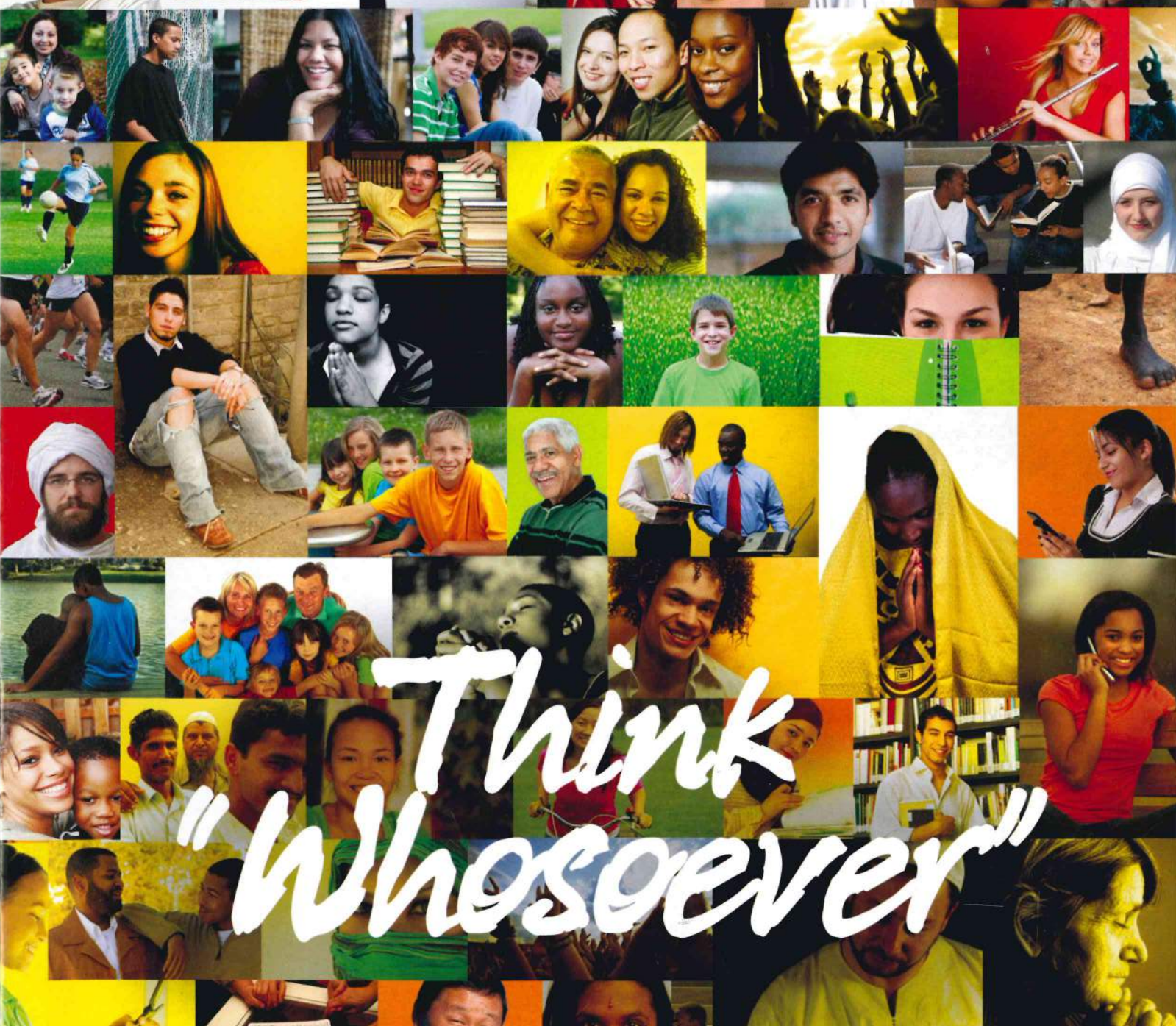


EXTENDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD...ONE PERSON AT A TIME

ONE-TO-ONE

Winter 2008



Think
"Whoever"



ONE-TO-ONE

VOL. 23 NO. 1 WINTER 2008

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As this issue of ONE-TO-ONE was going to press, Carolyn Simpson went home to be with the Lord after a courageous battle with cancer. We will have much more on her life in the next issue of ONE-TO-ONE, and online now at www.csmpublishing.org

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cords AND stakes



Even as our vision expands, we must continue to strengthen our foundations

By Stephen Simpson

I'M NOT EXACTLY THE WORLD'S greatest outdoorsman. I love to watch TV shows like *"Deadliest Catch"* and *"Man vs. Wild,"* but that's not quite the same thing as actually personally risking your life on the Bering Sea or camping amidst crocodiles. There's an interesting verse in the Bible that says this:

"Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes" (Isaiah 54:2).

