the last supper. John's entire Gospel was written about the things Jesus did that we might believe, and in believing be restored to fellowship with God. To see this reconciling ministry, this uncontainable joy of Jesus expressed in the world, let's look at John's Gospel, beginning with the second chapter, and watch as He brings sinful men home to His Father.

Water Into Wine

In John chapter 2, the water is changed into wine "and His disciples believed in Him" (v. 11 NAS). In John chapter 3, a ruler of the Jews finds the door to the kingdom of heaven. In John chapter 4, we meet a Samaritan "dog," a woman who brings a whole town out to meet Jesus, saying, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done" (v. 29 NAS). In John chapter 5, a lame man is healed, and in John chapter 6, five thousand are fed.

A woman caught in the very act of adultery, John chapter 8, is forgiven, and in John chapter 9, we pause to see a man blind from birth receive his sight. This is his simple testimony: "Whether He [Jesus] is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (v. 25 NAS). In John chapter 10, the "good shepherd" lays down His life for the sheep, and in John chapter 11, a man is restored to life after being in his grave for four days. In John chapter 13, Jesus gathers the disciples into a room for a meal, and after washing their feet, says in John chapter 15, "Let Me give you My joy."

"And both the Pharisees and scribes began to grumble, saying, 'This man receives sinners

LOST AND FOUND

and eats with them' " (Lk. 15:2 NAS). But for Jesus it was His joy. When sinners repented, diseases disappeared, and demons fled, He could hear the angels sing and feel the Father's heart rejoice. And when He faced the cross, He knew that in this final act, lost men could find their way into the fellowship the Father had longed to see from the beginning of the world.

Has His joy become ours, or do we sit self-righteously in an insulated little group, murmuring about the terrible condition the world has gotten into? Has He not, in fact, loved and cared especially for us that we might this day fully enter into His joy?

Brought Back to God

If we have truly been given our Master's joy—His message of reconciliation—then the Church has in effect become the lost and found department of the kingdom of God. There should be a sign in front of every church, saying, "Lost and Found Department." If it's the "First Church," or "Main Street Church," the desperate sinner might not get the right idea. But if it's the place where the "lost are found," hope springs up and sinners find the joy of being brought back to God.

There was a television program called *The Finder of Lost Loves*. The plots for the program sprang from the idea that valuable relationships had been severed and that people who wanted these relationships restored often needed help in being reunited with those who were the source of their joy.

When the Church comes together, it does so as "the finder of lost loves." The joy of its ministry is seeing the lost found. When the congregation gathers for worship and fellowship, its joy should know no bounds. The joy of the angels, the Father, and

the Son combines with the joy of the saints as sinners are brought back to God.

Barbecued Sinners

In the spirit of reconciliation and Jesus' joy, we once had a sinner-for-dinner picnic at our home. We didn't do anything special except invite about fifty neighbors over for barbecued chicken. A friend who played in a bluegrass band brought his group over, and about thirty-five of my neighbors came. I introduced myself as a new pastor in town and said that I hoped we would become friends, and if they ever wanted to get together again, we were available. It was the opening of a door to that neighborhood.

I think if I listen carefully, I can hear a distant "...gogguzo, gogguzo, gogguzo. That doesn't sound like evangelism to me."

But the joy of Jesus was being part of the process that brought lost men back to the Father. Each step in the process is cheered by the heavenly hosts, and every sinner who repents and is converted is cause for rejoicing in the courts of the King.

In Acts 13:52, it says that as the disciples preached the gospel, they "were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (NAS). The joy of the disciples and the joy of Jesus was the joy of running a lost and found department, the joy of bringing the lost into a relationship with the Father. One group murmured; the other knew the joy of the Master. We have been given the message of reconciliation. We have been given the joy of Jesus. □

Bruce Longstreth graduated from Simpson College in San Francisco and did graduate study at Golden Gate Seminary, Mill Valley, California. Besides serving as editor of New Wine, Bruce is editor of Fathergram, a newsletter ministry to fathers. He and his wife, Janet, have two children.

If we truly have our Master's joy—His message of reconciliation—then the Church has in effect become the lost and found department of the kingdom of God.

HOUR THE POWER

How we can revitalize our daily time with the Lord

Part 2 of a 2-part series

BY LARRY LEA

Many people desire a better prayer life but don't know how to achieve it. When I obeyed the call to pray, the Holy Spirit showed me the secret of a strong prayer life, which transformed my desire without action to daily discipline, and then to delight.

