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THE

Preacher's

MAGAZINE

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Olivet Nazarene University
KANKAKEE, ILLINOIS

01/13/91

**MINISTERIAL
RESPONSIBILITY**

**MINISTRY IS NOT A JOB
BUT A CALLING**

PASTOR IN THE GRASS

NO FORTY-HOUR WEEK

**MINISTERIALLY
SPEAKING**



*Out of the church
must go forth
vigorous healthy men
and women
who went in maimed
and paralyzed.
Broken things
that no one could mend
have been made whole
again.*

—John Henry Jowett



Fear Not; I Am with Thee

by Randal E. Denny

Spokane, Wash.

One of my favorite hymns declares:

*Fear not, I am with thee.
Oh, be not dismayed,
For I am thy God,
I will still give thee aid.*

—"K" in Rippon's "A Selection of Hymns," 1787

After spending the morning in my study preparing sermons, I conducted our staff meeting over the lunch hour. A woman with a disintegrating family counseled with me for two hours seeking easy solutions. I didn't have an easy solution for spiritually disinterested people. I hurried on to meet with a Christian brother whose heart is broken. I ached for him and his ministerial situation. The next stop found me listening to a doctor pronounce a "death sentence" to a man unequipped to face eternity. He refused to let me pray with him and asked me to go home. I felt "dismayed."

Rushing from the hospital to our midweek adult Bible study, I then remained at the church office during "annual reports." Supper came at ten o'clock, and then I spent my most alert hours alone with my Bible. Giving my attention to the *Preacher's Magazine* after midnight, I went to bed feeling "dismayed."

Jesus said of those who have faith in Him: "He will do even greater things than these" (John 14:12). None of those "greater things"



seemed to be showing up yet. A new book on 10 successful churches with "greater things" insisted that senior pastors must become "generals" instead of "Red Cross workers." But I don't know how to turn away from the wounded.

The next day I served as chairman of the District Ministerial Credentials Board. Young pastors working toward ordination shared their testimonies and calls to pastoral ministry. God blessed me through them. Their fresh, unscarred careers brought me back to basics. God knew my limitations all along—but He sovereignly chose me to serve Him. As much as I would like to "succeed," I must remain surrendered.

Spiritual refreshment is found in God's encouraging Word: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; . . . For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isa. 43:1-3).

That same favorite hymn reveals God's answer for those hours when we feel so empty, so useless, and so "dismayed":

*When through fiery trials thy
pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be
thy supply.*

God's affirmation of Paul in his struggles speaks to us in our day: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Andrew Murray has creditably given us these eloquent words: "First, He brought me here. By His will I am in this difficult place: in that I will rest. Second, He will keep

me here in His love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child. Third, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow. Fourth, in His good time He can bring me out again: how and when He knows. So, I am here by His appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time." ❧

Preacher's Exchange

I am interested in making contact with anyone that may have old books and/or old copies of the Nazarene *Herald of Holiness*, even copies that go back to the *Pentecostal Publishing Co.*, of many years ago. I would especially be interested in copies that had *Bud Robinson's "Corner Chats"* in them. The books I am interested in would be either original or copies of holiness writers prior to 1945.

I may also be able to help others obtain books in reprint by some of these same writers (i.e., B. Carradine, Watson, Godby, Dougan Clark, B. Robinson, and English writers of old).

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The Bright Side

by **Barbara A. DuPuy**
Hurst, Tex.

Our church has been through many financially trying times. During one of the worst, the church board of deacons and elders had difficulty conducting business. Only the church treasurer had the needed financial information, but he was absent from the meeting. Everyone was quite concerned about him because he was very dedicated and reliable.

Late in the meeting, the treasurer appeared. Everyone turned to look at him. He melted the icy stares when he said, "I bet you thought I'd absconded with the deficit."

Ministerial Responsibility

by William S. Deal

El Monte, Calif.

*"But watch thou in all things,
endure afflictions,
do the work of an evangelist,
make full proof of thy ministry"
(2 Tim. 4:5, KJV).*

In these days of laxity, it is sad to note that far too many ministers are failing to make full proof of their ministry. (These words literally mean to "fulfill," NASB.) There is too much disregard for ministerial responsibility.

The time has come when we must speak plainly. Richard Baxter, great English minister of deep piety, felt compelled to write a book exposing the sins of the English clergy. They responded by reminding him in scolding tones that he "should have written in Latin." Baxter replied that if the clergy had sinned in Latin, he would have written in Latin; but as they had sinned in English, he had written in English!

Let us consider the minister's greatest responsibilities:

1. THE MINISTER HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD.

God has called him, given him a message, and providentially opened doors for him to deliver it. To be lax in his duties to God is the highest treason to his calling. He must be first in devotions and last to leave them.

His private prayer life must be exemplary. It must be a channel through which the golden oil of divine power can always flow out to others. Many an hour should also be spent in diligent study.

His family devotions must ever be kept up. To neglect them is to betray both his family and his calling.

The minister's motives must ever be such as God can smile upon. To grasp for more money, to work for greater places for selfish reasons, to seek places of ease, to shun self-denial are motives beneath his calling. His private life must be clean

and wholesome. His conduct must be above reproach as the representative of God.

Upon the minister rests a solemn vow that he has taken to be true to God, His Word, and His calling. To do less than this is to betray Jesus again into the hands of sinners, to become a "truce breaker" and an unfaithful witness, helping to destroy the work of God.

Compromise makes a traitor of the minister and robs him of his dignity and self-respect. How can he respect himself or expect others to do so? Compromise does more; it eats the heart out of Christian experience. It lifts the anchor of the minister's soul and starts him adrift upon a dangerous sea. It is but a step from compromise in practice. From here, it is but another step into outbroken sin, heartache, disillusionment, and despair. How soon will such men look back upon the golden days of opportunity and bewail how they let them slip through their fingers.

Certainly, there are wiser ways to preach uncompromising truth than the blunt manner in which it is sometimes put. But, are we sure that in choosing the "wiser ways," we have not compromised the essentials of our message at some point? May God help us!

2. THE MINISTER HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS PEOPLE.

When a church calls a pastor or an evangelist, they do so, generally, upon conditions understood by both parties. This amounts to a moral contract, whether papers are signed or not. A bride and groom do not often "sign" any contract, but they enter into vows by mutual agreement. These, however, are so morally binding that heaven itself demands that they be kept. More ministers need to realize the solemnity of the contract they enter into in accepting a church's call.

This unwritten contract binds the minister to be a true witness for Jesus Christ, in and out of the pulpit. His spoken word, business dealings, personal appearance, homelife, and conduct among his people are expected to be "above reproach" (1 Tim. 3:2).

The pastor cannot afford to overlook the use of his time. Most of his members punch a time clock. Housewives are early at their duties. Business is early on the move. While he must have proper time for rest, the public and the church despise a lazy minister, and rightly so! Such a man should not be surprised if soon he has to look elsewhere for employment.

Nor can a minister be true to his calling and contract with his church if, while he is paid a reasonable salary by the church, he insists on working a portion of his time at other employment while his church suffers for his attention. I have the greatest respect and highest honor for the precious men who feel they have to work to make their home missionary churches go. However, the pastor who receives sufficient support from his church, yet works on the side, is in danger of betraying his trust. Even if he must sacrifice to live on his salary, if he would devote his time to God's work and improve his own talents, his support would likewise improve.

The minister also owes it to his church to uphold her standards. Her regulations, based upon the Word of God and formulated by holy men



Ministry Is Not a Job but a Calling

by Mel Norton


Saint John, N.B.

Rev. Bob Rowlands, former United Church minister, now serving in an evangelical Anglican church, gives this helpful advice:

"Jesus was evangelical. The very first thing He says to His disciples is 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' If that isn't a call to evangelism, I don't know what is."

The best advice ever given to me was: "If you can possibly stay out of the ministry, stay out." Why? Because it's not a career. You don't become a minister the same way you become a pharmacist, or a lawyer, or a physician, or a chartered accountant. Pastoral ministry is not a job, but a call from God. Thus, it is imperative that in ministerial preparation, you keep these thoughts in focus.

THE MINISTER'S GOLDEN DOZEN

1. You **MUST NOT** become so professional that you are **NO LONGER** personable.
2. You **MUST NOT** become so businesslike that you can **NO LONGER** bear one another's burdens.
3. You **MUST NOT** become so administrative that you are **NO LONGER** available as a servant.
4. You **MUST NOT** know all the answers so fully and completely that you can **NO LONGER** say, "I am sorry," or "I was wrong."
5. You **MUST NOT** become so self-sufficient that you are **NO LONGER** willing to be accountable and responsible for your own actions.
6. You **MUST NOT** get so busy living for Him that you **NO LONGER** are living like Him.
7. You **MUST NOT** be so idealistic that you can **NO LONGER** be flexible. Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be broken.
8. You **MUST NOT** be so caught up with opinions, successes, and abilities of others that you can **NO LONGER** be yourself.
9. You **MUST NOT** be so afraid of criticism that you **NO LONGER** are willing to learn from your mistakes. A good leader must maintain a teachable spirit. There is a difference between constructive and destructive criticism. If it's true, then do something about it. If it's half
10. You **MUST NOT** depend upon man so completely that you **NO LONGER** remember who God is and what God can do. It's **HIS** church.
11. You **MUST NOT** let methods, programs, and talents become so important that you can **NO LONGER** recall that there is absolutely no substitute for love —unconditional love, a baptism of love, a 1 Corinthians 13 love!
12. You **MUST NOT** be so consumed by the church family that you **NO LONGER** have time for your own family's well-being. 

over a long period of years, are not to be set at naught by him. In nonessentials, all are free; but biblical standards, plainly set down, we are bound to obey. If a minister does not intend to obey the rules and honor his church's scriptural standards, then let him find another church more to his liking. To remain in a church and be untrue to it is to infringe upon a good conscience, if not to practice hypocrisy.

The history of denominations reveals that it takes only about two generations of failure to be true to the spiritual standards and doctrines of a church, until that church will drift back into a cold and formal state. If we are unfaithful to our youth today, in another generation our misdeeds will spring forth in

shallowness, worldliness, and wholesale backsliding.


3. THE MINISTER HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO THE WORLD.

This may best be met by faithfully discharging his duties to God and his church. In their saner moments and more serious reflections, men still look toward the church for help in their greatest needs. Whether they attend it or not, they generally have high expectancy from it, especially from its minister.

The minister must not allow his life and influence to undermine this confidence. His contacts with the outside world must always be such as to hold for him this esteem and high regard. Men may not always pay him high tributes in his presence.

Often it is quite the contrary. But often, too, at such times the worldling is merely "testing the metal" of which the minister is made. If he "rings true," good; if not, it is a heart-sickening disappointment.

Let us remember that we have a message for our world. Our lives and contracts must not lower men's respect for our message! When our ministry has the confidence of the world, even though its outspoken criticism may accompany it, we are safe as a church. But when our ministry loses this confidence, even though the world may shout, "Hail, fellow! Well met!" we are done for.

In a large degree, it is up to us ministers to carry forward the work of God to success. May God help us do our best! 



Pastor in the Grass

by John Crowder

Burleson, Tex.

Relief of guilt can, and does, change lives. I will never forget the first time I experienced that kind of relief. It was an event made possible by one special man who ministered to my family in a wonderful way.

When I was eight years old, my father died of multiple myeloma, a form of cancer that attacks the bone marrow. He had fought the disease for two long years. When he died, my mother was left with my older sister, my two older brothers, and me. We were fortunate to have many people who cared about us and reached out to us. One man in particular ministered to us in ways that none of us has ever forgotten.

My father died on a Wednesday morning. A lot of people came in and out of our house that day and for the next two or three days. On Thursday afternoon, the man who had been our pastor for a number of years took the four of us outside in the backyard where we could talk without being disturbed by the crowd.

It was a pretty day in March, so it was nice to be outside. We sat down on the ground in a circle. It has always impressed me that even though he was wearing a suit, he was willing to sit down in the grass with us. Our church was not small. My sister, Nancy, recalls seeing him as a "big church pastor" who "shouldn't have had time for the little kids." But he did have time for us. He made time for us.

The one thing I remember him saying was that Daddy's death was not our fault. How did he know what I was thinking? I had convinced myself that because of my sin, God was punishing me by taking away my dad. I remember feeling extremely guilty because it was my fault that the others had to lose their dad, too, and that my mother had to lose her husband.

I had never told anyone what I was thinking and feeling. I could not imagine how the pastor could have known about my guilt. All I knew was that he said it wasn't my fault. I don't remember much about that week, but I will never forget hearing those words. I have never experienced such an overwhelming feeling of relief.

It is interesting to me that as adults, my siblings and I remember different aspects of our talk that day. My brother Richard is closest to my age. He remembers the pastor explaining to us that we were not losing as much as Mama was. We were losing a parent, but she was losing a lifetime mate. We needed to be there for her and support her just as she would always be there for us.

My brother David is next to the oldest. He doesn't remember what the pastor said specifically, but he does remember that the pastor "just talked to us. He didn't preach or try to let us in on the profound things in life." David has always felt that the pastor was monitoring us to see how we were doing instead of trying

to give us "words of wisdom."

Nancy is the oldest of the four. Like David, she doesn't remember specific words. However, she remembers being impressed that the pastor would take time to sit down in the grass and talk to a bunch of kids. She knew then, and has always known, that "he came because he cared about us."

That one event probably lasted half an hour or less, but it made a lasting impression on each member of my family. It wasn't until recently that I realized what an impact it had on my own life. At that time I didn't know what it meant to be a minister. Even at that tender age, though, I knew that I wanted to grow up to be a man like this man was. I wanted to be the kind of man who would sit down in the grass to comfort hurting children.

By the time I was in junior high school, I knew that God wanted to use my experience of loss to help other hurting people. Before long, that grew into a real sense of call into the ministry. I am certain now that a large part of my sense of call

(Continued on page 31)



No Forty-Hour Week



by Eugene F. Gerlitz
Salem, Oreg.

It's a 40-hour week for me," exclaimed the young minister. "I'm not killing myself with overwork or sacrificing my family for my job as I've seen other ministers do." He was new on the staff, just beginning his first stint after graduation from seminary.

It seems that this is a common complaint of young ministers, intent on living a "normal" life like everyone in their congregation. They intend to be different, a new breed of ministers who refuse to work 50- or 60-hour weeks and be on call 24 hours a day. This young minister carefully divided his day into segments. If he made a call at night or attended a board meeting in the evening, he would take as many hours off the next day as would total his week to 40 hours.

The young man forgot that church members have crises in the evening and during the night, as well as daytime. Why shouldn't he take holidays off and an extra day if the holiday came on his usual day off? And why shouldn't he take his usual month's vacation, uninterrupted by funerals and weddings, even though the same things happen to members

of his church, interrupting their holidays and vacations? After all, isn't every Christian a minister and, therefore, as responsible for ministry as he?


The fledgling pastor would soon learn that it is impossible for the minister to settle for a 40-hour week and still be a good pastor remaining in the good graces of his church. If he were to be a true minister, he would work as many hours every week as it takes to carry on his ministry, whether it took 40 hours or 50 or 60.

Pastors need to remember that our parishioners may work only a regular 40-hour week at their secular occupation, but they, too, are subject to overtime, sometimes without overtime pay, to missed holidays, and interrupted vacations, if they expect to advance in their jobs.

Then they have the church work we expect them to do. We exhort and expect our parishioners to sing in the choir, serve on boards and committees, attend prayer meetings and special events. Sometimes they put in more hours than we do. "You are *ministers*," we remind those who have committed themselves to

Jesus Christ. We tell them, "Real commitment requires sacrifice of time, money, life, and sometimes even family."

Of course each pastor needs to take care of his family and his health too. We can burn ourselves out in a few years of intense service when we could have given twice as many years of more moderate service. Jesus himself is our Role Model. Remember how He often took time out to rest, meditate, pray, and commune with His Father. But we also should remember that He "burned himself out" on the Cross, serving God and us.

Perhaps "moderation . . . in all things" is the key—moderation in the number of hours worked and moderation in the time taken for rest, relaxation, and restoration of spirit. Our model is not the minister who works too many hours nor the minister who demands a 40-hour week, but we should follow Jesus Christ. As committed servants to God, we should not set a lot of rules about time put in or effort extended, or money given. We must live in the spirit of sacrifice, giving as much and working as hard as situations require to meet the needs of God's church and His world. 



Ministerially Speaking



by Deanna Harrison

Early, Tex.

My husband and I had fully expected a routine hospital visit. One of our nursery workers, Granny Howell, was scheduled for surgery the following morning. Scott and I dropped by to offer moral support and a few encouraging words. The conversation took an unexpected turn, however, when she introduced us to her roommate.

"This is one of the ministers from my church," Granny Howell told the woman.

"And what church are you with?" the woman asked.

"First City Church," Scott replied.

"Oh," the woman said as her eyes lit up, "so *you're* the competition."

"I beg your pardon. I don't believe I quite understand."

"Well," she explained, "my pastor says that First City Church is the competition, I guess because it's the biggest one in town."

Competition! Is that what "ministry" is all about? Competing with one another, church against church? I really didn't want to think about it. The idea even made me uncomfortable. The woman's accusation reminded me of a conversation I'd overheard the day before as Scott and I stood in the buffet line at a ministers' conference. I couldn't help hearing the two men in front of me discussing their Sunday statistics. Their conversation went something like this:

"Well, Bill, we had a glorious day

yesterday at Eastside. How were your services?"

"Tremendous, Tom, just tremendous! You know we lost a staff member a while back, but things are still going strong. We had under 500 yesterday, but we'll be back up real soon. You know how it is with vacations, bad weather, out-of-town company."

And so the conversation went. Bill's report was accurate. They did have under 500—to be precise, they had 390. His assessment of the situation is what is commonly known as "ministerially speaking."

Speaking in ministerial terminology seems to be a common practice. After years of hearing men and women speak in such terms, I finally asked myself, "Why?" Why do those of us in the ministry feel it's necessary to pad our words with decorative disguises that distort the truth? Are all the glowing adjectives and aggressive verbs really that important? Why do I, as a minister's wife, occasionally feel tempted to sing loudly the praises of my husband's work and our church's programs when in the company of other ministers or their wives?

With these questions in mind, I took a long, hard look at ministerial terminology, attempting to pinpoint its purpose or, at least, to justify its existence. Rather than finding concrete answers, I came up with more questions.

The first question that came to

mind was offensive and almost unthinkable: *Do ministers compete with each other?* Does competition fuel the fires of ministerial terminology? Is it the secret desire of many ministers to serve the fastest-growing church in their area? If that is the desire, is it because only pastors of numerically growing churches are successful, according to society's standards? Have we begun evaluating the Lord's work by a secular measuring rod?

Competition within the ministry doesn't seem to agree with Paul's teaching. Speaking of the Body of Christ, Paul said, "God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. . . . And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:18, 26, NASB).

To be completely honest, this particular teaching of Paul's was hard to apply when the Lord called my husband to serve as pastor of a small rural church. There seemed to be more deaths in that community than births. New families were simply



nonexistent. It was difficult, then, to listen as a friend excitedly told me about another young pastor's city church that was "growing by leaps and bounds. There's just not room for all the new people!"

With unmistakable envy, I retorted, "Well, of course his church is growing. A new housing development was just built across the street from the church's front door. They can't help growing."

A spirit of rejoicing? Obviously not. Why was I not able to rejoice? I can only look back to that day and attribute my attitude to a spirit of competition and envy, feeling, Why can't that be our church? I had forgotten that whether Paul, Apollos, or a pastor in a country church, "neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth" (1 Cor. 3:7, NASB).

Dr. Oscar Thompson used to tell his seminary students,

We are to work as a body under the headship of Christ to draw the world to himself. My gift is not your gift. Do not desire my gift. . . . He [God] knows what he wants to do with you, and he knows where you fit into the body. . . . Some preachers are always comparing themselves with other preachers. But God did not make us alike. . . . God has a ministry, and he has a plan for you. I do not care how great that other fellow's ministry is. You be faithful in the things that you can do. You are not to judge yourself by your peer group. You are you. Do not be condemned by anybody else's standards.'

Unfortunately, however, ministerial terminology continues.

Based on personal experience, I had to ask myself, *Could it be that ministers speak in ministerial terms because they don't want to admit how much they're hurting?* After all, the successful minister has everything under control, doesn't he? His people enthusiastically follow his leadership and support his steps with love and action. His programs are always successful. His

church's goals are always met. His wife and children are nearly perfect. To openly admit hurt, problems, and even defeat would be to admit failure as a successful minister. Or would it? Have society's standards infiltrated the ministers of the Lord in this area also?

Not long ago, a young, vivacious minister silently suffered while all those around him envied his energy and charisma. Martin's church programs ran like clockwork. His sermons were known for their sparkle and pizzazz. His attitude ranked right up there with Robert Schuller's. But one day the word came: Martin's marriage had ended. His struggle to be a "successful" minister came to a close.

Does competition fuel the fires of ministerial terminology?

When the news reached us, we sat in disbelief. "I didn't know he had a problem in the world," one friend said.

"He didn't say a word to me about his marriage," said another.

Though none of us had the courage to say it, we all wondered what kind of response Martin would have received had he dared to share his burdens with us. Would he have found acceptance and support? Would we have cared enough to listen and love him through the storms? Was his ministry really going well or was he simply hesitant to share the truth? Could we have made a significant difference in his marriage and ministry? We'll never know.

A third question came to mind one day as two pastors discussed

their ministries. When their conversation began to reek with cloudy clichés, I wondered, *Is ministerial terminology used among ministers because no one wants to bear the truth or the horror stories?*

The older man began their discussion by sharing some of his hurt and frustration. Obviously he was burdened by his church's problems. When he paused for a moment, the other minister jumped in, not to help or encourage, but to sing the praises of his own church and its ministry. The first man sat quietly, fully aware that his companion was not the least bit interested in his burden.

It's true that horror stories are just that—horrifying. You can't help wondering, What's to keep that from happening in my church, to me, to my wife, to my family? Yet, despite the horror and hurt that is felt when someone shares his problems, the Bible still clearly says to "bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2, NASB).

I can't help believing that many couples would still be in the pastoral ministry today if a compassionate, sensitive friend had been willing to listen and to say, "I understand. I care what you're going through. I'm praying for you."

At times my husband and I have wanted to throw in the towel and take our place in the unemployment line. We might have, too, if a kind, supportive minister had not allowed us to unload our burdens on him. In exchange for our burdens, he offered wisdom, love, and encouragement.

Perhaps this is the kind of conversation of which we need more. Perhaps ministerial terminology needs to be replaced with this kind of honest reality and concerned, compassionate communication. Then others will know we are Christians—not by our competitive spirits, growing churches, or building programs. We will be known simply by our love.

*W. Oscar Thompson, Jr., *Concentric Circles of Concern* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), 42-43.

Christmas Simplicity

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.
Windham, Maine

Luke 2:1-7, KJV

“And it came to pass”

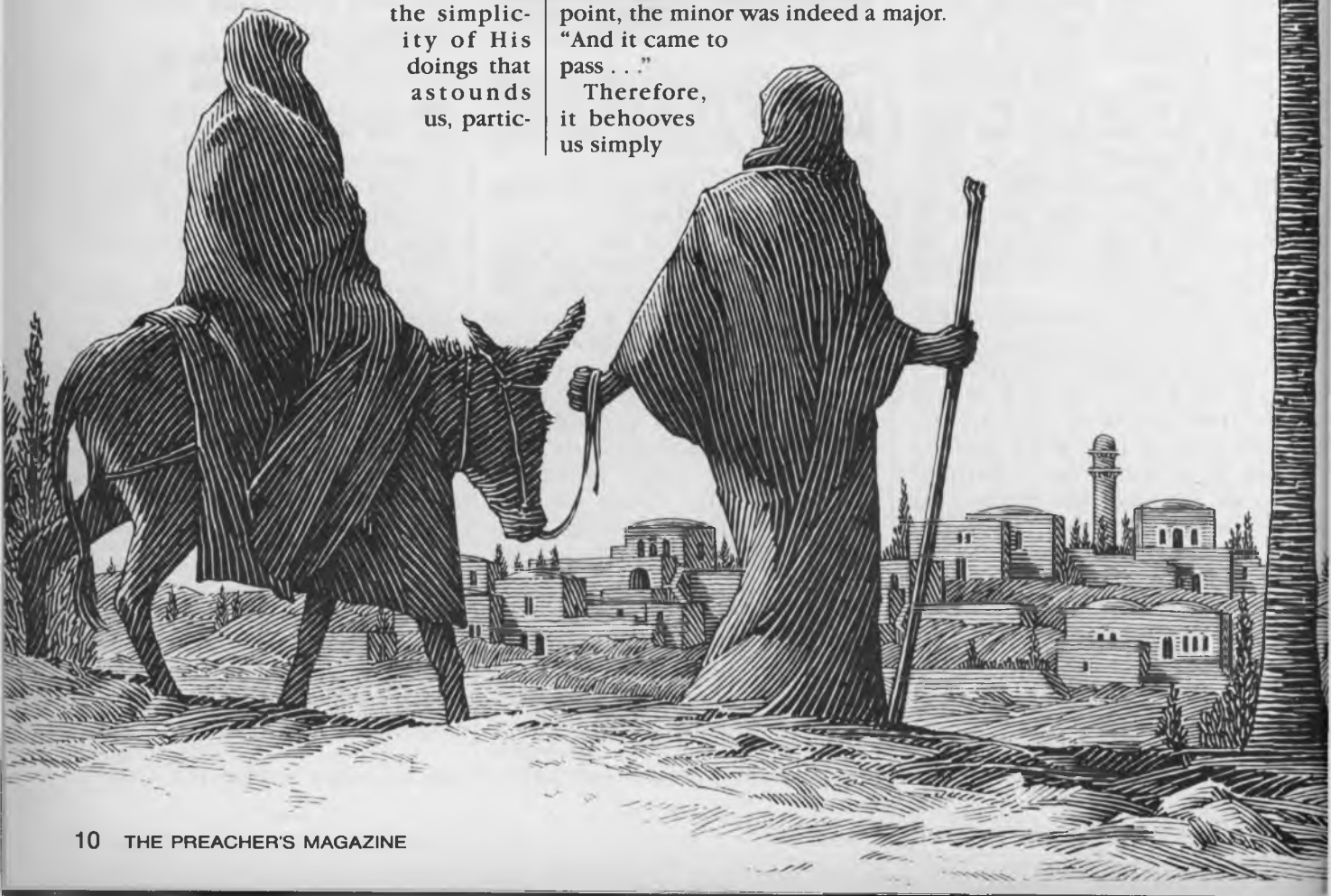
Imagine the nonchalance of the record. This account is about to tell us of the Incarnation—the coming of Deity into human form. Yet it starts the story with nothing other than one-syllable words: “And it came to pass.”

So it is frequently in our lives. What God does with us for eternity’s sake is often stepped out in silence or mere muffles, not much fanfare. It is the simplicity of His doings that astounds us, partic-

ularly when we are so taken up with the grand and opulent.

We are absorbed with sorting out the minors from the majors in our biographies. We want more majors and less minors. We want our lives to be significant, to count for something marvelous. Yet how often has God done something profound in our days in understatement—the minors? It is only later that we discover that, from eternity’s viewpoint, the minor was indeed a major. “And it came to pass . . .”

Therefore, it behooves us simply



to trust and obey, to leave the details of importance with God and so live for today's opportunities of non-chalance.

"... that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus ..."

Once again we are dumbfounded with this telling. The record providing specifics concerning the coming of the Messiah starts, not with religion, but with politics. It details not what God is up to but what government is up to. The focus is not on the Holy Spirit but on Caesar Augustus!

So it is with much in our lives as well. What God does for us and with us is frequently wrapped up in the world's doings. Take, for instance, the life of Corrie ten Boom. She and her family housed Jews who were being hunted down by Nazis. They befriended these frightened people in the name of Jesus, saving them from being gassed. We are inspired by what the ten Booms did for God because of what the government was pressing against their lives. Caesar's plays squeezed out the Spirit's witness.

The same can be said for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor/professor who stood up to Adolf Hitler. For this Christian stand, he was put in prison and then hung in Easter-tide 1945. We are enriched by his life and writings because of what politics did to force the courage from his soul.

Therefore, we look back upon a dedicated life to conclude that God's work is frequently understood long after. Then it is that we also realize that while Caesar passes on, God remains, as does His holy venture.

"... that all the world should be taxed."

Still we are not getting into much religious; we are being told of the detail of politics. The recorder tells us that there is going to be a counting of heads, names listed on a register. Yet what is also at work beneath this counting of heads is God's counting of souls.

For instance, He comes to understand that He can count on the commitments of a Mary and a Joseph as well as some magi and scrubby shepherds. On the flip side, He cannot

count on the friendships of a Herod nor the latter's soldiers, and some years hence He will not be able to count on the help of one named Pontius Pilate.

Therefore, we are reminded in the Christmas story of the Great Count—the Judgment Day that is not only at the close of our lives but every day. When God registers our doings, what do they add up to? Can we be numbered with the Marys and Josephs or with the Herods?

"... all went to be taxed, every one into his own city."

Still we are not getting very far into the obvious pronouncements of Divinity. We are yet provided background concerning the decrees of government. However, beneath that there is certainly at work the deignings of God. Could Caesar ever have realized that his dictum was in fact providing for the fulfillment of Old Testament predictions? Would he ever know that his press upon the populace also pressed a young couple out of Nazareth into Bethlehem for the seeing through of prophetic detail?

In God's simplicity, His nonchalant, He works through history's events to see through His plans. These are not always detectable on the surface, at first glance. It is later that they become evident.

In our own lives, then, we are to keep the faith midst all sorts of worldly happenings. We are to live by Rom. 8:28: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

When we are willed into the divine will, we then see that what life does *with* us is what God is doing *for* us. The Bible is filled with real-life examples of this trusting principle. There is Joseph, who went from the pit to the prison to the palace. God was in it. Daniel went from the lions' den to become Deity's spokesman to a needy culture. God was in it. Jesus was strung upon Calvary's tree in order to rise again. God was in it.

"Joseph ... went up from ... Nazareth ..."

As God leads us along, we never know what a journey may yield. Certainly when Joseph became burdened with the details of the trek 80

miles southward to Bethlehem—packing clothing, food, closing his carpenter's shop, caring for pregnant Mary—he did not know how mighty God was at work in the tether.

It is the same with our Christian lives. We meet someone along the way, and our entire lives are changed. We read something, and our thoughts are never the same. We go to an appointment, and from that time onward we take a different road. We travel to a particular city and find new dimensions we had never known before. We attend a particular college or university and meet someone who transforms our futures.

Chuck Colson was sent to prison for crimes committed during the Watergate scandal. While there behind bars, he met believers who told him about Jesus, controlling his future. His life has never been the same.

Did Joseph ever dream that in his going from Nazareth to Bethlehem, his life would be embedded into religious history forever—for good?

"... to be taxed with Mary ..."

So it is that when we make our journeys in life, it is not pleasant to go it alone. Therefore, on your way to Bethlehem, take someone with you.

Thank God that we are not called to a monastic walk nor a recluse religion. Heb. 12:1 reminds us that we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses! It is a community of faith we belong to. We are a part of the best crowd ever.

No wonder Jesus was enlivened with the company of His disciples. And when John met Him, brother James joined in too. When Andrew discovered the Lord, he ran to tell his brother, Peter. How heartening to read of a household—Mary, Martha, Lazarus—who lived under mercy. And when Zacchaeus came to grace, he took the whole village to his heart.

Is there someone—spouse, child, parent, friend—who will believe with you on your way to Bethlehem? Who will get hold of the simplicity of Christmas?

"The days were accomplished ..."

Once again we are offered the gift of time as we are given it in verse 1: "And it came to pass ..."

(Continued on page 38)

A Carpenter's Gift at Christmas

by David Wiggins
St. Augustine, Fla.



The Saturday before Christmas of 1972 dawned warm and muggy, with steam hovering above the landscape as the earth thawed.

Sam Pheasant came up out of Soco Valley with a claw hammer in his coveralls loop and a carpenter's box in his massive left hand.

He had been into the beer a bit; I could smell it on his breath. But the old Indian was steady on his feet, the whites of his eyes yellowed but not bloodshot as they usually were by the end of a week. It didn't figure—Sam sober on Saturday.

We were gathered in a small church, its pine-paneled interior sorely in need of new varnish, preparing for a Christmas play to be presented to the congregation and guests from the community that evening.

I, then the young pastor of a reservation mission, my Seminole friend named Tiger, and two Cherokee youths had erected a stable with

wood scraps and hemlock boughs. Our limited construction skills showed; the stable was about to collapse.

Women were arranging straw, fitting costumes, and adjusting angel wings.

We wanted a curtain to hide the rostrum, which would serve as a stage for a three-act play. We desperately needed a carpenter.

Sam was a good one. He had helped build many houses in the Soco community before he allowed alcohol to steal his dignity and dependability. None of us who worked on the stable thought of sending for his help, assuming that he would not, or could not, come. He had not entered the church in years, certainly not during my two-year pastorate.

But there he was, a strapping man who filled the frame of the front door, though slightly stooped in the shoulders. "Lucinda said you'ins might need some help," he mumbled shyly, looking at the floor, as if half-expecting me or God to forbid him attendance. "Got my box here, an' reckon I know a leetle bit about fixin' sheds an' such."

Lucinda, his wife and a dedicated church member, slipped by her man and went to help the other women. She was beaming. Sam had caused her much grief, but at that moment you could see the love in the woman flowing for her man like water from a mountain freset.

It's hard to describe the camaraderie with which the little congregation worked that morning. Sam's

presence at first brought a hush among us, but soon his steady hammering and sawing and gentle instructions to me and the others sparked a sense of well-being and unanimity like that I would imagine the disciples experienced when the little boy's gift of fish and bread were used to feed the multitude.

The curtain, old blankets pinned together, was finally raised on the wire hanger and opened by a pulley system Sam had devised. The stable stood erect, well supported by the carpenter's bracing. The straw was laid, the costumes ready.

We stood then, silent, all eyes fixed on the stable. And Sam, who had been sawing and hammering outside, came in with an object behind his back.

He set it upon the stable straw, and someone sighed. His surprise was a manger, a gift no less precious than those brought to another stable by wiser men long ago.

The old man picked up his toolbox and turned. He stopped motionless there in the center aisle and looked quickly from face to face. The trace of a smile broke at the edges of his hard mouth, and his dark eyes brightened for a moment. His wife was smiling through a stream of silent tears. I nodded my approval and appreciation to him.

A child walked over and laid a doll in the manger, and Sam Pheasant slipped out of the church as quietly as he had come.

It was his only visit in the years I pastored there.





St. Valentine's Day

by Morris Chalfant

Bourbonnais, Ill.

An air of excitement hung over Rome that February 14, A.D. 269. During the previous two weeks, young men had been sacrificing to the wolf destroyer god, hoping that the drawing of a girl's name from a box would bring companionship for the coming year.

This heathen feast of Lupercalia, a lovers' festival for young people, was not significantly affecting the band of Roman Christians, except that special prayer was being made for one of their finest members, a priest named Valentine. His powerful witness and compassionate treatment of persecuted Christians had caused his imprisonment.

There seems little doubt that Valentine had been communicating to members of his family by means of homing pigeons with messages pricked on heart-shaped violet leaves—messages like, "Remember your Valentine" and "I love you."

February 14 would be his execution day. Claudius Caesar II had been infuriated by Valentine's prison work for Christ. Asterius, the jail-keeper, had been won to the Lord, and his blind daughter had been healed through prayer.

Guards led Valentine to the execution site, where he was martyred.

But over the centuries, Valentine has come to represent love. The day of his martyrdom has become a day to honor love.

Whether the story is true we do not know for sure, but wouldn't this be a happier world if people would express their love for each other more often?

How long has it been since you've told someone, "I love you"? If you try expressing your love to just one special someone, you may be amazed by the response!

I need to hear those words, "I love you." I suspect you do too. But if we want to hear them, we must have the courage to say them and the determination to support those words of love with good deeds.

We live in a workaday world full of facts, hard realities, crushing competition, sentiment-dulling materialism. I am glad for the coming of Valentine's Day. If I don't have to brush a tear away before the day is over, then I'll know that I am growing old. If I don't get a Valentine from anyone, then I know where there's a crumpled flower and a verse in faded writing:

*Long, long, be my mind with
such memories filled,
Like the vase in which roses have*


*once been distilled;
You may break, you may shatter,
that vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will
cling 'round it still.*

—Author Unknown

Valentine's Day remains, as ever, a day to express love. Very few who observe it go as far as television personality Garry Moore. Many years ago he hired four skywriting airplanes to produce for his wife's delight a three-mile-wide heart, pierced by a six-mile-long arrow, ornamented with their names.

Not even Garry Moore's spectacular gesture, however, has caused one of the oldest and simplest messages to become outdated:

*Roses are red, violets are blue,
Sugar is sweet, and so are you.*

The verse is, of course, automatically signed, "Guess Who?" 



Sweet Music from a Second Fiddle

by Chris Smith

Louisville, Ky.



The troubling question can come at any time: "Just what is it that you do at your church? Are you the preacher?" Senior ministers, unlike associates, aren't bothered by this question. "Yes, I am," they confidently reply.

But as an associate minister, my very self-respect is challenged by this question. Immediately I'm confronted by an array of possible responses.

Humorous: "I am the preacher boy" (remember to laugh).

Descriptive: "I work with youth and have pulpit responsibilities" (and don't give many details).

Succinct: "I am the associate minister" (fewer details).

My favorite: "I am one of the ministers at the Raleigh Church" (no details).

Kidding aside, despite the proliferation of multiple-staff churches in the past generation, most people still think in terms of having one preacher who has a bunch of helpers. The other ministers may be important, but since they aren't "the main man," well-meaning parishioners continue to ask associates, "When are you going to get your own church?"

Whether they view their present work as a stepping-stone to getting their own church or a lifelong calling, associate ministers have to come to terms with second-fiddle status. At least I have had to.

Here, in fact, are five strategies that have helped me enjoy the associate's role.

Remember the silver lining

Before whining about my plight as

a second-class preacher with lower pay, less prestige, and almost no invitations to speak at lectureships and Bible conferences, I try to remember the numerous advantages of being an associate.

Less pressure. Being an associate means not having to worry about everything. Only within the last year, for instance, have I given more than a passing thought to the budget and money matters at my congregation. It wasn't my responsibility, so I didn't worry about it; I just pick up my check and go to the bank. Besides, why worry about finances? None of my checks has ever bounced. But the senior pastor has that pressure.

I've seen what additional pressure does to a person. Our office manager took on the bookkeeping chores a few years ago. As these words are being typed, she is trying to decipher figures for next year's budget. "I may have to work Saturday," I heard her sigh. Taking this promotion has transformed a care-free woman into a pencil-chewing accountant who worries about each Sunday's offering. The prestige that comes with more responsibility also brings more sleepless nights. No thanks.

More family time. Whenever I visit my preacher friend in another city, I'm reminded of my blessings as an associate. The telephone rings during every meal at his house. My friend pastors a congregation a third of the size of mine but has less free time than I do. The difference? He is the only pastor, and I am one of a staff of four.