One thing we need to know right away about this verse is that the Prophet is not giving us a camping seminar, but he is using a metaphor. A student once asked, "What's a metaphor?" Well, in these few brief paragraphs, I will attempt to tell you.

During the past four years, the Lord has continued to lead me back to the book of Isaiah for study, wisdom, and refreshing. The entire book is a message of redemption for God's people and for the whole earth.

Isaiah spoke of the corruption

and uncleanness that had come into the earth and the judgment of a holy God upon sin. But Isaiah had a vision from the Lord and saw God's glory. He was swept up in worship and awe. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and given the task of declaring God's purpose in the earth. Isaiah prophesied clearly and repeatedly about the coming Messiah and the deliverance and redemption that was coming through Him.

Isaiah also testified that this coming deliverance was not just for Israel, but for all those who would receive Israel's Messiah. Isaiah says that God's people would be delivered and anointed as a testimony to all people everywhere. This was a radical idea for the people of Israel, who saw God as being only their God, only for them.

But Isaiah told them that God was doing a new thing (see Isaiah 43) and that He was going to remove their barrenness and make them abundantly fruitful again—that He was going to cause them to bear more children from among the nations. In order to prepare for this new growth, Isaiah instructed the

people to "expand the place of their tent," by adding to and stretching out the tent flaps, and lengthening the cords that held the curtains. This is exciting! He said, "Do not spare any effort or material in growth!"

But, he also instructed the people to "strengthen their stakes," which speaks of foundational issues. We are often far more excited about the visible signs of growth than we are about doing the "dirty work" of foundational preparation and maintenance. In fact, we often think that if our foundations have been good enough to securely fasten us thus far, then they will probably be good enough for whatever is coming ahead. Not so, says the Lord.

What God has for His people in days ahead requires us to lift our vision higher and drive our faith down deeper into the rock of His Word and His promises. As we look toward new methods and means of communicating the Gospel to the world and to the emerging generation, we do not have the option of weakening or neglecting our biblical foundations.

My dad often quotes Les

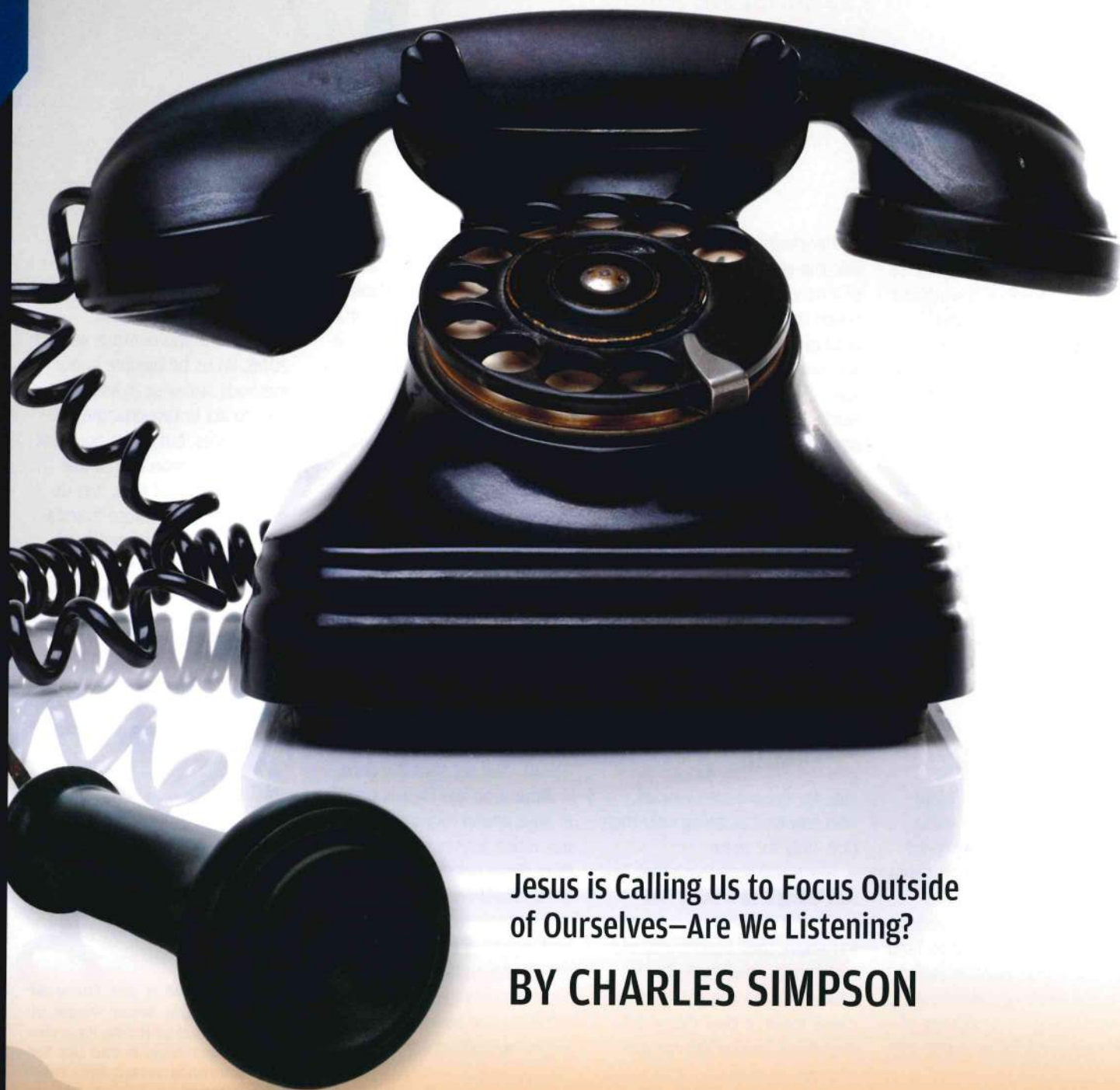
Brown: "Methods are many, principles are few; methods may change, but principles never do." As we hurtle through the momentous year of 2008, let us be flexible in our methods and wise in knowing how to act in fast-changing circumstances, but let us hold fast to our confession and to the revealed Word of God. Let us give attention to those foundational truths and disciplines, and to the mission that is ever before us: to extend the kingdom of God...one person at a time. **121**