The secret is simple. What we have traditionally called the Lord's Prayer has become a model prayer for me. In this prayer, Jesus lists six vital topics that we should cover in our daily prayer time. Last month, we examined the first three topics, and this month we will look at the final three.

Forgive Us Our Debts

Topic 4: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Mt. 6:12). Often in the first part of our prayer time as we thank our Father for the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit points out a sin that we need to confess, or someone we need to forgive. Although we may deal with these specific sins when they come to our attention, it is important to bring our relationships and attitudes before the Lord when we pray, "Forgive us our debts." I do it by repeating the prayer of David:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and

lead me in the way everlasting (Ps. 139:23-24).

When something comes to mind, I confess it and claim the promise of 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The word *confess* in this verse means "to speak the same thing." We must agree with what God says about our sin and be willing to turn from it.

It is not sufficient, however, that we only ask God to forgive us. We must also forgive others as often as we want to be forgiven. Immediately after giving His model prayer, Jesus adds:

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt. 6:14-15).

In Matthew chapter 18, we find a graphic illustration of this principle. Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (v. 21). Peter really felt anointed! He thought that forgiving someone seven times was exceedingly generous.

But Jesus' answer surprised Peter. "I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven" (v. 22).

Jesus taught that we must forgive as many times as we are offended, because that is how many times the Lord is ready and willing to forgive us. Jesus then told a parable about forgiveness. A servant who owed a king ten thousand talents—about ten million dollars by today's standards—begged the king to have patience with him, and the king, moved with compassion, completely wiped away the debt. But instead of being grateful, the servant went out and grabbed a man who owed him a hundred pence—about twenty dollars—and insisted he pay his debt. When the man said he couldn't, the servant threw him into prison. The king found out about the servant's actions, called him back, and turned him over to the tormentors (see verses 23-24).

Jesus used this parable to teach at least four lessons: First, our debt of sin against God is greater than any debt anyone will ever owe us. Second, when we refuse to forgive another person, we place that individual in bondage. Third, we are to forgive at the same level that we are forgiven by God. Fourth, if we choose to keep a record of wrongs and bear a grudge, we will live with tormenting memories and demonic oppression until we release the person and forgive.

Each morning as we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we
continued on page 32





A Good Land

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land...a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything....

"When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you."

(Dt. 8:7, 9-10 NAS)



Prayer

continued from page 28

forgive our debtors," we should determine that we will forgive those who wrong us that day. We shouldn't wait until we are in the heat of emotional conflict to decide how we will react. If we have already willed on our knees to forgive, it is not so hard to forgive when we are standing face-to-face with someone who has wronged us.

I would be the most bitter thirty-four-year-old preacher in the world if God had not indelibly written the message of forgiveness on my heart. When Jesus forgave me, I in turn forgave my dad, who had been an alcoholic for twenty-five years. All my unforgiveness and bitterness disappeared, and God saved my dad two years later.

As we begin to forgive those who have wronged us, we are freed to experience new spiritual liberty, victory, and joy.

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Topic 5: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Mt. 6:13). When Jesus instructed the disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," He was telling them to pray that forces beyond their control would not lead them into trials. He was also teaching them to watch and pray against entering into temptation through their own carelessness or disobedience.

As Jesus faced the prospect of the cross, He Himself prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mk. 14:36).

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had cautioned the disciples to pray lest they enter into temptation (see Luke 22:40). But when He arose from a time of prayer, He found them not praying, but sleeping (see verse 45). Before the

Jesus knows our weaknesses, which is why He instructed us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation."



night was over, at least one of the disciples gave in to temptation: Peter denied being Christ's disciple, swore he didn't even know Him, and then wept bitterly because he had failed the Lord.

Jesus knows our potential weaknesses also, which is why He has instructed us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." As children of God, we do not have to learn everything the hard way. We may be instructed, warned, and trained by His Word and the examples of others (see 1 Corinthians 10:11). God desires for us to learn that way rather than by discipline or difficult personal experience.

Jesus also taught His disciples to pray for deliverance from evil. Specifically, as we through prayer put on the whole armor of God, we build a hedge of protec-

tion around ourselves and stand firm in the victory Christ has already won.

The armor of God is our only defense against the wiles of the devil. We must put on each piece of armor, as outlined in Ephesians 6:14-17, by believing and confessing the promises of God. Each day, I prepare myself to stand against Satan by girding my loins with truth. "Jesus," I pray, "You are my truth. You are the way, the truth, and the life" (see John 14:6).