As for me, I get to tuck my chil-

dren into bed six out of seven nights. I travel fewer than three weeks out of the year. I usually can take Friday afternoon off if I want. I work 45 to 50 hours a week, but the schedule of an associate minister is still more flexible than that of the solo or senior pastor.

More personal relationships. Particularly in a large church, the senior minister is a rancher and not a shepherd, more an administrator and less a pastor. Being an associate provides the opportunity to develop deeper and more personal relationships in the congregation.

In fact, those with a calling to one-on-one ministry may find the associate's role a good alternative to pastoring a small church. One master pulpiter, who also served as the dean of a local seminary, noticed the difference at his church. As members filed out the back door on Sundays, they shook his hand. The long-term associate received hugs.

Take on what you can handle

Our preacher was on a three-month sabbatical, and the budget crunch was on. It was my moment to shine in the ecclesiastical sun. I proposed a fund-raising goal of \$150,000, complete with pledge envelopes and an innovative theme, "Improving to Serve" (we needed to raise funds for badly needed building repairs). After promoting the cause and preaching my best two sermons on giving, the final tally stood at less than \$50,000.

An elder summed up the failure: "You don't go into the big game with your cleanup batter out of town." I was a leadoff hitter with little power to the opposite field, and my swing for the fences fell short.

My failure was not entirely due to lack of ability. Failure also came because I was trying to do a job designed for someone else. Attempting the campaign when the senior minister was gone said to the congregation, "This fund-raising campaign is not that important after all."

Once we realize the relationship of power and position, it's smart to enlist the aid of church power brokers when we want to succeed. And if the preacher is good at it, have him make your announcement for volunteers. I've also tried to enlist the aid of members who wield influence. Some people call this playing

politics. I call it people skills and good sense.

Let your light shine

Recently, a 10-year member of our church expressed amazement that our educational director was in charge of the nursery school. "I didn't know he did that," the member told me. He could be excused for his ignorance, I suppose. The director had been in charge of the nursery school for only 27 years!

Never assume the congregation knows what you do. If you aren't in the pulpit two times a week, the hospitals three times a week, and the auditorium class of 200 as teacher, your church members may assume you play golf half the day and nap the rest. Some educating is in order.

So I advertise my wares. Especially through the church bulletins, I make sure people know what I'm doing by making sure they know what the groups I lead are doing.

Sometimes, of course, it works too well. When one admirer commented, "I just don't see how you do all you do," I was faced with a dilemma. Do I tell the truth and admit that although I administered all the functions, I attended about half of the youth activities listed in the bulletin, or do I keep my mouth shut? I opted for the middle road. I said, "Well, I don't go to every event," and hoped she would think I missed only one devotional every other year!

Promoting one's work reminds me of the story of the lion and the tiger.

*A tiger and a lion met by a pool.
Said the tiger, "Why are you
roaring like a fool?"*

*"I'm no fool," said the lion, a
twinkle in his eyes,
"I'm called king of beasts be-
cause I advertise."*

*A rabbit overheard them and
ran home like a streak.*

*He tried the lion's plan, but his
roar was just a squeak.*

*Just then a fox chanced by and
had lunch in the woods.*

*The moral: When you advertise,
you'd best have the goods.*

So I try not to hide my light under a bushel. Nor do I take credit for things I don't do. I do, however, let people know what, in fact, is happening in my ministry.

Take on some winners

In *The Multiple Staff and the Larger Church*, Lyle Schaller divides ministerial responsibilities into two types. "Winners" are activities that earn congregational appreciation and admiration: preaching, hospital calling, home visitation, weddings, and funerals. "Losers," on the other hand, are the jobs that are often the source of criticism and disapproval: youth programs, Christian education, social action, evangelism, and ministry to young adults. Such ministries sometimes bring more problems than rewards.

The solution? Get involved in some winning activities. One youth minister visited hospitalized members the first week on the job and was surprised at the reaction. "Why,

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As leadoff hitter, my swing for the fences fell short.

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you don't have to visit me. You're the youth minister," was one member's response. Visiting the hospital earned the youth minister respect and admiration, and it's one of the reasons he has been at the church for 10 years.

When I was 22, I inherited the ladies' Bible class. Conventional thinking would say, "No unmarried kid fresh out of college can teach a class of 50-year-old women successfully." Yet it was the best thing that could have happened to me. The class taught me humility, responsibility, and tact, and at the same time provided me with my biggest supporters at church.

I've been fortunate at my congregation not to have been pigeonholed. If you are a youth minister, beg to teach an adult class. If you work with single adults, offer to do some hospital calling. If you are the Christian education minister, ask to do some weddings. Working in a few winning areas will increase your influence and make ministry more interesting.

Find life outside of ministry

During nine years at Raleigh, I

have completed my M.Div., worked on a Ph.D., and published articles. On those days when I felt unappreciated and angry that the church hasn't gushed over my obvious and tremendous talent, at least I was able to point to a dust-covered diploma on the wall. And the occasional byline helps feed the troubled and immature soul.


Extracurricular activities keep me fresh. Granted, you can do too much and wrongfully neglect your work, as I have done at times, but the positives outweigh the negatives. Serving on the PTA, getting a degree in counseling, writing a mystery novel, working as a volunteer chaplain, running a marathon, taking up woodworking, running for councilman, going on a mission trip—the list is endless. Even if your ego is happily satisfied as an associate, working and playing in noncongregational settings will make you at least a more rounded minister.

Recently, one of our high school students was involved in a serious automobile accident. After 10 days in intensive care and 10 hours of surgery, she seems to be making a full recovery.

The first day I visited her in the intensive care unit, she couldn't speak due to the respirator and numerous other tubes surrounding her. Frankly, she looked pitiful. After I prayed for her, I prepared to leave, but she wouldn't let go of my hand. It was the closest I've come to weeping in a hospital room. Over the next several days I visited her, and even though she couldn't talk, she always moved her hand, indicating she wanted me to hold it. As I left each day, I told her I loved her, something I don't normally do.

After she was discharged, we spoke on the phone one day. She said, "You came every day to the hospital. I knew you were there, even when I couldn't talk. You made me feel better." Known for her wit, she couldn't resist adding, "You're a good little youth minister."

So now I have a new response to the question, "Are you the preacher at your church?" I can say, "No, but I am a good little youth minister."

But it's still hard not to add, "with preaching and administrative responsibilities." 

Church Growth

Revival services were coming to completion. Kevin and I rose Sunday morning to prepare ourselves for a day of service.

"Karen, what time does Sunday School start?"

"Oh no! I forgot to ask. Is it posted out front?"

My husband peered out the window of our traveling home. "No, just the name of the church."

"Did Pastor give you a bulletin?"

"Yes." My evangelist husband pulled the bulletin out of his Bible. He opened it, searched the front, the inside, and the back pages. "No service times are listed. Was it announced during the services?"

"I don't think so." I paused to consider the situation. "But Sunday School usually starts at 9:45."

We continued to get ready. About 9:20 cars started pulling into the parking lot. I remarked to my husband that either the people liked to come early or Sunday School started at 9:30.

It did and we were late. We decided to go to the sanctuary to finish preparations for the worship service. There we found the senior adults class.

An usher sitting in the back of the class saw us. "Good morning! Would you like to go to class? Let's see . . ." He paused. "There's a pastor's class meeting in his office. Fran teaches a class in the fellowship hall, there's a new class meeting in the balcony, and another class down the hall there." He pointed. "Where would you like to go?"

Kevin looked at me. "The pastor's class sounds like it might be a membership class," he guessed.

"Oh, yes," the usher confirmed, "that's right."

"Which class is for people our age?" I asked.

"Oh," answered the usher, "we don't divide adult classes by age anymore, except for the senior adults. Fran's class is studying the end times. I'm not sure what the new class is studying. The one down the hall is doing First John."

My husband asked me, "Where would you like to go?"

"Let's go down the hall."

The usher pointed again and returned to the sanctuary. Our only



clue about the class behind each door were the sounds. Through one door, we heard someone praying.

"Good," I whispered, "they're just getting started."

At the close of the prayer I slowly pushed open the door. Every eye focused on me. The Sunday School teacher, sitting beside the door, stopped in midsentence and turned to greet us.

"Good morning! We're glad to have you this morning. Class, this is our song evangelist and his wife.

You'll enjoy his music this morning."

I looked for a pair of empty chairs but saw only single ones scattered around the circle; many of these held Bibles, purses, or coats. Across the room someone cleared off a chair, and three people shifted around the circle. My husband and I crossed the room to our chairs. The class secretary passed a visitor's card to us. I borrowed a pen from the man on the other side of my neighbor and filled it out. Rather than pass it back around the room, I decided to turn it in when we left.

The first bell rang—our cue to go to the sanctuary to finish preparing for the service. On the way I tried to find the ladies' room, but Kevin had to ask an usher for me.

I entered the sanctuary and cued the music for Kevin's specials. The second bell rang, and people began to enter the sanctuary. Kevin asked me, "Did you get a bulletin? I left mine in the trailer."

I shook my head.

"OK, I'll get one." He asked for a bulletin, was greeted by several people, and returned to the platform after the pastor and the evangelist were seated. I arranged my Bible and notebook on the pew beside me, and the forgotten visitor's card fell out.

While most churches want to make new people feel welcome, often our visitors hear "Welcome!" from our lips, but our signs, bulletins, and classrooms silently say, "Do Not Disturb." Although the above Sunday morning is a composite of events, it is like many Sunday mornings Kevin and I experience. From our unique perspective of being both "family" and "visitor" at churches in which we minister, we have discovered that most churches need to periodically evaluate their plan for welcoming guests into God's house.

When guests first come to our home, they are not treated like "family"—guest towels are laid out, the



linens changed, and the guest room made ready. Schedules are rearranged, and their visit takes precedence over personal agendas. Time is taken for those extra touches to make their visit pleasant. These things—anticipation of needs, convenient accommodations, and special touches — also make our guests at church feel welcome. Neglecting these things sends a message that we like things the way they are and do not wish to have the status quo disturbed.

Are there invisible “Do Not Disturb” signs at your church? What impressions are silently communicated? Tour your church from the perspective of a first-time visitor, or ask a friend to help you. Perhaps you will see signs of unwelcome in your church. The items below will help reveal these signs and enable both verbal and nonverbal welcomes to ring with sincerity. Whether simple or significant, these changes will help our guests feel more at home with the family, and that is the first step in becoming part of the family.

OUTSIDE

We give our first impression to the community through the appearance of the exterior of the church building.

- Are the grounds well maintained and inviting?
- Can the service times be easily read from the street? Are children and teen services included?
- Is the parking lot in good repair? —holes filled in? —a surface provided that will be mud-free in wet weather?
- Are the second-best parking spaces marked for visitors? The best should be for the handicapped.
- Are the parking lot and church entrances well lit?
- Are the main entrances indicated, or do visitors need to try locked doors before gaining entrance to the building?

FOYER/MAIN ENTRANCE

- Are greeters posted at every entrance? Do they: —know locations of all adult and children’s Sunday School classrooms? —ask visitors if they have been invited by someone in the church? —provided a bulletin and other

information about the church and activities?

- escort first-time visitors and children to classes?
- introduce visitors to teacher?
- If the sanctuary is not easily seen from the main entrance or if the church is large or has many hallways or additions, has a wall map of the church been provided to act as a directory?
- Is the way clearly marked to: —rest rooms? It may be embarrassing to have to ask. —nursery? —church office? —fellowship hall/gymnasium?
- Have wastebaskets been placed in convenient places such as the foyer, rest rooms, and classrooms?

**Often our visitors
hear “Welcome!”
from our lips,
but our signs,
bulletins, and
classrooms
silently say,
“Do Not Disturb.”**

- Has a large, attractive church calendar been posted and a take-home size provided?
- Are bulletins placed conspicuously for evening service visitors?
- Do bulletins: —include name of pastor, staff, and their spouses? —list office phone numbers and hours? —include service times? —provide a service outline for those from a different church background? —include song numbers and book names if two or more are used?

SUNDAY SCHOOL

This may be the church’s initial and most important personal contact with a visitor.

- Is each classroom labeled by age, grade, or name?

- Is the teacher identified either by a sign on or in the room or by a name tag?
- Do teachers: —arrive first? —greet early guests? —always face the door while teaching? This minimizes distractions and the embarrassment of visitors who may arrive late.
- Do class members fill the front seats/pews first to create an attitude of positive expectation?
- Are a number of the seats nearest the door reserved for visitors’ convenience and comfort?
- Is someone assigned to: —greet visitors and sit with them? —introduce them to the class? —record their names and addresses? —inform visitors of upcoming activities and invite them? —ask visitors to sit with them in church? —encourage visitors to come back to evening and Wednesday services?
- Have coatsracks and/or tables been placed conveniently in the room so that chairs are used by people instead of personal belongings? Visitors may not feel comfortable leaving personal possessions in an unfamiliar public place.
- Have areas that present constant visual and/or audio distractions that compete with the teacher —such as the choir loft, balcony, and gym—been considered class space?
- Can classes be combined rather than placing two or three classes in the sanctuary or fellowship hall?

REST ROOMS

Rest rooms can make a positive or a negative statement about a congregation; they reveal the personality and thoughtfulness of the church.

- Is the way to the rest rooms clearly marked from every major entrance?
- Are the men’s and women’s clearly marked? If the signs are missing or illegible, have they been replaced?
- Has liquid soap been provided as a more sanitary and attractive alternative to bar soap?

(Continued on page 51)

When the Saints Go Marching Out

by Kathleen D. Bailey

Raymond, N.H.

The future looked good for Paul and Karen. Their church-planting effort for their denomination had recently organized into a regular congregation. Formative stages behind, they were about to launch a systematic program of outreach into their community. They were in the process of looking for land and a building when Jed, one of their "core" members, took his family out. Jed, undergoing personal problems, claimed working in a small church was too stressful for him.

The scenario of Paul, Karen, and Jed has been played with variations in every congregation. Pastors agree that while it is difficult to lose fringe members, the real heartbreak comes from losing solid laymen whom they disciplined and trusted. The only remedy, most pastors agree, is a clear conscience, a lot of prayer, and donning their biblical armor.

THE MERGER THAT WASN'T

"To some extent, transfers are easy to deal with," Chuck, a Pennsylvania pastor, says. "There is not much you can do when your army family or IBM executive gets marching orders." But when it is a mass transfer to a nearby church of the same denomination, the results can bring heartbreak.

"The idea of a merger was part of the history of two neighboring churches," Chuck, the "left behind" pastor, recalls. His small-town pastorate was growing, and some people talked about a new building. But others talked about merging with a

neighboring congregation on the verge of closure. While Chuck's people talked openly about the merger, they never formally approached him. Eventually he took an all-church survey, which showed less than one-third of his congregation wanting to merge. However, that one-third included the active, influential group of youth, young adults, and middle agers.

After a stormy all-church meeting where dissenters insisted that "it is God's will," about 25 people moved to the other church. Though most of the remnant rallied around Chuck and his wife, Betty, two more families finally left. Some bus children from the Sunday School were also drawn away. Their group of about 70 shrank to 40.

Betty was "absolutely devastated" at the loss to their congregation. They both had had big plans and ideas for the church, but the defection "plunged the knife in all the way."

Chuck agrees. On a surface level, he dealt with the problem swiftly, tying up loose ends, replacing people in key positions. At a deeper level, he hurt.

PAIN

Chuck and Betty live in a small town where they constantly run into former members. These encounters, though superficial, bring back memories of the conflict and pain. Since the church had a battle-scarred past, the town was not surprised at the defection. In addition to former members, he dealt with a watching community.

Denominational functions were also rough, Chuck recalls. It was hard to see former members with their new pastor at district assemblies. It was devastating to him when a former member testified in camp meeting about how he had grown in grace.

Chuck found his only relief in prayer. He lifted up a different family every day—its health, its well-being, its children. He prayed faithfully but did not feel release until a year after the split.

The members who stayed were loyal and supportive, Betty recalls. However, they were mostly retired from active service. The "movers and shakers" had left, and the church operated with a skeleton crew.

The split produced far-reaching hurt and psychological damage. Chuck now warns other pastors to forget the hurt, or they will sour current relationships. He advises, "Learn to trust the ones who stay."

He continues, "For years I was constantly looking over my shoulder. I suspected the ones who stayed of plotting against me." When one loyal member began acting like the former church boss, Chuck and Betty became paranoid.

The ones who stayed told them, "It wasn't your fault." The church had had a troubled history, including another split 30 years earlier. However, Chuck and Betty still blamed themselves. Chuck says he felt "guilty all the time."

On a regular basis, he wondered if he could have done anything differ-

ently to prevent the split. With mental tweezers, he went over past conversations and minor conflicts.

Betty remembers, "We'd talk for hours. What if we'd done this? What if we'd done that?"

"What if I'd been more forceful?" Chuck contributes. As the shadows lengthen around their parsonage home, he reaches for his wife's hand: "We'll never know."

EACH SITUATION DIFFERENT

An Eastern pastor of a midsize church thinks the parsonage couple's reaction should be gauged by the members' reasons for leaving. For example, one strong lay couple, who had been commuting 60 miles to services, left his congregation when a "baby" church of their denomination opened 20 miles from their home. "I liked them," Allen recalls, "and I felt anger and jealousy, but I also felt happy for them." Though Allen has kept in touch, he did not attempt to win the couple back.

An elderly man and longtime member is a different case, according to Allen. The man disagreed with his pastoral style and told Allen, "I'll come back when you are gone."

The older man had been church treasurer for 17 years without attending a Sunday morning service. Allen administered church discipline. When the man refused to improve his attendance, Allen removed him from the treasurer's position. Allen recalls, still amazed, "He thought I had a lot of nerve, asking him about his spiritual condition."

In the open atmosphere of a pastors' retreat, Allen admits, "I don't like the man. But he needs to be ministered to in the name of Jesus." Allen still calls on his elderly antagonist, facing him with "lots and lots of prayer."

Allen, a veteran pastor, recalls that in his first church, he faced each defection with great guilt. "It was a time of deep soul-searching," he says. He made many efforts to contact the people and "begged forgiveness on my hands and knees," even when he knew he hadn't done anything wrong.

Now, three parishes later, Allen is more analytical. He tells departing families, "If you don't choose to wor-

ship with us, that is fine. I hope you find a place you enjoy." The rational, friendly approach seems to work for Allen, who still has a pastoral relationship with some defectors.

LIKE A MARRIAGE

Sarah, a Massachusetts woman, became an ordained elder after several years as a pastor's wife. She brings both perspectives to the question of departed members.

Some cases should be dealt with, Sarah believes, while others should *not* be touched. Serious differences in doctrine are best handled by the dissenters moving to a church more in line with their beliefs. They usually are not willing to change and will cause conflict when retained.

Also, Sarah says, when she or her husband take a new pastorate, they are "not in the practice of chasing people who left before we got there." If a family has left for a good reason, they probably will not come back. If they left for a bad reason, such as a doctrinal dispute, Sarah is not certain she wants them back.

Sarah and her husband, Steve, believe there are no lost causes except when angry people throw up barriers. "They won't let you resolve it," she says of some situations. "But you've got to be there if they let the barriers down."

Unfortunately, the barriers stayed up when women in one church opposed her call to ministry and accused her of "taking over." Though she had church board approval for preaching in that church, the women formed their own jury. Hurt, Sarah withdrew from the women.

"I could have dealt with them one-on-one," she says now. But she didn't, and a large contingent of women left the church. With their families, it amounted to a split.

To Sarah, the hurt was especially sharp because it revolved around personal issues, "all of them versus me." Asked if she felt any guilt, she responds, "Oh, my, yes! I felt very responsible. But I was secure in what God wanted me to do."

Sarah believes a lot of anguish could have been avoided if laypeople had come to her or her husband first. "But it just burned in secret," she says. "Some of them had good motives and didn't really want to hurt me."

The laypeople could have made things easier, Sarah thinks, by following biblical models for confrontation and criticism. "There can be a lot of misunderstanding if things aren't dealt with properly," she says. "It's like a marriage."

WRAPPING UP

"The door swings both ways," one mother of eight used to tell each child as he left home. It is the same churches. Those who leave need to know they will be accepted back if they choose to return. Whether or not they return, the pastor and his wife need to know they have done all they could. Then, in the language of the '90s, they need to "get on with their lives."


Chuck and Betty stood fast, working with their skeleton crew. Four years later, their glowing faces make them look like a brand-new couple as they talk about recent growth in their church. "We have four new families plus one widow," Chuck says. "Frankly, our biggest problem right now is assimilating growth."

Chuck and Betty offer no formula for this success. "We just kept on doing what we were doing," she says. "New families moved into the area, and we met others through our own people. We grew by 25 percent in one year."

Though Chuck and Betty remained faithful to their charge, they do not see the growth as a "reward" for being good. "It's the natural outcome," Chuck says, "of people maturing and the Lord giving the increase."

Betty is excited about their growing church. But even if it hadn't grown, she says, she and Chuck would have stayed at least long enough to complete their personal healing. She advises, "Don't ever leave a church when you're broken. You will take that brokenness into your next church."

Though some memories are unpleasant, Chuck and Betty now have a broader view of the split. They are grateful for lessons learned. Chuck says, "I feel like a seasoned pastor now."

Betty contributes, "We've had two churches, the one we came to, and the one after the split. The one we have now seems almost like our third church. And for us," she says, "the hurt has healed." 

If You Preach:

READ

by Carl G. Conner
Durham, N.C.

Prior to assuming my first pastorate, I conferred with a well-known pulpiteer and seasoned minister. Realizing gaps in my knowledge, I asked him to recommend several reference books he felt every pastor should own.

The short list he suggested included A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, a verse-by-verse and word-by-word study of New Testament Greek; L. D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*; the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, a four-volume set that covers almost every subject in the Bible; *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*; and *Pulpit Commentary*.

While these volumes were classics at that time, several have been revised and continue to be good references. But they do not stand alone in the field of pastoral reading material that every minister should own.

Unfortunately, some ministers do limited reading of the Bible as well as of many excellent books. The minister who reads little often preaches a weakly documented sermon.

There are at least five reasons why preachers should be readers. Reasons for reading include (1) filling gaps in one's knowledge, (2) for enjoyment, (3) to update one's profession, (4) filling one's time with useful pursuit, and (5) gaining information.

To be well-rounded, one should read many types of books. Most individuals find it difficult to be well read in all fields. As a result, it is important that one read in his own chosen field and then study selected books in other areas.

The most common fields of reading are autobiography, biography, fiction, history, medical, psychological, and theological works. A general knowledge of these fields should be included in every minister's library.

Years ago I visited a friend who had a large library of beautifully leather-bound classics. Knowing that he was not a reader, I asked, "How many of these have you read?"

"None," he replied. "I bought them to fill my bookcase."

The study of theology divides into several categories. There are classics, such as Josephus' *Antiquities*; early 1900 writers such as the late Dr. Clovis Chappell; reference volumes and contemporary writings covering a wide scope that is ever increasing.

Perhaps one of the most difficult areas for preachers is illustrations. Over a number of years, I have clipped items from newspapers and current publications rather than depend only on several illustration books on the market. Three volumes I found on the shelf of a bookstore

recently included *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, by Paul Lee Tan; *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, by Michael P. Green (Baker Book House); and *12,000 Religious Quotations*, by Frank S. Mead (Baker Book House).

A study of cults and their messages demands a great deal of a minister's study. A well-known book in this field is *The Chaos of Cults*, by J. K. Van Baalen, revised in 1983 (Eerdmans Publishing Co.). The New Age Movement has stimulated dozens of volumes on this cultic subject. Included in recently released books are *Straight Answers to the New Age*, by Bob Larson (Thomas Nelson Publishers); *The New Age Cult*, by Walter Martin (Bethany House Publishers); *Dark Secrets of the New Age*, by Texe Marrs (Crossway Books).

While the New Age Movement is one of the most recent cult doctrines, older heresies still demand attention in a pastor's day-to-day contacts in homes. Among them are Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. One might wish to refer to *The Kingdom of Cults*, revised and expanded, by Walter Martin (Bethany House Publishers), and *Mormonism, Mama, and Me*, by Thelma Greer (Moody Press).

The field of sermon books and outlines is limitless. However, one might wish to reference such contemporary writers as Warren W. Wiersbe, author of *Listening to the Giants*. Also, F. E. Marsh's *1,000 Bible Study Outlines* (Kregel) would be worth buying. Other more recent volumes include *Dr. Tom Malone Preaches on the Apostles* (Sword of the Lord) and *The Preacher and Preaching*, edited by Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House).

Today bookstores are full of excellent reading material for ministers. This fact makes it increasingly difficult to afford, much less read, everything available. If you live near a Bible college or seminary, visit the library. This affords an excellent opportunity to read books you might never be able to buy.

As an example, well-known evangelical writer Chuck Swindoll has written more than 24 books. David A. Seamands, a specialist in psychological volumes, has written at least

16 books. W. Phillip Keller, a writer of pastoral-type material, has authored more than 18 books.

Every minister would profit from reading Seamands' *Healing Waters* and *Healing for Damaged Emotions*. Of Keller's, I would recommend *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, *Taming Tension*, *Walking with God*, and *Still Water*.

Of the more than 20 volumes by Swindoll, I would suggest *Hand Me Another Brick*, a study of the Book of Nehemiah (excellent for a mid-week study series); *Three Steps Forward and Two Steps Back*; *Living on the Ragged Edge*; *Dropping Your Guard*; and *Strengthening Your Grip*.

Readers should be aware that many of the more recent volumes by popular authors have been released in cassette recordings. However, these are only brief selections from these writers and seldom worth the money for a minister who would like in-depth coverage of a subject.

He who reads little often preaches a weakly documented sermon.

Some areas of religious writings seldom become the subject of books. Two such subjects are angels and the minister's wife. In the study of angels, I recommend Billy Graham's *Angels* and Betty Malz's *Angels Watching over You*. Recently visiting a Christian bookstore, I could not find a single volume on the minister's wife. However, I recommend *Help! I'm a Pastor's Wife*, by Michele Buckingham.

Almost everywhere you turn, it is possible to see mention of demons. Recently the book titled *This Present Darkness*, by Frank S. Peretti, has been popular. Within one week, two different persons recommended it to me. However, I find the plot of the book, featuring demons, develops very slowly. More important, I feel the author deals with the subject much like the science-fiction style. It is a fiction work.


The general field of theology and devotional writings is covered by contemporary writers. I suggest Charles Stanley's *How to Listen to God* and William L. Coleman's *Lord, Sometimes I Need Help*.

Though I am not an authority on either New Testament Greek or Old Testament Hebrew, I am a collector of Bible translations. Recently a magazine article indicated that the well-read minister should own at least four translations of the Bible. While this would be a start, I feel it is far too few. With many translations released in recent years, finding new translations is easy.

I recommend *The Living Bible* to very new converts, especially if they are finding other translations difficult to understand. The *New American Standard Bible* is a favorite of mine. Over the years I have collected many translations, some rarely found in bookstores today. These include the *King James II*, translated by Jay P. Green.

Other volumes in my library of more than 25 translations include the *New International Version*, *Smith-Goodspeed*, *Amplified Bible*, *New King James Version*, *Revised Standard Version*, *The New Life Bible*, *Lamsa Holy Bible* (translated from Aramaic), *Rotherham's translation*, *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, and other modern English translations.

Personally, I find multitranslations difficult to follow, although I own several volumes. However, it is interesting to compare the different translations, using two at a time. Because of its antique beauty, I prefer the King James Version for use in the pulpit, although I refer to other translations occasionally.

Every preacher should be a reader! While some persons dislike hearing a minister give a Sunday morning book review, most churchgoers appreciate the added richness and insight that reading provides. 



Ima Jo Kerr's Book List

by Bob Haslam



One of the qualities a successful editor must have is a love of books. I have hundreds of them on my shelves at work and at home.

Being a lifelong "bookie" (lover and connoisseur of books), I now take this opportunity to recommend a few titles and authors for your edification.

History and roots are "in" at the present time. I recommend *Remember the Good Old Days*, by Carey Meback.

Travel is big these days too. Try these travel books: *All About Wyoming*, by Shy Anne; *A Quickie Tour of Holland*, by Aunt Werp; *Tragedy at Niagara Falls*, by Ilene Dover.

But shouldn't we be more spiritual about this? Then try *Glimpses of Heaven*, by Pearl E. Gates; *Morning Prayers*, by Earl E. Rizer; or *The Origin of the Tithe*, by Mel Kizadek.

If you're into prophecy, look for *Predicting the Future*, by Arma Geddon. If your thing is reconciliation, you'll just have to find *Bringing People Together*, by Brother Hood. If you hate rock and roll, you'll love *Gimme That Old-time Music*, by Vic Trolla. Or if you panic easily, look up *Crisis Management*, by Harry Carey.

Now everyone knows we Free Methodists are encased in a modified episcopal system. That's why we have General Conference every four years—to modify the episcopacy. For your edification in this area, I recommend *Bucking the Hierarchy*, by Count Meout. Then there's that brief treatise titled *Will the Bishop Ignore the Discipline?* by Betty Willnot.

Is your nemesis deadlines? Then by all means get a copy of *Meeting and Beating Deadlines*, by Hugh I. Madit. Is giving up too soon a weakness? Try *Never Give Up*, by Percy Verance. Are you tempted to break the law? Then must reading for you is *In Trouble with the Law*, by Miss Dee Meanor.

I think everyone should read *Dealing with Attitudes*, by Judge Mental. And for those who find issues to be a sticky problem, I recommend two books: *Taking a Stand on the Issues*, by Jack B. Nimble; and *Where to Take a Stand*, by X. Marx Despot.

If you're a person who's into leadership, this book is a must: *How to Be an Effective Leader*, by Dick Tater. If you're forever getting into trouble, read *How to Keep out of Trouble*, by Layne Lowe.

Perhaps you're into auto repair. I've got just what you need. *Secrets of Car Repair*, by Otto Motive. Or *Fixing Up Old Cars*, by Claude Hopper.

I even have some suggestions for missionaries, particularly first-termers. *The Making of a Missionary*, by Minnie Hard Knox; *How to Handle Homesickness*, by Heva Seifer Holme; and *Eating New Foods*, by Forcette Downe.

For those seeking to fine-tune their ministry potential, try these: *Effective Ministry to the Aging*, by Jerry Attricks; *Successful Prison Ministry*, by J. L. Bird; *How to Interpret the Bible*, by Herman Utics; *Understanding the New Age Movement*, by Claire Voyant.

Ah, here's one for meeting New Day goals: *Gulf Coast Church Planting*, by Mrs. Sippy.

Every pastor could use this one: *Pastoral Administration Made Easy*, by Della Gate.

Everyone who participates in a funeral needs this one: *Funeral Manual for the Layman*, by Paul Barrer.

Are you into cooking? This is for you: *Cultural Cuisine for the Nineties*, by Gore May.

That's enough to keep you going for a while. But, no, just one more. Try *Why I Write Book Titles*, by Ima Jo Kerr.



Going Forward— It's Easy!

by Kathy Scott
Conestoga, Pa.

Going forward is easy!" Every time a preacher says those words, I wonder when was the last time he walked down the aisle. At that remark, I recall the dummy of Senor Wences saying, "Ees easy for you; ees difficult for me!"

Perhaps his ready and willing response to God's call, however, has put him in the pulpit and me in the pew. Perhaps stemming from my stubborn nature, going forward has never been easy.

Even my initial response to salvation came after a year of vacillating between two opinions. Later, it took me three years to respond to another decision.

I was going through a time of deep emotional turmoil. Daily I battled various fears. I began to question my sanity. After several months of this struggle, I prayed to the Lord, "How can I know freedom from these fears and depression?"

He answered, "Go forward at church."

"Go forward at church? Admit publicly that something is amiss in my life? No. There must be another way."

Foolish pride would not let me make that step. For months my mental agony continued to the point of considering suicide before I finally agreed to step out from the pew.

As I walked down the aisle to totally surrender my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, the bars of prison began to open. I left behind the inmates of fear—fear of life, fear of death, fear of being alone, and fear of insanity.

When I reached the altar, I was released!

Freedom, at last! In my joy of being free again, I did not look back. Now I can—the pain, the emotion, dulled by time. And yet, I breathe the liberty as if it were yesterday.

A man in our church went forward one Sunday evening. He told the pastor that he had resisted the Holy Spirit's prompting to go forward for 33 years. For 33 years he sat in the pew and refused to listen to the Spirit of God. He had been spinning his wheels as a Christian and not gotten out of the ditch. What victory he experienced that night!

The dilemma of the Christian caught in the "no response" syndrome is often lost to us. There is no progress in the life of the one who does not heed God's call. More frequently the Christian will actually go backward in his spiritual life. That is the very warning given in Hebrews (cf. 3:15—4:1).

New Testament writers remind us that Old Testament experiences were written for our example and learning. We can learn something from the children of Israel. A significant passage in Deuteronomy 1 says that the distance from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea is "eleven days' journey" (v. 2, KJV). Then, the next verse talks about 40 years later. An 11-day journey took 40 years because Israel refused to enter the door God had opened for them. They wandered in the wilderness because they refused to go up to the Promised Land and claim it by faith.

Often a Christian's answer to the invitation results in others heeding God's call. One Sunday morning, a woman in our church named Joan walked down the aisle. She was concerned that she was becoming caught up in the pursuit of materialism. Another woman also came forward that Sunday and said later, "When I saw Joan walk up to the front, I knew I had to respond. I admire her more than any other Christian woman I know. If she admits a need in her life, I had to acknowledge mine."

Marge, a missionary, responded to an invitation when she was a girl of 14. For some time, she had been resisting the calling of God upon her life. When she stood that night in dedication, her brother also stood. He had told the Lord, "If Marge stands tonight, I will."

They have both served the Lord for many years in South America, but it was rooted in that response to the invitation.

After making the earlier decision, I wanted to become more involved in Christian work. Again I experienced the urging of the Holy Spirit to make that a public commitment. I

(Continued on page 33)



Breaking Through the Communication Barrier Ministry to Stroke Victims

by Robert W. Rae
Mesa, Ariz.



We all are vulnerable to cerebral strokes, which can disable without warning. Nearly every pastor has stroke-disabled members within his congregation. These afflicted persons and their families need the care of a pastor who is both compassionate and competent in this specialized ministry.

Much has been written describing the types, causes, and symptoms of strokes. Some of the best literature on this subject has been published by the American Heart Association.

Little, however, has been published to structure a *spiritual ministry* for such casualties. Certain modes of ministry can break through the communication barrier blocking pastoral discourse with the disabled.

As one who has ministered to stroke victims and their families for more than four decades, I offer these suggestions to care-givers.

Cerebral strokes constitute the third leading cause of death in the United States, surpassed only by heart attacks and cancer.¹

In the past, physicians have been pessimistic about the prognosis of

cardiovascular casualties. Dr. Henry Betts, chairman of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, describes past indifference toward stroke patients: "Twenty years ago, stroke victims were just discarded, put into nursing homes and that was it."²

Now, doctors and institutions are dedicating efforts and funds to the rehabilitation of such victims. The result is gratifying. "The life expectancy of patients after strokes is increasing because we're taking better care of them," is the hopeful word of Dr. Michael Reding, director of the stroke program at Burke Rehabilitation Center of White Plains, N.Y.³

Our Vulnerability to Cerebral Strokes

Today's stress-burdened people are very vulnerable to cerebral strokes. More than 400,000 Americans are disabled by such injuries each year. Approximately 160,000 of these victims die prematurely, one-third expiring before their 65th birthday.⁴

Strokes can afflict almost anyone, often without warning. On the day before Easter, 1986, Jacqueline Cole⁵ suddenly doubled over, holding her head. "I've got a terrible headache," she whispered. "It's the worst one I've ever had!" Moments later, she exclaimed, "I can't feel my arm! I know I'm having a stroke!" With that unexpected crisis, Jackie Cole suffered a massive stroke,

which lapsed into 47 days of deep coma.

Likewise, Mrs. Dolores Kehr, of New York City, was stricken while having dinner with her sons in an East Side restaurant. She suddenly turned deathly pale, began mumbling incoherently, and her right arm began to curl inward. Dolores Kehr was suddenly disabled by a massive stroke, at 51 years of age.⁶

Causes of Cerebral Strokes

Cerebral strokes can result from several causes, the most common being hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and preexistent heart disease.⁷ Other causes include heavy smoking, oral contraceptives, increased red blood cells, and blockage of arteries by atherosclerosis.⁸

These causes can now be identified by means of ultrasound, CAT scans, exploratory X-rays, and surgery.⁹ As a result, many potential strokes are prevented. Through drug-controlled blood pressure and blood-thinning anticoagulants, stroke deaths have dramatically declined during the past two decades.

Types of Strokes

Three major types of strokes disable people today in America.¹⁰

1. *Cerebral thrombosis*—a blood clot that gradually attaches to an arterial wall, finally blocking the blood flow to the brain and temporarily paralyzing one side of the victim's body.
2. *Cerebral embolism*—a floating blood clot that travels



through a cranial artery until it lodges in a narrow passage, blocking both the blood flow and the oxygen supply to the brain. This condition often proves fatal.

3. **Cerebral hemorrhage**—internal bleeding within the skull caused by the rupture of a weakened artery. Only 12 percent of strokes result from cerebral hemorrhages, but 80 percent of these prove fatal.

Description of a Stroke Experience

A detailed description of a stroke experience, its treatment, and lengthy—often frustrating—recovery has been chronicled by a knowledgeable victim, Dr. Charles Clay Dahlberg, M.D., and interpreted by his colleague, Dr. Joseph Jaffre, M.D.¹¹ Dr. Dahlberg concludes his book, titled *Stroke: A Doctor's Personal Story of His Recovery*, by offering nine specific suggestions for patients, families, friends, and doctors who are related to cerebral stroke patients.

However, no spiritual nurture of stroke victims is mentioned. Let me suggest some modes of ministry for stroke victims.

MINISTERING TO STROKE VICTIMS

Stroke-injured persons often remain mentally alert, with hearing and vision intact, despite their inability to communicate verbally. This situation allows a pastor to penetrate communication barriers and discourse with the disabled. It also warns care-givers against saying anything at bedside that the patient should not hear or worry about.

Most stroke victims can respond to yes and no questions with simple body language. If the victim's voice has been silenced by aphasia, he may be able to respond through headshakes, hand squeezes, nods, smiles, frowns, shrugs, or charades. Aphasia indicates injury of the left hemisphere of the brain. If someone can interpret the victim's garbled speech, conversation can be facilitated.

One important contribution that pastors can make is supportive encouragement. Often a stroke victim will weary of exercises and resign himself to his limitations. The pas-

tor can give his discouraged parishioner valuable encouragement and support at such times and thus contribute to his recovery. Praise of even minimal progress helps to buoy up the spirits of discouraged patients.

Utilizing whatever means of communication are available, the pastor can bring the blessings of spiritual comfort to stroke victims. God's promises of continued care can provide spiritual security and peace through Bible readings, prayers, and sacraments. Following are a few nurturing scriptures that can be shared:

Today's stress-burdened society is highly vulnerable to strokes.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1, KJV).

"Be glad for all God is planning for you" (Rom. 12:12, TLB).