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Stephen Simpson is the Editor of *One-to-One* and Senior Pastor of Covenant Church of Mobile. He is also available for ministry in your city. For more information, contact Betty Duke: bettydukecsm@aol.com / (251) 633-7900.



I REMEMBER OUR FIRST TELEPHONE. THE LINES FINALLY CAME TO OUR COUNTRY road in the very late 1940's, and it was a major event. Our first phone was on a party-line that included eight families. If it rang once, the call was for us; if it rang twice it was for another family. We had real "community" phone calls—you never knew who might be listening to your calls.



**Jesus is Calling Us to Focus Outside
of Ourselves—Are We Listening?**

BY CHARLES SIMPSON

Hank Williams wrote a song about this: *"The lady on the party line is the nosiest thing; she picks up the receiver when she knows it's my ring; why don't you mind your own business?"*

Things got better later; we finally obtained a private line. And then, after many years, came cordless phones. They were helpful; you could walk around, do other things and talk at the same time, as long as you stayed near the base. Then later came car phones and cell phones. Now we have world phones and blue tooth. You can go anywhere and talk to anyone. (Of course we still do not know who is listening.) Technology is amazing, especially to a non-techie like me!

Technology affects society but is usually way ahead of our ability to catch up with our thinking. A lot of us are still socially on the "party line" locked into a rather small circle, living behind a cultural barrier, though the relational possibilities are way beyond our practice. Some of us still stay very close to our base.

Him speak and watched Him minister. He closed His instruction to them with a command, "go into all the world." He also said, "You will be witness unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth" (see Acts 1:8).

When the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, the powerful transformation began and the book of Acts records the story. The success of the early Church was the result of transformed thinking. Progress came about by instruction, the power of the Holy Spirit, and a continual openness to what the Lord was saying. The apostles and the Early Church leaders remain models for us in how to become "whosoever" thinkers.

The Challenge

We all rejoice when we hear of someone from another race, nation, or culture that comes to Christ. We support and pray for missionaries who take the Gospel into sometimes hostile environments. When I was young,



Think "Whosoever"

"Whosoever" Thinking

Jesus was miles ahead of His time and culture in the way that He thought. Without modern technology or transportation, He preached a "whosoever" Kingdom. In John chapter 3 and numerous other texts, He invited "whosoever wills" to come and receive life. He continues to call those who follow Him to come to a "whosoever" mind-set.

Jesus' relationships included the poor, needy, those afflicted with evil spirits, or those who were just culturally different. Then, He instilled His "no barrier mentality" into His disciples who had come from a very narrow background. They heard

*Jesus was a
"world-phone"; the
disciples were still
on a "party-line"*

our local church always supported missionaries in Africa through our denomination, but had little contact with African-Americans or other missionaries living locally.