I put on the breastplate of righteousness, saying, "Jesus, You became sin for me that I might be made the righteousness of God in Christ. You are my righteousness" (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

I place on my feet the preparation of the gospel of peace, declaring, "Jesus, You are my preparation—my readiness—for I can do all things through Your strength" (see Philippians 4:13).

I take the shield of faith, and say, "Jesus, through Your name I withstand the fiery darts of the wicked. The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in You, who loved me and gave Yourself for me" (see Galatians 2:20).

I put on the helmet of salvation with, "Jesus, You are the author of eternal salvation for all who obey You. You cover my head in the day of battle" (see Hebrews 5:9 and Psalm 140:7).

I take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, saying, "Jesus, You are the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. You are my living Word" (see John 1:14).

This is how I begin each day: putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and readying myself to fight the good fight of faith.

Next, I pray a hedge of protection about myself and my loved ones, according to Psalm 91:2-3:

I will say of the Lord, He is my

refuge and my fortress, my God, on Him I lean and rely, and in Him I (confidently) trust! For [then] He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence (AMP).

Psalm 91 goes on to give us three reasons why we can claim God's protection. We can claim it "because you have made the Lord your refuge, and the Most High your dwelling place" (v. 9 AMP). To invoke God's protection, we should make the Lord our habitation. Psalm 22:3 says, "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." As we sing praises to the Lord, He dwells among us, enthroned upon our praises. He inhabits our praise.

We can claim God's protection also "because he has set his love upon Me" (Ps. 91:14 AMP). We should set our love upon the Lord. But we, like Martha in the story of Luke chapter 10, are anxious and troubled about many things, and forget the "one thing that is needful": focusing our love on Him. The Holy Spirit desires to help us set our love upon the Lord. Then, we can cling to Him in absolute trust and He will be our protection.

Finally, we can claim protection "because he knows and understands My name" (v. 14 AMP). We must know His name. Proverbs tells us, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Pr. 18:10). In Topic 1 of the Lord's Prayer, we learned that the Lord's name signifies not only who He is, but also what He wants to be in our lives: righteousness, sanctification, peace, presence, healer, provider, banner, and shepherd. We must submit to what He wants to do and be in our lives, and acknowledge that His name is a strong tower.

We should be certain each day

May we never enter or leave the Lord's presence without offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.



that we are walking in these three bases for God's protection. Then, we can stand in our armor and declare by faith, "You are my refuge, my fortress, my God. In You do I trust." Clothed in God's armor and encircled by His hedge of protection, we can stand secure in the victory Christ has won for us.

For Thine Is the Kingdom

Topic 6: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever" (Mt. 6:13). As we examine the Lord's Prayer from beginning to end, we discover that it opens and closes with praise. Praise is the most dynamic commandment in God's Word.

In the Old Testament, seven levels of praise are expressed by seven Hebrew words. *Todah* means "to extend hands in

thanksgiving." *Yadah* is "to worship with extended hands, to throw out the hands, enjoying God." *Hallel* means "to be vigorously excited, to laud, boast, rave, celebrate." *Zamar* means "to pluck the strings of an instrument, to praise with song." *Barak* is "to bless, to declare God the origin of power for success, prosperity, and fertility, to be still." *Tehillah* is the word for "singing in the Spirit" or "singing psalms." *Shabach* means "to commend, to address in a loud tone, to shout."

Obviously, the expression of man's worship to God did not originate in 1909 with the Pentecostal movement! Praise has always been a mark of the people of God. Clearly, there are many acceptable ways to express our love, gratitude, and worship of God.

Jesus instructs us to return to praise after we have brought our petitions before the Father. But there is also significance in the words He uses: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever."

Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32). Paul, in Colossians 1:13-14, tells us that God our Father has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has brought us into the kingdom of His Son. When we pray, "For Thine is the kingdom," we should praise God because He has invited us to be participants in His kingdom. We can declare: "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18).

The Lord has also made us participants in His power. He gives power to the faint (see Isaiah 40:29). He gives us power to attain wealth (see Deuteronomy 8:18). We are kept by the power of God (see 1 Peter 1:5). He

will raise us up by His mighty power (see 1 Corinthians 6:14). Jesus promised:

"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Lk. 10:19).

He also said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8). We can praise God because He has invited us to be participants in His power.