"Everything that happens fits into a pattern for good" (Rom. 8:28, Phillips).

"I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13, RSV).

"My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9, RSV).

If a pastor learns to recognize the warning signs of an evolving stroke, he may be able to preserve a parishioner's life. Some warning signs are these:¹²

1. A sudden weakness or numbness of face, arm, or leg
2. Temporary loss of speech or difficulty understanding others' speech
3. A sudden dimness or loss of vision, especially in one eye
4. An episode of double vision
5. A change of personality traits or mental ability

When a pastor observes any of these difficulties disabling a parishioner, he should get the person to his doctor immediately. The sooner a doctor begins treatment of such symptoms, the less serious will be the damage.¹³

A pastor may volunteer to spend a

regular period of time with the confined patient, playing games, watching television or rented movies, or listening to a talking book borrowed from the local library. This visitation can provide an overburdened family with some "off-duty" free time. This ministry to the patient's family may prove more beneficial than visitation of the patient himself. A pastor may urge a family to divide the care-giving duties among its members so that none is overburdened.

The parishioner's door can swing inward to welcome visitors from outside the home. Thus the shut-in need not be shut out of the world around him. The booklet titled *Shut-In but Not Shut-Out* offers helpful suggestions for the enrichment of confined persons.¹⁴

Summary of Pastoral Ministries

The foregoing paragraphs have attempted to set forth some suggestions for pastors who minister to victims or potential victims of strokes. Let me summarize these suggestions for pastoral care-givers:

1. Pastors should learn to recognize symptoms that warn of an evolving stroke. When stroke symptoms are noted in a parishioner, the pastor should get the ailing person to his doctor for treatment as soon as possible.
2. Because most stroke victims can see and hear, a pastor can nurture their spiritual life through shared scriptures, prayers, and sacraments.
3. The pastor can relieve an overburdened family of a stroke victim by arranging free time for them. The pastor should be aware of the needs of the family and undergird their labors of love in every possible way. Meaningful moments may be shared by pastor and parishioner while the family is "off duty."
4. The pastor can offer counsel to the family of a stroke victim, frankly discussing such concerns as institutional care versus home care, handling emotional outbursts, dealing with depression and its dangers, and coping with bizarre behavior.¹⁵

(Continued on page 47)

The Power of Positive Preaching

by Croft M. Pentz

Union, N.J.

The old axiom, "A spoonful of honey will draw more flies than a spoonful of vinegar," certainly applies to preaching.

Positive preaching produces more and lasting results than the negative approach.

Of course, some negative preaching is needed to balance the positive. However, too much negative preaching puts the speaker and people always on the defensive.

In the sports world we often hear, "A good defense makes a good offense." However, if you have all defense and score no points, you won't win games.

Some ministers are known as being against everything and for nothing! Their preaching makes Christianity a religion of don'ts instead of a positive force.

How often Rom. 6:23 is quoted, "The wages of sin is death." Too many end here. The latter part of the verse says, "But the gift of God is eternal life." A positive approach will entice more people to follow Christ than telling them what they can't do!

Positive Preaching Is Expectant

The spirit of expectancy on the part of the speaker is passed on to the hearers. The promises of God come to life. His Word becomes personal. "It is for *me!* It will meet *my needs.*"



This type of preaching produces faith. It encourages complete trust in God. It doesn't look at the dark side but presents the solution to the problem.

Positive preaching tells not only what God *can do* but what He *will do* to meet personal needs. Spiritual eyes and understanding are opened. People see what God has done in the past, but they also know what He will do in the present.

Positive Preaching Is Practical

God's Word is positive and practical. It is man who complicates and makes it impractical.

Positive preaching not only tells the answer to man's needs but shows the way and encourages him to follow the way.

This type of preaching not only diagnoses the illness but gives a cure! There is little value in showing a person his need unless you show him how to overcome his problem.

Positive Preaching Is Sound

There is no place for politics or a self-righteous, fighting spirit. Positive preaching is always true to God's Word.

It puts man's feet solidly upon the ground. It is not mystical or super-spiritual but sound and stable.

It is sound in its *approach*, offering hope. There is a way out! It sees beyond the rough draft to the finished product.

It is sound in its *affection*. Love is evident not only in the words of the speaker but in his attitude and concern, which is felt by the hearers.

It is sound in its *appeal*. The people sense reality and sincerity.

Positive Preaching Is Interesting

Before a salesman sells a product, he must make it appealing to the

prospect. He must be convincing. His sales pitch must make a prospect listen and remember.

Interesting preaching causes people not only to listen but also to react and respond.

A positive, interesting sermon will produce eternal results.

Developing a Positive Ministry

1. *Study the Scriptures.* Of course, some scriptures have a negative message, but the positive always outweighs the negative. Look at the ministry of Jesus, Paul, and other great Bible characters. See their positive ministry.

2. *Study the salesman.* Of course, pick the honest salesman and learn from him. Examine his approach.

3. *Study radio and TV commercials.* Look at their positive thrust. See how interesting they make their products. Note their sales pitch.

4. *Study successful speakers of the past and present.* Why did they get results? What do they have that makes their speaking and churches a success?

5. *Study people.* Notice how various people of various backgrounds respond.

When the Philippian jailer asked Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul didn't give a list of don'ts! Rather he said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). Paul didn't expose his past life of sin; he simply told the jailer to believe.

Get people to believe God. When they begin to trust Him, something happens! A change takes place in their lives. Then things that displease God will disappear.

Let's begin to spread more honey and less vinegar!

Illustrations in Preaching

by W. Floyd Bresee

In many ways the success of preaching depends upon the success of the illustration. An idea without an accompanying illustration is like an airplane without wings; the idea is not going to fly. The most successful preachers soon discover that illustrations have a way of personalizing the message, of attaching an address to it. As preachers, when we fail to use illustrations, it's the same as writing a lengthy letter but failing to address the envelope before mailing it.

Ali Baba, in an old Arabian Nights tale, was fleeing for his life. Suddenly he was face-to-face with a dead end. Mammoth rock walls rose before him and on either side. His enemies were closing in from behind. It seemed there was no way to escape. But Ali Baba shouted two secret words, "Open Sesame." As if by magic, giant rock doors swung open before him. He rode through to safety and riches.

Preacher, have you ever had that dead-end feeling in the pulpit? Have you found yourself facing people whose minds seemed as impervious as rock to the truth you were trying to present? Have you been hotly pursued by feelings of failure? Have you desperately wished you had two magic words like Ali Baba's that would open doors and let the truth get through?

You do have two magic words: *for instance*. As you lay an illustration before your congregation, eyes focus on the pulpit. Minds focus on the sermon. Doors swing open. The truth gets through!

Importance of illustration

Let's first examine the reasons why illustration is an important way of conveying truth.

1. *The Bible is largely a book of illustrations*. Remembering this makes the Bible both more interesting and understandable. Underlying virtually the entire Old Testament is illustration of how God leads His people. Notice how Paul emphasizes this fact: "Now these things which happened to our ancestors are *illustrations* of the way in which God works, and they were written down to be a warning to us who are living in the final days of the present order" (1 Cor. 10:11, Phillips, italics added).

We wouldn't become nearly so confused over such subjects as the Old Testament sanctuary if we remembered always to look at it as God's way of illustrating how Christ saves. The Gospels perfectly illustrate truth by telling the life story of the only One who ever lived truth perfectly. If you're going to teach truth the way God teaches it, you must use illustrations, for His Book is a book of illustrations.

2. *Jesus always illustrated*. Mark 4:33-34 asserts, "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them" (KJV). The Sermon on the Mount has some 56 metaphors. You can read the entire sermon aloud in 15 minutes. If the sermon was delivered just as it is recorded, Jesus was using more than three illustrations a minute.

With Jesus the Kingdom was always *like* something. Look at just one chapter with me—Matthew 13, KJV (italics added). In verse 24 Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is *likened* unto a man which sowed good seed in his field." In verse 33, "The kingdom of heaven is *like* unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." In verse 44, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is *like* unto treasure hid in a field." In verse 45, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is *like* unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls." And in verse 47, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is *like* unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." In our Lord's preaching, the Kingdom was always *like* something.

3. *Paul used illustration*. Before the angry mob at Jerusalem and when on trial before Agrippa, he

used a narrative—the experience of his own conversion (Acts 22 and 26).

Unfortunately, today some feel that sermon illustrations are unspiritual and shallow. But if God in Scripture so consistently and persistently used illustrations, is it right to call illustrations unspiritual? Certainly the Bible is not unspiritual. If great minds such as those of Jesus and Paul used illustrations, should we call illustration shallow? Certainly we would not call Paul and our Lord shallow.

Definition of illustration

Illustration comes from the Latin word *lux*, meaning "light." It might take the form of a narrative, an analogy, or whatever, but its purpose is not the same as storytelling. It is never used primarily to excite or entertain, but to throw light on truth.

Storytelling, on the other hand, is that which is used for its own sake and is out of place in the pulpit. It deserves the indignation heaped upon it. Charles Reynolds Brown differentiates illustration from storytelling in the following way: "The word *illustrate* means literally to throw light or luster upon anything. The illustration is never to be regarded as an end in itself; it shines for the sake of something beyond. When the lighted candle is held up to the painting, it is not intended that the beholders should look at the candle but at the painting upon which the candle throws its light."²

Too little light prevents you from seeing the picture, because of the darkness. But too much light also keeps you from seeing the picture, because of the glare. Too little sermon illustration prevents many in the congregation from seeing the truth you are presenting. But too exciting and dramatic an illustration

leads them to see the story instead of the truth. Sometimes the best story makes the poorest illustration.

When a listener has remembered your story but can't for the life of him recall what it taught, though it may have been a good story in itself, it was a bad illustration. A story can be like a living room lamp. It's beautiful—something to look at. A ser-

If Jesus and Paul used illustrations, should we call illustration shallow?

mon illustration should be like a streetlamp. It doesn't attract much attention to itself. Its business is lighting up the community.

Christ didn't tell hair-raising stories as a preface to long theological discussions. Instead He used simple analogies almost continuously and with a proper balance of emotion. He didn't focus on the extreme ends of the reason-emotion continuum but stayed in the middle, using both as continuously as possible.

An illustration, then, is not for entertaining, nor is it a blank space between arguments. Rather, it is that which applies argument to life. Did you ever try to hang a picture for your wife when you had only a nail and no hammer? Ever try to drive a nail with your wife's high-heeled shoe? On the other hand, did you ever have a hammer and couldn't find a nail? The best of hammers would only make a mess of the wall. Which do you need to hang a picture—a nail, hammer, or both? The nail is your idea, the lesson you want to get across in your sermon. The hammer represents your illustration. Having an idea without an illustration is like having a nail without a hammer to help it penetrate—to drive it home. Having a story without a lesson to teach is like having a hammer without a nail for it to strike against. You need both.

What do you see on this page? Ideas? Words? Not really. What you see on this page is ink. But the ink is being used in such a way that, hopefully, we become oblivious to it and see only ideas. The perfect illustration is like that. It becomes almost oblivious. It leaves the listener thinking, not of it, but of the idea it illustrates.

Purposes of illustration

Let's look at six reasons for using sermon illustrations.

1. *Illustrations make truth easier to understand.* We best learn a new thing by its being likened to something we already know, by the unfamiliar being compared with the familiar. This is the basic principle underlying the use of illustration in preaching. Beecher reminisced: "I have seen an audience, time and again, follow an argument, doubtfully, laboriously, almost suspiciously, and look at one another, as much as to say, 'Is he going right?'—until the place is arrived at, where the speaker says, 'It is like—' and then they listen eagerly for what 'it is like' and when some apt illustration is thrown out before them, there is a sense of relief, as though they said, 'Yes, he is right.'"³

Far from being shallow, well-illustrated preaching dares to present deeper thoughts. What if I have an argument that I would like to include in my sermon, but it would demand the most careful attention of even the deepest thinkers in the congregation. Dare I include it? Only if I illustrate it. A deep thought well illustrated and practically applied will gain the interest of both the thinker and the child in your audience.

2. *Illustrations hold attention.* In the strictest sense many sermons that are preached never are delivered. The pharmacist sends his delivery boy out with a prescription for Mrs. Jones. But the day is hot, the bicycle is slow, and Mrs. Jones lives clear across town. So the boy throws the prescription in a trash can and goes swimming instead. Did he deliver it? Well, he got it off his hands. But you can be sure his employer will insist that delivery was made only when the prescription got into Mrs. Jones' hands.

Like the boy, we ministers tend to

become lazy. We step into the pulpit with God-given truths, but we fail to provide the illustrations that will grip people's attention. When the sermon is over we pull our sanctimonious robes about us, insisting, "I said it. If the people didn't hear it, that's their problem." Not so. A sermon is really delivered, not when the preacher has gotten it off his hands, but when his people have taken it into their hands and hearts.

Rom. 10:17 gives a formula for building faith: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (KJV). The formula is simple: WORD + HEARING = FAITH. A sermon is for the purpose of increasing faith. Our formula suggests that the Word of God must be combined with hearing before it produces faith. In other words, it's not how much of the Word of God we preach, but how much is heard, that will build faith. William James put it this way: "What gets your attention determines your action." And illustration is simply the most successful means available for focusing people's attention on truth.

"What gets your attention determines your action."

—William James

Dad used to set my two older brothers and me to work sacking grain. Being the youngest, I invariably held the sack, and my brothers did the shoveling. There's a bit of a trick to putting your forearm into the grain sack just right so its mouth hangs open wide enough for a whole scoopful of grain to go in. We shoveled a lot more grain than we sacked, but the problem was that Dad gave us credit only for the amount that went in, not the amount of grain that was shoveled. Is it not possible our Heavenly Father measures sermons the same way? He's not so much impressed by the amount of truth we handle as by the amount that goes in. Good illustra-

tions help hold people's attention. And that's how more truth goes in.

3. *Illustrations retain truth longer.* When a piece of film is developed and an image emerges, the process is not yet complete. The film must be put through a fixer before the image can last as long as the film lasts. In preaching, not only do we want to impress our listeners with truth, but we long for that impression to last. Illustrations are the fixers making permanent the image of truth.

But preachers must not overlook the principle behind Jesus' use of illustrations. If He were preaching in our cities today, He would illustrate with freeways and supermarkets, not with shepherds and sheep. The principle behind Jesus' choice of illustrations is that they should tie truth to things people would be doing so that they will be reminded of the truth every time they do them.

The truths of Jesus' sermons were remembered every time a listener saw a lamb or a lily. Every time the people lost something, they remembered the lessons of the lost coin or the lost sheep. Every time they had company, they thought of Jesus' teaching about the man who borrowed bread at midnight for his company. Ellen White suggests: "Christ's illustrations were taken from the things of daily life, and although they were simple, they had in them a wonderful depth of meaning. . . . Ever afterward, when His hearers chanced to see these objects, they recalled His words. Thus the truth became a living reality; the scenes of nature and the daily affairs of life were ever repeating to them the Saviour's teaching."⁴ If, like Jesus, you want your sermons to go on preaching themselves all week long, illustrate them with things your people will be doing that week.

4. *Illustrations prove religion relevant.* They are a means of showing that Christian theory works in everyday life. Listeners often wonder whether it will. Preachers tend to forget that it must. Good illustrations prove that it does.

Your audience will perceive your sermon as

relevant to life if you illustrate it with experiences similar to theirs. An illustration about a child being spanked is usually more relevant than one about a soldier charging into battle. Most of your audience have been either on the giving or receiving end of a spanking, but what woman in your congregation has ever fought on a battlefield?

If Jesus were preaching today, He would illustrate with freeways and supermarkets, not shepherds and sheep.

The day before he preached, Henry Ward Beecher liked to spend some time at the docks. He claimed acquaintance with every gatekeeper at Fulton Ferry, every engineer or dockhand on the boats. Or he liked to ride on an omnibus and talk with the driver. His sermon was still forming in his mind when he went out to observe life, asking himself whether or not this idea would work there. From watching life on Saturday, he brought illustrations that made his sermon relevant to life when he preached on Sunday. Proudly Beecher asserted, "If ever I saw one of those men in my church, I could preach to him, and hit him under the fifth rib with an illustration, much better than if I had not been acquainted with him. I have driven

the truth under many a plain jacket."⁵

5. *Illustrations present strong truth without offending the audience.* We might not look at this as a principal purpose of illustration, yet Matt. 13:10-11, 13 shows Jesus used it this way: "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . . Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (KJV). Apparently Jesus used illustrations to make His teachings both easier and harder to understand—easier for those who wanted to understand, and harder and more obscure for those who didn't.

Abolishing slavery was not a popular idea in many congregations during pre-Civil War days, even in the North. Many people didn't appreciate their ministers' preaching about it. Yet the consciences of some preachers wouldn't allow them to keep quiet. The solution? Some used examples out of slavery to illustrate sermons on other subjects. The illustrations gradually got to the people's hearts when no amount of argument would have. Illustration sometimes makes it possible to present strong truth without offending the audience.

6. *Illustrations motivate.* Merely to announce what ought to be done without helping motivate people to do it is of little value. Enveloped in a cloud of dust, the county agricultural agent drove into the farmyard and bounced onto the old farmer's porch. The farm looked pretty much run-down, and the farmer sitting in the creaking rocker did too. The agent, enthusiasm personified, began sharing what he thought were exciting ideas for improving the

BEYOND BELIEF



farm, but the old man stopped him in midsentence. "Simmer down, sonny; I know how to farm twice as good as I'm farmin' already."

Most people are not living even half the truth they already know. They don't so much need to know more as they need to be motivated

Use illustrations as "pump primers."

more. While the principal purpose of illustration is not to excite the emotions, illustrations do help listeners feel the truth. And people mostly do what they feel like doing.

Sources of illustrations

Naturally it's much easier to defend the importance of illustrations than to find good ones when you need them. At times we're all tempted to throw up our hands and say we just can't.

The University of Northern Iowa once offered a general art course that included a most unusual exercise. The teacher brought to class a shopping bag filled with lemons and gave a lemon to each class member. The assignment was for the student to keep his lemon with him day and night—smelling, handling, examining it. Next class period, without warning, students were told to put their lemons back in the bag. Then each was asked to find his lemon. Surprisingly, most did so without difficulty. They had fondled and scrutinized and lived with that lemon until it became intimately theirs.

The sermon illustrator must do with life what the student did with that lemon. The preacher must perpetually turn life over, examine it, study it, always asking the Holy Spirit to show him how it illustrates Christianity. This must be at least partially what is meant by "Pray without ceasing." We all live life.

The preacher must truly observe it. A thousand illustrations pass before each of us every year, but we need to train ourselves to see them.

The minister who complains about having no illustrations is admitting either that his religion isn't relevant to life or that he doesn't yet possess what every successful preacher must develop—the "homiletic bias." The homiletic bias means more than training yourself to see the world; it means always seeing it in spiritual colors. What does it teach about Jesus? How does it illustrate His kingdom?

That's the way Jesus did it. He observed everything. He looked for illustrations everywhere. Notice how broad and all-inclusive was His observation of life as indicated by His illustrations on homelife (leavening bread, borrowing from a neighbor, patching clothes, lighting lamps, sweeping floors, the boy who didn't want to live at home, children playing games in the street); business (lending money, collecting money owed, paying taxes); trades (managing orchards and vineyards, building houses, fishermen sorting their catch, bosses and servants); nature (wheat, tares, harvesting, flowers, birds); politics (kings going to war); and social events (feasts, weddings). To illustrate as Jesus illustrated means two things: staying close to life, and staying close to God so that you see Him in every facet of life.

Keeping these principles in mind, let's look now at five sources of illustrations. *First*, the Bible. Biblical illustrations have both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that they carry weight because they are taken from Scripture. A disadvantage is that most people have heard them so often they tend to be bored unless the illustrations are creatively done.

A few suggestions may help. Do enough research so you can make the narrative live. Use a "suppose" and translate the ancient experience into a modern setting. Utilize less-familiar illustrations such as the life of Demas or Onesimus. Many old Testament incidents are not well-known in most congregations today. Unless you have a genius for narrative, use Bible illustrations more as proof, not as a substitute for examples from contemporary life.

Second, the congregation is a source. If the basic lessons for your next sermon have been gleaned from Scripture early in the week and are churning in your head seeking ways to be taught, then as you visit and minister to your congregation throughout the week, illustrations are almost certain to come. It is a simple fact that the sermons that come from the congregation tend to fit the congregation. They also tend to create a family atmosphere. Then your parishioners will respond, "This sermon is about *us*" or "One of *us* has a problem similar to that."

Caution! If the illustration is laudatory, people won't object to your telling something about them in public. But be extremely careful about intimate details. Someone is listening to how well you keep confidences before daring to trust you with the hurt in his own heart. I am shocked by the number of people who have come to me saying they don't share their problems with their pastor for fear he'll share them with the whole congregation as a sermon illustration.

Third, your personal life is a source. The preacher should not talk too much about himself in the pulpit, yet a careful observer should probably be able to compose a biography of his pastor from a year's sermons. Your own illustration is better even if it's not so good. That is, what you know for certain about Christianity is only what has worked for you.

Illustration is like the Incarnation.

However, don't be the hero of every personal illustration. It encourages people to hear of your humanity now and then and to know that you're aware of it. On the other hand, don't glorify your wayward youth or brag about mistakes of the past. Some preachers make it sound

as though the only fun they've had was serving the devil.

When using illustrations from your own home, always talk lovingly about your wife. Ladies in the congregation are unbelievably sensitive in picking up little nuances about what kind of husband you make. Also, don't embarrass your children by either building them up or running them down. They already have enough of a goody-goody image surrounding them without Dad's sermons magnifying the problem.

Fourth, your file is a good source. Always write down an illustration as soon as you hear or think of one. Forget that you can remember, and remember that you are bound to forget. Have you heard about the preacher who had such a beautiful thought that he immediately dropped to his knees to thank the Lord for it, but when he got up, he forgot what it was? Write it down.


And have a well-organized topical file so that it will be readily available when you need it.

Fifth, books of sermon illustrations are sources. These are left to last, because they should probably be used only as a last resort. Their greatest value may actually be in reminding you of some incident closer to your life or that of your congregation. Use them as "pump primers."

There's an old saying, a bit judgmental, yet true, that tells why we must use illustration: "Little minds dwell on people, mediocre minds dwell on things, large minds dwell on ideas." Then how are we going to get *ideas* into little and mediocre minds? By associating them with people and things!

Reverently I ask, Did you ever stop to think that the use of illustration is like the Incarnation? "In Christ's parable teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mis-

sion to the world. . . . Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar."⁶

Let us, like Jesus, continuously link the divine with the human through illustration. 

1. Halford Luccock, *Communicating the Gospel* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 136.

2. Charles Reynolds Brown, *The Art of Preaching* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1922), 124.

3. Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching* (New York: J. B. Ford and Co., 1872), 158.

4. *Counsels to Parents and Teachers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1943), 261.

5. Beecher, *Yale Lectures*, 97.

6. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1941), 17.

This article first appeared in *Ministry* magazine. Used by permission.

Pastor in the Grass

(Continued from page 6)

ing is founded on an example of ministry shown to me a long time ago in the grass of my backyard.

What does it take to be that kind of minister? What qualities make it possible for a person to have that kind of impact on the lives of hurting people?

Wisdom is an often overlooked quality in ministry. Our emphasis is often on academic preparation and training. All the knowledge in the world, however, is worthless to the fool who can't use it. This pastor's wisdom allowed him to see our needs clearly. Wisdom does not need to be seen as something in the future that we can only hope to obtain. We can become wise if we have a teachable spirit and are willing to use the world as our classroom.


The need for wisdom does not negate the need for a solid **education**. The pastor who ministered to us in the grass that day is a highly educated scholar and theologian. No doubt his academic background gave him tools he needed to help us deal with the grief we were experiencing. It is what we know that gives us the power to put our wisdom into action.

An absolute must in ministry is a sincere **love** for those to whom we minister. His love for us motivated our pastor to take the extra time to sit down with us in the grass. By the time my father died, our church had called a new pastor. The man who cared for our needs so beautifully had actually moved on to another position. It was not his job to minister to us. He chose to do it because he cared about us. Sometimes we must be willing to ask God to break our hearts for those around us who are hurting. If we can't love them enough on our own, He can surely love them through us.

The example of ministry that Jesus most wanted to leave with His disciples was **servanthood**. Our pastor could have stayed inside with the adults and not have been bothered by little kids. Or he could have made a big production out of his conversation with us, making sure everyone could hear what he was doing for us. He did neither. He quietly humbled himself and met our needs. Who else but a servant would sit in the grass with children? Didn't Jesus do that kind of thing also?

One final aspect of ministry that cannot be overlooked is **availability**. My sister recently pointed out that our pastor seemed so sophisticated, yet he has always been so available. There was a period of time before my father died in which he was able to go to work but was unable to drive. The pastor regularly came by and picked up my father and took him to work. When Daddy died, the pastor was close by to help us through it.

Shortly after my father's death, the pastor took us all out to the lake and taught us to water-ski. That would have been plenty, but his availability did not stop there. As we have grown up and begun our own families, he has kept up with us. He always let us know that he is there if and when we need him. Jesus reminded us of His availability when He promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). As His ministers, we must follow His example.

The word *pastor* carries with it the image of a shepherd caring for his sheep. What better place is there for a shepherd to be than in the grass with kids? 

The Preretirement Years: A Time for Planning

by Don Walter

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A good friend, now retired for several years, has a plaque hanging on his wall that reads, "Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart." That saying would seem more humorous, of course, if it were not so true. My friend's plaque suggests that we learn many of life's lessons the hard way. And it hints that some learning could have been easier had we been more alert sooner. Consider particularly the task of planning for retirement.

For many individuals, retirement is the "tomorrow" that will "never come." So preparation for that even occurs minimally or not at all. Then one day the main entry on the daily schedule is a retirement celebration—theirs!

Suddenly income shrinks, but living expenses stay the same. Questions about where to live or how to spend the newly limited income disrupt sleep. Important decisions are made on the spur of the moment. As a result, problems develop and well-intentioned men and women struggle with unfavorable circumstances caused by a poorly planned retirement. These folks are caught "Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart."

To heed the warning of the plaque, we should anticipate and plan for retirement during preretirement years. Some psychologists identify the preretirement stage of life as the years from age 56 to age 65. Others view this stage as beginning as early as age 50. During this time many people tend to look forward to retirement, yet they often experience anxiety due to the uncertainties retirement may hold. Careful and adequate planning during these years will do much to relieve anxiety and facilitate the transition into meaningful retirement.

Effective preretirement planning should involve four main areas:

1. Personal Finances
2. Health and Health Care
3. Retirement Activities
4. Emotional Changes and Adjustments

The following brief discussion of these topics may give the minister some initial guidance in preretirement planning.

Personal Finances in Retirement

The main financial issues during preretirement years are (1) what to expect realistically as financial need and income during retirement, and (2) how best to structure financial resources to guard against outliving wealth.

When assessing financial need, a crucial item is housing. Most likely a minister will have to provide his own retirement housing and utilities. This will be quite a change from living in a parsonage or receiving a housing allowance. Since housing represents a large part of retirement living expense, available alternatives should be considered early. Reasonable choices for many geographic areas include single-family or multi-family dwellings, apartments, condominiums, retirement village housing, and prefabricated or mobile homes.

To provide for retirement needs, a retirement savings program should start as early as possible in a minister's career. If this has not occurred, benefit still can be gained during preretirement years by establishing and contributing to a Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA) or an Individual Retirement Annuity (IRA). The minister's denominational pension board generally can provide detailed information on such plans.

When projecting retirement income, be sure to contact the Social Security Administration for free material regarding general benefit cal-

ulation. Also, it is wise to request a report of personal income. Check this report every two or three years to make certain your records are being updated accurately. Local Social Security offices provide appropriate forms for each of these requests.

As another helpful procedure, contact your denominational pension board for a summary explanation of the pension plan(s) under which you are covered. The amount of pension to anticipate usually can be estimated from this summary. This information, together with the information from the Social Security Administration and projected retirement income from your TSA and IRA plans, should provide a close estimate of fixed income amounts to expect from these sources.

To help conserve supplemental cash resources for retirement purposes, frequently a life income annuity contract is used. A number of options exist for this type of contract. When evaluating options, remember that the need to guarantee a retirement income from cash resources must be balanced with the need for liquid reserves available for emergency use. When reviewing these needs and considering the options, consult a trusted, certified financial planner.

Health and Health Care

As one gets older, health and health care become increasingly important. With age come increased health risks and the increased possibility of needing extended health care. Health issues to consider in preretirement planning include: (1) how to best maintain good health, and (2) how to pay for health care services in the event of ill health.

Adequate health insurance is a must. The misfortune of ill health cannot be predicted, but financial protection in that event can be as-

sured. The Social Security Administration provides at no cost general information materials on Medicare. Everyone should know what Medicare does not pay for. This understanding allows one to shop intelligently for insurance to supplement Medicare coverage. Many insurance companies offer such plans with a variety of options and premiums. Contact a qualified professional to help you analyze insurance needs and evaluate options for coverage.

Retirement Activities

Most full-time ministers have their time fully, if not overly, scheduled. For these men and women and their spouses, the change retirement brings in the level and nature of activity is a particularly important issue for scrutiny.

No one (not even you yourself) can prescribe beforehand all the appropriate activities for either the person or the schedule that exists after retirement. Some individuals continue many of their ministerial activities even though "retired." Others pursue interests in different areas. Whatever your choice, some basic questions regarding retirement activities should be investigated during the preretirement years. Consider the following:

"What have I always wanted to do for which I never had time?"

"What service opportunities would I find fulfilling?"

"If I do volunteer for service in an organization, how much of my time do I want controlled by others?"

"Will my hobbies or recreational activities keep me busy and happy?"

"What will be my role in the activities of my local church?"

Answers to these questions remain unique to each individual. Being prepared for change furnishes a key to successful planning. With regard to retirement activities, part of that preparation includes being willing to reevaluate and adjust any activity when necessary. Each of us has skills, abilities, and needs to be challenged, used, and fulfilled by wisely planned retirement activities.

Emotional Changes and Adjustments


Any major change in a person's life, such as retirement, brings with it a time of emotional adjustment. Although areas of adjustment may vary with the individual, a time for accommodating this major change is normal.

For one minister, retirement brought the need to adjust his feelings regarding self-identity. This man had been so busy that unscheduled time was nearly nonexistent. When retirement came, people did not call for him "as they used to," and free time was abundant. For this individual, some special time had to be spent alone with his family to discover just who this

newly retired minister really was.

Sometimes adjustment takes place in the relationship to husband or wife. Most ministers and their spouses have found that the demands of ministry often left precious little time to spend together. In retirement, they may be constant companions on a daily basis. One semiretired friend commented that he really enjoyed having more time to spend at home. The only problem, he said, was that his idea of when to tackle a project around the house was not the same as his wife's. Retirement may bring the need for some fine tuning of interpersonal relationships.

Accommodating emotional changes that occur with retirement is not always easy, even with the best planning. Knowing that these changes and adjustments are normal is an important first step in coping. Being willing to share personal feelings with your spouse, a fellow minister, or a trusted friend who has recently made successful adjustments to retirement often helps this adjustment process.

Each minister should undertake essential preretirement planning. Certainly the transition from a "full-time-plus" work routine to a retirement routine brings a major change in one's life. Preretirement planning should identify the issues that accompany this change and prepare to resolve them. 

Going Forward—It's Easy!

(Continued from page 23)

read in the Psalms, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (116:18, KJV).

I struggled with the critics. Some would say, "She is one of those who thinks she has to run forward every week." The Lord encouraged me with these words, "If Christians are not willing to respond, how can the unsaved be expected to answer?"

That Sunday I stepped out on the first note of the invitational hymn, and 24 other people did the same. The pastor later said, "I never saw the people respond as they did this morning. It was as if they could not

wait to go forward."

There were several reasons to go forward: Salvation is, of course, paramount. But there is also dedication, burden of prayer, confession of sin, victory over habits, or settling a private decision.

In many Bible-believing churches there is no regular invitation given. Have we lost something with its demise?


Some have altar calls only during the evangelistic crusade or the missionary conference, which makes the average Christian unwilling to answer.

Perhaps some pastors have given

up due to the lack of response. Others may believe that public decisions are not always sincere ones, or that some Christians are always "walking the aisle" for every little problem. This too might stem from an opinion that "going forward is easy."

When we take the first step, God has a way of making all the other ones lighter.

In one church we attended, the pastor often expressed the opinion, "The altar should be the sweetest place in the Christian's life."

It may not be the easiest, but it certainly is the sweetest. 



Make It Easy to Give

by Maxine Dowd Jensen

Lee's Summit, Mo.

Recently I visited a church and slipped the bulletin in my purse because of an item that read, in part:

It is of *utmost importance* that you make separate checks for each fund such as budget, building, kitchen, or one of the memorial funds. The money is deposited in different banks, so separate checks are needed. Please use your contribution envelopes. To write your number on your check is not sufficient, as the checks go to the bank. We key the information off the envelope.

I noticed that their contribution envelopes were not as long as the check or dollar and were divided in the middle. One piece of currency, folded, would have stuffed either side. I thought, *This church isn't making it easy to give.*

Later, my friend told me that four similar "scoldings" had appeared during the six months following the distribution of these new envelopes.

Getting a church member to give can prove most difficult. Especially



today when cuts in federal funding force many worthy causes to expend more effort for contributions. Therefore, a church should make it easy to give.

Here are some suggestions.

Based on that excerpt from the bulletin, why is that church asking for separate checks? Probably because it makes it convenient for the church office. But it is putting a burden on the 50 to 1,500 (or more) members.

Some banks charge for each check written; others allow only three checks on an account before a charge is made. This uses up money that could be channeled into the church. One check each time makes it easier on your member if the Internal Revenue Service requests an audit. Folding checks increases the possibility of its destruction as it flows through the bank's machines.

The church printing the excerpt used several banks. This is permissible. A Finance Committee can vote for this. However, should this concern the congregation? No. The job of the member is to give; that of the church office is to keep the monies straight.

Today, many church accountants find life easier with a computer. If your church uses one, remember it is versatile. The seller of the equipment can enable the user to set up the program for life as it is. Please don't expect your congregation to

conform to the way you wish it were.

If you encourage your membership to give through envelopes, as most churches do, choose envelopes large enough that no folding of money is necessary. Less can go wrong for everyone if the envelope is the right size. This includes possible paper cuts for the volunteers who must unfold and try to keep stacks of checks and currency flat.


Be sure itemization of the funds are indicated on the face of the envelope.

Many churches save money in postage and cost by asking those who wish envelopes to sign up for them and then pick them up at a central location.

Also, Christians can be stubborn.

Some make decisions based on "scoldings" in a bulletin or the size of the envelope. They may say, "If they don't want my money the way I give it, I don't have to give."

Church members who love the Lord shouldn't make decisions in this fashion, but they've been known to do so. Therefore, encourage them. Don't put obstacles in their way.

Our cause, bringing Jesus to people, is the greatest in the world. Help people choose the church as the recipient of the majority of their gifts. Eliminating "scoldings" and providing the proper size of envelope should go far in keeping the offerings and tithes funneled toward the church. 

Welcome to Jesus

Welcome to Islam

by Jim Buchanan
Swaziland, Africa

One of the biggest annual events in Swaziland was starting in eight days, and the Church of the Nazarene would have no representation there.

Thousands of people from all over Swaziland and surrounding southern African countries swarm into Manzini each year for the Swaziland International Trade Fair. We had tried to get a stall for the Nazarene Literature Office, but we were cut off at every turn.

The Swaziland literature staff and I had talked about having a stall in the trade fair. We knew it would be a strain on our small staff, but we felt it was the right thing to do. "We need to be in the big Prince Malunge Pavilion. That's the real thing," said Rev. Chirwa, the Nazarene Bookstore manager.

However, when we inquired about the Prince Malunge Pavilion, the trade fair representative told us it was completely reserved. She showed us a new pavilion under construction and told us we would have first choice to take a stall there. The pavilion was built—but the officials decided it would be used only for displays by foreign countries represented there.

The trade fair representative then showed us yet another pavilion under construction. Again she said we would have first chance to get in that new one. She promised to call us as soon as the building was completed. Weeks passed and not a word came from the trade fair representative.

I had given up on the notion of being at the trade fair, but Rev. Chirwa persisted. "Umfundisi, [Teacher], let me check with these trade fair people once more," he said.

"Well, go ahead, but I've given up on the idea. We're out of time to prepare anyway," I replied.

Very soon Rev. Chirwa came back to me with good news and bad news. The new building was available to us, but the cost was prohibitive. This time Chirwa agreed with me; the trade fair would go on, but Nazarene Bookstore would not be there.

We went on with our work at Nazarene Literature Office and Nazarene Bookstore. The trade fair was out of our minds. Then eight days before the fair, Miriam (the trade fair representative) called from the trade fair office. She explained that the construction crews had left out one stall in the Prince Malunge building. For some reason the workers did not install the last booth right on the end of the pavilion next to one of the two entrances.

As soon as possible, Chirwa and I rushed off to the fairgrounds with deposit money in hand and secured the best spot in the main pavilion at the right price. We rejoiced together: "Eight days before the fair, and we're in." We had enough faith to believe that the Lord wanted us to be there.

With a lot of fast work and timely help from missionaries Jim Whited and Mel Felts, we organized literature, bookshelves, brochure, sign, and all the odds and ends needed to get ready.

One day before the fair, God demonstrated His perfect timing again. A slip came from the post office in my name. I was not expecting nor had I asked for leftover Sunday School literature. But Park Lynn Church of the Nazarene in Marion, Ind., sent a box just the same. I thought maybe we could use the literature at the trade fair, so we took that box along with the other boxes of books for the fair.

The fair got under way, and things were going well. Then the Lord revealed to me what I feel is the real

reason we were there. A short distance from us was another pavilion with a banner that read, "Welcome to Islam!" Free literature and videos promoted this religion.

To me it seemed the Lord was showing us that the battle line had been drawn. With a lot of prayers, we armed ourselves with all the artillery needed: *World Mission, Herald of Holiness, Introducing the Church of the Nazarene, Focus on the Family Magazine*, gospel tracts, and the Sunday School literature from Marion, Ind.

In addition to all the "stuff" being handed out by other religions and businesses, the good news of Jesus was going out from Prince Malunge Pavilion. People at the fair, especially young people, were so happy to receive anything to read. Time and time again I joyfully said, "Here's something good to read," as I handed them some free literature with the Good News.

One man named Mkhezi took literature and asked if I would pray for him. While dozens of people swarmed around us, we made one spot—standing room only—a place of prayer and encouragement for this man. On another day, an alcoholic came my way, asking for my help. Our banner read, "Nazarene Bookstore, Manzini," but those who were hungry saw an invisible banner the Lord himself had raised, and it read, "Welcome to Jesus!" (See Rev. 3:20.)

The sales were better than expected. The publicity was good for the Nazarene Bookstore and the Church of the Nazarene. Our staff handled the extra work load very well. But only eternity will tell us what was accomplished for the kingdom of God with Nazarene literature from Swaziland and Marion, Ind.