The challenge that we face is how to take the Lord's "whosoever" and make it personal and not just institutional. The great religious divide in Iraq is an example of that challenge. For years, the strategy was to get the Sunni and Shiite leaders to reconcile. It wasn't working. Then the strategy changed to get the local individuals to reconcile. That began to work.

Reconciliation is a personal matter.

No one can think for us. We must take the "whosoever" thinking of Jesus down to the local and personal

level. It is not enough to rejoice that some have world phones if we are still mentally on a party-line. Jesus was a "world-phone"; the disciples were still on a "party-line"; but, they changed and we must also.

The great challenge of the Church is the same that Israel faced. Israel was locked into a sense of cultural superiority. They had a "whosoever" kingdom with a party-line mindset. Some of them changed; some did not. That will be true of us as well.

More and more, the world is coming to us, whether we like it or not. We are being confronted. The question is, will we personally recoil or will we embrace the opportunity with all of its challenges? And there are challenges.

Vernon Simpson

Vernon Simpson was my father. He was the youngest son of a Baptist deacon and sheriff in Alabama. His town was a typical Alabama county-seat town. Dad went away to a Baptist college in Birmingham, Alabama.

But this article is not so much about race as it is about grace. The issue is not primarily about going to some distant place, though that may be God's call. The example of Jesus was located in a rather small geographical area. But His grace flowed wherever He went, and to whosoever He met.

The Apostle Paul

Paul is another prime example of someone who went from a "party-line" mind to a "whosoever" mind. He was a Pharisee locked into a legalistic, superior mentality. He was hostile to followers of Jesus and he viewed them as a threat. But three things happened: He met the Risen Christ; He was filled with the Holy Spirit; and he received a prophetic word. He would go to the Gentiles.

The apostle Paul received a transformed mind. And he wrote that we can be transformed by the renewing of our mind (see Romans 12:2). That will be necessary if we are to accomplish the will of God.

But all of the normal patterns were shattered by the Great Depression. He had to drop out of college and go to New Orleans where he would find work and attend seminary. New Orleans was very different from his segregated home town. It was a large multicultural city.

Dad joined a local Baptist church where the pastor had a vision to reach south Louisiana's French-speaking population. Dad went to the bayous where he met and married my mother and started churches.

One church that my father started was in a small village of mixed-race people, accessible only by boat. As a small boy I went with him on the 50 mile journey south of New Orleans and the rowboat ride to the village on Grand Bayou. That experience was burned in my memory because the people and culture were so different.

More than 50 years later, our daughter went to Costa Rica to work with children, married a Costa Rican, adopted five children, and then they had two children born to them and are beginning an orphanage. Our two sons also enjoy "whosoever" thinking and we have a "whosoever" family. Dad and mother's seed live on.

There are numerous books that testify to the power of a changed mind. Among them are, *The Road Less Traveled*, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, and *In His Steps*. Of course the primary source is the Bible itself.

The Younger Generation

The children of this generation are less hung up on the baggage of my generation. But in many ways they are more needy. Technology

has opened their opportunities, but they are often poorly equipped to face real life. Additionally, many young people are segregated from the wisdom and experience of older generations. Their world is filled with world phones, iPods, Myspace, Wii, and Youtube, while many parents live in a "party-line" social group. The

This generation's world is filled with iPods, MySpace, Wii, & You Tube while many parents live in a "party line" social group.

generational issue is our greatest challenge. Christians are losing their children at an alarming rate. We need an immediate mental change toward youth.

Jesus was "child-friendly". Most of His disciples were still young men. If we fail to reach young people, they will probably not ever be reached. But if reached, youth have the energy and flexibility to affect the world. Jesus' example demonstrated that. Jesus accomplished His success with youth personally, not institutionally. It is a personal issue.

Following Jesus

I like the term "follower of Jesus" instead of "Christian" because today, "Christian" is a cultural status; *following* is an active pursuit. "Christian" is a group label; *following* is a personal decision to do what He did and what He does. What will following mean to us?

- *A renewed understanding of the love of God that sent Him here.*
- *A renewed look at how He carried out His mission.*
- *A renewed understanding of "whosoever" thinking.*
- *A renewed comprehension of the disciples' transformed thinking.*
- *A realistic review of our own lives and how we use time and resources.*

I haven't always followed Jesus. And when I did, I was often lagging way behind. I have often grieved over my unwillingness to catch on racially, culturally, or in other ways, to what He was calling me to do. I have no desire to criticize those who haven't caught up.

I have close associates who labor among the

addicted, the poor, and in other countries and cultures. Sometimes they labor in dangerous places. My wife, Carolyn, and I have recently been to South Korea and witnessed the advance of the Gospel in Asia.

I am continually encouraged to think larger—to think "whosoever".