Jesus also taught us to pray, "For Thine is...the glory." God's glory is the manifested perfection of His character, especially His righteousness. All men fall short of God's glory (see Romans 3:23), but Jesus, through His suffering for the sins of mankind, brought many sons unto glory (see Hebrews 2:9-10).

As believers behold the glory of the Lord—the character and ways of God exhibited through Christ—they are changed into His image (see 2 Corinthians 3:18), and the character and ways of the Father and Son are formed within them. Is it any wonder that Paul charges believers to "walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Th. 2:12)? We should also praise God because He has invited us to be participants in His glory.

The kingdom, power, and glory all belong to our Father. They're all His, yet He shares them with us, because of the provision of His Son. The life blood of Jesus has made all blessings possible. May we never enter or leave the Lord's presence without humbly bowing before Him and offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

On to Delight

As we pray through these

As believers behold the glory of the Lord, they are changed into His image, and the character and ways of the Father and Son are formed within them.

topics outlined in the Lord's Prayer, we soon find ourselves easily tarrying an hour or more with the Lord, and our prayer time transforms from desire to discipline to delight. It is God who gives us the desire to pray. Psalm 65 says, "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee" (v. 4). A holy desire comes from deep within and causes us to say, "I want to know You, Lord, more than anything else in this world. I'm going to discipline my flesh. I'm going to get out of my bed earlier in the morning and bow my knees before You."

Some people tell me, "This really sounds good, but I don't have an hour to spend in prayer." Everyone has an hour. We can reorder our priorities and find an hour to tarry with the Lord. If one is not disciplined enough to spend an hour in prayer, he should spend as much time as he can, adding to it all through the day. He should ask God to make prayer the top priority in his life.

Something supernatural happens when we begin to pray an

hour each day. Life takes on new purpose as we set, maintain, and pray our priorities. We discover new dimensions of praise as we make powerful declarations based upon the Lord's names and promises. We experience God's abundant provision as we pray in our daily needs. We enjoy new spiritual liberty and victory as we set our will to extend love and forgiveness to those who hurt us. And we experience divine safekeeping as we put on the whole armor of God and pray the hedge of protection about ourselves and our loved ones. Prayer is no longer drudgery or ritual. Instead, it is a dynamic, delightful encounter with the living Lord.

Let me encourage you to begin today to fulfil the Holy Spirit's deep desire within you for a consistent prayer life. Start now to apply the principles set out in these two articles and you will be amazed at the dramatic increase in the effectiveness of your prayer ministry and the deepening of your relationship with the Lord. □

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Larry Lea, pastor of Church on the Rock in Rockwall, Texas, ministers on prayer in churches across the nation. He and his wife, Melva, have three children and live in Rockwall.

For Further Study

Larry Lea has a seven-tape series, from which this article was taken, called "Could You Not Tarry One Hour?" It's available from Church on the Rock, and comes with a 122-page study guide. To order, send \$35 to Church on the Rock, P.O. Box 880, Rockwall, Texas 75087.

A cookie tycoon rounds up the neighborhood

Getting to Know Our Neighbors

BY BRUCE LONGSTRETH

I watched my perky pigtailed four year old skip confidently out the door to sell cookies to the neighbors. Abby was taking part in a school fundraising project that parents are asked to help with each year.

As I watched her leave, I must admit that I feared the outcome. "O Lord," I whispered, "You've had experience in 'sales.' Please don't let that little cherub be too disappointed at the neighbors' responses. And if it be Thy will, let her sell at least one box of cookies."

For three evenings my little chatterbox joyfully went out on sales calls all around the neighborhood. After the final evening, she bounded into the family room, plopped down on my lap, and proudly announced, "Daddy, I sold \$400 worth of cookies. Isn't that great?"

I was a mixture of emotions: unbelief, pride, and awe.

My wife explained how it happened. She had gone with her every night, but stayed out of sight as Abby went up to the door. All alone, that three-and-a-half-foot, thirty-five-pound sales dynamo met the neighbors and boldly asked, "You wanna buy some cookies?" I know I'm her daddy, but who could refuse such a sales pitch from an exuberant

little kid?

What impressed me the most, however, was not the cookie sales but the neighborliness of the neighbors. People wanted to talk. "Little girl, have we ever met you before?" "Where do you live?" "You're about my daughter's age. How about you and her playing together sometime?" And when they spied Mom hiding behind a tree, they wanted to get better acquainted. It made me realize that people don't really want to be "left alone." They want to meet the "people next door"—if only they could find a way to break the ice.