So Much of Life Is . . . Adjusting

Strait
by C. Neil Mich.
Grand Rapids,

Sometime ago, my daughter bought me the book *Beyond IBM*. A fascinating bit of information leaped out at me: "A rocket is on course only 2% of the time—the rest of the time it is correcting" (Lou Mobley and Kate McKeown, *Beyond IBM* [New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1989], 30).

It seems that ministry is like this—mostly correcting, adjusting. There are times when it seems that so little of ministry is "on course" and so much of it is "correcting."

I gave serious thought to what this bit of information might say to me. Let me share my reflections.

One, as a pastor, I must praise God for the occasions when ministry is going well. One danger in ministry, as in all professions and jobs, is that the problems and bad times have a way of obscuring the good and great moments.

I believe that God gives us the great moments of ministry, not only because they are fulfillments of His will and answers to the prayers of

His people but also to validate His goodness, authority, and power. As such, we should not forget them. God's caution to the children of Israel was that they would not forget the trips through the dry sea or the occasions when He provided for their needs. It is a sad commentary on human intellect that the good times are so quickly forgotten while the bad times are so long remembered.

Second, I must let the good times speak direction and assurance during the troubled times. The same God who blesses and gifts life with treasured experiences is the same God who wants to guide, comfort, and protect during the troubled moments. I need to remember this and draw strength from the God who is there!

A few years ago I sat at an early hour with a pastor whose ministry had crumbled due to poor judgment. He asked me the questions every person asks at some time in their crisis, "Where is God?" I reminded the heartbroken pastor that God was where He always is—right here, available, comforting, loving, reaching out arms of understanding and forgiveness. He looked at me for a moment, as though the words formed a new truth. After a long pause he replied, "That's what we preach, isn't it?" I said that it was, and I put my arms around him and encouraged him to open his prob-


lem and his defeat to God. He did, and the road to recovery began.

Third, the troubled times are not totally lost. Sometimes, out of the ashes comes beauty. Sometimes, out of the chaos comes a deepened dependence upon God. Whatever is going on in crisis—pain or suffering, misunderstanding or confusion, separation or conflict—it is forcing adjustment, correcting, processing, searching, and stretching. While such can be, and often is, painful and stress laden, the possibility for resolution and growth is ever present.

Further, such dark moments help us appreciate the better moments. It is often in a walk through the dark tunnel of problems that His grace and glory speak so beautifully to the heart. I asked a man not long ago what he had learned in what he called his "tunnel of agony."

He replied, "That God's grace and help are more real than I ever thought."

What does all of this have to do with adjusting, correcting? Just this: I must learn to adjust my circumstances to the grace and ways of God, rather than let my problems determine my view of God. I must be in a "correcting" mode where life's situations are letting in the truths and promises of the gospel.

The more we live and pastor, the more we realize that life is on course such a brief time, and the rest of the time it is correcting. 



Parsonage Paychecks

by Celia Jolley
Roseburg, Oreg.

A profound saying suggests, "When your outgo exceeds your income, your upkeep becomes your downfall." Do the ins and outs and ups and downs of one-income parsonage life in a two-income world leave you feeling like a juggler balancing on one leg but lacking the grace of a flamingo?

In a church of 200 people, there are only four mothers who stay home full-time with their preschool children: one, an unwed mother on welfare; another who sells home crafts; and two of us who baby-sit. I accepted two student loans and spent four years to get my B.A. in order to earn \$1.00 an hour? Here I am—three children and 12 years of ministry later. Sometimes I feel like a dinosaur rather than a natural woman. As the tide has turned, the frontier of full-time homemaking requires a pioneer spirit to face the hardships and dare the unknown. Yet, we drive on, convinced of the joy set before us.

When the waves of doubt lap up around your castle, the first moat of defense as a homebound mom is your conviction. If you feel God-called and fully convinced that's where you are to be, you have won the first battle. We feel the best way for us to raise our children up in the way of the Lord is to do it ourselves. Our children are God's gift to be treasured no matter the cost. If God calls a woman outside the home, He will provide grace for her home task as well.

Our world needs surviving models of this kind of homelife. When standing up for your conviction, it is important not to stand on someone

else's toes. You can be an example without being on a soapbox.

Where does the church fit into the juggling of two-career families? The church must be sensitive to the stretched schedules of its members and hurt when one member of the body hurts. But we sometimes act more like an exhausted, overworked aerobics class suffering pulled muscles, limping away Sunday after Sunday. What gives?

As lay ministry volunteers balance multi-careers, home, church, and recreation, more and more they look for relief by hiring staff to create desired ministries. This relief is costly to pastors and their families. Monies spread to staff positions usually leave it thin on your side of the bread too. In the vast empty arena, there are great opportunities for development of spiritual gifts and unburied talents for those enabled with the resource of time. However, we do not need superstars as much as we need teamwork of the whole body working together efficiently in a healthy manner.

Convictions have a price tag. What happens when you go for broke? God did not call us to be free from lack of money, just the love of money. Don't throw a pity party and invite thoughts of greener grass to sip tear-water tea or drink the cup with the attitude, "I deserve better than this." Bitterness will choke you. Be historical, not hysterical!

First, let your memory take you to times that God has intervened in your past. Begin a blank book and let your family fill it with the novel ways that God's grace has appeared on the scene. Then you might re-

kindle the faith that God can still part the red sea of ink and lead you through. Read accounts of sacrifices made and simple life-styles led by a majority of humanity. It puts your poverty in perspective and causes you to feel richer. Raise your children on the autobiography of Laura Ingalls Wilder. Read the collection of diaries now available from pioneer women in *Women in the West*. Review the Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11. Read the story of the Schmelzenbachs in *Sons of Africa*. Broaden your horizons and seek out someone in greater need. That person needs to know the comfort with which you have been comforted (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Learn to be thankful for daily bread even when you crave cake.

When there's a gap between "considering it all" and "joy" (see James 1:2, NASB), review God's promises. We may be poor, wayfaring strangers traveling through this world of woe, but we can enlarge our tents of faith. Take a good look at God. Try a Bible study on the attributes of God, especially His Father-God love toward us. Look up Matt. 7:7-11; 6:25-34; John 14:13-14; Jer. 31:3; James 1:17; Heb. 12:7-11; Isa. 49:15-18.

Be surprised by God. He has a great sense of humor and loves to bless us in most unexpected ways.



The Bible does not say, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mailbox, from whence cometh my help." No, our help comes from the Lord! (cf. Ps. 121:1-2, KJV).

A move to a pastorate in a different state illustrated God's creative ways of being a very present help. The relocation had created more hidden expenses than we had funds. Then the Department of Motor Vehicles lost our application for car license plates. Finally, an anonymous church member, growing tired of the out-of-state pastor's car, donated the money to purchase new plates—not knowing the missing ones had just arrived in the mail at last. The next Sunday our Oregon plates were in place, but we didn't know whom to thank. We only knew that when we were broke, God moved in a mysterious way to reimburse us for a hidden cost of moving!

"Lead us not into temptation," we pray. Most Americans are "malled" to death by the "shop till you drop" syndrome. Don't concentrate on what you can't do. Find what you can. If the world has put the squeeze on you, break the mold. Make it a family project to create a list of cheap thrills such as sporting events, parks, county historical points of interests, the library, museums, art galleries, music programs offered in the wider church or community world. Hit the garage sales, if that is your grab bag, for a treasure hunt with a preplanned spending limit. Don't rule out home entertain-

ment for those rare moments when all creatures from outer space land in the same orbit on one evening in your house. Make it an event when your house is inhabited by all your family members. Rent a VCR and family video. Play a game. Read out loud. Pull out photo albums and baby books. For those times when you have to get out of the house or go out of your mind, find a road you have never been down and travel to the unknown.

Be real. Sometimes we act like we can outdo Evil Knievil's jump over the Snake River Canyon as we try to leap by "faith" over financial abysses of irresponsibility. When backed into the corner by your credit cards, it's a hard place to brighten up. Credit cards are guilty as charged. We found, through sad experience, if you trust in the cards to see you through, you are not trusting in the Lord for daily needs.

Finally, we discovered muzzled oxen can't be heard. After five years in growing and thriving churches without even a cost of living raise to keep up, we realized that it was time to take the muzzle off, to be painfully honest and humbled, and to state to the powers that be our true condition. Good churchmen overreact to abuses and excesses of other or previous ministers. So, examine your motives and read, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'"

(Heb. 13:5); and "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matt. 6:24). Perhaps their wives work, yet their combined incomes do not measure up to your one salary. Count your blessings. Perhaps in their strained, busy schedules and thin pocketbooks it never occurs to them that someone else may feel financial pressure, especially a man of faith like their pastor. Do you feel all alone in your distress? Maybe they are waiting to be told of your distress. Tell them.

When you've passed through the desert, having been delivered from a land of bondage, be careful never to be enslaved to debt again. However, disasters never fit into a budget. Relatives do come to live with you. Your child does have his appendix out. Your car gets wrecked. The doctor joyfully announces that you are going to have a new little addition to your tight budget. The church board still doesn't give you that needed raise. Don't pull your hair out; God has them all numbered. When you say, "I don't know what to do," remember God says, "For I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11). So even if you have only one leg to stand on, hop to it. Follow God at all costs. You may leave the single footprint someone else may need to follow. 🙏

Christmas Simplicity *(Continued from page 11)*

God works in time; so don't hurry Him. And what He starts, He completes—each segment of your life as well. Then trust the love of His vision.

We are so concerned with our calendars—minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years. Yet God is more concerned with our characters—values, reputations, influences, positions of the heart.

Keep in mind that it does take time to birth a baby; so it takes time to birth one into grace, obedience, and a life of holiness. The maturation process is God's gift, His way.

We would hurry. God would hov-

er. We would push. God would prepare. Remind yourself of the scriptural phrase: In "the fullness of time . . ." (Gal. 4:4, KJV).

"... she brought forth her firstborn son . . ."

So it was that in the midst of the pain, there was the pleasure. Can you see it, too, in your own life? The spoiled pout; the saved of the Kingdom do not pout but praise Him, even in the pain.

Mary and Joseph were so alone; yet at the same time they were awakened by the face of newborn Jesus. They were terribly confused; but

just the same they were comforted by His tender presence. They were poor; yet they were plenteous with the birth of their Firstborn. They were tired; but their countenances shone with triumph when looking into the Boy's face. They were bushed; yet they were blessed.

And we? We, too, if we can but see it with the eyes of faith. It is in the simplicity that we know the pleasure of His presence in the midst of pain.

"... she . . . wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid

(Continued on page 49)

Attitudinal Rigidity

by Raymond C. Kratzer

Yakima, Wash.

The apostle Paul is esteemed as a master teacher of the ministry. He taught not only by precept, but by example as well. His ideal for the ministry was always perfection: "Finally, brethren, farewell. [I like to think of this as "fare well."] Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11, KJV).

One can almost feel Paul's intensity as he strives to get men to be pliable, agreeable, and personable in their relationships to each other.

All of us have some attitudinal hang-ups born of our backgrounds or our dispositional peculiarities. Differences of opinion and varieties of procedures help make life interesting and less drab. Likewise, various types of personalities in the ministry make it possible to reach all types of people.

Many examples could be cited. When a change of pastors was effected in a church, the new leader was able to encompass the salvation of some persons impervious to the former pastor's approach. This is not to say that the former pastor was wrong in his manner of operation. But he was not on the same wavelength as some individuals. No doubt his successor lacked rapport with others who were drawn to the previous pastor.

God works through a variety of instruments. That is why you need to be alert to the voice of the Spirit, either to adjust your approach and renew your personality impact, or to accept a providential call to a new assignment. However, the latter method of solution should not be an escape or a refusal to adapt to a circumstance in order to "adorn" the gospel.

The length of a pastor's usefulness or tenure in any one pastorate is usually contingent upon his adaptabil-

ity. If he is hung up by a rigidity in his attitudes, he is destined to have short pastorates or completely eliminate himself from active service. Whatever his pattern of longevity in any one place, his effectiveness will be limited by an unbending attitude that savors of selfishness and lack of insight.

I have heard good and talented pastors say: "I can't help the way I am. People are just going to have to accept me. I'll never be any different!" What a low concept of the capacity of a personality that is capable of growing, especially with the help of the Lord. When souls are at stake, when church growth is involved, and when joyous worship is dampened by a pastor's rigidity in holding to personal prejudices, the whole situation becomes tenuous. A church can so easily fall apart under such leadership.

A man who refuses to modify his attitudes sidesteps one of the most satisfying metamorphoses of life—that of growing through change. Paul warns against the minister becoming "selfwilled" (Titus 1:7, KJV), which is another way of emphasizing the perils of attitudinal rigidity.

Some men feel that compromise is either a sign of weakness or a lack of commitment to the highest and best within them. However, compromise, where basic principle is not involved, is one of the finest things a person can do. Heat may be removed, peace can be restored, and progress will begin when a pastor has adjusted his ideas to conform to others. Relaxing a rigid position transforms heat into light. To be able to compromise is a part of the genius of good leadership.

Friction between pastor and people often begins because of an unbending attitude in the pastor. For example, in a church board meeting

the pastor proposes that a Sunday School bus be purchased. Someone objects because they already have two buses and the cost of operation is too much. The pastor parries with the need of vision, of sacrifice, and of fresh outreach. His ego is on the line. But the ego of the objector is also on the line. If the pastor insists on his point of view by browbeating the uncooperative board members, he injures their egos and dulls the impact of his leadership. If he brings the issue to a vote that passes in his favor, it will take some doing to restore the best type of fellowship between him and those who voted against the issue.

One of the most common complaints of church board members is the lack of tact or diplomacy of pastors. So often friction could be avoided if a pastor had the grace to be patient, kind, courteous, and pliable in his approach. If a proposition needs to be resolved, a wise pastor strives to generate a climate where unity will prevail. His attitude should be so open and reasonable that even the most conservative board member would be prone to get on his side.

Often a little introspection and a cautious presentation will prevent cleavage in the Body of Christ. And what does it matter whether we get our way or not as long as the job gets done. What a pity when a minister is so devoted to his own ego that he would rather see his church fall

(Continued on page 52)



When It Comes to Worship . . .

ISN'T GOD THE REAL AUDIENCE?

by Joanne L. Holland and
Albert M. Wells, Jr.

Clearwater, Fla.

Please take your bulletin because there you'll find printed all the songs we're going to sing. Now, these songs are new and quite different, as they were just written last week, but after you get to know them, you'll love them. The choir will sing them for you first."

So begins a Sunday morning divine worship service. Added to these strange songs, which are sung in a new strange idiom, is a plethora of "special music" usually performed with taped accompaniment. I came to the service expecting to join other Christians in the worship of our God. But I cannot worship amid a morass of overamplified volleys of sounds that contain the same rock idiom I must constantly turn off on secular radio.

Having been reared in an evangelical church, much of my understanding of theology has come from the hymnology of the church. I refer specifically to such songs as "In Heavenly Love Abiding," "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," "Holy Spirit, Be My Guide," "Thou Wilt Keep Him in Perfect Peace," "My Jesus, as Thou Wilt," "I Want to Be like Jesus," "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go." We sang these songs, and others like them, over and over again. Even as a child and teenager, I never tired of them, and, more importantly, I never stopped learning from them.



A major factor in the influence of the hymns upon my life was the fact that I could *participate in them*. I was able to sing them into my mind and heart while being joined by everyone else in the congregation. To unite with others of like faith in the worship of God, by using and singing such thoroughly appropriate words and music as that found in the historic hymns, is a spiritual experience that glorifies God and edifies the worshiper.

It is my observation that the hymnal is being used less and less in today's evangelical churches. When it is used, seldom are all the verses of a given song sung. In some churches, where words from the hymnal are printed in the bulletin, fewer than half of the verses may be used.

Terry Baldrige, professor of music at MidAmerica Nazarene College, had this to say in the March 1988 edition of the *Preacher's Magazine*:

When the music of a particular church or service is reviewed, the focus is usually on special music with congregational singing seldom mentioned. Many churches are musical churches but not singing churches. Although special music may tend to attract more people in today's society, it is congregational music that unites the people. People of all ages and backgrounds are joined in a common act of worship through singing.

Are people really bored by "How Firm a Foundation," "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," and "Jesus Is the Sweetest Name I Know"? Has the onslaught of television made us into professional spectators? Is Christian corporate worship to be determined by social status, age-group interests,

EDITORIAL

NOTE:

or personal preferences? Is listening to someone else make a joyful noise preferable to making the joyful noise oneself in concert with others?

Hymns were written, both words and music, to help implement worship and intensify the faith of the worshipers. Special contemporary music is offered to attract those who like performances with the trappings of show business. The performers prefer a style and idiom that is worldly, though the universal term of usage by which to describe this music is "contemporary."

"Contemporary Christian music" is a description that sends a clear message. It includes such characteristics as performance, entertainment, overamplification, rock idioms, and a show-business atmosphere including applause—praise of the performers. A religious theme "makes it" Christian. In short, "contemporary" is a code word for worldly.

(Continued on page 50)



Winter 1991 \$4.00

GROW

A Journal of Church Growth, Evangelism and Discipleship



**Should the first
to inhabit
North America
be the last to hear ?**

**Veteran Indian Pastors Joseph Curley and
Alex Riggs**

Our Business Is Reaping



Jesus said, "I sent you to reap" (John 4:38). He acknowledged that, "One sows and another reaps." He even said sowing was hard work. But He sent His disciples to reap.

The disciples' problem was that they could not find the harvest. They went to the village of Samaria and obviously encountered many people, but they did not see any harvest. Jesus sat beside the well and found a ripe harvest in one person.

Of course, Jesus was God and He could see far more than His disciples could ever perceive. Even so, He reminded His followers that He had assigned them the task of reaping and

there was an abundant harvest right before their eyes.

Today, Jesus has sent His followers to reap. We sometimes hear people ask, "Where are the reapers?" But the real question is, "Do the reapers know where the fields are?" And do they see that they are ready for harvest?

Sowing is important. Storing the grain is also important. But without reaping there can be no harvest. Ripe fields must not be missed. Jesus still reminds His followers, "I sent you to reap."

Bill M. Sullivan

Mission of Church Growth Division

To contribute to the advancement of God's kingdom by fostering growth in the Church of the Nazarene.

To promote aggressive evangelism in all its many forms throughout the denomination.

To create an awareness throughout the church regarding the necessity for planting new churches, including the mission potential among cultural minorities.

To increase participation and effectiveness in a reproductive ministry that is engaged in Christian mission.

PENTECOSTAL OUTPOURINGS IN SEOUL

1,000 Baptized in One Praise Rally



One thousand persons who became Christians as a result of the outreach of the Thrust to the City of Seoul program were baptized in a special celebration service August 6. Nearly 7,500 persons packed the KBS Gymnasium in Seoul for the service.

A large part of the service was given to worship focused on Luke 19:41, "Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it." General Superintendent Knight preached on the theme, "Christ and the City."

REV. MICHAEL ESTEP PRESENTS CHURCH PLANTER CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION: 20 churches have been planted in six months.

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT JOHN A. KNIGHT PREACHED ON THE THEME "CHRIST AND THE CITY": Dr. Chong-nam Cho, president of Seoul Theological Seminary, served as interpreter.

OUTPOURINGS IN SEOUL: Goal of 70 New Congregations



7,500 ATTEND SEOUL THRUST TO THE CITY RALLY: 1,000 persons were baptized.



REV. SHI-CHUL KIM, CHAIRMAN, THRUST TO THE CITY OF SEOUL, OPENS RALLY: Kim is district superintendent of Korea Central District.

"It was one of the most exciting things I've ever been a part of," said General Superintendent John A. Knight. "I think more people were present for that one rally than for the first General Assembly I attended in 1940."

The service was held to celebrate the mid-point of the 1991 Thrust to Seoul, according to Michael Estep, Thrust director. The rally served as a time of recognition for the organization of 20 new churches in South

Korea's capital city. Plans are to organize another 50 churches as part of the Thrust.

"What is happening in Seoul is phenomenal," said Knight. "It is like another Pentecost. One congregation



REV. YOUNG-BAIK KIM BAPTIZES A NEW CONVERT FROM HIS CHURCH: Kim serves as a member of the General Board, Church Growth Division.

had 135 new converts.”

Others participating in the service were George Rench, Asia Pacific regional director; Central Korea District Superintendent Shi-chul Kim,

chairman of the Thrust to the City of Seoul; Young-baik Kim, honorary Thrust chairman; Shigeru Higuchi, Japan district superintendent; and Vijai Singh, India-Delhi district

superintendent.

Estep said the pastors of the new congregations, two of which are women, each baptized their own new members.



DISTRICT	GOAL	June	July	August	DISTRICT	GOAL	June	July	August
Akron	513	41	2	9	New England	725	3	11	5
Alabama North	466	5	8	2	New Mexico	312	15	7	7
Alabama South	275	NR	21	18	New York	761	NR	6	42
Alaska	200	0	1	0	North Arkansas	320	22	2	NR
Anaheim	650	2	NR	NR	North Carolina	500	113	36	10
Arizona	700	16	0	40	North Central Ohio	546	34	1	1
Canada Atlantic	100	NR	NR	NR	North Florida	500	7	0	20
Canada Central	218	0	0	0	Northeast Oklahoma	533	8	5	13
Canada Pacific	103	0	0	0	Northeastern Indiana	600	15	18	7
Canada Quebec	200	0	0	1	Northern California	600	4	0	4
Canada West	400	7	0	0	Northern Michigan	128	0	0	4
Central California	500	35	NR	8	Northwest	555	51	NR	16
Central Florida	1,000	51	13	45	Northwest Indiana	433	14	8	11
Cen. Latin American	114	0	14	0	Northwest Oklahoma	558	22	19	2
Central Ohio	912	48	41	8	Northwestern Illinois	610	9	2	2
Chicago Central	700	0	0	0	Northwestern Ohio	450	6	11	27
Colorado	700	3	12	0	Oregon Pacific	902	0	9	5
Dakota	200	0	0	0	Philadelphia	600	40	23	0
Dallas	525	41	14	5	Pittsburgh	380	0	NR	4
East Tennessee	329	18	22	6	Rocky Mountain	195	NR	1	21
Eastern Kentucky	308	0	0	0	Sacramento	600	9	13	3
Eastern Michigan	750	0	0	0	San Antonio	471	16	7	7
Florida Space Coast	400	10	14	3	South Arkansas	264	15	12	0
Georgia	500	20	4	2	South Carolina	587	55	4	18
Hawaii Pacific	157	0	5	0	Southeast Oklahoma	300	NR	13	NR
Houston	400	22	NR	22	Southern California	441	5	0	14
Illinois	600	NR	0	15	Southern Florida	1,100	13	35	26
Indianapolis	400	15	2	7	Southwest Indian	56	NR	NR	NR
Intermountain	471	0	0	1	Southwest Indiana	600	10	5	28
Iowa	311	9	3	11	S.W. Latin American	80	1	7	2
Joplin	462	9	64	0	Southwest Oklahoma	601	98	0	6
Kansas	473	10	2	1	Southwestern Ohio	644	22	5	23
Kansas City	633	177	8	6	Tennessee	602	11	NR	4
Kentucky	500	13	5	5	Upstate New York	500	1	0	0
Los Angeles	1,406	19	14	17	Virginia	325	35	2	2
Louisiana	300	5	0	8	Washington	497	18	7	5
Maine	112	1	1	NR	Washington Pacific	700	82	15	16
Michigan	450	14	5	3	West Texas	825	13	31	32
Minnesota	165	8	2	0	West Virginia North	605	38	6	1
Mississippi	308	6	2	3	West Virginia South	315	47	16	5
Missouri	477	24	0	7	West. Latin American	172	0	0	NR
Navajo Nation	100	NR	NR	NR	Wisconsin	329	19	0	4
Nebraska	300	0	3	0					
TOTALS FOR USA/CANADA						39,610	1,500	619	1,650

REGIONS

Africa	11,580	NR	NR	NR
Asia-Pacific	5,500	NR	NR	NR
Caribbean	14,904	261	44	160
Eurasia	3,540	NR	NR	NR
Mexico & Central America	6,500	NR	NR	NR
South America	10,000	NR	NR	NR
TOTALS FOR WORLD REGIONS	52,024	261	44	160

GROW

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Growth Markings & Main Points

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in!

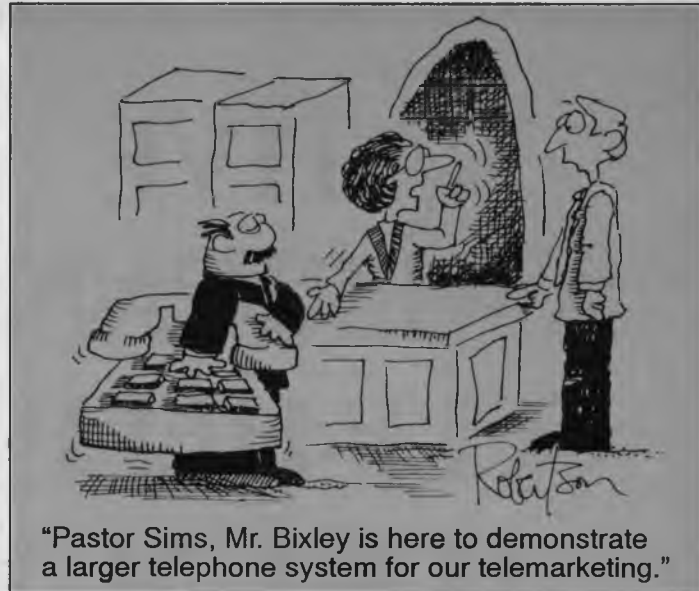
Edwin Markham

The growing church is more likely to have discretionary resources than the shrinking institution where most resources are allocated to survival goals. In the church, discretionary resources include the time and energy of volunteers, optimism, hope, money, staff, creativity, and physical facilities.

Lyle E. Schaller

The best thing pastors can do for the people is to encourage them to be honest with their money. One-sixth of every word from our Lord is about money. He knows our basic sin—love of money.

William M. Easum



Christians should be concerned about cult growth because 70% of those who inquire about a cult actually join. Most of those who join cults (82%) are churched, and 35 are Protestants.

Earl Parvin

Faith is the God-given ability to take the promises of God out of mothballs and apply them to the challenges of everyday living.

Joseph C. Aldrich

About four-fifths of our churches are beehives of random or inherited motion, but not of action that will achieve something.

George G. Hunter III



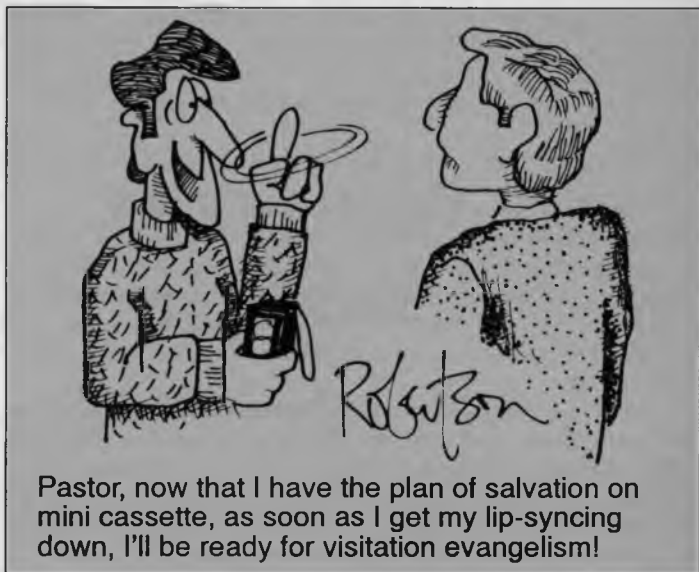
Good news pastor!! They wouldn't fill out a visitors card, but I got their tag number.

Preaching that is biblical, intelligible, winsome and delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit sets churches on fire and sends members into the streets charged with enthusiasm to draw others in.

Donald A. McGavran

By lifestyle evangelism I mean equipping the saints to bear effective testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ in the normal context of their everyday lives, through the formal and casual relationships in which they are involved, and in a manner and at a level that conforms to the needs and interests of their hearers.

T. M. Moore



Pastor, now that I have the plan of salvation on mini cassette, as soon as I get my lip-syncing down, I'll be ready for visitation evangelism!

**NATIVE
AMERICAN
SELF-HELP
FORUM
ORGANIZED**

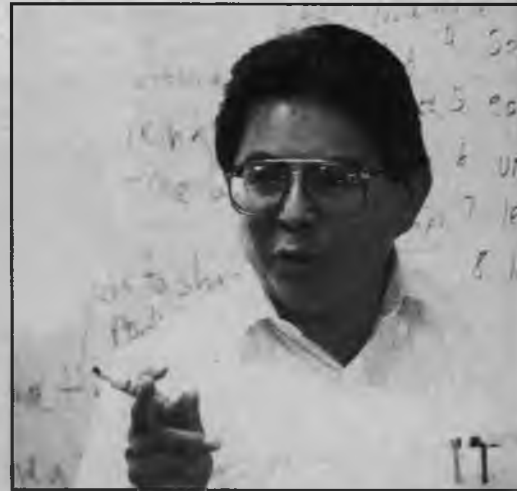


**DR. JULIAN GUNN SHARES
DEVOTIONS WITH FORUM.**

**Can
Self-Help
Improve
Ministry to
Indians?**



REV. TOM MCKINNEY DESCRIBES NAZARENE INDIAN BIBLE COLLEGE TO DR. R.T. BOBERJACK AND REV. WILBUR BRANNON.



NAVAJO NATION DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT JOHN R. NELLS EXPLAINS INDIAN PERSPECTIVE.

A pressing question—"Can self-help strategies resource ministry among Native Americans?"—formed the foundation for all deliberations at the Native American Self-Help Forum held at Nazarene Indian Bible College on July 5-7, 1991. Few people have ever considered such an idea. Thinking through related issues and brainstorming possible methodologies grew out of an informal discussion by several Native American and Anglo church leaders earlier this year.



DR. GERARD REED ASKS FOR CLARIFICATION CONCERNING FAMILY ISSUES.

NAZARENE COMPASSIONATE MINISTRIES—CANADA/U.S.



MRS. JUANITA GUNN DESCRIBES THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN INDIAN CULTURE.

on one of three committees to deal with 1) ministry to children and youth, 2) help for alcoholic and dysfunctional families, and 3) economic self-help strategies. After committees formulate recommendations and determine direction for action, the Forum will meet again to finalize plans for implementing Native American self-help programs.

Suggestions from *Grow* readers would be welcomed by Forum members; persons with ideas about businesses, foundations, and other groups interested in this project may contact Rev. Thomas McKinney, Nazarene Indian Bible College, 2315 Markham Road, S.W., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87105.

Prayer support is needed and appreciated.

—by R. T. Bolerjack,
Director of Nazarene Indian
Bible College.



**IS SELF-HELP POSSIBLE?
REV. TOM MCKINNEY LEADS
FORUM.**

The Forum, sponsored jointly by the Division of Church Growth and Nazarene Indian Bible College, was funded by Nazarene Compassionate Ministries - Canada/U.S. The Division of Church Growth administers Nazarene Compassionate Ministries - Canada/U.S. and Dr. Tom Nees serves as its director while continuing his leadership of the Community of Hope at Washington, D.C.

Rev. Tom McKinney, Nazarene Indian Bible College academic dean, prepared the agenda and chaired the sessions. Navajo Nation District Superintendent John Nells discussed Native American migration from reservations to cities. Southwest Indian District Superintendent Julian Gunn outlined the characteristics of Indian populations as they become more acculturated to urban life.

Other Forum participants included Native American pastors and spouses: Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Liston, Rev. and Mrs. Freddie Lee, and Rev. and Mrs. Dennis

Benale; Dr. Gerard Reed, Point Loma Nazarene College professor; Mr. Les Ingram, Compassion International; Mr. Steve Bowman, layman; Rev. Lloyd Commander, NIBC professor; Rev. Wilbur Brannon, Pastoral Ministries Director, Church Growth Division; Mrs. Bernita Gunn; Mrs. Juanita Nells; Mrs. Laurita McKinney; and Dr. R. T. Bolerjack, NIBC Director.

The Forum's work centered on efforts to find creative ways for Native Americans and the Indian churches to develop programs to begin a process of resolving pressing social, educational, spiritual and financial problems facing their people today.

Reestablishing moral and ethical values in the home was of great concern to all participants. Implications of large scale unemployment, both for the home and the church, were discussed in depth. Considerable attention was given to economic self-help possibilities.

Forum members agreed to serve

NEW CHURCH RECEIVES 39 MEMBERS BY PROFESSION OF FAITH

The Lester Baker Family ▶



“Church Planting Is Genuinely Rewarding Work.”

“ love it! Church planting is rewarding, satisfying work. What a personal blessing to see new Christians become established in their faith. The process of discipling new believers, seeing them start from nothing, and watching them grow in their relationship with Christ is fun.”

That is how Pastor Baker summarizes his ministry to a baby congregation at Lakeside, California.

Baker, a 1989 graduate of Nazarene Bible College, moved to the Southern California District in the summer following his graduation. Baker and his wife, along with district sponsorship and about 100 helpers from neighboring churches, phoned 17,500 households in their area.

A total of 138 persons attended the first service of the Lakeside Community Church of the Nazarene, held on March 15, 1990. A little more than one year later, the new congregation was officially organized with 47 members. Thirty-nine joined by profession of faith. The church reported a Sunday school average attendance of 72 to the 1991 district assembly.

Composed of skilled trades people and construction workers, the church has succeeded in winning others to Christ through a life-style evangelism program.

Because this group of believers meets in the Lakeview Middle School, congregational activity is mostly limited to Sunday morning or occasionally is shifted to other facilities. To correct

these limitations, the congregation at press time was in negotiations for larger facilities located nearer the center of their ministry area. This proposed facility would give the growing congregation more space, opportunities to meet during the week, and a central location for the same rent as they now pay for the school.

GROW congratulates this pioneer church plant for its extraordinary launching and solicits prayer support from our readers for the future advancement of this congregation.

Reaching The Unreachable
THE NEXT STEP



World Mission Radio



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OUTREACH NEWS

CHURCH MINISTRIES

Growth in all the Nazarenes

Through an infinite variety of strategies God is leading His people to impact their world for Christ. The following reports come from several settings across North America and from churches of various sizes. We rejoice in what God does through the people called Nazarenes. We want to hear about your victories, too. —The editor.

LAKE HOUSTON (TEXAS) CHURCH reports a 46 person membership gain resulting from intentional efforts to assimilate new people at a rapid pace and keep them in the church family.

Pastor Jim Stocks explains, "We do this by helping new Christians find ministry that is significant to them as quickly as possible in the church. We also organize our 'friendliness' to make sure visitors have a positive warm welcome. Complementing this is an aggressive but sensitive follow-up and outreach ministry that helps keep the back door closed. People coming to our church meet seven or more people within the first few minutes after they arrive. During the first week after the first visit, there are at least seven contacts made to each visitor."

Stocks shares this conversion summary about Barbara, a 30-something housewife with three children and a dog: "Bess Reed, from our church, taught Barbara's children in a weeknight Bible class in her home. Barbara became curious because her children could not wait to attend the class at Bess's home. She decided to visit one evening and found her own heart hungry for what Bess was teaching the children. A few weeks later Barbara called Bess and they met for coffee. At that time Barbara asked how she could be saved. Bess was happy to lead her to Christ. Immediately, Barbara and her family began attending Lake Houston. She was later sanctified and began witnessing to her neighbors. She has been responsible for

twelve people attending and joining our church this past year, and she continues to network in her neighborhood to bring in the lost. She has recently accepted the post of children's coordinator at Lake Houston Church."

ABINGDON (ILLINOIS) CHURCH was organized on November 4, 1990, in a church building purchased by the Northwestern Illinois District. **District Superintendent F. Thomas Bailey** reports: "Pastor Walter D. Johnston met a young man while substitute teaching at the high school. Some of the man's visiting relatives insisted on going to church somewhere the next Sunday, so the young man suggested the Church of the Nazarene. The following week the pastor shared the gospel in that home and the young man accepted Christ. He was baptized last fall along with a lady who recommitted her life after she had been away from the Lord for many years. Both are charter members of the new church."

CHRISTIAN JOY CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE AT FORT MOHAVE, ARIZONA, was organized on May 19, 1991, with 21 charter members, 14 by profession of faith. First services were held at Snow Bird Trailer Park Club House. **Pastor Roy Sanderson** rejoices for construction help from a Kelso, Washington, Christian non-Nazarene group called Hard Hats for Christ. They built their church building valued at \$140,000 for \$67,000 in seven weeks—from pouring the slab to final completion. The construction group declined money or meals; they only wanted a place to park their trailers. Nineteen children were baptized in children's church on June 2.

BETHANY FIRST (OKLAHOMA) CHURCH received 162 members last year with a net gain of 82. **Pastor Melvin McCullough** attributes these increases to relational evangelism, dynamic worship experiences which set forth the gospel,

women's Bible studies, and systematic visitor follow-up. Dr. McCullough shared news about the conversion of Richard and Darlene Knight: "In their 40's, Richard is a hairstylist and Darlene is a Y.M.C.A. public relations director. Though Richard grew up in a Christian home, he spent years in rebellion and claimed to be an atheist for most of that time. A man who shines shoes where Richard works as a barber asked his help for understanding the Bible. This started a search. Darlene invited Richard to visit the church where she had found healing and restoration. The catalytic moment of his conversion came when Richard realized that if Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus, He must also be concerned about Richard's spiritual well-being."

MONTREAL GRACE (QUEBEC) CHURCH gained more than 50 members in its first year. **Pastor Carlton F. Harvey**, when asked who was most responsible for their church's growth, said, "God put me in touch with a marketing consultant who donated his expertise in developing our strategy. We used state-of-the-art computer programs to locate our target audience and then prepared materials to reach that target. This man, though unsaved, guided us through the whole project."

When asked about conversions in this new church, the pastor wrote, "Maggie Estwick received a brochure about our church and decided that one day she would visit. Several months later she found our church and was surprised to discover we were a Nazarene church. She remarked, 'My son is a Nazarene pastor in Washington, D.C., and he kept telling me I should find a Nazarene church.' Soon Maggie knelt at the altar to give her life to Christ. She joined the church and continues to faithfully attend."

Life Among Nazarene

healing..... Sanctification..... miracles..... knowledge.....
...needs... Salvation...
Let us pray for these prayer requests.... Please write them on the chart.

Hoolzhisdés' kají' 'láh doo shí-zhi' bee da'dí' ááh kéed da; (shízhéé bi zhié) bee da'dí' náhkéed gu níhée doolyéé, áko ní hini' biighahgo níhít da hózhéé doo. John 16:24 - O-yá God óizand-

Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. John 16:27 - NKJV.

Sandy + Dale Seville and daughter, Catherine José, Elisa Maria, Kase Thompson, Danny Emerson Pino + family
 Maria, Bertha Pino, Maxine Martine, Robert José,

People in the Armed Forces: Lorean J. Henio, Kao Lee, Kaye

Gene Yazzie, Calister Eriacho, Taster Martinez, Shawn Benally, Edgar White,

NWMS

Navajo Nation District council, Pastors, congregation and Sunday School Teachers and Others.