I remain theologically conservative, but am faced with the fact that love must be communicated before trust and truth can be established. I am not in favor of "confrontational" evangelism. I am in favor of loving the lost and I am trying to do so—not just theoretically or institutionally, but personally—one at a time.

The way I see it, we have catching up to do if we are going to follow Jesus. We must catch up to His motives, His message, and His methods. We must catch up to the technological capabilities that are being presented to us. We must catch up in our world view.

And, we must especially catch up with our kids.

"Whosoever" thinking will break barriers, put us into new adventures, open us to the Holy Spirit and enable us to hear new prophetic sounds that will mark the path ahead. 121

Charles Simpson is Editor-In-Chief of One-to-One Magazine. He ministers extensively throughout the United States and among the nations.



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The Spirit-Led HOME

By Stephen Simpson

Discovering how husbands, wives, and children can relate more effectively to God and each other

I WILL NEVER FORGET, IN THE DIFFICULT days following the death of my Grandma Simpson back in 1991, our family rallied around Grandpa Simpson and stayed close with him. One day, as he and I were doing some work around his house, we paused for a cup of water and sat down at the now-lonely kitchen table. He said, "You know, one of the hardest things about losing Genoa is that after 56 years of marriage, I was just now learning how to be a good husband."

Anyone who ever observed my grandparents together knew they were an exceptionally loving and devoted couple. And yet, there was my Grandpa saying he was "just now learning." That comment struck me deeply and taught me a very important lesson about marriage and relationship—it's an ongoing process, and an attitude of humility towards God and towards our spouse makes a world of difference.

One thing that all four of my grandparents, and both of my parents, taught and demonstrated over the years was that a Bible-based, Christ-centered marriage was not only a beautiful thing, but it was a much-needed anchor in a storm-tossed society.

The Bible is the greatest handbook for living that has ever been written. It expresses the heart and the plans of the One Who made all life. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians in the city of Ephesus that contains much practical wisdom for daily life.

GRACE AND PEACE

Paul opens Ephesians with the greeting, "Grace and peace to you." The intent of Paul's instruction is to impart grace and peace to all who would read his letter. And, we must keep in mind that all of these instructions are to be carried out in a spirit of grace and peace as well.

In the beginning of Ephesians 5 Paul writes, "Be imitators of God in Christ." In order to fulfill our calling

and destiny in God, we must follow the example of Jesus

Specifically, we need to walk in love—not in the way that the world defines love, but in the way that Jesus defines love: He gave Himself for us... as an offering to God.

What follows in Ephesians 5 is practical wisdom from God's heart showing us how to live and relate to Him and one another, including in our families and homes. Yes, there are many among us who, for various reasons, may not be living in a home where there is a husband, a wife, and children present. Nonetheless, Ephesians 5 provides us with many clear insights into godly and practical principles and standards for home life.

Whatever our backgrounds, experiences, or present circumstances, we need to understand these principles and we need to see these standards—which are under major attack by secularism—upheld and championed. We are called to boldly proclaim the standard and graciously minister to the exceptions—remember, God is able to save and redeem us wherever we are on this journey.

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

One of the cornerstones of Ephesians 5 is that we should not seek any counterfeit or shortcut to a truly blessed life. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit."

Some translations of the original language indicate that this means "Stay filled with the Spirit." It's a continual process that we must walk out.

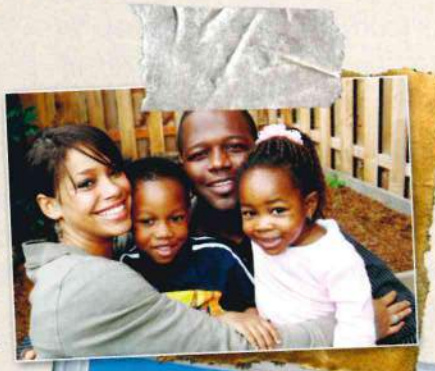
We are to not only walk in the Spirit individually, but corporately. We have responsibility to each other in our walk in the Spirit—to exhort and encourage one another, specifically in the arena of focusing our

worship on the Lord. And, as imitators of Christ, filled with His Spirit, we are called to humbly submit to one another—to practice the grace of yielding.

LOVE AND RESPECT

After Paul encourages us to submit to one another, he brings it down to a very practical level—right into the home. He says we are to submit to one another, but gives some clear instructions as to **how** that submission works. First of all, biblical submission is not something that a person is coerced into, but it is something that they offer as a gift.

As believers, we are submitted first to the Lordship of Jesus Christ—as citizens of His Kingdom. We then offer our lives to one another. This submission to one another is rooted in our submission to Jesus Christ, His



Word, and His ways. It affects how we relate to other believers and also how we relate in our marriages and homes.