After the cookie sale episode, my wife and I discussed ways we could meet the neighbors. Some we've tried; some have been done by friends of ours. Here are a few of them:

1. *Sales.* In addition to garage sales and rummage sales, there are housewares and art sales, and cosmetic, health food, and vitamin parties. All are great ways to get better acquainted with our neighbors. The selling isn't as important as the getting together.
2. *Evening walk.* Taking the "tribe" around the block each evening is another way to meet people. After the neighbors see us outside on a regular basis, it won't be long before they wave

and strike up a conversation.

3. *Helping hand.* When new people move in, bake a loaf of bread or stop by to find out if they need anything. Be prepared to recommend the "butcher, baker, and candlestick maker" most used by the natives.

4. *Recognition.* A good reason to subscribe to the local newspaper (other than for the puppy or parakeet) is that our neighbors will appear in it from time to time. Stop by and offer congratulations or encouragement.

5. *Fellowship meetings.* PTA, Bible study, self-help, and community-help meetings are great ways to get neighbors together.

6. *Community service.* One man I know volunteered to serve on a pool committee, and in the process got acquainted with every family within three blocks of his house.

7. *Block party.* Our family will never forget the time we had a cookout and invited the neighbors to come. Everyone brought some food to share, and not only did we meet the neighbors, but the neighbors met other neighbors. It was great!

In a decade often characterized as the "me" generation, we have to make an extra effort to break out of our own little world and meet those around us. Fathers who do it will benefit by it, their families will benefit, and so will their entire neighborhood. □

Bruce Longstreth is editor of *New Wine and Fathergram*.

"Tips for Fathers" is provided by *Fathergram*, a monthly newsletter that offers insights, tips, and testimonials for fathers who care about their families. To subscribe, send \$9.95 (special price) to *Fathergram*, P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616.

Few things are easier than finding fault

Crack Down on Criticism!

BY DON BASHAM

I recently read the exciting biography of a famous pilot. The life of this remarkable man is almost like popular fiction. As a fighter pilot in World War II, he was shot down by the Germans, lived with the French underground, made his way to Spain, returned to his squadron, and took to the skies once more to shoot down twelve enemy planes—five in one day. After the war, he became one of America's outstanding test pilots, eventually receiving the Medal of Honor for his service to his country. He is a true American hero.

My only problem with the book is this: In telling his story, he is needlessly critical of so many lesser men. Not content with lambasting his own critics (a deplorable but completely understandable sin!), he repeatedly goes out of his way to discredit and demean men whose more modest aviation careers reflect certain weaknesses that displease him. As I read each additional volley of criticism and faultfinding, I felt increasing regret, because with each such attack he seemed to diminish his own stature. From such glorious heights of personal achievement, one rightly expects compassion or at least tolerance for less heroic men.

It may be that some of those critical barbs were initiated by the biographer who actually wrote the book. The blurb on the

dust jacket identifies him as a former reporter for a major daily newspaper. My own experience with reporters has often been unpleasant, sometimes leading me to question the level of ethics in the profession as a whole. But that's a topic better discussed another time; so back to the subject at hand.

Frankly, there are few things in this world easier than finding fault. There's something nasty in our human nature that takes delight in voicing criticism. The critical spirit that pervades society as a whole is galling enough; its prevalence among the people of God is cause for even greater concern. Jesus said, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged" (Mt. 7:1 NIV).

I believe the reason God speaks so strongly in His Word against our judging others is that He alone has all the facts. When we decide to judge or criticize some brother who fails or in some way falls short, we are never privy to all the facts and factors that have contributed to his poor performance. Many times there are extenuating circumstances of which we are totally unaware—circumstances that if we were facing them, would probably make our own performance even more miserable.

Personally, I can get more mileage out of one word of en-

couragement than I can out of a whole bookful of criticisms. I'll swap fifty critics for one good encourager any day of the week. I usually don't need to have my faults and shortcomings pointed out to me (although there always seem to be a few folks who feel called to that ministry!).

There is such a thing as constructive criticism, but its valid use is almost the exclusive right of superiors, instructors, parents, employers, teachers, and others vested with legitimate authority. Yet most criticism does not come from such sources. Most criticisms are leveled by those who are not responsible for the situation and who are not willing to be accountable for what they say. Most criticism is destructive, and my own experience with those who have been my critics and who have told me things "for my own good" is that they have not really had "my good" in mind at all. Destructive criticism serves only to inflate the prideful ego of the one making the criticism and to make life more miserable and more difficult for the one being criticized.