Alice Roberts

Nazarene Senior Citizens

D.S. Johnny Nalls + Family

Missionaries: Atrica, Don Gardeners' Family, Papua, New Guinea, Ellen

Syvert, Don and Bessie Black.

NIBC students

Twin Wells Indian School

Ramah Navajo Nazarene church members.

The desert environment where many Native Americans live shapes every phase of life including Nazarene ministry. Mere existence and productive ministry require lots of stamina out where people struggle constantly with barren soil, scorching sun, high wind, deadly winters, destitute living conditions, and hopelessness. But our church has a growing group of sturdy national leaders who minister among their people. The GROW staff, desiring to acquaint our readers with these committed folks, took a camera to the reservation to help us get to know these delightful fellow believers.

—The editor



KAYE GENA YAZZIE, associate pastor at Twin Buttes, and his daughter, Kaylene.

Native Americans



PASTOR AND MRS. ALVIN TSO, Forest Lake Church of the Nazarene.



VETERAN PASTORS JOE CURLEY, Montezuma Church of the Nazarene, and ALEX RIGGS, Round Cedar Church of the Nazarene.



LAY LEADER CHESTER WILLIAMS AND PASTOR EARL WILLIAMS, Smoky Hill Church of the Nazarene.



PASTOR DANIEL LISTON, Sells Church of the Nazarene.

Former Contractor Shapes Indian Bible College Campus

Soft spoken, well organized, and vigorously energetic, Gene Cope is a layman committed to a full-time ministry of building construction planned by God for him.

At an age when people customarily feel driven to build a business, advance a career, or accumulate security, Gene Cope, his wife Karen, and their two teenage children answered a call from God and the church to give up a secure, well-paying livelihood, a comfortable home, and a strong middle-sized Nazarene church to give full energy and skills to Nazarene Indian Bible College.

Now Gene and Karen receive extremely nominal salaries. Their family lives on campus in a double wide mobile home where they are constantly on call for all real and imagined emergencies. And often they worship with the students or visit a small Indian church. Because they live nearby, the students and their children consider the Copes to be special friends, and they are.

Onlookers call this sacrifice, but the Copes call it satisfaction.

As campus development manager, Cope directs Work and Witness teams, instructs college vocational classes, and provides hands-on oversight of campus maintenance and janitorial services.

In four years, through Work and Witness Cope has worked with 64 teams consisting of 1,012 people from thirteen states who have contributed approximately \$191,000 for building materials and donated their labor. He purchases materials, manages food and housing logistics for teams, supervises the actual work, and snaps hundreds of pictures so team members can take a memory home.

In the instructional part of his work, Cope teaches courses in blueprint reading, framing, construction, plumbing, electrical and wood working.

Though Cope fits few traditional concepts of called ministers such as pastors, evangelists, youth directors, Christian education staff people, college teachers, administrators, or even missionaries, he is called nonetheless. In fact, Cope's call to a specific assignment perfectly fits his gifts and graces to meet the current needs.

What an inspiration to observe how the Father brought Cope and the Indian Bible College together. And this match powerfully depicts God's eagerness to call available laymen from around the globe to accomplish adventuresome achievements for Him.

Here is Gene Cope's testimony: "Since childhood I thought I felt a call to be a missionary, but since I never felt called to be a

GOD CALLS LAYMAN TO OVERSEE 64 WORK AND WITNESS TEAMS

Unique Providences Lead from Longmont to Saudi Arabia to Albuquerque

preacher, teacher, or doctor, I thought there was no place for me on the mission field. My father was a builder, and I was always interested in following in his footsteps. Although I have tried many other kinds of work, I always seem to come back to construction.

"Through the years, just to survive, I have had to work in most of the construction trades.

Sometimes working in so many different occupations made little sense to me, but now I see it has given me a great deal of valuable experience, all of which I am using at Nazarene Indian Bible College. This is especially true of my experience in Saudi Arabia as a construction superintendent where I was forced to learn to work with people from other cultures.

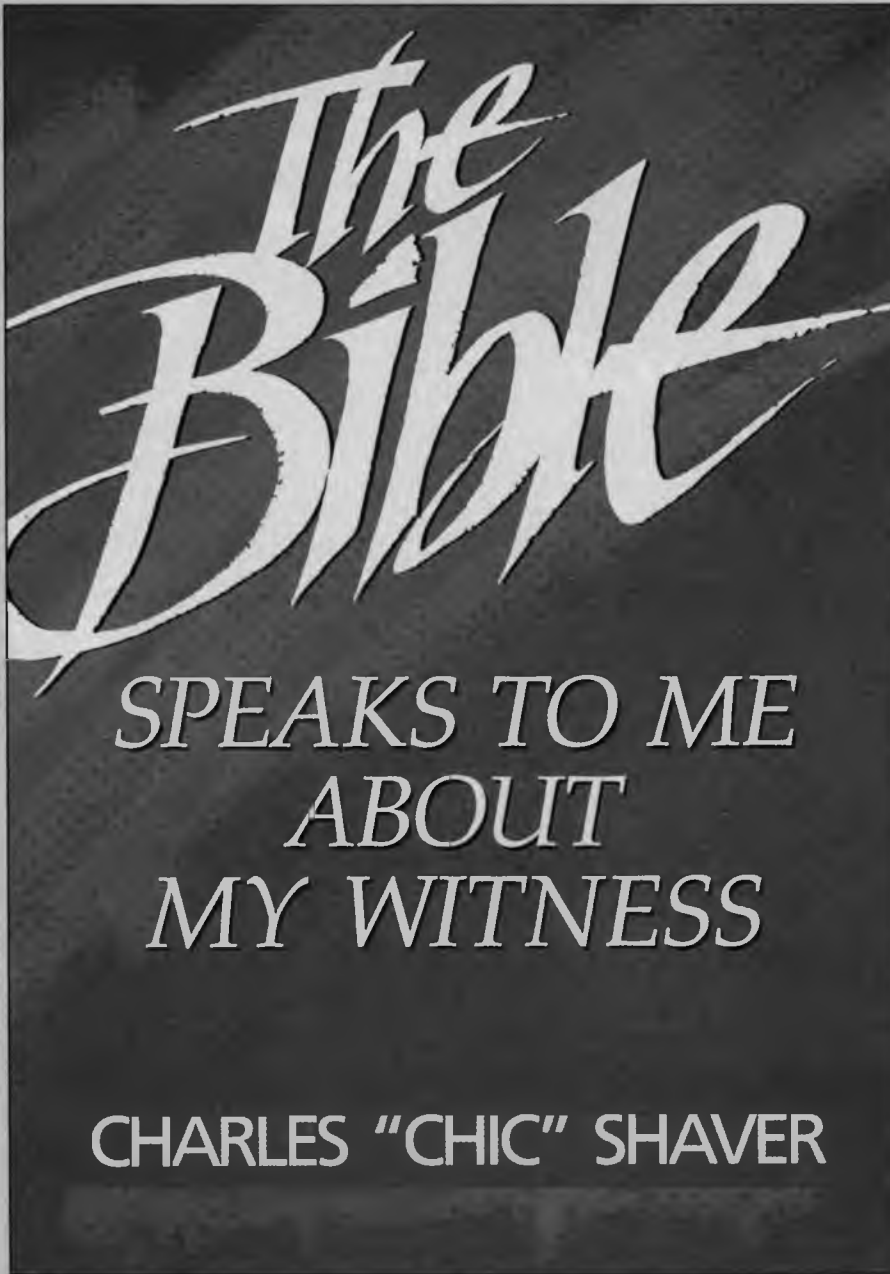
"In the summer of 1984, my family and I went on a Work and Witness trip to Laches Nazarene Church on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona. During this trip we felt drawn to the Indian people, and again there was a tug toward missionary work. Three years later my wife, son, and daughter went to the Nazarene Indian Bible College at Albuquerque on another Work and Witness project with our home church at Longmont, Colorado. I was unable to go with them because of my job. During this trip my wife, Karen, felt a pull to work with Native Americans.

"It 'just happened' that Nazarene Indian Bible College was in need of a director of campus development and an administrative secretary. Our pastor informed the college president of our interests and our qualifications. Following an interview in Colorado and another on campus, we were offered the assignment. After much prayer we knew it was God's will for us, and we accepted.

"Although it was difficult in many ways to give up our fairly comfortable way of life to come here, we have never been sorry because we have no doubt that this is where God wants us at this time. We have been blessed to be able to work with the Native American people and to meet and work with so many wonderful people who come to help us with Work and Witness projects."

—by Laurita McKinney,
Nazarene Indian Bible
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YEAR 4 • FEBRUARY—MARCH 1992

“I DON’T WANT TO SEE A CHAPLAIN!”

Taking God’s Love to Dying AIDS Patients

The way I typically meet patients on the AIDS unit is by knocking on a door, walking into a room, and saying to a person I have not yet met: “Hello, my name is Michael and I’m the chaplain on this unit. I just stopped by to see how you’re doing.” Most AIDS patients are happy to see a chaplain.

The room at the corner with a beautiful view of the city is David’s room. David responds coldly to my introduction: “I’m not religious and I don’t want to see a chaplain.”

I say, “Now why is that?”

“Because I’ve had quite enough religion stuffed down my throat growing up. No thank you!”

“In what church were you raised?” I ask.

“Southern Baptist! But now my folks are Nazarene. They dragged me to church at Christmastime the last time I saw them. It was pretty bad.”

“Do your parents know about your diagnosis?”

“No they don’t, and I’m not going to tell them. If they knew they would start praying for a deathbed conversion and I’m not going to do that.”

“You think your parents would have a hard time dealing with AIDS?”

“I think they would.”

“Listen, David, if you ever decide to tell them, and you need someone from their denomination to help them deal with it, I would be pleased to help. I’m a minister in the Church of the Nazarene, and I’m available.”

David seems surprised that I am a Nazarene and thanks me for the offer. He writes down my name and phone number just in case.

A few months later David is back in the hospital, and he has finally told his parents he has AIDS. They call me from Arizona and tell me their son is gay and is dying of AIDS. They want to come out to see him.

I try to prepare them for seeing

It has been twenty years since their son left home and the church.

their son. “David knows how you feel about his homosexuality; you don’t have to tell him again. He also knows how long you have been praying and hoping for him to come to Christ; you don’t have to remind him. Why don’t you simply love him and accept him as your son who is very sick. No judgment, no Scriptures to think about, no speeches on what he needs to do; just come and be with him.”

They agree and tell me they had stopped sending him gospel tracts and pressing for his salvation years ago. They are eager to see the son they love.

David braces himself to see his parents by telling his gay friends that

his parents are very religious and might try to convert him. “They think unless you believe like them, you’ll go to hell. Don’t let them lay that on me, please! I don’t want a deathbed conversion,” he says emphatically.

His parents come to town to visit their son. True to their word, they are loving and accepting. They withhold any moral judgment they might feel. It has been twenty years since their son left home and the church. It is devastating for them to see him in the hospital with AIDS. They stay for a few days and have to go home.

I return to the hospital to see David after their visit. I ask him how the visit had gone. He is relieved and delighted. “They surprised me,” he says, remarking on how supportive and accepting they were. “It was a good visit.”

“Did they try to convert you?” I ask.

“No, they didn’t.”

I tell David he is welcome to live in our Care House after he gets out of the hospital, if his doctor thinks it appropriate. He smiles and thanks me for the offer.

David is not released from the hospital but becomes progressively worse. Some days he is coherent and other days he is not. AIDS is literally destroying his brain. His doctor schedules him for a biopsy.

On the eve of his operation, Carl Stuart, a Baptist minister and my fellow chaplain in the hospital, visits David. It is during this visit that something happens deep within

"I DON'T WANT TO SEE A CHAPLAIN!"

David's spirit that he swore to his friends would never happen. He opens his heart to Christ on his deathbed, as Carl Stuart explains:

"You should see the view from my room,' David told his parents over the phone between sobs. 'Something wonderful has happened that has changed my perspective on everything.'

"The view was exceptional that day from the AIDS ward at San Francisco General. Through the familiar fog which gently embraced Twin Peaks shone a piercing sunlight in beautiful, powerful rays.

"David had been lying in spiritual darkness and the 'shadow of death' for weeks. He had set his will against God as he understood God from his childhood. His experience with the church and his own spiritual rejection left him feeling rejected and angry. But God had called him 'out of darkness and into his marvelous light' (I Peter 2:9).

"It was early evening when David's friend approached the nurses' station with unopened letters to David in his hand. The request from David's parents was for Chaplain Michael Christensen to open and read them to David and to support him through the emotional and spiritual impact the letters might bring. The letters were what might be the last words from two of his brothers, Dennis and Brian, who were unable to come in person.

"Since it was not Michael's day to be at the hospital, I agreed to read the letters to David. Before I opened the first letter, David asked, 'Could we pray first?' We bowed together and prayed for courage of heart and strength of spirit to hear what was to be said.

"The first message was from Dennis who inscribed his love on a card: '... there is NO ONE quite like you!'

And he proceeded to urge his brother to accept God's love.

"David broke into tears as we attempted to get through the passionate words from his brother.

"Brian's letter followed. It exuded love and doctrine as he carefully cited the Scriptures he wanted his brother to consider. 'All are sinners, not because of the sins they have committed, but because of the nature which they have received at birth,' he wrote. But 'God has given us eternal life. And this life is in His Son. He that

Without prompting, David uttered a faltering but sure expression of saving faith: "God, I want to ask you into my life. . . I'm sorry it has taken me this long."

hath the Son hath life. And he that hath not the Son of God hath not life' (I John 5:11).

"As the words of life continued to flow from Brian's letter, it was not yet evident that the Spirit of Grace was caressing David's heart, warming the soil for the seed that had been planted in his childhood.

"Time passed as we stopped again and again for David to cough, to cry, to consider. At the end of the readings, I asked David how he would like to respond to his brothers. By letter? By phone?

"Again he said, 'I want to pray.' Without prompting, David uttered a faltering but sure expression of saving faith: 'God, I want to ask you into my life. . . I'm sorry it has taken me this long.'

"I reminded him of Paul's words, 'Therefore being justified by faith, I have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:1).

"The crying stopped, the countenance changed, the courage came to call his parents to tell them his good news.

"We dialed, they answered, and he said, 'I have accepted Jesus, and He has given me such peace.' And then came the tears of joy, the kind that only come from heartfelt gratitude to God for the gift of peace.

"No wonder the view from David's room was different. As he looked out the window and saw the setting sun pierce through the fog on the hills of Twin Peaks, it was as if he was seeing a place prepared for him in heaven. As he pointed out to me the area at the foot of the Peaks where he lived, I knew he saw far beyond to his eternal home. Facing the imminent brain surgery for which he had prepared for three days, he exclaimed, 'You should see the view from my room!'"

David goes to surgery the following day, and physically takes a downward turn. Two weeks later he lies unconscious with his sister and his friend at his bedside. Their last words to him constitute an important goodbye: "David, you can go home now."

Permission granted, David is free to die, if that is his wish. In that very moment, David leaves this life behind, finally free from his years of pain.

Because of his faith in God and his courageous friends and family members, David did not have to die alone.

—by Michael J. Christensen
Nazarene Chaplain
San Francisco General Hospital

Can Love Do Less?



For I testify that they
gave as much as they were able,
and even beyond their ability.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:3, NIV

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Chaplaincy

1941

MINISTRIES
50
Years

Ministries

1991



Celebrating 50 Years of Ministry to Servicemembers

From the Nazarene Servicemen's Commission of 1941 to Chaplaincy Ministries in 1991, the Church of the Nazarene has been on active duty, discipling service personnel. Starting with a nucleus of dedicated elders serving in World War II, the Nazarene chaplains corps has grown to 66 chaplains, 24 of whom served in Operation Desert Storm—more percentage-wise than any other Protestant denomination.

Celebrating an International Mission

In 1941, the Church of the Nazarene determined to minister to its members in the U.S. Armed Forces. In

1991, Nazarene chaplains are still serving God and their countries—including Brazil, Germany, Great Britain, India, New Guinea, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe.

Celebrating an All-Encompassing Ministry

In 1941, chaplaincy meant military. In 1991, over 400 serve as full- and part-time chaplains in the Civil Air Patrol, police and fire departments, hospitals, prisons, factories, retirement centers, college and university campuses, funeral homes, and counseling offices, as well as active duty and reserve military. Nazarene chaplains go wherever spiritual hunger and human need exist.

In this 50th anniversary year, the ministry opportunities are still gold unto harvest.

NAZARENE MINISTRY DURING OPERATION DESERT STORM

In the Supreme Commander's Service

Ever since the Iran-Iraq War, our brigade has had soldiers stationed in Bahrain, and I had orders in hand to visit them. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, I asked my commander if I should still go. He replied, "You'll be going all right, but not to Bahrain, and you better start packing soon."

On September 20, my birthday, I stepped off the plane in Saudi Arabia to be greeted by a blast of hot (120 degrees plus), dry, desert air and the same commander. He handed me a bottle of water and said, "Here, Chaplain, now get to work," and I did.

I was on duty as a chaplain every waking hour during the entire time I was in the Middle East. What an opportunity for ministry, and I loved it! Almost every day, I thanked God for the privilege of serving Him in that place. I was, also, grateful for the opportunity to represent the wonderful people of my church during this conflict.

Please do not misunderstand me; it was not at all like going to camp meeting.

There was the painful fact that in order to be blessed with this ministry, I had to endure separation from my wife and family, and how I missed them. Separation is often a part of military life.

My wife, Betty, and I discussed this aspect before I became a chaplain, so we were in agreement, and I enjoyed her full support during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. In fact, as I was leaving she said, "As much as it hurts to see you go, I know those soldiers need you right now more than I do."

But this separation caused another serious problem. Although Betty and I



agreed to a ministry with separations, my girls, Leslie and Dawn, did not. Was it fair to them to have their dad gone? How would they feel? Dawn made it clear the evening before I left when she said, "Daddy, I thought we prayed about accepting our move to Fort Bragg."

"We did," I replied, expecting her to ask, "Why are you going then?"

Instead, she matter-of-factly said, "Then, this is what you are supposed to be doing."

Not only was the separation difficult, there were the living conditions. Part of the time I lived in a compound in Daharan and the living was fine, but when we deployed to the desert, the conditions became austere. The wind blew and it was full of dust and grit, and the nights were cold. I bathed in a small plastic wash pan and did my laundry in the same pan when my clothes got so bad I could not stand them. I had a small tent with a dirt floor that slept four, and the hard cot did not compare to my kingsize bed at home.

But all this is a small price to pay when I compare it to the victories for the Kingdom.

I remember being on a plane when a soldier walked up to me and handed me a note. After I read the note, I answered him with another note that



OPERATION DESERT STORM

said something like this: "I appreciate your honest and sincere note. You can be sure that I will be praying for you, and I hope we can talk when we land." I regretted that a crowded, noisy military plane did not provide opportunity for serious conversation about anything. I sought him out after we landed and everything had calmed down, and he said with a smile on his face, "It's all OK now, Chaplain. When I got your note, I went into the washroom and I



prayed and I cried for a long time. I'm back where I need to be with God." Here is a victory for God, and I did not do anything except be where God wanted me to be.

Then there was the Warrant Officer who came in my office and wanted to know how to become a Christian. By now, I had the Four Spiritual Laws and the Roman Road of Salvation down pat, so I shared the gospel with him. When I asked if he wanted to make a commitment to Christ, he said that he wanted to think about what I had said. He had a good Christian wife who had been taking him to church and was praying for him, so he was getting interested. He came back in about a week and said, "Chaplain, I'm ready to accept Christ." We prayed less than two minutes before he smiled and said that

he was ready to go home to his wife and home to God after this war was over.

I cannot forget the woman soldier who had lived a very troubled life. She grew up in the slums of New York and had a life so wicked and horrible that she thought she was demon possessed. She could not sleep at night because of dreams of demons, and sometimes she thought she saw them in her room. We talked about the power of Christ over demons and prayed for several weeks.

Then one day, she made the complete break through. She gave her life, demons and all, to Jesus. She knew she had the victory and she slept a calm, restful sleep for the first night that she could remember. Her victory was complete, and she enjoyed this peace from then until the last time I talked with her, which was months after the Middle East War ended.

Then there were those who would catch me after the worship service to talk, pray, and accept Christ. There were soldiers who would get me behind tents, in vehicles, or any other private place to talk about God. There was a real interest in spiritual issues, and many found the Lord.

I did not try to keep count of those who came to Christ because I did not want to reduce the most important thing in life to putting tick marks in a Bible. But God was at work in Saudi Arabia, and I am glad I was there on a mission for Him.

I was so sure that I was exactly where God wanted me to be during the entire conflict that I did not especially pray for my safety. I only prayed that I would be found faithful when an opportunity for ministry presented itself and I would not fail my Lord.

However, when the Iraqi Scud landed on the compound and killed 28 soldiers, I changed my mind. That compound was only 300 meters from ours. And even though I was away at the time, I realized how close death could be, and I was grateful for the thousands who were praying earnestly for my safety.

I and most soldiers I talked to believe God gave us this victory because of the prayers of millions of Christian people.

I want to thank everyone for their prayers and letters. And I want to thank the Church of the Nazarene for allowing me to serve God under its banner of sponsorship and support.

—by Chaplain (LTC) Lowell P. Moore
United States Army





ROOTED IN CHRIST

— Personal Growth Helps for Leaders —

LIFE GIVING WORDS

WEEK ONE

THE AWESOME POWER OF WORDS

“In the beginning was the Word....” (John 1:1).

A young German patent office clerk, bored with his job, wrote an article in 1905 for an esoteric scientific journal which posited and explained a simple mathematical formula: $E=MC^2$ (energy equals mass times the speed of light squared). This and several others advancing the theories of general and special relativity exploded like a bomb in the minds of physicists. Suddenly they found themselves looking at the relationship between matter and energy in an entirely new light. Albert Einstein's humble words written on a piece of paper thrust our world into the nuclear age, for better or worse. Words are dynamite!

Here is an astonishing fact: communication precedes creation. Such it was in the beginning. First came the **word**: “And God said, let there be . . .” (Gen. 1:3). Then came galaxies cartwheeling through space, morning stars singing together, trees clapping their hands,

mountains dancing for joy, and songbirds taking wing. First God said, “Let us make man in Our image. . .” (Gen. 1:26). Then came the man and the woman walking down Eden's country road, lovers holding hands to watch the sun go down.

Revelation's order moves from communication to creation, from “In the beginning was the Word” to “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1, 14). So it is today. First the word of the Gospel, then saving faith: “He who hears My **word**, and believes Him who sent Me, **has eternal life**” (John 5:24; see Rom. 1:16-17; 10:14-17). Words constitute the final reality: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:25). Words constitute the first and primal reality.

WEEK TWO

WORDS CREATE

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:3).

The year was 1961. President John F. Kennedy stood to make his first State of the Union address before the joint houses of Congress. He brought his listeners upright with these historic words:

“Let's put a man on the moon in this decade.” Just ten simple, mostly monosyllabic, words. And yet they aroused the sleeping giant of our vast industrial scientific technological complex as no others in the twentieth century. Like a powerful magnet over iron filings, the daring words of the president focused the collective genius of our nation's best and brightest minds, unleashed a tidal wave of invention and innovation until, on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first man in history to walk on the moon.

Words have creative power. Such is the Scripture's testimony: creation *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, by the sheer power of God's spoken word. That is also a fact of life. Everything that occurs in the realm of human experience begins with a word spoken or written. Words are the mind's instruments by which inchoate thoughts, feelings, and desires are given objective form and then sculpted into communicable symbols. Words are the brush and pigments by which we paint what is going on inside. Once we image something and find the appropriate words to convey it, then it becomes a dynamic creative force. Words are the vehicles by which we transmit those images to the minds of others. Words enable us to share thoughts, ideas, and our hearts with each other. They are to

human community what wires are to electrical current. Without words there is no life together. Without words, no life at all! That is why it is so vital for us to continue and enhance the practice of the earliest church, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship . . . and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

WEEK THREE

WORDS CREATE LIGHT

"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3).

Matisse, the nineteenth century expressionist artist, tells how he discovered his vocation. As a boy he happened upon a Bohemian painter at work by the sea. He became enthralled with the picture that took shape before his eyes. He watched with fascination as a glorious seascape gradually emerged from the blank canvas under the artist's magic brush. He says of that experience, "It was as if my eyes had been skinned. All of a sudden I came alive to the wonderful world of color."

Paul had such an experience. He writes, "As I was journeying to Damascus . . . at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those journeying with me" (Acts 26:12-13). Though his physical eyes were temporarily blinded, he saw something about Jesus of Nazareth with his inner eyes that no one else had ever seen. He translated that vision into words with such clarity and force that the world has never been the same.

Two thousand years later we see unfolding, in ever greater magnitude, what Paul envisioned of Jesus so long ago: "Therefore also God has highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth,

and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Something like that happens whenever words are spoken, for the primal function of words is to illuminate. First came the light, in Genesis one, and then the glories of the universe in all of its wonder and beauty. Words continually reenact the miracle of the man who, touched by Jesus, testified, "Whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25).

WEEK FOUR

WORDS CREATE LIFE

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image'" (Gen. 1:26).

God spoke and man became a living being. Words create human life. Over and over again. Four times Marge and I have held our very own babies in our arms. At birth they somewhat resembled the species *homo sapiens*, but otherwise there was little to mark them as such. They couldn't walk, talk, sing, or sass. They were totally defenseless and utterly dependent upon others for life.

Then each in turn was enveloped in a warm blanket of words: words heaped upon them by their mother, father, grandparents, uncles, and aunts, and a host of others. Almost from the beginning we could see each of them responding with eyes and facial contortions. Soon came answering coos and inchoate mumbblings. Then, one day, right out of the blue we heard them say, "Mama," "Daddy." And our hearts did back flips for joy. Those were swiftly followed by "No!" and "Mine!" and "Dad, can I have the keys to the car?"

Words actualize human potential. Sociologists tell us that if a child is totally deprived of all human speech for the first seven years of its life, it will never be able to talk normally but will remain in a state

of severe retardation. Educators now know that children who enter school with serious social or learning disabilities, more often than not suffer from communication malnutrition in the home. On the other end of the age spectrum, gerontologists assert that what was previously thought to be senility is, in most cases, communication isolation.

There is nothing we do in our families or churches as important as talking and listening. Like a flower opening its petals to the rising sun, so does the human spirit blossom in the warm loving environment of words.

WEEK FIVE

WORDS NOURISH HUMAN LIFE

"Do not forsake assembling together . . . but encourage one another" (Heb. 10:25).

It was our first family vacation trip to Canada. While camped at Radium Hot Springs in the Banff National Park we ate a late lunch at a small coffee shop. I struck up a conversation with a man next to us. I invited him to join us. He proved to be a most interesting guest, having spent a score of summers in the arctic north pursuing various avocations such as fishing, hunting, and working as a professional guide. He regaled our children with bear and moose stories. Then he shared an experience I will never forget.

He signed up to track a herd of caribou on their annual migration across the Canadian Yukon. For thirteen weeks he followed the herd, subsisting off the land and with what he carried in his pack. He didn't carry a radio. A bush pilot located him every couple of weeks to drop him fresh supplies, but otherwise he was absolutely alone. When the pilot picked him up at summer's end, he was shocked to discover that he couldn't talk. He could say a few words and phrases but had lost the capacity to form sentences and otherwise carry on a normal conversation. He was alarmed, wondering if thirteen weeks of isolation had unstrung

him mentally. The bush pilot had encountered this phenomenon before and told him not to worry. He assured him that he would quickly recover his ability to communicate once he was with people again. Yet he said that it took him at least six months before he could speak with his previous fluency.

Words not only create but nourish human life. What food is to the body words are to the soul. We cannot get along without the stimulus of talking and listening. It is only in a human community of shared words that we actualize our full human potential. As Reuben Welch likes to say, "We really do need each other!"

WEEK SIX

WORDS CREATE SPIRITUAL LIFE

"The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63).

My evangelistic efforts to reach Jim, a chess partner and an occasional church attender, seemed to have no effect. That is, until we went backpacking. For the ten days we were on the trail, after breakfast we shared in the reading of the Scriptures and prayer. Even though neither Jim nor his three sons made any profession of faith, they participated fully. As we soaked up the spectacular mountain vistas along the John Muir trail in the California High Sierras, we talked about many aspects of the gospel and Christian belief. He asked innumerable questions. I could sense an awakening occurring.

On Sunday we got an early start and hiked up McGee Creek to a high sub-alpine meadow. Under the arches of 14,000 foot peaks and the mantle of fleecy white clouds over our open-air cathedral, we had our own church service. Everybody participated. "For the first time," Jim testified, "I know without a shadow of a doubt that there is a God." With emotion cracking his voice, he spoke of becoming alive as never before to the awesome power of God in and

through His creation. He shared the wonder of how he was becoming so aware of Jesus' love and care exhibited in the frisky chipmunks and fragile wild flowers that blossomed all around us. We concluded our service with a sub-alpine meadow celebration of the Lord's Supper. It was Jim's and his boys' first time to participate in Holy Communion. "Heaven came down, and glory filled our souls."

I don't know if Jim could define a precise moment when he became a believer, but he can testify that when he went up the mountain, he was a child of Satan headed for hell. When he came down the mountain, he was a child of God headed for heaven. As Peter put it in speaking to Jesus, "You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:69).

WEEK SEVEN

WORDS UNFOLD DESTINY

"And Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me . . .'" (Mark 1:17).

I am astonished as I look back at my life and see how often Jesus' invitation has come to me through human lips. I am thinking now of the gentle but heavy hand of a missionary physician in Hong Kong, laid upon my 13-year-old head he prayed that my life would be devoted to the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His words became a holy inheritance that focused my entire life.

I recall the chance meeting I had with a pastor, while a rootless collegian, who invited me to be his youth minister. Such a possibility had never entered my mind. Nevertheless, his words set me on the road to professional ministry from which I have not departed.

I think back in wonder of the risk that a district superintendent took who, in his first conversation with me, asked if I had a call to preach. "Yes," I replied. "When you are through with your education," he responded, "come see me and I'll give you a church." His words fixed themselves like a north star on the horizon, holding me steady through those

difficult educational years when, otherwise, I might have dropped out. He fulfilled his promise twice, recommending me to both my first and second pastorates.

So it was with the college president who inquired, over lunch, if I had ever thought about teaching. If he had known my academic record he would never have asked. Yet his words burned like live coals in my breast and launched me on the road to doctoral studies and my present ministry in Christian higher education.

Whatever I have become, by the grace of God, began in every instance with words. Words unlock buried potential, open up new horizons, and create destiny.

WEEK EIGHT

THE WORD OF ABSOLUTION

"And Jesus . . . said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven'" (Mark 2:5).

It was Gary's first Sunday at church. He asked if he could see me. I dropped by his auto repair shop that week. He let me in on a dark blot upon his life. He believed that he had committed the unpardonable sin. He went home unexpectedly one day and found a man in bed with his wife. In the fight that ensued, he killed him. He had just been released from prison. Taking another person's life weighed so heavily upon his conscience that he felt that God had forever turned His face from him and would never forgive him though he sought for it day and night in a continual litany of confession.

I read several passages of Scripture including John 20:23 where Jesus said, "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them." I asked if I could pray for him. He was eager that I should do so. He knelt on the concrete floor amidst the clutter of his tiny office. I laid my hands upon him and simply repeated the words of Jesus to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." As if struck by lightning, he leapt to his

feet and began doing a little dance around his office. Like a drowning man suddenly breaking surface, he gulped great quantities of air while exclaiming over and over again, "I'm free! It's gone! That terrible pressure in my heart is gone! Thank you, Jesus." Gary followed up on that experience by making a public confession of faith in Christ the next Sunday morning. He went on to join the church and became a faithful and productive Christian.

Sometimes guilt is so deep and remorse so oppressive that people cannot believe they are forgiven until they hear the word of absolution spoken in Jesus' name by an acknowledged minister of the gospel who acts in His stead. Words release captives and set prisoners free.

WEEK NINE

WORDS RECONCILE

"God . . . has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19).

Coming to know Christ, unfortunately, did little to heal Oscar and Josephine's shattered marriage. Unable to afford a divorce, they slept in separate bedrooms, drove separate cars to church, and co-existed in virtual silence. My counseling efforts came to naught.

One evening my wife suggested that we invite Oscar and Jo to go with us on an overnight trip we were planning to our favorite lakeside resort. I approached Oscar; he was all for it but doubted Jo would go with him. I asked Jo; she would love to go but knew that Oscar would not. Discovering that they both really wanted to go made the rest easy. Yet during the trip and on through dinner, while both conversed with us, neither talked to the other. After dinner we took a walk along the lake. Marge and I held hands hoping that they would do likewise. Instead Oscar walked next to me and Jo next to Marge.

Upon returning to our cabin we plunged into a game of Rook: men against the women. I noticed that, quite by accident, Oscar made some remark to Jo and she responded as a reflex action. Then she slipped up and verbally jabbed Oscar, provoking a reaction. The crack in the ice wall between them soon became a major breach as they loosened up, laughing and telling stories on each other. There were only two bedrooms in our cabin, and I did not intend to share ours with either Oscar or Jo.

As we drove down the mountain the next afternoon, I had to avoid looking in the rearview mirror because of the cuddling that was going on in the back seat. Oscar and Jo were catching up on a lot of loving. Their reconciliation proved to be deep and enduring. The catalyst? **Words!** As long as people talk to each other, all things are possible.

WEEK TEN

WORDS CALM TROUBLE HEARTS

"Jesus . . . said to them, 'Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid'" (Mark 6:50).

Walking on the water Jesus came to aid the disciples as they strained at the oars, when contrary winds blew in their faces, and when they were so confused they thought Jesus was a ghost. Even a surface reading of the passage helps us see fear, doubt, and uncertainty were more pressing problems for this frightened group than weather and wind.

But at a time when Jesus had many problems of His own like the gathering political storm that would soon take Him to death at Calvary, He tells them, "Take courage! It is I." Words like that calm troubled hearts.

Following those life-giving words, look at how the disciples' perspective and situation changed. The record says He climbed into the boat with them, the wind died down, and the disciples were

completely amazed. These words, "Take courage; it is I," always make situations improve or change the person who hears them.

I love Barclay's sentence of strength, "When Christ is there the storm becomes a calm, the tumult becomes a peace, the undoable becomes doable, the unbearable becomes bearable, and men pass the breaking point and do not break."

Oh, the calming power of a word from our Lord!

WEEK ELEVEN

THE MIRACLE OF WORDS

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

A small girl interrupted her bedtime prayer and said, "Mommy, I wish God had skin on His face."

The good news of the gospel is that at a specific point of time in human history, the Son of God did put skin on His face. His name was Jesus of Nazareth. John speaks of Him as *logos*, the "Word." That is, Jesus communicates what God is like. By the words He used, the stories He told, and the life he lived, Jesus painted for us an unimaginably beautiful portrait of the face of God, "full of grace and truth."

We might never have known about Jesus, however, had not the four evangelists and a host of others put pen to paper, thus preserving Jesus for the ages. Those original eyewitnesses freeze dried their experience of Jesus into words which not only could survive the death and resurrection of Jesus but would then be copied, translated, and distributed around the world.

When we come to those ancient words written in the book of God, pour the boiling water of our living spirit over them, suddenly a miracle happens. They unfreeze and live. Jesus takes shape on the screen of our mind. The disciples

become flesh and blood. We thrill to see the lame walk, the blind see, and the deaf hear. We hear Jesus shout, "Lazarus, come forth!" Chills break out on our skin as a dead man walks out of the grave. Sorrow overwhelms us as we stand at the foot of the cross. Joy envelops us as we hear the angels announce, "He is risen!" We, too, fall on our faces before the risen Christ and confess with Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Oh, the miracle of words!

WEEK TWELVE

THE TRUE GIFT OF TONGUES

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 12:3).

"The greatest of all gifts," Lewis Mumford asserts, "is the gift of tongues." By that he does not mean unintelligible speech but languages that communicate.

Mumford's insight is borne out by Scripture. It was when God spoke intelligible words, "Let there be," that primeval chaos was conquered and the heavens and earth came into existence. It was when "the Lord God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 1:26; 2:7) that man became a living being. More is meant here than pumping up man's lungs. There is, in Scripture, a close connection between breathing and speaking. For instance, John's gospel reports that "Jesus *breathed* on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). God's spirit is not chaotic but communicative.

Jesus came speaking, not with spiritual tongues of ecstasy but in Aramaic, the common language of His time and place. He spoke so clearly that Peter could testify, "You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost came as "a noise like a violent, rushing wind" (Acts 2:2). The miracle that followed was not one of unintelligible speech but precisely the

opposite: everyone heard the gospel in their native language. The chaos of Babel was overcome at Pentecost. The glue that bound the early church together was that "they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). There can be no community apart from communication. The true sign of the Spirit's fullness is the supernatural ability to confess, in a known and intelligible tongue, that "Jesus is Lord."

WEEK THIRTEEN

WORDS LIBERATE

"And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was removed, and he began speaking plainly" (Mark 7:35).

David Tom, 54, a frail Chinese, was released recently from the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute in Chicago after it was determined that he was not—and had never been—schizophrenic. His institutional imprisonment began thirty years earlier when, as a recent immigrant, he was admitted to a sanatorium suffering from tuberculosis. Since he babbled unintelligibly, it was assumed he was psychotic. He was transferred to a mental hospital where all he could say in English was, "Me no crazy; this nuthouse." No one listened. He was never examined by anyone who could speak Chinese. It was only when, nearly three decades later, a social worker took Tom to a Chinese restaurant where he carried on an animated conversation with the cook in the Cantonese dialect that this travesty of medical politics came to light. Yet it took another four-year battle in the state courts to win his release. What a tragedy!

Into a world of people passing each other like strangers in the night, each locked in their own prison of misunderstanding, came Jesus who announced, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and re-

covery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luk 4:18). Through the miracle of words deaf ears are opened to receive the "good news" about God in Christ. Hardened hearts are softened and transformed. Then tongues are released to proclaim that "Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11). Earth-bound prisoners are released and set free to become the "children of God" (John 1:12).

—by C.S. Cowley



TRAINER STUDY GUIDE

Personal

EVANGELISM
TRAINING

II

BEVERLY BURGESS

Personal Evangelism Training II

by Beverly Burgess

In the first edition of Personal Evangelism Training we learned how and what it means to lead a person to Jesus Christ.

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TAX HELP IS IN THE MAIL!

It Pays to Have the Facts!

For All Active Ministers in the U.S.:

In January the Board of Pensions and Benefits USA will mail complimentary copies of *Preparing Your 1991 Tax Return*. It will give current information on how a minister should report income expenses when preparing the 1991 income tax forms. Any active minister who has not received the booklet by February 10 may request one by writing to the Pensions office.

For Local Churches:

Up-to-date church management memos were mailed at the end of November to all U.S. church treasurers and their pastors by the Board of Pensions and Benefits USA. Memo No. 3, *Tax Procedures for Congregations*, includes information on how to complete the new form W-2, which has been changed for 1991 by the IRS.

For U.S. District Offices:

In January, the Pensions office will send to U.S. district offices a complimentary copy of Richard Hammar's updated *Church and Clergy Tax Guide* along with a set of audiocassettes on taxes. Districts will be encouraged to use these as a lending library resource and in zone workshops with pastors and church treasurers.