Scripture provides clear wisdom and order for our homes—the better

we are able to line up with God's will and God's plan, the more we open the door for His blessing to come in. Ephesians 5:22 tells us that wives should submit to their husbands as unto the Lord.

Let me reiterate: true submission is something one person offers to another, it is not coerced. Notice also that Paul also doesn't say, "Wives, submit to your husband if you think he's worthy of it," or "Submit to him when you feel like it," or "Only when you think he's right."

Now, let me hasten to add that this verse in no way implies that a wife should submit to her husband's wishes when the husband is clearly violating God's Word or her conscience. And it doesn't mean that a wife should in any way submit to being a victim of abusive behavior by a husband.

What this Scripture does mean is that God has ordained that husbands should be the head of the home as a leader, a shepherd, a provider, a priest, a nurturer, and a protector. The very word "husband," according to Webster's Original 1828 Dictionary not only means a man joined to a woman in marriage, but it also refers to a man who is a good steward and manager. It also refers to a farmer who tills, sows, nurtures, and reaps.

When a wife is able to recognize her husband in that way, it not only expresses faith in him as a leader, but faith in God, Who is the head of the husband. When she serves or blesses her husband, she not only shows respect for him, but also for the Lord Who ordered the home (see also 1 Peter 3:5-6; Genesis 18:12; 1 Timothy 2).

In Ephesians 5:25, Paul ups the ante when he writes to husbands: he says that we are to love our wives as Christ

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defining SUCCESS



An Interview with Heath Varnedoe

HEATH VARNEDOE BEGAN HIS career at Flowers Industries (a leading producer of packaged bakery foods) as route salesman. In 1997, Heath retired as President and Chief Operating Officer. Under his management, Flowers grew to become a publicly traded Fortune 500 company. Today Flowers has bakeries throughout the southeastern and southwestern United States that bake breads likely to be on your grocery list, including Nature's Own, Cobblestone Mill, BlueBird, Sunbeam, and Bunny to name a few.

Mr. Varnedoe says in his new book, *Called To Excellence*, that at age 34, he seemed successful. He had a healthy family, a beautiful home, and was headed to the top at work; however, "all was not well behind the facade". His relationship with his wife and family were suffering. He had become a

taskmaster at work where employees responded to him out of fear. It was all about to fall apart, he says, and that's when he opened himself up for introspection, sought out a trusted friend and minister, and began a "new climb."

Heath's retirement did not mean an end to his adventures. Today, Heath owns a pecan and pine tree operation, serves on the board for Integrity Media and is a sought after speaker. On a personal note, I have the utmost respect for Mr. Varnedoe and his wife, Jacqueline. At age 17, I had the opportunity to live in his home and work at his pecan tree farm in southern Georgia. From that vantage point, I saw a man who truly is a demonstration of integrity. It was my privilege to catch up with Mr. Varnedoe and get the following interview.

– Jonathan Simpson

SUCCESS IS...*wholeheartedly pursuing God's call to excellence in whatever situation He has placed us, using whatever means and talents He gives us.*

121: Recently, you wrote a book, *Called To Excellence*, where you define success as “*Wholeheartedly pursuing God's call to excellence in whatever situation He has placed us, using whatever means and talents He gives us.*”

What are some differing results you see in people who follow this definition versus those who subscribe to a secular definition?

HV: Colossians 3:23 says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” That puts us in a new realm of Godly values. You represent the Lord in all of your work. You are the son of a King. God says, “You work for Me.” As a Christian, you understand priorities: God, Family, Work. You have to walk it out in that order. It will work, but it is an issue of the heart. When we approach it that way, the time will be there for what God has called us to. You may have to give up other things, but they are replaced by greater things.

Remember, we are not measured in a day but over a lifetime. Peace comes as we try to walk right before a God that is Sovereign. With true success comes the peace we have when we know we are in harmony with the purposes that God created for us.

121: You mention that “business leaders by their very nature are ‘fix-it’ people.” You address our attempts to “fix” things in our lives but say

that you reached a point in your life when you couldn’t “fix” something on your own. What should our response be when we are struggling to fix something?

HV: When people are struggling, there is a pride factor that often prevents them from asking for help. God puts people in our lives, but it’s up to us to pursue that relationship. This is God’s system, we help one another. I’m reminded of the Frank Sinatra song “My Way”. This is really the wrong approach. We try to fix things rather than have our hearts changed. I remember a young person came to me for advice one time and said “God told me this and God told me that,” so I asked, “Then what do you need me for?” When I went for help, it was very humbling for me. Romans 8:28 says: “In all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to His purpose.”