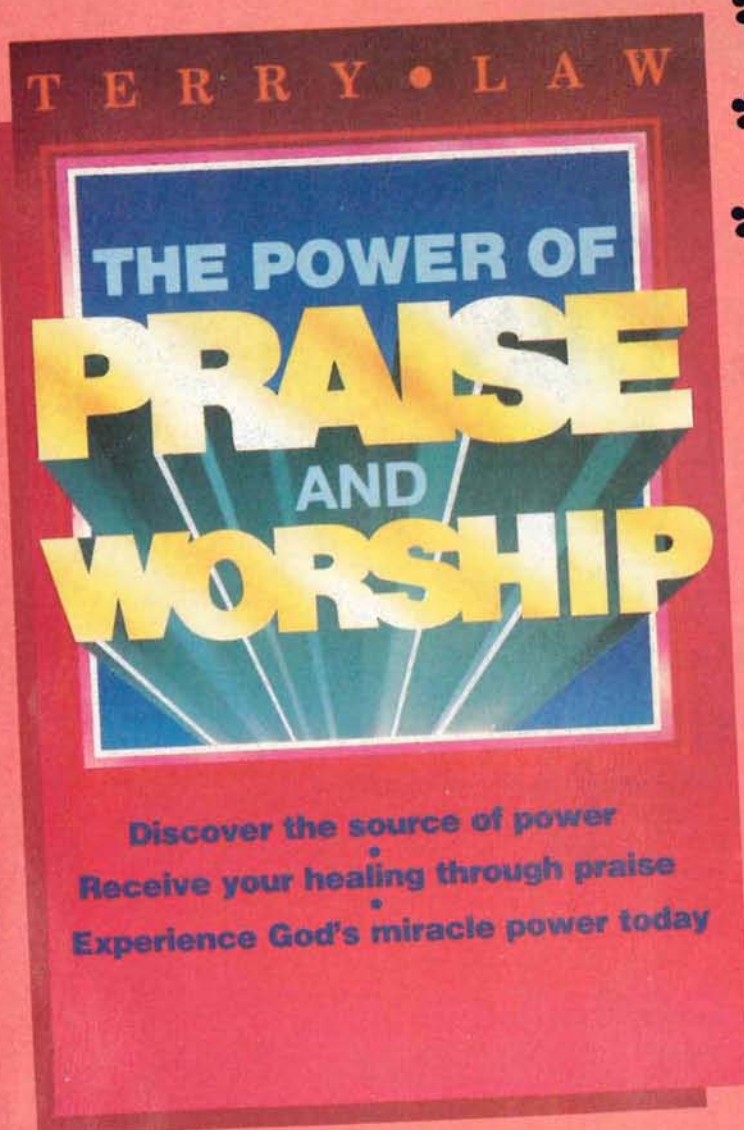
Until the Kingdom comes I suspect the world will remain full of criticism and condemnation and full of those who delight in expressing them as well. But if we are living the kind of life the Lord intends, we will properly find ourselves the targets of such ungodly attacks rather than the instigators of them. At least, that's the way I see it. □



Don Basham is chief editorial consultant for New Wine.

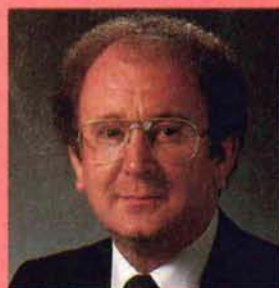
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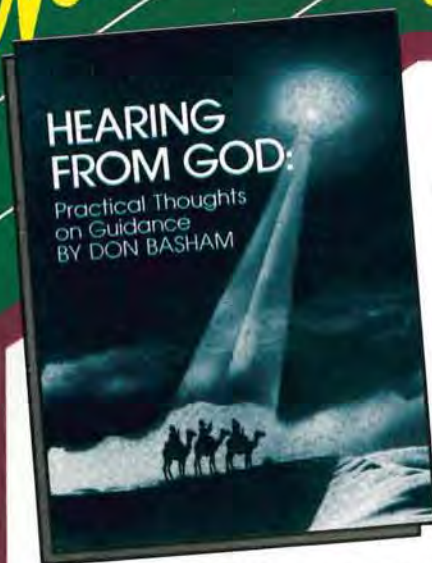
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