News Releases:

Additional information and an endorsement of other tax helps were given in the October issue of *P&B News Notes*, the newsletter produced by the Pensions office and mailed quarterly to all active U.S. ministers. That tax information will be updated in the January issue.

Board of Pensions



and Benefits USA



**1,012 Work and
Witness Team
Members
Construct Buildings**

Indian Bible College

**A new day of
opportunity
opened for us**

Nearly everyone believes little is much when God is in it. Considering its history, Nazarene Indian Bible College at Albuquerque, New Mexico, could use that refrain from the gospel song for a motto and a marching song. From puny origins, the school has grown to a student body of 60.

History: Indian Bible College opened as a children's boarding school in the fall of 1948 sponsored by the World Mission Division. Following many defeats and a hundred setbacks, the grade and high school phased out in the early 1970's, leaving a small adult



NEW STUDENT HOUSING: Work and witness team from Emporia, Kansas.



MISSIONARY CHAPEL SERVICE: Veteran Missionary Robert McCrosky challenges students to full surrender.

Grows To 60 Students

student body struggling to study the home ministerial program.

By 1976 General Assembly action, jurisdiction for the school moved from World Missions to Home Missions (now the Church Growth Division) in 1976. This decision proved to be good for all parties because World Mission had little or no experience operating schools in North America. Almost immediately a study committee was formed to make recommendations for the future. A decision to become a Bible college for Native Americans resulted from the committee's recommendations.

A new day of opportunity opened for us. About that time the long development of curriculum and faculty started and increased recruitment of students began. The process continues. From that point in our history, several other decisions and relationships provided immeasurable assistance.

Church Growth Division: Sponsorship by the Church Growth Division in more recent years has furnished significant financial resources and educational know-how which enabled us to become a real college. We are especially thankful for general bud-

get dollars and compassionate help invested here; we work hard to produce productive reapers to garner the Indian harvest.

Work and Witness: Since 1980, the Work and Witness program of the general church has enabled us to make crucial repairs and erect several modest buildings; in the last four years 1,012

**We are
especially
thankful for
general budget
dollars**

team members have given labor and love to improve our campus, and they brought nearly \$200,000 for materials with them. Our campus master plan when completed will house more than 100 students and their families.



STUDENT MUSIC ENRICHES CHAPEL SERVICE

Indian Bible College Grows To 60 Students

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Owens' Presidency: During the presidency of Rev. Denny Owens, veteran missionary and effective fund raiser, Nazarene Indian Bible College was brought to the attention of the entire denomination. Residual benefits continue. Persons who heard our story in Faith Promise Conventions where Owens preached still pray for us, come on Work and Witness trips, and support us financially.

Nazarene Bible College Connection: In 1987, the Board of Trustees voted to become a part of the new movement of ethnic extension education directed by Nazarene Bible College at Colorado Springs. Dr. R. T. Bolerjack, Nazarene Bible College vice-

**Counting
children, our
present campus
population is
more than 150**

president for extension education, was also asked to become the director of the Indian Bible College.

This connection made accreditation possible by the American Association of Bible Colleges in the fall of 1988. As a fully accredited extension of Nazarene Bible College, we have higher academic credibility in the minds of potential students, and we are able to help students receive financial aid from both the federal and tribal governments.

Student Profile: Our present student body of 60 has an average age of 30 and an average family of three children. Counting children, our present campus population is more than 150, so we minister to the whole family. Most students come with little more than the clothes on their back, so they need support of every kind.



LLOYD COMMANDER: First Native American NIBC professor and excellent musician.



MR. & MRS. PETE RIGGS: College seniors—he serves as student body president.

Ministry Opportunities: When students graduate, they will go to churches that often pay less than \$50 per week. This condition is forcing us to develop a unique curriculum patterned after the Apostle Paul's tent-making approach to ministry which blends ministerial preparation, spiritual readiness, and marketable vocational/trade skills. We already offer instruction in building construction, computer skills, and office practices.

Indian Outreach: Another compelling reality now impacts us. Today only 35 percent of Native Americans live on reservations while the other 65 percent are scattered through towns and cities across North America. As a group, the Indian population is among the most poverty stricken of all ethnic groups.

All these immense needs cause us to ask students to prepare themselves so they will be able to move to new areas either in the city or on the reservation to plant churches at their own expense.

Such a challenge requires heroic dedication to Christ and the church, but God is supplying that type of student.

Our goal by 2,000 is to have 55 Native American churches and church type missions on the two Native American Districts and 35 Indian

**Today only
35 percent of
Native Americans
live on reservations
while the other 65
percent are scattered
through towns
and cities
across North
America.**

fellowships ranging from small group ministries as a part of a local church to fully organized churches across North America. It is projected that these com-

bined works will represent 5,000 Native American members of the church with at least 70 licensed and/or ordained ministers to lead the churches.

Our challenge: God keeps opening opportunities faster than we can fill them. What an exciting time for the work of the college. Think of the possibilities—Work and Witness teams building new buildings, the prayers of God's people, accreditation to help with student tuition, visiting administrators and professors from Nazarene Bible College, vocational training to provide graduates with self-help skills, students committing to church planting, and the guiding providence of God to lead us.

Pray that we may seize the opportunities for the glory of God. We are moving ahead; although the size of our task is astounding, the grace of God is amazing.

—Rev. Thomas McKinney
Academic Dean,
Nazarene Indian Bible College

NON-ANGLO CONCENTRATIONS

Nazarene Districts in Canada and the United States



The map above shows the ethnic diversity in each of the Nazarene districts of Canada and the United States.

The Census Bureau is releasing data on ethnic groups in the United States. While the largest single group remains White, English-speaking persons, this is not true uniformly throughout the nation.

San Antonio, New Mexico, and Los Angeles districts find themselves with non-Anglo majorities principally of Spanish origin. Canada Quebec is predominantly French. And five districts in the Southwest are targeted specifically to Spanish or Native American groups.

Even districts showing little non-Anglo concentration have cultural diversity. Because the Census Bureau does not identify all groups, an area such as Maine, shown with a very small non-Anglo population, actually has a large concentration of people of French descent, creating substantial cross-cultural ministry opportunities. Dakota District, with very few non-White/Anglos, has several Native American reservations to reach. And Iowa, with only a few non-Whites throughout the district, has a thriving Black congregation in Des Moines.

Data for your area is now available from the Church Growth Research Center. How may we serve you?



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

RESEARCH AND TRENDS



Provided by Church Growth Research Center

Dale E. Jones, Manager

NAZARENE ETHNIC POPULATIONS

Ethnic census figures just being released by Census Bureau. Census Bureau counts American Blacks and West Indies immigrants . . . even Haitians . . . as Black. And anyone of Spanish ancestry is "Spanish Origin" . . . whether they speak Spanish or not. And no detail of Asian groups or Native Americans yet released . . . but enough is available to report good news for Nazarenes . . . and some good challenges.

BLACK OPPORTUNITIES

Black populations in major metro areas usually have a Nazarene church . . . especially outside the South. 50 metro areas have over 100,000 Blacks today . . . and 33 have some Nazarene presence. Of the 17 without active Black Nazarene work, only Philadelphia and Seattle are outside the old South. 16 large Southern cities do have Black Nazarene churches . . . 15 do not. Largest Black concentrations without active Nazarene work are Philadelphia, 1 million . . . New Orleans, 1/2 million . . . Birmingham and Charlotte, 1/4 million each.

HISPANIC CHALLENGES

Spanish populations in major metro areas are also represented by Nazarenes. 47 areas have at least 50,000 people of Spanish descent . . . 33 have Nazarene churches or missions. 27 of the large Spanish concentrations are in the Southwest states . . . Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California . . . and 22 have Nazarene work. Largest Spanish areas without Nazarene work: Washington, D.C., 225,000 . . . Austin, Tex., 160,000 . . . Salinas-Monterey, Calif., 120,000.

MINISTERIAL PLACEMENT

Some perception that students graduating from our colleges and seminary have difficulty locating a position in Nazarene churches . . . recent study indicates otherwise.

**MINISTERIAL
PLACEMENT
(continued)**

Of credentialed Nazarene ministers who were classified as students sometime during the last decade, 2,500 moved to another classification . . . that is, they were ready for a church assignment. 1,100 moved directly to a pastorate . . . 450 straight to an associate position . . . and 250 to another position such as chaplain, evangelist, or educator. Totally, 76% of former students found a position in the time the next district assembly classified their role change . . . and 62% were in a local church.

**WHO ARE
THE NEW
NAZARENES**

The Church Growth Research Center has begun a continuing study of new Nazarenes . . . those joining the church by profession or from another denomination. First year's results indicate a couple surprises . . . and a confirmation.

The people themselves are older than anticipated. Conventional wisdom says newcomers to any church tend to be young adults in their late twenties or early thirties. Of last year's new Nazarenes who are still active members, one-half are between 26 and 40 . . . but fully one-third are over 40. And one-fourth are in their late teens or early twenties . . . supposedly a tough age group to reach.

And sometimes we hear of churches who hurry to bring people into membership before they understand what's happening. Over half of new Nazarenes have been participating in the church for three years or more before joining.

I John 4:20 principle . . . How can people believe in God's love if God's people don't demonstrate it? Consultants have stressed the "Rule of 7" . . . a newcomer should make seven friends within the congregation. Confirmed by study. 85% of last year's new Nazarenes are still actively involved in church. 55% of these have close friends within the congregation . . . 42% have immediate family in the church.

RESEARCH AND TRENDS



New Plumbing in San Diego

A New Perspective on Inner City Location

“The church is getting new plumbing!” That is what Sister Tucker told me. She had a dream that the church was being worked on and that all the old plumbing was being taken out and replaced with new plumbing. Our building had become rundown and needed all kinds of repairs, from plumbing to plastering. I thought, “Maybe some of these things will finally be fixed.” Sister Tucker let me know that the dream meant more than just building repairs. It meant REVIVAL! Just as plumbing carries water, so the Spirit would flow anew through our church. New plumbing meant there would be new life at Southeast.

I do not know too much about dreams and interpretation, but I do know that Sister Tucker is on the mainline with God and that our church did need new plumbing. We needed to become a channel through which God could work. We needed His Spirit to move in us and through us. Things had gotten bleak at Southeast. Folks had grown tired and weary. Members who had been there eight years were still considered as the new people. There were barely enough people to keep the doors open. So Sister Tucker and her dream brought hope that God would do a new thing within us, that He would indeed revive us and let His Spirit flow through us.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The neighborhood of Southeast is pretty rough. While San Diego is not Detroit, it does have its inner city, and that is where Southeast is located. Our community is torn by drugs, gangs, and violence. Unemployment is a major problem. The high school drop-out rate



RODEHEAVER: Aside from God Himself, our location is our greatest resource.

is about one out of three. Mainstream America is a world away. A common goal is to get out of the neighborhood.

Unfortunately, many churches share that goal and succeed. There was a time when Southeast Church wanted to relocate. Finances kept the church from moving out of the community, but that kind of attitude kept the church from ministering effectively to the community. It is hard for God to use a church that would rather be somewhere else.

But God began to give us a new perspective on our location. Instead of seeing it as a detriment, we began to see it as a resource. God gave us this land. It is our place of service. It is His corner in the city. We began to recognize that God placed us in the middle of hurting people so that He could touch them. This was not a problem to run from, but an opportunity to embrace. We took notice that we were the only Nazarene church still in the city. While our sister churches desired to show

compassion to the oppressed of the streets, they had no place to do it from. They were removed from this field of ministry. We are in the field.

Aside from God Himself, our place is our greatest resource. The Bible says, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” If God became us in order to save us, does not that imply that the church must dwell among those it seeks to save? Our place puts us right in the middle of people He seeks to save. We are blessed to be where we are.

SERVING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

With our new understanding of our good location, we began to pray and think about ways to serve our neighborhood. We have become involved in SHARE (a food distribution program) and ISN, a winter months interfaith shelter network. Also, a tutoring program has been set up with Point Loma Nazarene College students and Emerson elementary school—a public school

Plumbing in San Diego

that is across the street from the church. PLNC supplies the tutors. Emerson supplies the students and studies. We provide the place. We are meeting needs that could not be met from an outside location.

One of our prime neighborhood ministries is the Table Ministry. On Friday nights we set up tables and chairs in the sanctuary and serve a free dinner. This dinner has two purposes: (1) to feed the hungry, and (2) to provide fellowship for those in need of a friend or a positive place to be. We try to avoid the situation of church people staying in the kitchen and serving guests. Rather, we eat together so that relationships can be built. Ministry begins to happen in these relationships.

Mr. McFarlin lived down the street a block and a half from the church. His wife had recently died and he was left with the task of raising his two granddaughters, Irene and Clara, grades 2 and 1. The girls' mother was in New York, hooked on drugs. Mr. McFarlin battled diabetes and had a difficult time keeping up with Irene and Clara. One Friday night they discovered the Table Ministry. Irene and Clara became regulars not only on Fridays, but also on Sundays. Soon they were bringing their friends to Sunday school. Men in the church would stop by to visit Mr. McFarlin. The church became a source of hope and family.

For two years Mr. McFarlin was a part of the Southeast fellowship. Then one night a fear became a reality. Mr. McFarlin had a heart attack and passed away. We hurt that we lost a friend, and even more that the girls lost the person who loved them most. Family members were not going to have a funeral or any kind of memorial service. They simply wanted to dispose of the body, figure out who would have custody of the girls, and get on with life. But the church could not let Mr. McFarlin go without saying good-bye. We set up a dinner and invited the family. They came and brought Irene and Clara. We spoke of the good fellowship we had with Mr. McFarlin. The love of God was present. We were touched, for God had used us

to impact a man whose family did not care enough to give him a funeral. Irene and Clara said good-bye to their grandfather, knowing that he was loved and that he loved them.

PURPOSE

We may never become a great and successful church in the eyes of the

We are a black church with a white pastor in a Hispanic neighborhood.

world. But that is not our goal. Our purpose is to be a sign of the Kingdom, a sign of the new creation that Christ is bringing about. In the Kingdom, all peoples will seek the Lord and worship Him.

We are a black church with a white pastor in a Hispanic neighborhood. Not exactly the formula for success. But we are seeking the Lord and you don't

have to be like the person next to you in order to be accepted.

There are vast educational differences in our congregation, from those who dropped out of high school to those who went on to earn a Ph.D. But there is an understanding among all that it is not how much you know, but Who you know and how well you know Him and obey Him.

That is how it is in the Kingdom. We have the poor and some wealthy. We have those who travel by foot and some who drive a Mercedes. We have white collar and blue collar, the employed and the unemployed. We have young, old; single, married; divorced, widowed. We have all peoples and we seek to see each other through the eyes of Christ rather than measuring each other by the standards of the world. We want to provide a glimpse of the Kingdom in a world of divisions.

SALVATION

After four years of pastoring in the city, I can see some changes in my understanding of salvation. I now see three dimensions of salvation: personal, community, and eschatological. The three intersect with each other and all need to be emphasized. The best way I can explain them is to tell you about the people who live them.



The Steve Rodeheaver family minister in urban San Diego.

Marion and Viana can testify to personal salvation. Marion attended Southeast as a boy many years ago. Growing up, he got into the street life of gangs, dealing drugs, violence, and the pain that goes with it. Marion and Viana were living together. Viana was pregnant with Marion's child. Each had a child from a previous relationship. Marion had gotten a construction job although both he and Viana still messed with drugs. One day a believer named Craig witnessed to Marion at work. Through Craig's witness, Marion received Christ into his heart. Eventually Marion found his way back to Southeast and began to grow in the Lord. Viana saw a change in his life and a hunger for the Lord was awakened in her. She began attending church with Marion. Soon she accepted Christ into her heart. Eventually Marion and Viana married. They have joined the church and they serve the Lord in numerous ways as they continue to grow in His grace. Christ does save and change the lives of persons.

Erica was a fifth grader at the elementary school next to the church. She began coming to the church on Friday nights for dinner. Sometimes she would bring her whole family. Erica had a great time on Friday nights but we could never get her to come on Sunday. Finally we discovered the reason. She did not feel like she had anything good enough to wear for church. We provided her some work at the church, and then paid her by taking her shopping. Now she has some church clothes. Over the past two years she has been as faithful as anyone in the congregation. It does not matter that her family has moved half a dozen times and been on the verge of homelessness often. Erica is there when the church doors are open.

Society would tell you that Erica will never amount to anything. She will drop out of school before the eleventh grade, have two children before she's twenty, never marry, spend her life on welfare and most likely end up on drugs.

But Erica is a part of another society. She is a part of a community of believers that is an alternative to the dominant culture. She belongs to the

church. At church, Erica is somebody. At church, there is great expectation for Erica. At church, there is purpose and meaning for Erica. At church, Erica is loved and given opportunity to grow and blossom. The church is a community of salvation, and Erica is part of that community. By herself, she does not stand a chance in this world. But as a member of the believing community, Erica is experiencing salvation from a world that would trample her into the dust.

The deep needs of people have shown me that salvation must be more than personal and community. It must



be eschatological. We need the Kingdom to come in its fullness. Sin is such a massive problem. It is a cancer that infects not only our individual lives, but all of the structures which we live under. Such vicious cycles of unemployment, welfare, alcoholism, poor health care, drugs, child beating and molesting, gangs, homelessness, teenage pregnancy, unaffordable housing, poor schools, and absent fathers seem impossible to break. Praise God, there are the Marion and Vianas, the Ericas who do receive the Lord's salvation.

But even then, all is not well. The oppressive forces they have to live under, the cycles that they find themselves in, will never be broken until the Kingdom comes in all of its power and glory. For now, all that we can do is stand fast and pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!"

I just received a call from a sixth grade girl named Leonia. She and her brother Diandre have just been placed in a foster home. They have an eight-month-old baby brother with a broken thigh. When the mother took the baby in for care, the authorities determined her to be at fault and removed all her children from the home. Leonia does not like where she is. She misses her mom and wants to go home. She does not understand how or why the system works like it does. I have no answers for her. She has already suffered more than I can imagine. She cries for her mom. It is really a cry for the Kingdom.

PRESENCE

More than anything else, we are a ministry of presence. We cannot make everything right, but we are here. We are here to suffer with people. We are here to announce that there is hope. We are here to let God touch and heal.

For the past year, one Wednesday night a month, we have been going calling on the downcast and shut-in. It is not your normal calling, however, for we go and sing. About a dozen people grab a hymnal, pile into cars, and head for our visit. Often we are led to homes where there is not very much to sing about. The pressures and afflictions of the world have attempted to rob folks of all joy. But we go and sing of God's love.

Somehow, in the midst of singing and prayer, God comes and gives life. His presence is made known. A light shines in the darkness. The song has announced what is hidden. We have sung more than can be explained. God is present, suffering with us and making a way where there is no way.

Has Southeast received new plumbing? We battle with clogged pipes, but our desire is to be open to His Spirit. We pray that the Lord will always be working on our plumbing, making us a better channel of His love and presence.

by Steve Rodeheaver, Pastor
Southeast Church of the Nazarene
San Diego, California

NAZARENES IN THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION SERVING . . .

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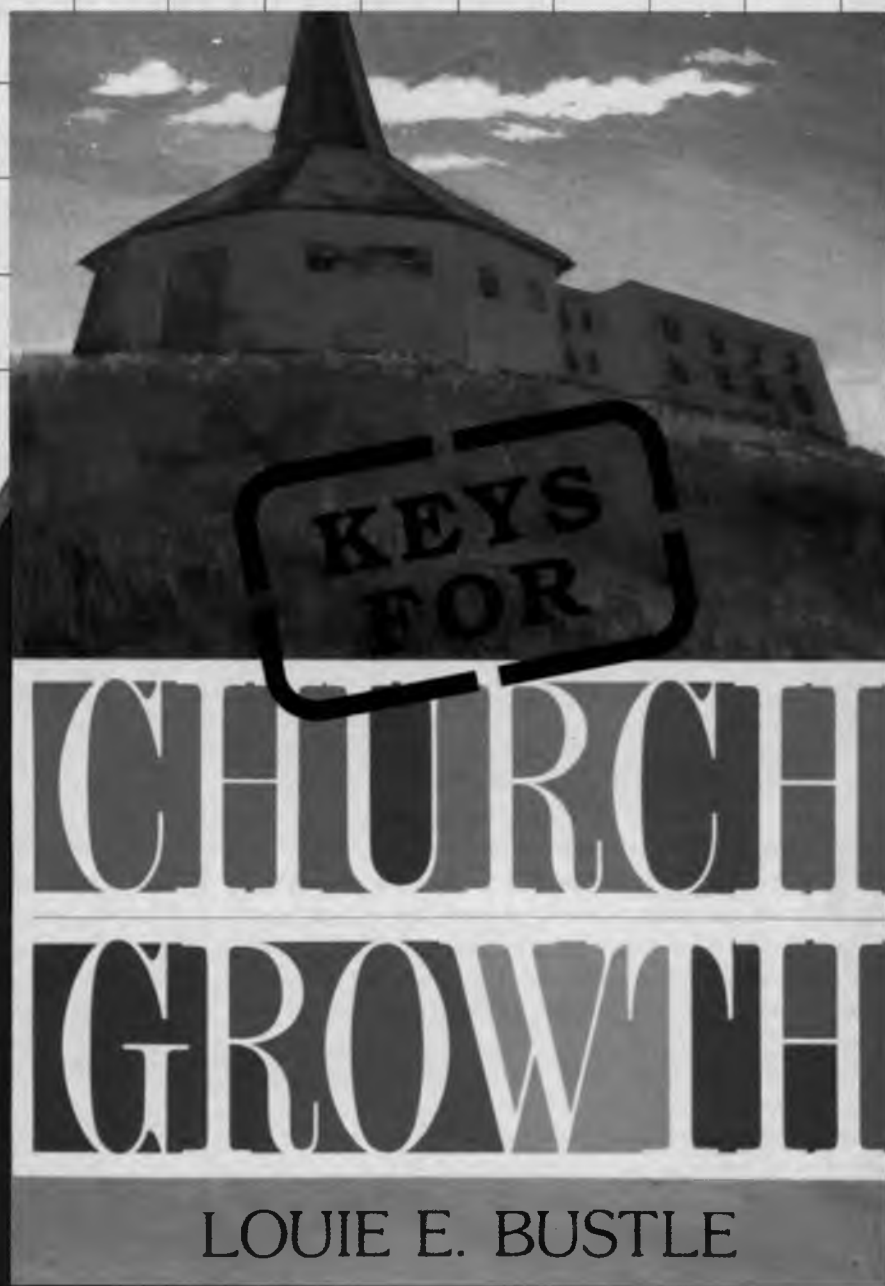


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KEYS FOR CHURCH GROWTH

By Louie E. Bustle

"This book," says Dr. Bill Sullivan, "is characterized by spontaneity and is written by a 'producer' of church growth."

The author's basic premise is that *"Church growth is more than a strategy—it is a way of life. It is just as natural for a church to grow as it is for a person to breathe."*

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A TRIBUTE TO DADDY

A Daughter's Affectionate Memories of Her Evangelist Father

I know big girls and grown women say "Dad," but you were always Daddy to me, and I was always your little girl. Our special relationship etched many happy remembrances on my memory. As mother and I and friends sat by your bedside during your last weeks and watched you slip from us, I relived many events from the past.

When I was four, you and Mother began your evangelistic ministry. You made me a part of it. You set out a chair and lifted me upon it to sing. I loved traveling with both of you.

But soon it was time for me to begin school. Grandma Colaw came to one of your revivals and took me on a train back home to Independence, Kansas. There were many tears that day as the price for following God's will in evangelism became clearer to all of us.

In the first grade, I recall an occasion when you and Mother drove all Sunday night between revivals, just to eat breakfast with me. On that trip, you were not feeling well, but we had a great time. Before I ran off to school, you knelt by me, and Mother took a picture of us hugging and kissing. I turned back to wave to catch one more glimpse—how many times?

I remember later that week when Grandmother woke me in the middle of the night and told me I must go see the doctor in Kansas City because my daddy had polio and the medical people wanted to be sure I did not become ill with the same disease.

What frightening thoughts I experienced then. My daddy might die! But God's healing touch restored you to full health, and in five days you walked away from an iron lung and an amazed hospital team of doctors and nurses. They wrote on your chart, "Healed by a higher power."

The next two years were especially difficult for us. Most of the time your revival meetings required you to be gone four to six weeks, sometimes more. Many nights I slipped in your empty bedroom, stood in the closet, and hugged yours and Mother's off-season clothing. I felt close to you there. Often I closed my eyes and imagined you were holding me. Then I went to my room and sometimes cried myself to sleep.

When a decision was made that my education would be obtained through correspondence school, I was the happiest little girl alive. No more lonely train rides. No more summer camp schedules.

You and Mother were my teachers. You taught me math and science, all the way through geometry and biology. What a commitment both of you made to my education. Ten years of discipline and studying every day.

We soon obtained a 26-foot Airstream trailer. What a home and schoolroom it was. You let me have a parakeet, a dog, and a bicycle. What fun we stuffed into that 26 feet on wheels.

Thank you, too, for the devotion you demonstrated to my mother. I never doubted your love for each other. You were best friends. You showed me the elements of a happy home and a strong marriage. You shaped my attitude about life with your spiritual leadership in the home, your love, your patience, your listening, and your caring.

Now you have gone to be with the Lord. I can see you there, waving your hanky in heaven, giving a little leap like you did in the pulpit, and shouting as you walk the streets of gold. I am sure you are revelling in the goodness of God.

You are probably reminiscing about victories won with Bill Draper, Don Gibson, Tracy McCord, H. C. Benner, Edward Lawlor, H. C. Powers, D. I. Vanderpool and G. B. Williamson.

And I know you are rejoicing with hundreds of people the Lord helped you win through your evangelistic ministry.

Best of all, I know you are seeing your Savior face to face and hearing His majestic words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Yes, Daddy, we miss you greatly because we have loved you greatly, but we are proud you have attained your highest goal—to be with Jesus.

Lovingly, your daughter,

Carolyn

—by Carolyn Pickering, daughter of
Evangelist Calvin Jantz

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PASTOR ANONG NHIM SERVES O-SPEAKING CONGREGATION.

COULD A MIRACLE LIKE LONG BEACH OCCUR NEAR YOU?



PASTOR UNG TY SERVES KHMER SPEAKING CONGREGATION.

The Holy Spirit Might Surprise Us Again

God startled Long Beach First Church in 1979 with an immense outreach opportunity when thousands of Southeast Asian refugees settled in their city. So many people came that Long Beach was called the New Phnom Penh.

Like the famed mustard seed of the Bible, the initial almost inconsequential response to this massive challenge commenced when a few Cambodian children came to Sunday school on the church bus. Sunday school teachers Glenn and Letha George started the miracle when they sent notes home welcoming the children and offering to teach English to the parents. The next Sunday, five mothers came. Soon Bible classes were being taught in English, and before long the Bible lessons were retaught to friends and relatives in the native languages by those

who attended the classes.

God astonished everyone with remarkable growth. Today, more than 1,000 Southeast Asians attend two language churches each Sunday; services are conducted in Lao and Khmar. These vibrant

God astonished everyone with remarkable growth.

congregations served by different Southeast Asian pastors share the 600-seat church building made possible by Nazarene love gifts. Financial support came primarily from Long Beach First

Church, with smaller amounts coming from general budget, district funds, local churches, and interested individuals. This church property, located at the corner of Anaheim Street and Rose Avenue, is ideally suited in size and situated near Cambodian population. And the resulting response of needy people makes this effort the largest of all Nazarene ethnic works in North America.

The Holy Spirit surprised everyone again with the talented people He drew to this venture. The main characters in this modern chapter from Acts are faithful lay leaders from Long Beach First Church like Jim and Jo Warren, Russ and Karen Owen, John and Mildred Schmidt, and Bill and Jeanne Lonn.

Senior Pastor John Calhoun, key pacesetter, has been impressively assisted by missionaries like the Randy Beckums,





LAY LEADER JIM WARREN FROM LONG BEACH FIRST CHURCH HELPED PLANT NEW LIFE CHURCHES.

the Brent Cobbs, and the Steve Ratliefs. The long list of denominational leaders who encouraged the work includes General Superintendent Raymond W. Hurn; Dr. Robert Scott, former Southern California District superintendent

**God is doing a
brand new thing
among the
Cambodians in
their homeland.**

and now World Mission director for the Church of the Nazarene; Dr. Thomas Goble, Anaheim District superintendent; and Mrs. Robert Sutton, Anaheim District NWMS president.

A giant step toward maturation of the Cambodian ministry came when the New Life (Lao-Speaking) Church was officially organized on February 24, 1991, with 155 charter members; all joined by profession of faith. Pastor Anong Nhim leads this church which averages 300.

District Superintendent Thomas Goble commented in the official organization report: "The ongoing story is that churches have been planted out of this congregation on the Southern California and Central California Districts. Long Beach First Church has contributed countless hours of volunteer service and hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Anaheim District also contributed substantially to this work."



PASTOR ANONG NHIM VISITS IN THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY.

The Khmar-speaking congregation, averaging 650, is led by Pastor Ung Ty who came to Christ in 1986 through the ministry of Long Beach First Church. The New Life (Khmar-Speaking) Church of the Nazarene is organized into 32 house churches which meet twice each week in the homes and yards of church members. Lay pastors lead these groups. When Pastor Ung Ty was asked if neighbors might object to these home meetings, most with an attendance of 35 to 50 people, he replied, "No one objects because we invite them to

come to worship God with us."

The Holy Spirit may be surprising us again with the outreach potential of these two churches. Cambodian Christians, like believers around the world, yearn to share their faith. This outreach urge is planted by God in every believer's heart; someone called it the heartbeat of the gospel. The Cambodians are no exception. So, as Dr. Goble reported, new California Cambodian churches are being planted. At the same time, God is doing a brand new thing among the Cambodians in their homeland.

COULD A MIRACLE LIKE LONG BEACH OCCUR NEAR YOU?

The Holy Spirit recently astonished in another way. A wondrous moment came at the Anaheim District NWMS Convention, April 30, 1991, when Pastor Ung Ty showed a video picturing Communist government headquarters on the historic day when the Church of the Nazarene was granted permission to preach the gospel in Cambodia.

In that same convention, 300 believers from the New Life Cambodia Church raised their hands indicating they had relatives among the four million who were brutally exterminated during the Khmer Rouge between 1975-1979. Then, these new Cambodian Christians stood during the convention, holding high pictures with addresses of family members they prayed will receive the gospel.

Another startling surprise is unfolding in Cambodia. God is raising up a series of house churches. The process is fascinating.

On trips to his native land, Pastor Ung Ty shared his faith and inspired small groups to study the Scriptures. He was joined on two trips by Pastor John Calhoun and on one by Medical Doctor Gary Morsch. His house church method of evangelizing and conserving believers seems natural to him because of his experience in Long Beach, and it also provides a way



PASTOR AND MRS. UNG TY NEAR PRAYER CHART LISTING CAMBODIAN CHURCH PLANTS IN NORTH AMERICA AND ASIA.

to by-pass the legal question of religious assemblies in a Communist country.

In July, 1991, Pastor Ung Ty returned to Cambodia hoping to locate a remnant of house churches he started on other trips. Though he maintained contact by sending videos of his Long Beach services, he wondered about those who professed faith in Christ and those who were baptized on earlier trips.

Then the Holy Spirit provided another

immense surprise! On Sunday morning, July 14, 1991, Pastor Ung Ty preached to 200 adults crowded into Sor Phoeum's house-church-on-stilts. Under the church, 250 children clustered together to sing, "I Have Decided To Follow Jesus." The lay leader, Sor Phoeum, a bi-vocational taxi driver, had been appointed earlier by Ung Ty to serve as spiritual leader of the group.

Those victories sound like a fulfillment of a prophetic word from Billy



LAO-SPEAKING LAY PEOPLE PHONE EVERY FRIEND AND MEMBER EACH SATURDAY OFFERING PRAYER AND ENCOURAGEMENT. 900 calls are made each Saturday.



PASTOR AMONG NHIM SHARES GOSPEL IN NEIGHBORHOOD CAMBODIAN HOME.

Graham during the 1985 Anaheim Crusade: "The mission fields are moving to you here in California, so the converts can go back home to share the gospel."

Could anyone have dreamed such staggering outcomes would start with a few simple letters sent to Cambodian homes by Sunday school teachers from Long Beach First Church?

The end is nowhere in sight. Thousands more Southeast Asians wait to be won, both in Asia and in North America. The work, like Dr. Bresee enjoyed saying, is in the morning of its existence, and who knows what will happen by high noon or the setting of the sun?

This story must do more than inspire us for a short time.

These empowered events force us to raise pressing questions about our own service: Does God want to do something incredibly amazing in our field of service?



TYPICAL CAMBODIAN HOME NEAR NEW LIFE CHURCH.

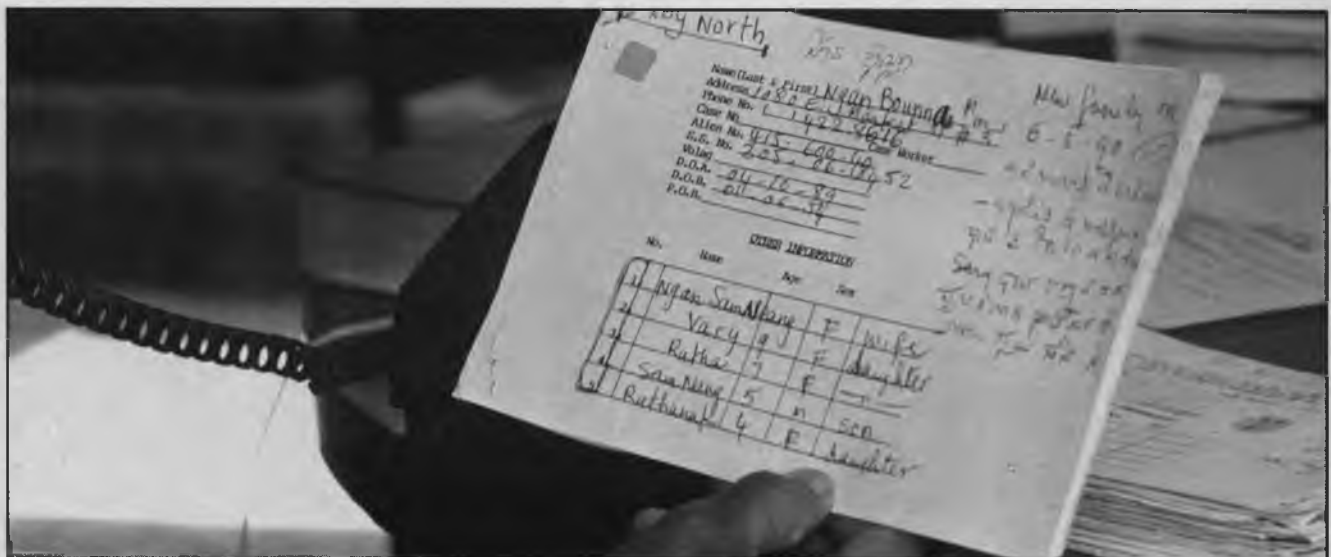
Is there an unreached people group near our church waiting to be touched by the love of Christ?

Perhaps God wants to do something

new, through you. Dr. Steve Ratlief, second mission director of New Life Ministries in Long Beach, advises: "There is no doubt that this model can emerge anywhere there are men and women who are willing to see a need and become involved in that need. The Southeast Asian people specifically, and Asians in general, are very open to the gospel and are hungry for reality. And, having been displaced from their old lives and old culture, they respond to love. So wherever love can get loose, it will bring back men and women who are looking for hope and peace and joy."

Are we available to love and be used by the Holy Spirit in another church growth surprise? Perhaps among Asians. Perhaps among Indians. Perhaps among Hispanics. Perhaps among Afro-Americans. Perhaps among Yuppies, retirees, or singles.

Are we attentive and willing?



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—Dr. Nina G. Gunter
General NWMS Director



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Each conference will feature an opening message presented by a general superintendent.

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- ◆ June 1 - June 4, 1992
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- ◆ June 8 - June 11, 1992
MidAmerica Nazarene College
- ◆ June 15 - June 18, 1992
Mount Vernon Nazarene College
- ◆ June 29 - July 2, 1992
Eastern Nazarene College
- ◆ July 13 - July 16, 1992
Trevecca Nazarene College
- ◆ July 20 - July 23, 1992
Southern Nazarene University
- ◆ August 3 - August 6, 1992
Northwest Nazarene College
- ◆ August 10 - August 13, 1992
Point Loma Nazarene College



Where Are You on the Growth Development Scale?

Why can two or three churches attend the same church growth seminar, apply the same strategies, and one church will show results, while another may not?

Through the "Two Year Growth Process" (conducted by CHURCH GROWTH, Inc. for individual and clusters of churches) we have found that an appropriate strategy for church growth depends on a number of factors. A growth strategy for one church may be highly successful . . . the same strategy for another could cause a church split

I recently developed what I call a Church Growth Development Scale. Locating your congregation on this scale can help you determine the appropriate steps to take in moving your church forward in growth. As you study the Church Growth Development Scale, keep the following insights in mind:

- Growth requires moving from one step on the scale to the next. A church cannot jump over a step, although sometimes leaders inadvertently try and encounter problems.
- Individuals change before organizations change. Some church leaders try to change the organizational structure prior to changing individuals and encounter frustrations.
- Correct strategy for growth will vary depending on where the church is presently located on the scale.

- Movement on the scale may be forward or backward.
- Leadership in a church may be a different place on the scale than membership. This may create problems if it is assumed both groups are at the same point.

What follows is a more detailed description of each stage. Can you identify where your church presently is? Which direction it is moving?

1. Ignorance

Congregation and leadership are uninformed of mandate to make disciples. Departments/ministries have no unified direction or sense of mission. The congregation tends to be self-centered and self-serving.

2. Information

General interest in learning more. Questions arise as to what results church growth might have for our church. If no further action is taken, increased indifference and apathy toward the Great Commission develops.

3. Infusion

Penetration of new ideas into the status quo may cause confrontation with apathy, prejudice, tradition. Tendency is to focus on problems. The need is for a *dream* to carry the church to the next step.

4. Individual Change

"Church growth eyes" begin to develop in some leadership. Growing number of questions arise on

whether present church activities are bringing satisfactory results. Little institutional reinforcement exists for members advocating change.

5. Organizational Change

Church's goals reviewed and clarified in light of growing mission priority. New activities and ministries are introduced in response to the new focus. New committees and structures may be formed.

6. Awkward Application

Some failures and some successes experienced. Initially limited applications of church growth thinking. Some mistakes are made, learning process is rapid. Need for additional knowledge, training, resources becomes apparent.

7. Integration

Growing comfort in understanding and application of church growth principles. Fewer dramatic changes, more refinement of previously initiated changes. Growing sense of accomplishment and secondary wave of results and success occurs.

8. Innovation

The base of support and involvement by membership and application of principles expands to other areas. Significant results are achieved and growth begins to perpetuate itself.