Heeth also recalled a time when one of his grandsons was injured in a very serious accident. As Heeth waited in the hospital, his daughter-in-law said “Big Heeth, you cannot fix this.” He tells in his book of how he prayed later that night “Lord, I just really want him to live, but he’s in Your hands, I trust you.” His grandson is now “back to his old self” but Heeth says, “as ‘type A’s’ it’s important for us to know that there are some things we just can’t fix.”

121: During your time of service at Flowers, the company grew tremendously. How did that growth affect the culture of the company?

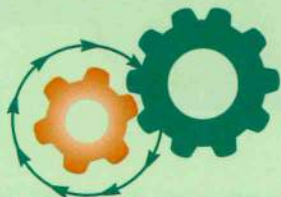
How do you advocate managing it?

HV: The culture starts at the top with the leadership. Do people really know what you stand for? They should not have to guess. Nothing speaks louder than an individual’s actions, their consistency. At Flowers I was fortunate to work with many Christians. Our mentality needs to be that we are servants of people, in that we need to help them develop their gifts and talents. I was a servant to the employees no matter where they appeared on the organizational chart. I learned that it was important to call them by their first name immediately.

Heeth mentioned times that he spent on the floor with employees visiting the company’s various locations. He often took the time to talk with employees on a personal level and follow up with them with letters and phone calls. Years later he found that one of his employees had actually framed a letter that Heeth sent and hung it in his living room. Heeth also notes in his book, “As I changed, the whole atmosphere of our meetings changed.”

121: We’ve had some dialogue on CSM’s website discussion forum board (www.csmpublishing.org/discuss) about words of wisdom for young workers just entering the workforce. Thinking back to your beginnings at Flowers, what would you say to our younger readers just entering the marketplace?

HV: You need to understand that not everyone you work for will be a Christian. Your boss may say many things you don’t want to hear. Have a



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121: You stated: "When we are in a position of authority, we have a tremendous responsibility, both at home and in the workplace, to do the right thing—always." How does that affect fruitfulness?

HV: People watch what you do. The fruit of humility is completely different from the fruit of pride. Work is God's design. It was God's plan for Adam from the start even before he fell—to work The Garden. God will honor hard work and humility and bring fruit.

121: What is retirement?

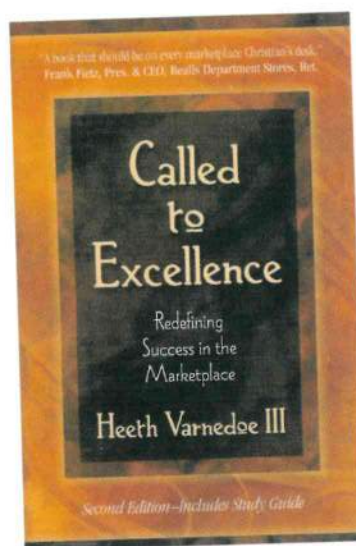
HV: I don't like the word "retirement". Retirement means you go and put your feet up. I prefer "refocus". It is a time of getting after what God is calling you to.

121: You've described your decision to retire from Flowers as a very difficult one that didn't come overnight; it was like a "River Jordan" that had to be crossed.

HV: I had worked there over 40 years. We had many good people but God was saying I've got something else for you to do."

121: Why did you write the book?

HV: When I left Flowers, I had accumulated many notes of things I'd learned and had saved various speeches I had given. I wanted to preserve these. Writing the book was much more difficult than I anticipated. I put it down for awhile then heard "you started, you should finish." It took me five years to complete it. **121**



CALLED TO EXCELLENCE

HEETH VARNEDOE was in the corporate world for nearly 40 years; starting out on a bread route with FLOWER'S FOODS and retiring as its president and chief operating officer. Over the years he encountered several pitfalls in the marketplace. From his personal experiences, he decided to write a book redefining success in the marketplace from a Christian perspective. Written in a very personal, easy to read style, this book will inspire you, no matter where you serve in the marketplace.

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continued from page 11

loves the Church. Some men may say, "Sure, I love my wife. She's a great cook, she's beautiful, she makes me feel good." That's not what Paul is talking about! He uses the word *agape* here, meaning a selfless, godly kind of love, and says that Christ's love is the standard—the kind of love that's causes you to lay down your life for your wife.

Some men may say, "Yes, I would be willing to die for my wife" —but let me ask you: are you willing to wash the dishes or take out the trash? The late Pastor Adrian Rogers once said: "The question a husband should ask about his wife is, 'Am I willing to die for her?' and the question a wife should ask about her husband is, 'Am I willing to live for him?'"

The husband is delighted in serving his wife because of his love for her. He recognizes that God has given him a precious gift to be well-stewarded, knowing that he will give an account to the Lord for his stewardship. He values her above all others, sets her apart as special, and washes her often in the healing, cleansing Word of God.