—by Dr. Winn Arn
Church Growth, Inc.
Monrovia, California

Ignorance	Information	Infusion	Individual Change	Organizational Change	Awkward Application	Integration	Innovation
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NAZARENE CHAPLAINS DEAL WITH TRANSITION

**400 Ministers
Serve People
Who Never
Come Through
Church Doors**

NAZARENE CHAPLAINS RETREAT AT
COLORADO SPRINGS: 65 Persons
Participated In Conference Program. ▲

DR. RON SCHMIDT, NAZARENE
EXECUTIVE FROM YOUNG LIFE: "Russia is
remarkably open to the gospel—especially her
young people." ▶



Impressive talents, experiences, and viewpoints showed through the ministers who attended the Nazarene Chaplains Retreat last summer at Glen Eyrie. Gifted servants of our Lord, many somewhat unknown in the denomination but fully credentialed by Nazarene districts and educated in our church colleges, take ministry to firefighters, military personnel, prisoners, hospital patients, police, and college students.

These specialists share Christ in underpublicized fertile harvest fields like hospital wards, frontlines in war time, counseling rooms, jails, chapel pulpits, values

classes for military personnel, AIDS patients, and small group Bible studies. And many outsiders would be surprised to learn Nazarene chaplains come in several skin colors, various ages, and both genders.

Sixty-five conferees met at the Navigators' Conference Center between July 29 and August 2 near the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs. The retreat, planned once each four years, featured much needed inspiration and fellowship. Workshops dealt with skill improvement and techniques to cope with transitions frequently faced by contemporary chaplains.

The sessions were chaired by former military chaplain Curt Bowers, director of Chaplaincy Ministries—an integral component of the Church Growth Division.

The conference highlighted two amazing realities: 1) 400 Nazarene ministers serve in assorted chaplaincy ministries and 2) through their efforts the gospel is taken to people who seldom come through church doors anywhere. This modern missionary service involves four paramount categories: military installations, hospitals, correctional facilities, and industrial work sites.

Ties to the denomination continue to be important to this group. Consequently,

thoughtful discussions centered around their desire to maintain close links with the local, district, and general church. Much spirited discussion suggested ways to strengthen these attachments. All recognized that acceptance and support from pastors, district superintendents, and lay leaders are especially needed to keep these bonds strong.

Speakers for the retreat included CAPT Leonard Dodson CHC, USN (Ret); CH (COL) Vernon Swim, USA (Ret); Dr. Ron Schmidt, Nazarene executive, Young Life; Dr. Neil B. Wiseman, Nazarene Bible College; Mrs. Eunice Stephens, Stonecroft Ministries; and Mrs. Shirley Swim, home-

"Our Nazarene chaplains left that beautiful setting near the Garden of the Gods with a new appreciation for the freedom to share the gospel around the world and to strengthen their connections to the church."

maker and former military nurse. Chaplain George D. Andrews, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and his wife, Sarah, led the singing. Highest Call, a musical group from Nazarene Bible College, also sang in several sessions.

Bowers summarized the significance of the retreat: "Our Nazarene chaplains left that beautiful setting near the Garden of the Gods with a new appreciation for the freedom to share the gospel around the world and to strengthen their connections to the church. They also grappled with cataclysmic changes affecting their future service to Christ like military build-down, budget restraints, medical ethics, bulging prison population, plus questions dealing with personal health and aging."

All participants rejoiced in reports shared by Nazarene military chaplains who served in Desert Shield and Desert Storm.



CHAPLAIN CURT BOWERS CHAIRED CONFERENCE: "It was an opportunity to meet our Lord and each other in rich encounter." ▲

CHAPLAIN LEONARD DOBSON LEAD MORNING DEVOTIONS. He called for new levels of devotion to Christ in the midst of such rapid changes. ▼



IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK TO GET A CHURCH GROWING



K-Project Helps Church Stretch To 1,000

My district superintendent asked me to describe for my pastor colleagues at our fall "Skil Skol" what the K-Project means to me. His request started me thinking about how the whole process, including the School of Large Church Management, has impacted me.

Like you, perhaps, I had no idea what on earth the K-Project was until I showed up at the introductory seminar at the 1988 PALCON. That was the meeting where Bill Sullivan and Wilbur Brannon sparked a vision in me for growth. They lit a fire in my imagination that helped me understand that God wants us to grow our church to 1,000 by the year 2,000.

VISION

First, the K-Project is about vision. It was a nice compliment to be regarded as a church having the potential for growth to 1,000. But to believe it could transpire on a foreseeable timetable seemed a remote dream. As I considered the possibility, I sensed the Lord saying to me, "David, instead of wishing to someday pastor a church of 1,000, why not grow one?" I began to feel that might be the only way I may ever pastor such a church.

I began to see it as possibility. To me, 1,000 was a long way off. But I came home from PALCON '88 saying,

"Yes, definitely. I want the Lord to use me to grow this church to 1,000."

In my pastor's report I told our congregation, "I believe Lake Avenue has the potential for that kind of growth in the next decade." Our membership of 429, at that time, was the only statistic that even approached the halfway point.

A strategic part of the K-Project is the School for Large Church Management. When I asked my board for permission to enroll in the school, they quickly granted my request and provided the funds. Our first module of training began in October 1989.

At that point our church was averaging 234 in Sunday school and 274 in morning worship. Admittedly, 1,000 seemed like a distant dream.

I am not a wild-eyed emotionalist, so before I turned up the heat to accomplish such a feat, painstaking groundwork had to be done. Accordingly, we designated 1988-89 as our "Year of Preparation."

The School of Large Church Management greatly assisted in this procedure by teaching us how to develop a mission statement. This learning prepared me to lead the church on this issue. We reformulated our existing 47-word mission statement, reducing it to ten words that could be easily understood and quickly memorized: "Reaching people with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Admittedly, it is simple and succinct, and perhaps a bit overly evangelistic. But to us, reaching people has broad implications that include all our ministries.

Next, we mobilized our church to a vital prayer ministry, believing that the church only moves forward on its knees. And nothing vital happens but in answer to prayer. Next, we concentrated on putting ministries in place

that would facilitate growth. Then, we deliberately began to mobilize the laity for ministry.

As the final step in vision development, we set out to develop a strategy for growth. Consequently, a strategic planning committee commissioned by the church board began meeting weekly to dream, to set goals, to prioritize, and to plan. This group proposed that we designate 1989-90 as our "Year of Expansion."

In reviewing our past ministry, we determined that we had been a "plateaued church" (+ or - 5% growth for five years) for nearly a decade. We set out to become a "break-out church" (+5 to 10% for five consecutive years). Limited sanctuary space had contributed to our plateau; for a decade the church operated at 80 percent capacity in the worship service.

In a nearly unanimously supported expansion project, we added 40 seats to our sanctuary, a new foyer and narthex, and two additional classrooms.

The K-Project and the School of Large Church Management put me in contact with innovative methods to double our sanctuary space without building. I am deeply indebted to Dr. John Vaughan, who bought my supper and gave me two hours of personal time at the School of Large Church Management. He encouraged me to go to two services as soon as practicable. Then, Dr. Elmer Towns drilled it into my head, "You must be

"David, instead of wishing to someday pastor a church of 1,000, why not grow one?"

born again; you must be baptized; you must go to two services!" On September 16, 1989, one week after we dedicated our expanded facilities to God, we began an 8 a.m. worship service. This step effectively doubled our space for growth without a multi-million dollar building campaign.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

The K-Project is also about leadership development. In seven years of college and seminary, and even a post-graduate Doctor of Ministry program, I learned to study and to minister to people. But I did not learn to lead a church for growth. The School of Large Church Management did wonders to fill this gap.

Pastors of growing churches and educators in the field of church growth shared their experiences and insights. The likes of Jim Henry, First Baptist, Orlando; Bill Hybels, Willow Creek Community; George Barna, of *Frog in the Kettle* fame; Rick Warren, Saddleback Community Church, Orange County, California; and John Vaughan, church growth specialist, shared their vision for growth. We were inspired, enriched, and humbled by the great things God is doing in their fields of service.

Then, add our own men to the list like Jim Diehl, Denver First; Gene Williams, Wichita First; H. B. London, Pasadena First; and Donald Wellman, Lakeland Highland Park, Florida, and you can see that the School of Large Church Management afforded us opportunity to rub shoulders with persons who are being used of God in great Kingdom growth.

MUTUAL SUPPORT

An added benefit has been the spirit of collegiality among those pastors who attend the conferences. I have never felt competition or professional jealousy about the position or prestige of anyone who attended. Rather, I have experienced a humble desire to do something great for God while we have time.

The School of Large Church Management has helped me to realize that I

am the leader of the church. If the church I lead is to grow, I discovered that I must have vision for the future that is attainable, even if only through extraordinary effort and sacrifice.

I must lead with unflinching determination even in the face of seemingly overwhelming obstacles. I must have focus so that complex problems can be unraveled to reveal the essentials which are susceptible to effective action.

Leadership is definitely not for the timid. My own optimism has to be infectious so that people will not lose heart when times are tough and commitments are tested. My sincerity has to be genuine and born of integrity.

Moreover, a sense of constancy born of a commitment to longevity has to be established in the minds of the people. Several of my colleagues in the School of Large Church Management have moved on to bigger churches while engaged in the process of growing their churches to 1,000.

For me, our church did not begin to move forward until the congregation believed I had made a commitment to stay with them.

Add to all of this courage and you can see that leadership is not for those who prefer to sit on the sidelines and watch it happen or critique the action. It is not for the "risk-averse." Leaders must innovate and lead their people through the changes that growth requires. I learned that if I was afraid to fail, I could not be a leader.

The School of Large Church Management helped me hone my management skills. Leading university professors from the field of corporate management taught us principles of organization and structure, planning, change and conflict management, staffing, as well as techniques of motivation, supervision, decision making, and finance.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The School of Large Church Management does not overlook the person of the pastor. Several sessions on who we are as persons were particularly helpful in self-understanding and personality development. The sessions with Dr. Archibald Hart were invaluable times

of personal growth. I learned that I am no better leader or manager of a large church than I am a person.

CHURCH GROWTH

The K-Project is about church growth—not simply believing it can happen, but attempting to be used of God to make it happen. As I learned the principles and sought to put them into practice, growth began. But not immediately.

My own commitment to the vision for growth was tested in the early weeks and months. Dr. Elmer Towns speaks of the "Law of the Two-Humped Camel." It is his colorful description of the cycles of growth and attendance during the year. Attendance seems to peak in the fall and spring. And it slumps during the winter and summer. Our growth began in January 1990. The first Sunday of winter, Lake Avenue broke the 300 barrier defying the "two-humped camel" theory and remained there for 12 consecutive weeks. The morning worship service average has not dropped below 300 since that time. We are now edging close to the 400 mark.

In response to the "Harvest Now" emphasis, 1991-92 has been designated our "Year of Evangelism." We are out to "Win 100." Already this year we have seen 22 first-time commitments to Christ. Evangelism is on the front burner. We are serious about reaching Fort Wayne for Christ. Growth continues.

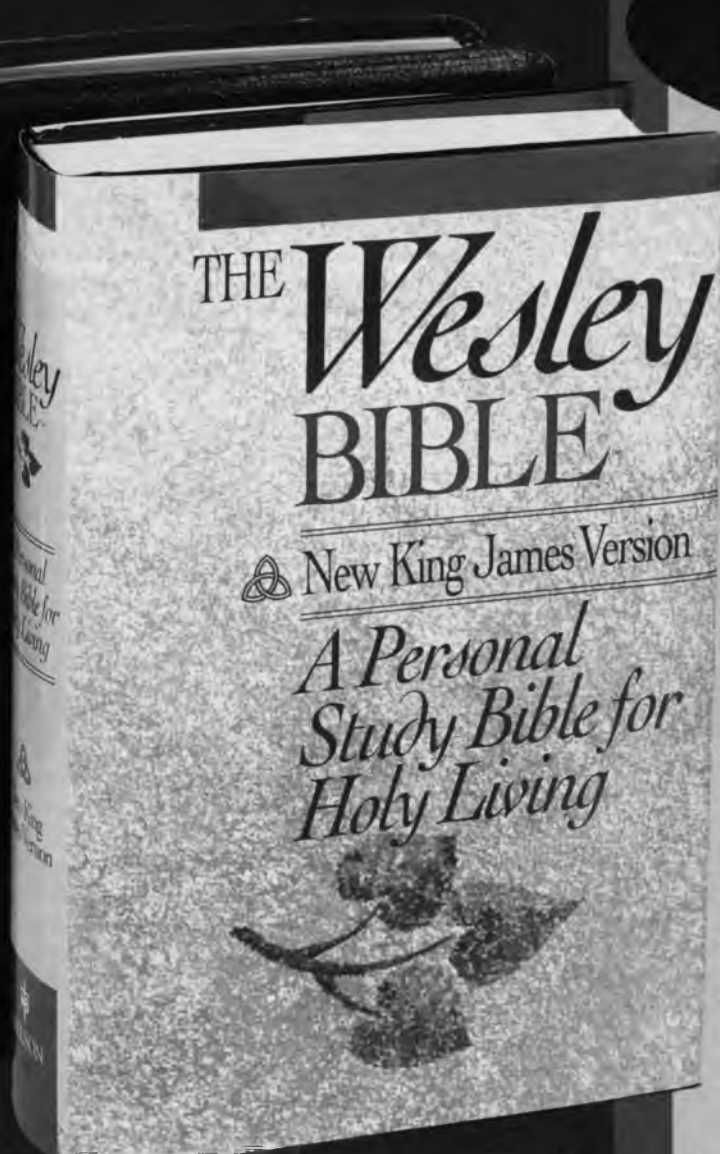
In these and a hundred other ways, the K-Project has expanded my vision for growth and improved my leadership skills. Since entering the School of Large Church Management, we have experienced 20 percent growth in our Sunday school average and 30 percent growth in our morning worship attendance. Happily, Sunday night service attendance has also increased by 20 percent.

What God is doing in our church thrills me as I strive to keep pace with Him. We have not yet achieved 1,000, but we diligently pursue the next 100—another important achievement on our way to becoming a K-Church by the year 2000.

—by David F. Nixon, Pastor
Lake Avenue Church of the Nazarene
Fort Wayne, Indiana

**Leaders
must innovate
and lead their
people through
the changes
that growth
requires.**

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Messengers from John the Baptist
(Matt. 11:2-19)

¹⁸ Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. ¹⁹ And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to ³Jesus,

[#]Is. 35:5
^qJohn 9:7
^rMatt. 15:31
^sLuke 17:12-14
^tMark 7:37
^u[Is. 61:1-3
Luke 4:18]

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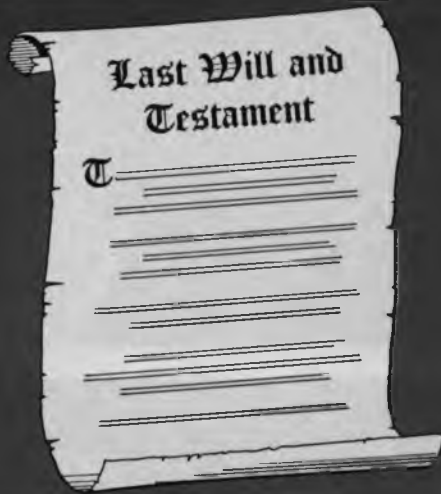
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**All effective church growth strategies
must place confident trust in the
power and authority of God's Word.**

GROW – A JOURNAL OF CHURCH GROWTH, EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

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A SECOND OR THIRD LOOK AT THE NUMBERS GAME

“Why not stop playing the numbers game?” questioned a college professor at a recent clergy preparation conference where ministry for the 90’s and beyond was discussed.

“Why are stats so important to the church?” probed a military chaplain at a retreat in the foothills of the Rockies.

“What if I can’t get the numbers?” one ministerial student queried his professor.

“My attendance is down, but I think the spiritual tone is up,” reported a pastor at last summer’s district assembly.

I wonder who started counting Sunday school attendance, professions of faith, church members, and local church income. Perhaps the numbers game resulted from a natural evolution as the Church of the Nazarene passed through its life cycle from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

Counting has been around for centuries. Long before the Nazarene denomination came into the world, the Bible reported numbers—5,000 people ate fish from the boy’s sparse lunch, 12 men formed the first group of disciples, 120 people examined their hearts together in the upper room, and in one day 3,000 joined the church during the pioneer growth phase recorded in Acts. All those records sound like somebody counted people near the early church’s dawning.

Then, again, tallying is common in contemporary culture. People total the dollars they earn, how many students sit in their classrooms, how many live in their town, how many populate the world, and how many attended their last family reunion. This “how many” curiosity carries over to counting church members and offerings. Nobody knows why we count, we just do.

It is true, much in life cannot be counted. Dollars and numbers simply cannot measure everything. In most instances, numbers do not tell the whole, or even most of the story. But statistical facts frequently tell part of the story—sometimes an important part.

Before we continue this chat, try to squeeze all emotion out of these issues. Strive for fair thinking. Then consider a church with a severe four-year decline in attendance and income: Is it likely that church could be spiritually vigorous? Is it the kind of situation when you would move your family without asking about the decline? Though numbers do not tell all the facts about this church and others, the statistical record highlights drifts, shows trends, or suggests directions.

Church counting makes more sense as we think about this powerful sentence from a caring pastor, “We count people because people count.”

Faithfulness - One vigorous argument against counting insists that God is more interested in faithfulness than increases. Why the contradiction? Faithfulness almost always produces increases.

Quality - Another anti-number conjecture contends quality ministry should replace numerical accountability. Try another idea for size—when one considers Christ’s magnetic promise “If I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me,” does it not follow that quality attracts people. One growth specialist insisted a long time ago that better Sunday schools nearly always become bigger Sunday schools.

Sovereignty - God’s sovereignty is sometimes used to argue against numerical increase with the notion that God gives the increases without our help. In such a debate, it may be useful to consult theological accuracy and human experience. God most often works through some amount of human effort to bring people to Himself. Who among us would be a Christian without another person’s strong influence?

Quality vs Quantity - Let us admit that quality is more difficult to measure than quantity. But at the same time let us agree that no conflict exists between striving for both.

And though our suspicions are only whispered, we know there probably will not be much quantity without quality. People go to churches where there is something worth going to.

Most churches need to get quality and quantity tied closer together. Some have quantity without quality. Others have quality without quantity. Let us work for both; one feeds the other.

Perhaps the time has arrived for us to give up our prejudices and myths—whichever way they lean.

For those who have problems counting folks, maybe they need to check again to see if the Bible

is against numerical accountability.

For those who place priority on quality, maybe they could so thoroughly improve their ministry that people flock to their services. Then growth will never be a negative issue for them again.

For those who argue God’s sovereignty takes numbers out of our hands, maybe they should think again about how God uses human help for doing His work.

Accountability - Everyone knows spiritual success cannot be measured in ultimate terms by members or dollars. But keep counting until we find more satisfying ways to evaluate our effectiveness against the evangelistic requirements of Scripture. Though the process leaves much to be desired, it helps measure the work we do for the Savior.

Any evaluative accountability, however frail, motivates us more than none. Because people really count, the church growth we seek is both spiritual and numerical in nature. It is quality and quantity together—never one without the other. The two hold high priority for us. And for the King.

And ponder another amazing reality—almost no one hesitates to report gains when the numbers are up. Interesting, isn’t it?

—NEIL B. WISEMAN
Editor, GROW





**A nearby harvest field:
92% of all Native
Americans untouched by the Gospel**



Confessions of a Born-Again Baby Boomer!

by Mike MacNeil

Sussex, N.B.

These two articles view the expressions of worship from opposite perspectives. Many holiness churches have people from both backgrounds. You, pastor, must learn to face the diversity in your ministry.

Attendance was sagging. Now each week there were spaces where real, live people used to sit. The services seemed . . . wooden. There was no other way to say it. Members blamed the pastor for being uninspiring. The pastor blamed members for being unresponsive. The back-section-twelve-o'clock-beeper people were becoming more vocal about getting out at twelve o'clock. The fired-up, sold-out-to-Jesus people had left for other churches. It was time for action.

We met in an upstairs Sunday School room—12 of us. "Lord, anoint our pastor today," we prayed. "Speak through him. May the worship be real and the Word come alive." We laid hands on the pastor. We were serious. I almost looked forward to the service.

Then we went to the sanctuary. It was eleven o'clock. The organ groaned its weird, sanctified, circus music. The piano thumped along. The worship leader led us in 200-year-old hymns and concluded what was supposed to be heartfelt praise with, "That's good singin'." Then came the message on stewardship and, believe it or not, an altar call. A perfect service for 1950. Unfortunately it was 1991. Then it hit me. The problem was not really spiritual. No amount of prayer would change the facts: People were

not rejecting Jesus; they were rejecting the culture in which the church had wrapped Him up. You see, for baby boomers like me, entering the average evangelical church is like entering a time warp.

Yesterday's Church

In his book *Dying for Change*, Leith Anderson describes what he calls "yesterday's church." He says, "Yesterday's church keeps hoping that tomorrow will be 1954." It won't.

Of the 375,000 churches in North America, I suspect that the majority are yesterday's church. They pray for revival, but what they really mean is that they hope the "good old days" will return. They expect God to work in the same structure and do the same things He did in the 1950s. Their members suffer "cognitive dissonance"—they work and live in the 1990s six days a week, but on Sunday, it's 1954. Church is an escape from the pressures of real life, but not a resource to help them deal with real life. Does this sound familiar?

Confession Time

As a born-again baby boomer, I need to confess: Most churches are irrelevant to my generation. What's more, most churches are irrelevant to me! I don't look forward to the Sunday morning service—I endure it. Why do I endure it? Because Paul said not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together and because I don't want to offend anyone. Am I spiritually bankrupt? No, it's not that. I *do* love Jesus. I *do* bear spiritual fruit in my life. But like 77 million other baby boomers, I need something to prepare me for real life in 1991. How many trips to

1954 can one take before one gets nostalgia fatigue? My life is tremendously complex. I need more than yesterday's church.

Get to Know Me!

Since I'm a typical baby boomer, you need to know what makes me tick. I'm motivated by experience, not money. I like money, but having fulfilling experiences is a higher priority with me. I am animated by fun, enjoyment, and adventure, not duty. I thrive on change, not stability—the exact opposite of my parents. I prefer candor—directness and blunt honesty—over tact. I respect professionalism more than next-door-neighborism. I'm looking for a church that makes things happen, not just a "nice" building with a "nice" pastor.

I confess further: Everything the experts say about me is true.

1. *I have low institutional loyalty.* I don't put a lot of trust in institutions, even religious ones. I'm not very denominational. What I'm looking for is a vital relationship with God. I'll go where I can find that, no matter what the label is. I won't put up with mediocrity for the sake of duty or past tradition or "Because my parents were (fill in denominational name)."

2. *I have high expectations.* Like the character from the Southern-boomer movie *Steel Magnolias*, "I'd rather have 30 minutes of wonderful than a whole lifetime of nothing special." I expect church to be a challenging experience, not a dutiful drudgery. For me, Christianity is a victorious, conquering faith, not a defensive, surviving faith. I will fol-

(Continued on page 51)

The Divine Story of Handel's *Messiah*

The Story of a Genius Who Was Reborn in Giving Birth to an Undying Melody

by Robert W. Pelton

Knoxville, Tenn.

On the afternoon of April 13, 1737, George Frideric Handel had come home in a terrible rage from rehearsal, red-faced, his temporal arteries throbbing visibly. The choleric German maestro had harshly slammed the front door and now was pacing the room overhead so furiously that the ceiling trembled. But his neighbors in London's Grosvenor Square paid no heed, for they looked upon 25 Brook Street as a lunatic asylum.

Suddenly a heavy thud, followed by the sound of breaking glass, came from upstairs. Racing to his master's study, Handel's manservant saw his body lying on the floor, his eyes fixed and open, his tongue rattling between palsied lips. As the servant stared in frozen horror, Christopher Smith, the composer's script copyist, rushed into the room. Together the two men raised the heavy body.

Smith cried: "Sprinkle his face with cold water while I go for a doctor!" Hastening to Fleet Street, he found Dr. Jenkins and dragged him to a carriage. As they galloped back to Brook Street, Smith explained: "They've worried Handel to death—those singers, librettists, critics, and whatnot! Four operas he has composed in the last 12 months, hoping to save the theater, but it's no good. All his savings are gone, and creditors are dunning him day and night. They're determined to break our genius!"

As Dr. Jenkins entered the maestro's study and made an incision for bloodletting, a deep sigh emitted from Handel's flaccid mouth. Then his lips moved and he whispered: "I'm finished . . . no strength . . . don't want . . . to live."

The doctor noted that one of Handel's eyes stared blankly as if it were sightless. Then he raised the stricken man's arm. It dropped back down lifelessly.

"Apoplexy," said Dr. Jenkins. "Right side paralyzed. We may be able to save the man—but the musician is lost forever. His brain has been permanently damaged."

For four long and tedious months Handel could neither talk nor walk nor sound a harpsichord key. When friends played music for him, his eyes would light up and his poor heavy frame, as if in a dream, would try to sway rhythmically to the sounds. But his limbs were petrified, and horror showed in his eyes.

As a desperate remedy, Dr. Jenkins ordered some hot baths at Aix-la-Chapelle. And just as under the frigid earth there boiled the strange springs, so within the immobile body of the great musician there stirred a mysterious force. His will hadn't been affected by the stroke; the undying fire refused to be extinguished.

A week after arriving at Aix-la-Chapelle, Handel was able to walk; another week and he was able to

raise his arm. It was an unbelievable triumph of will over caution! Handel grasped at life with a renewed enthusiasm.

On the day of leaving Aix-la-Chapelle, Handel went to the cathedral. He had never been deeply religious, yet he now felt moved by an irresistible force. There stood the keys with his stricken right hand. Soon, glorious chords rose and fell, filling the vaulted shrine with echoing sound.

Handel, his head bowed in humility, played and played. Again he had found the language in which he could converse with God, with his fellow mortals, and with eternity. Once again he would compose music!

* * *

Back in London, Handel hurled himself into composing. He wrote an opera, then a second, a third, a fourth; then the great *Saul, Israel in Egypt*, and *Alexander's Feast*. It was as if spring, long pent up, had been loosed.

Nevertheless, fate soon turned against him. Queen Caroline, his patron, died; his pension stopped; the Spanish wars came. Houses of entertainment were closed, his creditors pressed him, and the public remained indifferent. For the first time in his life Handel was ready to throw in the towel; the splendid fighter appeared to have met his match. In his

despondency he murmured the words of the Crucified: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34, both KJV).

A lost soul who no longer believed in his ability to create, Handel began to roam the streets of London. Passersby glanced at him indifferently; his burden of loneliness grew intolerable. Then, on August 21, 1741, he came home obsessed by a single thought: rest, sleep, oblivion. Slowly he climbed the stairs to his study; mechanically he lighted the candles on his worktable. Then suddenly he frowned.

There was a bulky parcel lying on the table. It was a letter and manuscript from Charles Jennings, the poet who had written the librettos of *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*. He had sent Handel the new manuscript, hoping that the greatest genius in music would speed forth the lumbering words on the wings of undying melody.

Handel carefully read the missive and dropped it back on the table. Was Jennings making mockery of him? A despicable thing to scoff at a dying man, stricken as he was! The maestro tore the letter to shreds and angrily stomped on the pieces. Then, annihilated and lost, he threw himself upon his bed.

But sleep wouldn't come, for a storm was raging within. Finally he arose, relit the candles, and pushed the manuscript nearer the candlelight. On the first page he read the word "Messiah." Another oratorio! All of his latest efforts in this medium had been abject failures. Yet he turned the title page and began to read.

The first words arrested his attention. "Comfort ye!" A marvelous beginning, an angelic summons to his weary heart. Hardly had he read them when they began to translate themselves into a musical idiom, swelling, calling, singing forth into the sky. Once more, Handel heard musical tones after the long drought of inspiration.

With trembling fingers Handel turned the pages. To him had come the call to lift his voice with strength; to cry out with the full blast of tubas, of mighty choirs, of thundering chords on the organ. His weariness disappeared. He was bathed in a rush of words that penetrated to his inner being, bringing forth a sense of liberation.

Then suddenly he read the sentence, "The Lord gave the word" (Ps. 68:11, KJV). Handel held his breath in wonder. Surely the Lord himself had inspired this poet! "The Lord gave the word"—divine mercy had rained down from on high.

Again and again must the words be repeated: "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" The voices of mankind must be joined in a mighty chorus—high voices and low, sweet notes from the fiddles merging with the rougher notes from the brass, the whole sustained by the organ's powerful undertones.

Tears flooded Handel's eyes as the fires of inspiration pervaded him. He excitedly took up his pen and jotted notes; faster and faster the peculiar little signs began to cover the paper. Darkness lay over London, but brilliant light flooded his own soul, and the study was alive with music.

Darkness lay over London, but brilliant light flooded Handel's soul. His study was alive with music.

For three weeks, day and night, Handel kept at his task, living wholly in the realm of rhythm and tone. But as the work neared an end, he was increasingly tortured by the fury of inspiration. He strummed on the harpsichord, he sang, he worked with his fingers until they gave out. Never before had this man so lived and fought with music.

At last, in three weeks—a miracle in music was completed. One word alone remained to receive inspiration: the final "Amen." But these two syllables were to be built into a monument that would reach the skies. The composer would dwell upon that first syllable so that, with the organ sustaining the chorus, it could fill not only the cathedral but the very dome of heaven.

At long last Handel rose to his feet.

The pen slipped from his hand. He neither saw nor heard any more; like a blind man he stumbled to his couch. He fell forward, his strained eyes closed, and he slept.

When, 17 hours later, attempts to awaken Handel proved fruitless, Smith again went for Dr. Jenkins. But as the two men arrived back at Brook Street, the manservant stopped in the doorway, waved both arms, and shouted: "The master is up! He has eaten half a ham, drunk four pints of milk, and even now is clamoring for more!"

The instant Handel glimpsed the physician, he began to laugh, peal after peal of ringing laughter as the joy of his life rioted in him.

"What's got you, Master?" exclaimed Dr. Jenkins. "Has somebody given you an elixir?"

Handel, smiling, strode to the harpsichord. "Behold! I tell you a mystery," he said. And he sang as he played the final chorus, jubilantly, triumphantly concluding with "Amen! Amen! Amen!"

When Handel finished, Dr. Jenkins muttered: "Never have I heard the likes of this. You must be possessed of the devil."

As he spoke, a cloud obscured the composer's face. He, too, was alarmed at the scope of his work, and humility overpowered him. With hanging head he whispered: "I think, rather, that God has visited me."

* * *

It was Handel's wish that the first performance of the *Messiah* take place in Dublin, where receipts were certain to be large. But he didn't want to profit from his work. Instead, he directed that the money be devoted to the care of prisoners, orphans, and the sick, because, he said: "I have myself been a very sick man and am now cured. I was a prisoner and have been set free."

On the evening of April 13, 1742, crowds were waiting in Fishamble Street for the doors to open. Ladies had come in narrow skirts, gentlemen had left their swords at home so that there might be room for a great audience. First, breathless silence; then the oratorio opened. There came a tremor as the massed chorus singers from two cathedrals began with a hurricane of energy.

Handel stood close by the organ as if in a dream. When the final "Amen"

resounded, he joined in with the chorus, singing as he'd never sung before. Then, when the storms of applause began, he quietly slipped away.


From this night onward, the stream of public acclaim for Handel flowed on, year after year. Nothing could stop his progress. Age sapped his vitality; he was tormented by gout; but his indefatigable spirit soared above all physical infirmities. He finished composition after composition. At length his eyesight failed, and he went blind while at work on *Jephtha*.

Year after year the *Messiah* was produced in London; always Handel devoted the proceeds to hospitals. The man who had miraculously recovered from his own illness wished to help other ailing folk and orphans, the disenfranchised and those who lay in chains. Finally he was to bid farewell to life during a performance of his masterpiece that had dragged him out of despair.

On April 6, 1759, a broken man of 74, he was driven to the concert hall to stand among the instrumentalists and singers whom he could no longer see. But as the waves of sound assailed his ears, his weary features lighted up one last time. At the words, "The trumpet shall sound," his face twitched, while his sightless orbs were directed upward as though he were already standing before the mercy seat of God. Then he staggered and nearly fell.

When friends got him back home and to bed, he murmured: "I should like to die on Good Friday." Physicians were puzzled, for though they knew that Good Friday would be April 13, they didn't know that April 13 had been the day on which, years before, fate had struck him down—and the day on which, with the *Messiah*, his temporal resurrection had been accomplished in Dublin.

The man's indomitable will had power over death as well as life. By April 13 his vital energies flagged. Handel couldn't see nor hear nor feel. His huge body lay inert in the bed. Yet to his inner senses came the sound of faraway music unheard by the others—music more splendid than any he had ever wrought in his imagination.

And the next day, before the Easter bells began to ring, there perished all that was mortal of George Frideric Handel. 

"The Best of All Is, God Is with Us":



Living Words of a Dying Man

by Barry E. Bryant

London

On March 2, 1791, 11 people gathered in a small room, on the second floor of a simple house in north London where a man was dying. The man was John Wesley. Each had gathered by his bed for the moment they all had dreaded. They struggled to hear every word, thinking perhaps it would be the dying Wesley's last. Many times he tried to speak, but no one could understand him. Elizabeth Ritchie recorded these events, saying:

Finding we could not understand what he said, he paused a little, and then, with all the remaining strength he had, cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us"; and then, as if to assert the faithfulness of our promise-keeping Jehovah, and comfort the hearts of his weeping friends, lifting up his dying arm in token of holy triumph . . . again repeated the heart-reviving words, "The best of all is, God is with us!" (*Journal* 8:143).

The message was short and the meaning simple. His words were a timely reminder: "The best of all is, God is with us." These were the living words of a dying man. Wesley

didn't coin the phrase; Isaiah did. The words live because they are God's words.

GOD IS WITH US EVEN IN OUR SINFULNESS

"God with us" comes from the word "Immanuel." Immanuel was one of the nicknames given to Jesus. William Hazlitt, a 19th-century English journalist, once said, "A nickname is the heaviest stone that the devil can throw at a man." Anyone who has been lumbered with one knows that's true. Before the devil could throw such a stone at Jesus, Matthew gave Him this Spirit-inspired nickname. His name would be "Jesus," because He would take away the sins of His people. His nickname would be "Immanuel," because He is "God with us." "Jesus" reminds us that we are sinners in need of forgiveness and salvation. "Immanuel" tells us that in spite of our sin, God is with us, present in our lives, even when we are not aware of it.

Wesley's word for such a presence as this was "prevenient grace." He described this as "all the 'drawings' of 'the Father,' the desires after God, which, if we yield to them, increase

more and more; all the 'light' where-with the Son of God 'enlighteneth everyone that cometh into the world', showing every man 'to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God'" (*The Scripture Way of Salvation* 1.2). Before we knew God, He knew us. Before we knew that we were lost, He knew where we were. Christ died for us while we were still in our sin. That is the "best of all." God is with us. But God is with us in another, even more profound way.

GOD IS WITH US IN OUR WORSHIP

As Wesley had written in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, "He is God incarnate, and dwells, by His Spirit, in the hearts of His people." That is true. But Jesus made an important promise to His people: "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20). Jesus is in our midst, through His Holy Spirit, when we worship. We do not ever need to invoke His presence. When the church gathers in Jesus' name, He is there. He promised that He would be. This simple truth should never be forgotten when we worship. God is with us in our worship.

My church is located in central London. It's not far from Buckingham Palace, where the Queen lives. Needless to say, she has never come to visit our church. We've never had a royal visit. Gathering in the name of Queen Elizabeth only makes you look foolish. It won't bring her out of the palace. But gathering in the name of Jesus transforms even our smallest gatherings into an audience with the King of Kings. We are ushered into the holy presence of our Father.



This sense of God's divine and majestic presence was one early Methodists knew about. In his journal entry for January 1, 1739, John tells about a meeting he and his brother Charles attended with about 60 others. He writes,

About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

It is not enough that God was with John Wesley. The best of all must be that God is with us.

Even so, there is still another way that God is with us.

GOD IS WITH US IN OUR PRAYING

Many Christians struggle in their prayers to enter into the presence of God. In God's presence and at his throne we obtain mercy. Wesley said, "All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer" ("The Means of Grace" 3.1). We often become impatient as we wait. We get frustrated when we don't feel ourselves in His presence. But Wesley can teach us something great about God's presence where prayer is concerned.

When commenting on Romans 8 in his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, he said the Spirit makes intercession for us, "in our hearts, even as Christ does in heaven," where He presents "His prayers, and our prayers sanctified through Him." This tells us two things about prayer. The Holy Spirit is at work praying *in* us. And Jesus is at the right hand of God praying *for* us. We can be prayed for by none better. No better prayer can be offered for us. In our praying the Spirit and the Son are God *with* us, *in* us, and *for* us.

In addition, the saints on earth are praying *with* us. Saints praying with

each other was always a mysterious but powerful force to Wesley. In his sermon "The Promise of Understanding," Wesley once remarked:

If there be any particular work of the Holy Spirit which we can tell less of than of the rest, it seems to be His influencing one person in answer to the prayers of another. That He does pour a larger measure of His blessed influence upon us at the request of those in whom He is well pleased He hath given us sufficient ground to believe in several place of Holy Scripture. That of St. James is expressed: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But how it avails we cannot explain. How God acts upon us in consequence of our friends' prayers, the manner of his returning the intercession of the one into the bosom of the other, we cannot know (1.4).

Still, the prayers of the saints were another evidence of God with us.

Less than a mile from where we live in London, Oswald Chambers once lived while he was principal of the Bible Training School near Clapham Common, London. In volume 2 of his *Christian Discipline*, Chambers succinctly summarized Wesley's understanding of "God with us" in our praying. He said,

Jesus Christ carries on intercession for us in heaven; the Holy Ghost carries on intercession in us on earth; and we the saints have to carry on intercession for all men (p. 60).

It has been 200 years since those 11 people gathered around for Wesley's death. Maybe we need to be reminded of those living words of a dying man. They are God's living promise to us: "The best of all is, God is with us." After Wesley these words became the motto of many Wesleyans. God is indeed with us, in spite of our sinfulness, in our worship, and in our praying. Such is the promise of our promise-keeping Father.

The Authority of Scripture

by J. Kenneth Grider
Kansas City

Dr. Paul Rees, in an interview some years ago as a member of the Billy Graham evangelism team, was asked if he believed in the Bible's inerrancy. His answer was judicious. He avoided the matter of whether the Bible has in it inconsequential errors, as in mathematics or geography, and guided the conversation to the really important matter. He said, "I believe in the authority of the Bible."

Rees was right. Our special interest as Christians, and specifically as Wesleyan-holiness clergy and lay Christians, should be in the Bible's authority. At times we might need to take up the matter of inerrancy, but it is the Bible's authority that is of paramount importance: what we expose as meaning in preaching, and what we read for devotional help.

God only, and not Scripture, is absolutely authoritative. Yet, as a written-down revelation of what the absolutely authoritative God has done and offers to do, and of what God's will is, Scripture is the one primary written authority. All other written authorities, such as creeds and confessions, and the best insights of the righteous and the wise, are only secondary or tertiary. We are, of course, not to worship Scripture, but the God of Scripture. We, therefore, do not have faith in Scripture; instead, we have faith in God. We do properly hold to a high confidence of Scripture's trustworthiness and veracity and authority.