All the time is not too often for a husband to sincerely express his love to his wife.

Paul clarifies the roles here by saying that husbands are called to love their wives, and wives are called to respect their husbands. (I highly recommend the excellent book *Love & Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs.)

The Bible doesn't tell us that we need to try to change our spouse so that they will change their behaviors. The first order of business is for us to ask God to change our own hearts and behaviors. Many times, if husbands would try to selflessly love their wives more, their wives would respect them more. And if wives would give more respect, instead of

demeaning or belittling their husbands, they would see their husbands loving them more perfectly.

Let me say this: the primary onus is on the husbands as the leaders to make the first step, but that doesn't excuse the wife for inaction. One reason so many wives have a difficult time submitting to their husbands is because their husbands are not submitted to the Lord or to godly authority in the Church. Husbands, if you want to see your wife respect you, then you need to make sure that you're being properly accountable to God.

CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Then, in the beginning of Ephesians 6, Paul exhorts children to listen to and obey their parents, which is one way in which we honor them (see also 1 Samuel 15:22-23).

Dishonoring our parents, no matter who they are or what they've done good or bad, is dishonoring to the Lord. Paul references Deuteronomy 5:16 in reminding us to honor our parents. He says, "Honor them because God said so, and your inheritance will be blessed."

A lot of people are missing out on present and future blessings because they are hung up on what happened in the past. Many young people today have no clue as to how or why we honor parents because their parents have let them down. But if we can yield to God's Word, there is an accompanying promise of God's blessing for honoring the parents that He gave to us. (Obviously, we can't obey anyone if they are clearly and flagrantly violating God's Word—nor should any child be abused or treated cruelly. That is a different issue altogether.)

Remember, when your parents discipline you for doing something stupid,

they're not trying to hurt you; they're trying to teach you a lesson that will save your life.

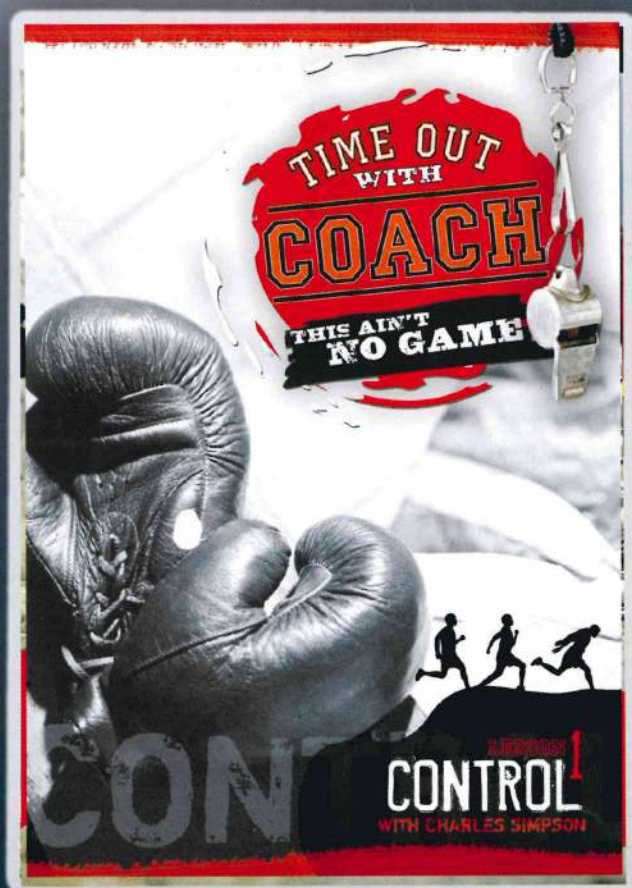
Paul closes out this portion of Ephesians with an exhortation to fathers—as the leaders of the home—not to provoke their children to wrath. Many fathers have sinned in this area.

It's no wonder that so many children, even as adults, retain great anger and alienation from their fathers. And while children are not excused for any dishonor on their part, a father bears tremendous responsibility before the Lord. The father's God-given task is to train their children in the life-giving ways of the Lord—and God's grace and favor will be on fathers as they seek to be obedient to this call.

AMAZING GRACE

All of us, at one time or another, experience failure in these areas. It's important to remember that our success is not rooted in our power, our might, or our goodness, but in the Spirit of the Lord. When we fall short, or experience brokenness, His grace is there to forgive, heal, and redeem. His Word offers us guidelines and hope, not only for us in our generation, but for all generations to come. 121

Stephen Simpson is
Senior Pastor of Covenant Church of Mobile
and Editor of *One-to-One Magazine*.



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