This kind of authority accompanies Scripture because of its in-

spiredness. Most basically, it is the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Scripture writers that invests Scripture with authority.

At the same time, another fundamental basis for the authority of Scripture exists because of its prophesying Christ in the Old Testament; narrating His life, works, death, and resurrection in the Gospels; and interpreting the meaning of the Christ events in the Epistles. In the Christ events themselves, even, there are revelations to us of, for example, God's love. In the event of the Cross, God's love is spelled out for us in blood dripping from a thorn-crowned brow. Yet we would not know about the revelatory events without the revelatory Scriptures that narrate them and that discourse on their salvific meaning.

At the same time, matters secondary to inspiration, and to Scripture's pointing us to Christ, also figure in the authority of Scripture. Another matter is that the Scripture writers were often eyewitnesses of the events. Also, most of the New Testament writers knew Jesus in the flesh. It is eminently so of James, the Lord's half brother; and of John and Peter, who were members of the inner circle of the Twelve. Paul counted Christ's appearance to him on the Damascus road as giving him a belated direct acquaintance with Christ (Acts 9:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:8).

Something else that is secondary to inspiration and the Word about the Word, concerning the authority of Scripture, is the attestation of the Church, the believing community. This is somewhat so of even the present "faithing," loving, and hoping community. It is eminently so of the Early Church. We who believe, as Luther did, that the Holy Spirit was profoundly guiding the Early Church, in its pristine apostolicity, hold confidently that the Spirit guided it to select the canonical

books and to allow the near misses, such as First Clement and even the Shepherd of Hermas (in the West) to slough off. This was usually a gradual and imperceptible growth in respect for the authority of especially the New Testament books—the Old Testament books having already, even before the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90, become gradually attested to in the consciousness of God's faithful people. And when such councils as the one that met at Carthage in 397 agree that no other books than the 27 of our New Testament be read in the churches as Scripture, you have an early and official recognition of authority as unerring in those canonical books.

Not only did the Early Church's decisions figure in the authority of the books of the whole biblical canon, the believing community from that time to the present also figures in the authority of the canonical books. The Bible books still, in a living way, are authoritative written sources for our faith. This is in part because we Spirit-guided Christians have become enthusiastic rediscoverers of what the pristinely apostolic early Christians have discovered. And since the Eastern Church includes the Shepherd of Hermas as Scripture, which is included in the oldest of all extant New Testament manuscripts, the fourth-century Sinaiticus, many of us feel that it, too, has a certain authority. To many of us, it should not be relegated to the place of the Acts of Paul and other quite-evidently spurious early books. And since the Council of Trent, just after Luther's death, added the 14 apocryphal books to the canon for Roman Catholics; since Martin Luther translated them, in his German translation of the whole Bible; and since they were included, for over 200 years, in all the King James Version Bibles—those books, too, are in-



vested with a degree of authority not found in the nonapocryphal books that also circulated in intertestamental times.

A few observations should be added that relate somewhat tangentially to the matter of the authority of Scripture. One is that we should not, as Carl Henry and other Reformed evangelicals do, speak of the Bible's containing "inscripturated revelation." Scripture is indeed a written revelation. In distinction from God's revelation in nature, or through the Holy Spirit to an individual, the Bible is a revelation that is inscripturated. Yet the term has in it a wrong kind of direction. The direction in the term is toward Scripture itself, in itself, instead of toward the word of God existentially heard by us when we read Scripture. The direction is toward the Word of God in its "out-thereness" instead of in its received "in-hereness."

Another observation is that it is not quite appropriate to speak of

the Bible as the divine Word of God. In this wording we tend to be bibliolatrous. We are saying about the Bible what we say about Christ when we are talking about His Godness—that the Bible is divine. Another problem with the phrase exists because it implies that the Bible is not a human book. It implies that there is no human element in Scripture—that Scripture was not forged in the midst of the traumatic experiences of its writers. People who use the phrase are, no doubt, well-intentioned. They want to show their high regard for the Bible. Yet the usage implies, or even states, too high a view and is bibliolatrous.

In this connection, it is not normally appropriate to refer to the Bible as "the Word of God." This is because the Bible itself calls Christ God's Word. We read in it, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Since Christ is also God's Word, it is a bit mislead-

leading to call the Bible God's Word. Christ is the living Word of God; the Bible is the written Word of God. Referring to the Bible in various ways that are correct, all the time, will minimize the likelihood of referring to it misleadingly some of the time. We do Scripture no justice when we make misleading statements about it, nor when we refer to it in a bibliolatrous way. Instead, by such references we do it an injustice.

Paul Rees is perhaps the Wesleyan-holiness preacher held in highest regard in the Christian world in our time. In his upper 80s, he is still preaching. I have been helped by him in many ways, as so many others have been. And I was helped on hearing of this interview.

As Wesleyan-holiness preachers, we are not searchers after whether or not Scripture has in it any rare and inconsequential errors. We are searchers after redemption, looking for the way to heaven, and on that we view Scripture as entirely authoritative. ✠

Breaking Through the Communication Barrier

(Continued from page 25)

5. The pastor can be a source of encouragement to a discouraged patient who is resigned to his limitations. The pastor may contribute to his recovery by participating in his physical therapies.
6. The pastor can contribute "reality orientation" to the patient by direct discourse, sharing information of mutual interest, and occasionally asking the patient's opinion.
7. The pastor can arrange for the stroke victim to attend worship services in his church, receive Communion, and remain informed of church activities. Many churches dispatch vans to bring housebound members to church activities.
8. The pastor can arrange for visitors to dispel the boredom of confined stroke victims.

Our Ministry Is Christ's Ministry First

We pastors perform our ministries of mercy in Christ's name and spirit. We recognize that our ministry is

Christ's ministry first. The Lord of love undergirds our labors of love. Jesus assures us that we continue His ministry on earth when we serve as His hands and voice through which He ministers to His brethren. Be His hands and voice. Let Christ fulfill His ministry through your ministry. Break through the barriers and let Christ speak the words of faith, hope, and love by which He wants His little ones to hear and live.

A Prayer for Strength

O Love that will not let us go: we are grateful that You know each of us by name and need, and care for us with a Father's love. You know the concerns that burden our hearts just now. We confess how we need Your hope to lift our faltering spirits. Transform our extremities into a demonstration of Your amazing grace, we pray, as You work all things together for our good and Your glory. Have Your own way with our lives, Father God, for we entrust our destiny into Your loving hands, through Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. ✠

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NOTES

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2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Joan Rattner Heilman, "The Miraculous Story of a Coma Survivor," *Redbook*, July 1987, 90 ff.
6. Clark and Hager, "Living with Strokes," 83.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Strokes—a Guide for the Family*, 9-10.
9. Clark and Hager, "Living with Strokes," 83.
10. *Strokes—a Guide for the Family*, 4-7.
11. Charles Clay Dahlberg and Joseph Jaffre, *Stroke*, 198-200.
12. *Facts About Strokes*, 2.
13. *Ibid.*, 3.
14. Mary Joyce Rae and Robert W. Rae, Herald Press, 1975.
15. For a description of stroke-induced, bizarre behavior and suggested methods of coping with this challenge, see *Strokes: Why Do They Behave That Way?* American Heart Association pamphlet.

The Great Baptistry Fiasco

by Ken Chamberlain

Ozark, Mo.

Editorial Announcement:

Many of us enjoyed David Roper's article in the June/July/August 1991 edition of the *Preacher's Magazine* titled, "Stories Preachers Tell Each Other." Roper gave us permission to make that a feature item. So, ladies and gentlemen, if you have humorous stories of ministerial experiences, consider sending them to "STORIES PREACHERS TELL EACH OTHER."

The shiny blue fiberglass baptistry with chrome accents was a thing of beauty. It had only been used a couple of times by the preceding pastor. Now I would get the privilege. Away with the barbarism of muddy streams, ice-cold lakes, and stock tanks filled with biting fish. I was going to use a new, clean, well-heated baptistry in a clean, warm, well-lit church. A microphone hovering over the surface of the waters would pick up and transmit my every nuance and intonation on behalf of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"Better fill it on Friday, Pastor," the chairman of the trustees had said. "It takes a long time to fill that thing up and get the water warm enough to use."

So, on Friday morning, I entered the church with joy and expectation in my heart, eager to try out my new blessing. I had accepted the pastorate of the church a scant six months before and was still learning the ins and outs of the equipment. This would be my first baptism service held in a real church, in a real baptistry. Oh, boy!

However, things did not go quite as well as anticipated. The first snag

came when there was no water supply to be found anywhere near the baptistry. There was a beautiful gray plastic drainpipe under it, but no water supply was to be seen. I looked for almost 20 minutes, just to be sure. "Nope, no way to fill this thing!" What to do? Who was home that I could call on a Friday morning? Phil surely was home, having retired a few years previously. I dialed.

"Hello," Phil answered cheerfully.

"Good morning, Phil," I said, trying to sound pastoral. "How do you fill up this baptistry? I don't see a water supply connection anywhere."

"Our last pastor used to carry buckets of water up the stairs to fill it," Phil said. "He used to be a marine and thought it was great exercise."

"You have got to be kidding!" I responded.

"Yes, I am. We fill it with a garden hose connected to the faucet in the old church kitchen down in the basement."

"I'll try that, Phil. Thanks," I said.

There were hoses out behind the church, and I made the connections. The hose ran out of the old kitchen—now the college students' classroom—down a carpeted hall, into the janitor's closet under the baptistry, up through the hole cut in the floor, up over the side of the baptistry, down the three fiberglass steps, into the belly of the beast. It took almost 60 feet of hose to do it, and the hose didn't look that good. I was a little apprehensive about the whole project by now.

Still, the kingdom of God had to roll on—five people were to be immersed in less than 72 hours. Back at the faucet, I turned the water on, but only halfway. (There's no reason to give the devil more than a foothold.) A leak check along the whole line showed everything to be dry and in working order. With fear and

trepidation, I turned the water on full blast. A strange sound began to rise from a distance about 60 feet away.

I ran down the hall, up the stairs, and behind the platform to the baptistry. The hose had turned into a thin water-spewing cobra, slowly lifting its head out of the bottom of the tub. When I got there, it was swaying back and forth, and the stream was just threatening to break over the side and spray all our choir robes, church music library, and sound system components. Furtively glancing around for something to subdue the beast, I decided on a small, unused file cabinet sitting nearby on the ground. I squashed the box on top of the hose, and it acquiesced. The tub began to fill.

This thing was not to be trusted, I decided. What if it did something spiteful while no one was watching it? I gathered the materials I needed to finish Sunday evening's sermon and set up a makeshift study right there on location. I called my wife and told her I would be away from the phone for a couple of hours.

The water filled to the level of the heating unit inlet in about two hours. I threw the switch and set the thermostat on the heater. Nothing happened. The heat didn't come on. The indicator light neither lit nor "indicated." And the water level continued to rise.

I decided that an early lunch was in order, but I certainly couldn't leave and go home. There was no way of knowing, after all, how long it would take this baptistry to fill. What would happen should the heater, all of a sudden, become operational? I called my wife, and she brought over some lunch for us. She also had a few questions to ask.

"Is this where the water is supposed to heat up?" she asked, pointing to the heating element.

"I think so," I answered. "The cold

water comes in through this bottom pipe, heats in this vertical one, rises to the top, and pumps out the top pipe."

"It doesn't appear to be doing that," she offered helpfully.

"So it would appear," I answered as a good Christian husband would. "Got any suggestions?"

"Well, why don't you get the heater out of your study and aim it at the heating tubes?" she asked. I was skeptical but tried it anyway, as I had no better plan. Three hours later the temperature had increased from 54 to 60 degrees. I prayed that the heat wave would continue.

By Friday night, the temperature had risen to 64 degrees, and the baptistry was full. I now had to turn off the water and disconnect all the hoses. Doing this after a teen car wash is an easy thing. Doing it with 60 feet of water-filled hose in a carpeted church basement is quite another. I prepared for the task with an empty 55-gallon trash can from the church kitchen. I quickly unscrewed the hose and poked the end into the can. The expected water came. And came. And kept coming. When my trash can was about a quarter full, I realized that something was very wrong. Then I remembered discussing the siphoning of fluids in high school science class. I had created a near-perfect siphon arrangement, and water would come out of that hose out of the baptistry. So, another run down the

hall, up the stairs, and behind the platform, and the flow subsided.

Now the behemoth was full, the heater and pump gurgled softly, and all was running well—except for the sound of leaking water. I ran down the stairs and into the closet that housed the drainpipe. There was, indeed, a small amount of water dribbling out of the big tub and down into the drainpipe. Up the stairs and back to what was fast becoming a big blue monster! The drain-release switch was closed, but water was still getting out. How? Down on the floor, kicked partially under the fiberglass demon, was a small, shiny metal drain stopper that I apparently should have seen and installed before I started all this. But what was the big deal? Only 650 gallons of four-foot-deep, 65-degree water stood between me and the drain. After denuding myself to the waist and hanging over the edge with my wing tips firmly pressed against the back wall, I was able to fix the problem.


Saturday morning I went to the church early to see how the sleeping dragon was doing. All was well, and the water was up to 67 degrees. That is when I first saw the floodlight on the ceiling over the baptistry.

"What a nice thought," I said to myself. "A baptism *should* be well lit." But how to turn the thing on? By process of elimination, I determined the correct switch. It didn't do any-

thing. "Bad bulb, then," I concluded "I can fix that." Ordinarily, I would have used a ladder to replace the bulb, but this one was directly over the water, about seven feet above it. So I tried to make it by standing on the lip of the baptistry itself. Of course, I slipped and fell in. I was very glad the church custodian wasn't there yet. I said a few words that a Christian shouldn't. That a holiness *preacher* shouldn't, anyway.

Sunday evening arrived. The water temperature had leveled out at a brisk but usable 73 degrees. The service was on. The five individuals who were to be baptized were told that the water was cold and they should be prepared for it. My sound man had rigged up a boom microphone a few feet above the water. "I haven't been able to ground this thing, so don't touch it," he cautioned. "Or you will light up like a Christmas tree."

The service itself was great! We had a good crowd. The Holy Spirit was present. Of the five that were baptized, only one yelled about how cold the water was—and what he yelled was, "Glory!" So everyone just naturally assumed that he had gotten blessed. As we were leaving the building that night, a fellow pastor who had helped in the service spoke to me. "Sure better than the old days when we dunked them in a lake, isn't it?"

I'm not sure he understood why my response wasn't all that positive. 

Christmas Simplicity *(Continued from page 38)*

him in a manger . . ."

"Make do," they say. Mary knew how to "make do." There was no comfortable room for Mary and Joseph in the inn; so they made do in the stable. They did their part.

We can so live in the simplicity of trust in Jesus that we learn how to make do too. We are handed nothing more than a manger. "Fine," we say, "as long as it is with Jesus." We are given nothing more than a stable. "OK," we reply, "with Jesus." There are nothing but cows for friends. "Great, as long as God blesses," we say.

What is it that God has given you with which to "make do"? Is it a

smile to share, a note to send, a prayer to offer, a phone call to make, a compliment to give?


"... no room for them in the inn."

We are so troubled many times because we cannot see the hand of God obviously in our lives. Do we not understand that God delights in disguises, in the maskings?

When there is no room in the inn, He puts us in the stable. Can we take it? Can we live up to it? Can we discover the adventure in it? God can work His will in the zigzag.

We would ask for the red carpet for the Christ's coming. God would

provide the red barn instead. So frequently in our lives, but in it all is the eternal plan. God's will being worked through in simplicity.

Learn then from the old, old story of love. Take the journey once more to Bethlehem. Be up and going. Make do with what God has provided. Pray for the eyes to see the invisible. Go forth with the merry heart and seek holy adventures with the faith-filled soul. In so doing, you will come upon the manger. And there you will discover yourself bent over, bowing in the glow of the One who has come not only to save our souls but also to show us the way of gladness. 

The Advantage of Videotaping

by Greg Crofford

Sedalia, Mo.

The march of technology brings with it mixed blessings. Old vices may make their way into new mediums, such as computer porn or lurid videotapes. Despite abuses, these media can be used by the church with positive results. One case in point is the creative use of videotaping in ministry.

Videocameras have come into their own. More and more laypeople are "going video," showing up at everything from graduations to family picnics with a Sony or RCA on their shoulders. While some pastors may be able to afford a camera of their own, many will simply need to ask an eager churchgoer to videotape a desired church event with their own cameras.

Purchasing a videocamera admittedly seemed like an excess for my wife and me nearly a year ago. Both of us have been surprised by the number of ways we've utilized it in the work of our small church:

1. Seasonal programs

Children, teens, and adults put in hard work on Christmas plays, Vacation Bible School programs, and other special events. They are gratified to see the "finished product" by video at a later time.


2. Baby dedications and baptisms

I've made it a practice to give parents of a newborn not only a New Testament and a rose but also a video of their special day. Babies will one day be old enough to look back and vicariously experience the happy event as well. Candidates for

baptism may want to mail a tape to relatives who were unable to attend their induction into Christian faith.

3. Annual meeting

I heard of one pastor who used slides to present an upbeat summary of the church's life in the previous year. This idea could be adapted to video very easily by editing a 10-minute presentation from various recordings made throughout the year.

These are a few examples of how a videocamera may be utilized creatively in the local church setting. Functions are limited only by the photographer's creativity. How can you put this powerful new medium into service for God and His Church? 

Isn't God the Real Audience?

(Continued from page 40)

"Contemporary Christian music" has changed a number of things on the religious landscape. Its advent has even made it possible for parents to boast that now their children are "into religion." All too often, music, which used to be a means, has become the end in itself, to be practiced, performed, electronically perfected, and, of course, paid for.

John Ruskin once said that if Shakespeare should come into a room, we would stand in homage, but if Jesus Christ were to enter our midst, we would all bow in worship. If in the worship services of our churches we mimic the styles of the world, we do not honor God. And if the unsaved person is seeking a difference, he will not likely find it.

Even though the invasion of "contemporary music" into the local church is nearly universal, the insatiable appetite for more continues unabated. The *St. Petersburg Times* of March 9, 1991, reports that "a new kind of church is pursuing

young adults who are searching for spiritual meaning but are turned off by stuffy sermons and old-fashioned hymns."

In the cover story of *Religion*, a magazine of the same edition of the *Times*, Thomas J. Billitteri gives six examples of such "contemporary churches" in the Tampa Bay area alone. In describing the nature of their worship, he says:

The services have plenty of music, but you won't hear *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* droning sonorously from a pipe organ. The songs are "contemporary Christian"—pop-style ensemble tunes jazzed up with bass guitar, keyboard, drums and synthesizer.

It has been rightly pointed out that "what we win them *with* is what we win them *to*." Do we wish to win people to a "show" or a Savior? The dynamics of "contemporary Christian music" are only slightly different, and in some cases, no different from what the unsaved person

has been hearing in his car, home, and headphones during the previous week. Furthermore, when taped accompaniment is used, there is no opportunity for spiritual spontaneity, still less any mood for it.

If this problem of "contemporary Christian music" were isolated to a few congregations, it would be sad enough. However, it is so universal in evangelical churches that one wonders how visitors can perceive the heavenly message when it is presented in such a worldly package.

Dr. A. W. Tozer once wrote, "It is scarcely possible in most places to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction is God" (*Man: The Dwelling Place of God*, 136). This is a serious indictment but most instructive. We are to worship God in spirit and in truth. We can do it simply. We can do it in song. And by singing the hymns together, we can do it profoundly.

Remember, when it comes to worship, the *real audience* is God! 

Do Not Disturb

(Continued from page 17)

- Is there a place to hang coats, lay Bibles, etc., in the rest room?
- Has a place been provided to change or wash babies or has a notice concerning the availability of the nursery been posted?
- Is there a large, well-lighted mirror?
- Is this area spotless, in good repair, and the temperature comfortable?
- Are the rest rooms well stocked with paper towels, tissues, etc.?
- Have the rest rooms been given a "homey" look by decorative touches?

WORSHIP SERVICE

- Is there prelude music?
—the tone set for worship with familiar hymns?
—music used to indicate the transition into the service—thus giving everyone a signal that the service is about to begin?
- Are bulletins distributed to guests who arrived in the sanctuary early? This is an opportunity for members to greet guests and introduce themselves.
- If choruses are used, has a *legal*


copy of the words been provided? Unknown choruses remind the visitor that he is not yet a part of the family.

- Do ushers:
—escort visitors to seats?
—seat people only during hymns, announcements, or at the conclusion of a time of worship?
—have one usher available to greet latecomers, while all other ushers sit or stand in the back of the sanctuary? Congregating in the foyer during the service is distracting and sends a "Nothing important" message.

For that "little something extra," here are a few special extra touches that churches have done:

- Visitors were given "Welcome Packets," which included information about the church, staff, upcoming events, a map of the church, and Sunday School material. Similar packets were given to children, which also included a small gift and treat.
- Pastor asked members to get acquainted with any visitors in their pew and introduce them to the congregation.

- Guests were welcomed by having them stand and giving each one a small fruit bread wrapped and tied with a note of welcome and a scripture.
- In one church the ladies canned jelly. Every Sunday afternoon a jar of jelly was dropped off at the home of each visitor as a token of welcome from the church.

Listen to the questions visitors ask. If they need to ask, "What time is . . . ?" or "Where is the . . . ?" it is a signal that more steps are needed to make guests feel welcome. If guests are not expected or provided for, it is most likely that they will not come or visit again. Visitors are often treated like family before they have had a chance to feel comfortable in the house of God. Making guests feel comfortable takes forethought, planning, and effort. Is the church family willing to make those efforts and to take down the "Do Not Disturb" signs? Are visitors really wanted? Then let the church declare it from the sign out front to the tissues in the rest room: "Welcome to the church! Our church can be your home." 

Confessions of a Baby Boomer

(Continued from page 41)

low men of vision, but not men of maintenance.

3. *I have tolerance for diversity.* I've grown up in a pluralistic, multiple-choice world. I consider diversity normal and conformity abnormal. I'm comfortable with constant change and variety. I like "different."

4. *I have weaker relationships.* Because I live a fast-paced, mobile life-style, I have fewer and weaker relationships with both family and friends. Therefore I crave meaningful fellowship with people to whom I can relate.

What I'm Really Looking For

The quintessential boomer band of the '80s was the popular Irish group U2. Their most famous song struck a chord with baby boomers. It was "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." If you are going to minister to a typical baby boomer like me, you need to know what I'm looking for!

1. *I'm looking for relevant preaching.* I'm looking for someone to form a bridge between biblical principles and the daily grind of my

life in the '90s. I need to know, not just what I should do, but *how* I should do it. I'm looking for straight talk. The key word is "practical."

2. *I'm looking for casual, vital, God-centered worship.* Organs, choirs, and 18th-century hymns are quaint to me, but I'm not looking for "quaint." I'm more culturally connected to guitars, drums, and Bible based choruses. I've grown up on rock 'n' roll, not classical music. I'm used to bands, expressive and casual vocals, and personal lyrics. A church that leans toward this style will draw me.


3. *I'm looking for visionary leadership.* I was raised on the assumption that one man *could* make a difference in the world. I am a child of the '60s and early '70s. I am partial to dreamers and visionaries. I'm looking for a cause that is bigger than I am. A goal of burning the church mortgage won't excite me. Challenge me to change the world, and I will respond to your leadership.

4. *I'm looking for variety in programs and services.* Remember,

I've been raised in a multiple-choice world. Not having a variety of options gives me cultural claustrophobia. My parents may have gone to a small church with limited programs and felt obligated to be there whenever the doors were opened. But I like big churches that offer me a lot of options, with the understanding that I will choose what is relevant to me.

5. *I'm looking for real evangelism and discipleship.* Believe it or not, I *do* want to fulfill the Great Commission and grow to spiritual maturity. I do *not* want to sit around in the name of Jesus. A church that trains me how to share my faith and grow in Christ will have my unconditional support.

Talkin' About My Generation

My generation is ripe for harvest. Baby boomers are looking for God, but it is human nature to see the package before the content. Churches willing to change their "package" to make Jesus culturally relevant to boomers will grow like crazy. Others will keep hoping for 1954. 



The Televangelists Did Me In

The televangelists did me in. But they weren't the start of it. We might never have discovered the leak in the roof if that new family, the Johansens, hadn't sat up front in the second pew. They looked odd there anyway—not that they weren't an attractive family, just isolated. They were so polite. I couldn't figure why they moved from one end of the pew to the other. Andrew, the six-year old, gave it away: "Are all the seats wet?"

They might have come back, too, if they hadn't gone to coffee hour. It slipped my mind that Freida was in charge. Lord help us! The council decided last year after Gus Linder suffered arrhythmia that No-Doze Freida could only make coffee twice a year. It's not true that Bill Roach's threat to call the Food and Drug Administration pushed the council into their decision.

Of course, with the furnace broken down, hot coffee, sugar cookies, and lemon squares could have helped erase the shivers from the sanctuary. Well, with Freida's leaded premium and enough powdered sugar to wire the dead, the Johansens—and everyone else—had the shakes before lunch.

If it had merely been a leaky roof and the specter of a malpractice suit, the week wouldn't have been too bad. As you noticed with the absence of Sunday bulletins, things came unglued in the office too.

When the electric typewriter and "Mr. Coffee" died on the same day, there was no way to convince our secretary, Minerva, that correspondence takes precedence over caffeine. She couldn't begin to get started until her grief had been salved. At 12 cups—11, actually—the last one shorted out the copier.

That was the same day the garage door opener of our parsonage wouldn't, and I had to walk to church. It's a good thing this is our children's week to be healthy. And, since next week is payday, we couldn't think about grocery shopping anyway.

Joe, our treasurer, phoned to tell me he's gone back to dart-board accounting. He tacks the bills on the wall and lets the Lord—and gravity—determine priorities. I can only hope one dart hits my salary check.

Joe was the one who suggested I find a prayer tower and appeal to the Lord—or for the Lord, I forget which. Just like on television!

And that's where those preachers did me in. With appeals to save the Incas and a satellite to reach the lost tribes of Israel—to the tune of several millions, what chance do we have for \$2,217.53?

And \$33.99 for "Mr. Coffee." 

Attitudinal Rigidity *(Continued from page 39)*

apart than adjust his ideas.

A very successful businessman gave the secret to his success expressed in the following three rules:

1. Never make a deal unless both parties profit by it.
2. Never assume you are on time to a meeting or an appointment unless you are several minutes early.
3. In pursuing a task, never concern yourself about who gets the credit for a job well done.

If we ministers will add these rules to our guidelines to success, we shall enhance our chances of doing a much better job.


The basic premise of consecration, a prerequisite for entire sanctification, is the complete submission of our will to the will of God. Submission is a blending of our will with

His will, rather than bending His will to ours. It is stated so well in Paul's words: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13, KJV).

A dynamic surrender to God, with the counterpart of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, is a continuing process as we walk in the light. Human personality, with all of its quirks, can be modified and enhanced by the help of the Holy Spirit as we maintain an awareness of growth and development. If we, by any chance, assume that some of our attitudes are sacrosanct and we close our minds to change, then, to put it graphically, "the concrete begins to set in our head. And that's a hard fact."

Caution should always be a part of our attitudinal adjustments. We dare

not either allow principle to be compromised or become callous to the erosion of ideals. Thoughtful appraisal of all the facts of change needs to be done.

A thrill comes over any person when he awakens to the knowledge that his contribution in life is done on an unselfish basis with only the glory of God involved in the upbuilding of His kingdom. Personal praise and self-satisfaction are only secondary issues. He appreciates the approval of his fellows and the acceptance of his ideas, but they are not a fetish he worships. He is blessed when these bonus moments come unbidden and unexpected, but his greatest happiness lies in the advance of God's kingdom through any contribution he may have made. 



WORSHIP

& PREACHING

HELPS



Derl G. Keefer

December/January/February 1991-92

Prepared by Derl G. Keefer

INTRODUCTION

My philosophy of worship states that preaching and worship are never done in a vacuum. There are no airtight canned sermons or sterile worship experiences allowed for our congregations. Preaching relates the story of Jesus to an audience of people—whether there be 1 or 10,000 sitting in the pew. The key is communication. Theology, ideas, philosophy, style, life stories, concepts, the person of Jesus, the presence of the Spirit, and the love of God unfold as the preacher shares from his heart what God has directed and what he has learned through diligent study of the Word.

Luke, the practicing physician, consistently wanted correct facts. He laid down those facts to his friend Theophilus. Sloppiness would decimate Luke in any area, but especially when it concerned Christ's story. The accuracy of his healing practice overlapped into his historical endeavor to be precise and truthful. His statement to Theophilus summarizes it: "Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you" (Luke 1:3).

His research leads him to people and places that uncover the real story of Jesus, the Lord, a story that has been life-changing to millions and shall continue to transform the masses of lost humanity. The message will not become stale nor the worship happening dull as long as preachers continue to do investigative work as Luke did.

Throughout this quarter we will do some of that investigative work, alongside Luke, endeavoring to uncover sermonic material to present to our present-day disciples of Jesus.

The 13 sermons have been divided into monthly series.

December, obviously, will center around the Advent season. I love a good, heartwarming story. Where better to begin a story than at the beginning? That is precisely what Luke does for us. He will, throughout his narrative, present a compassionate, humble Christ. His introduction generates that concept at the start.

The December 29 sermon will develop around Jesus' growth and the dawning of a new day.

January reminds me of newness, as a new year begins with the flush of freshness written over it. The sermons will deal with concepts that help us look at old ideas with a new look.

The church has always believed that in order for us to be whole, we need healing. February's messages will deal with that subject. Each sermon will endeavor to help us feel the freedom that comes from God's therapy for our lives.

As we walk through the next quarter, my prayer is that God will use these sermon ideas to help you communicate Jesus to your local congregation. God bless your ministry!

THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 1:1-25

December 1, 1991

INTRO

One of my all-time favorite TV programs, still coming via reruns, featured a never-losing, always-victorious lawyer, Perry Mason. Along with the hero was the omniscient secretary who always knew her boss's thoughts, a cynical police lieutenant, an unsuccessful district attorney—I always wondered how he kept his job—and a slick, handsome, muscular private investigator who always uncovered the truth. If it had not been for the detective, Paul Drake, I'm not sure Mr. Mason would have won all those cases. Paul was always digging into the details that gave the right answers to the right questions.

We don't know what Luke looked like, but he had one similarity to our blond detective, Paul Drake, because Luke wanted all the details straight. He left no stone unturned for clues or evidence when it came to the case of: *Jesus Christ, Savior of the World!*

Accuracy of details is of primary importance when we investigate the claims of Jesus ourselves.

Luke outlines in his introductory material (vv. 1-4):

1. The place in history for an accurate account concerning Jesus (v. 1)
2. The people who give an accurate account concerning Jesus (v. 2)
3. The personal accurate account concerning Jesus (v. 3)
4. The sharing of an accurate account concerning Jesus (v. 4)

In this first section (vv. 1-25), Luke foundationally lays for us the beginning of the story of Jesus of Nazareth. There are several lessons we can learn.

I. I Need to Personally Experience and Share the Story of God (vv. 1-4)

Matthew, Mark, and John knew the physical Jesus; Luke did not. He was absent during Jesus' three-year ministry. Never once did he hold a conversation, theological or secular, with Jesus. Nor did Luke ever take a Passover meal with Jesus. He did not witness the death or resurrection of the Savior; yet, the Gospel he wrote seems to be so personal. He dug out the details from eyewitnesses and experienced in life the personalness of the Resurrection. He wrote down his story to one man, Theophilus, in such a personal way that his Gospel has become universal. Vagueness does not appear in his compilation of truth.

Our testimony must not be vague, but rather filled with concrete, up-to-date experiential events. We share with our neighbors, friends, and relatives that our God is a person, not a philosophy. Have you listened lately to your testimony? Have you made God more into a philosophical concept rather than the God of your faith and history? Reflect on that momentarily. Replay your last testimony to a friend.

II. I Need to Live the Story of God (vv. 5-10)

"And they were both righteous before God, *walking* in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord *blameless*" (v. 6, KJV, italics added).

Walking indicates someone in forward motion. I think the word *blameless* could be translated *positive*. If I catch the spirit of all this, I believe God wants us to live His message positively in a forward motion pattern.

I like to call this "bicycle Christian." Have you ever noticed that you cannot go backward on a bike? You can only go forward. If you try moving the pedals backward, they only spin or, on older bikes, lock up. If Christians could just learn that lesson. God doesn't want us to back up in life. He wants us to start moving forward from the time we hit the altar and ask Christ into our lives. Sure, we will make mistakes, but we move forward by learning from those mistakes. We get excited by the great lessons we learn in circumstances, in worship, in Sunday School, from other people, prayer, and other ways.

I need to learn to live the message of faith in a loving God who wants me to succeed in my spiritual walk. Friend, quit walking backward. Start walking forward!

ILLUS. Today I talked with a young, 17-year-old girl who 3 years ago got her life messed up with a drug dealer. Her grades suffered, her communication with parents and friends diminished; life was in the pits! Somewhere God got hold of her heart. Through God's help and counseling she's walking forward. That's what God desires from the bottom of His loving heart.

Live the message!

III. I Need to Listen to the Story of God (vv. 11-20)

Notice where Zacharias was in our Scripture background: in the house of God. He was doing his priestly duty, burning incense in the inmost court of the Temple, called the court of the priests. William Barclay points out that while the priest is doing this, the congregation goes to the next court, called the court of the Israelites, where evening sacrifice is being made. The priest was to come to the rail between the two courts after the incense burned down and give a priestly blessing to the waiting worshipers. The people waited an extra long time for Zacharias to come out. When he did, he could not speak. He had been with God's messenger. Barclay noted that God's voice comes to those who listen for it, as Zacharias did.

ILLUS. Chuck Swindoll said that most of us were born hearing well, but all of us must learn to listen well. We all need to cultivate that skill.

I am afraid that although many of us speak, and God listens, yet when God speaks, we are too busy to hear. Is it not true that we need to linger longer than we do at our private devotions? I wonder what would happen to

us if we spent as much time listening to God as He spends listening to us. It might revolutionize our life-style!

IV. I Need to Catch a Vision of the Story of God (vv. 21-22)

A vision is something you see through the eyes of the mind and heart. Deep down inside, your faith stretches out like a runner coming to the finish line with someone attempting to pass at the last second. It's seeing what God sees. There is faith enough for a project to build a dispensary or to become a doctor, to see a new medicine produced, to electrify a Sunday School, to experience wholly holy living. It cannot or must not be stopped.

ILLUS. Chuck Swindoll relates a cartoon he saw. Two Eskimo were ice fishing. One of them has draped his line through the typical small disk-size hole about three feet wide. The other Eskimo also has his line in the water, waiting patiently for a nibble. His hole, however, is a crater-sized opening that reaches to the horizon in the shape of a whale! That's vision.

Most of us have a vision like the disk size. We live mediocre life-styles and go around doing little because we have no vision. God wants us to catch a vision of what He can do. J. B. Phillips wrote a book titled *Your God Is Too Small*. That's unfortunately all too often where we are in life. How big is your God, your faith, and your vision? Let God enlarge them today.

V. I Need to Act on the Story of God (vv. 23-25)

It's one thing to talk about the story of God and catching the vision of God's story. But it is an entirely different matter to act on His story.

ILLUS. A New England minister told his complacent congregation that there was a necessity of practical godliness needed. He contrasted his people with the early Christians by remarking: "We have too many resolutions and too little action. The Acts of the Apostles is the title of one of the books of the New Testament; their resolutions have not reached us."

God's heart was put on the Cross in human form—Jesus. Those who become disciples know that Christ enters their hearts carrying that idea further—God's love invades our hearts! If that is so, we cannot simply talk about God's love. We need to act out God's love. We must roll up our sleeves and put it into practical application. We ought to invite our unsaved friends to dinner, to give in sacrificial stewardship, to work with the aged as a volunteer in a rest home, to take food to the needy,

to paint and clean up a widow lady's home. Reuben Welch says that to know God is to respond to Him—in action.

Someone said that there are three classes of people: the immovable, the movable, and those who are in motion. Are we where the action is?

CONCLUSION

Jesus' story becomes our story as we get involved with Him. God's message speaks to all people. Will you help share His story?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Worship	
Welcome and Moments of Friendship	
Advent Wreath Lighting	"Jesus, the World's Hope"
Hymn	"O Little Town of Bethlehem"
Pastoral Prayer	
HYMNS OF WORSHIP	"To God Be the Glory"
	"O Come, O Come, Immanuel"
WORSHIP IN GIVING	Offering "Doxology"
WORSHIP IN MEDITATION	
Choir Special	"Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus"
Scripture Reading	Luke 1:1-25
Family Altar Moments	
WORSHIP IN PROCLAMATION	
Special Music	"Let Him In"
Sermon	"THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Call to Worship

Jesus has entered our world. He is ready to enter our service today. Let us invite Him now.

Moments of Friendship

A time to give everyone the opportunity to shake hands and greet one another.

Advent Wreath Lighting

Several weeks in advance approach four creative people who can write a devotional. Ask them to write one; then on the designated Sunday read it to the congregation. Pastor, as you enter the sanctuary, light the appropriate number of candles. This will alert the congregation that worship is beginning.

Offertory Idea

God gave His Son as an offering of divine love. Can we give less than our offering of human love?

Family Altar Moments

Have parents bring babies to the altar and remind them that God sent His Son to the world as a baby.

Benediction

We are leaving today with more than memories, for we have experienced the real presence of Jesus.

THE SURPRISING BEGINNING STORY

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 1:26-38

December 8, 1991

INTRO

Walter Cronkite hosted a television program titled, "You Are There." The premise of the show put the audience in the midst of a historical situation like Washington crossing the Delaware, the signing of the Constitution, or Alexander Graham Bell's first telephone call.

Luke is our ancient Walter Cronkite, putting us as close as possible to an important historical situation. It is a surprising story! The two major onstage actors were a teenage girl whose maturity level was much advanced for her chronological age and a nonhuman called Gabriel.

If I were God, my script would not include a story line with as many surprises as He throws at us. As scriptwriter, I would have a palace with royalty and an experienced mother with other children so that she would know exactly how to raise the Son of God. I'd write in a legitimate kind of father. After all, why couldn't God miraculously do His incarnation with a regular kind of family situation? Why a teenage girl and a man twice her age as parents? I sure wouldn't put a strange kind of being into the scene as a messenger of God. Rather, I would send a handsome courier on a white horse with gold trimmings to the palace to inform the selected couple of God's redemptive plan. Why the surprises? Luke, however, puts us there with the angel and young girl from Nazareth named Mary.

Let's examine this surprising beginning story.

I. There Is a Surprising Messenger (v. 26)

The average 1990s person with atomic power, computer technology, and nuclear physics tends to feel that angels are ancient man's supernatural imaginary friends. Thus, angels have no place in our modern scheme. Prof. Bernard Ramm wrote in *Basic Christian Doctrines*, "Atoms seem at home in our contemporary thinking, but not angels." People know the principles whereby they can reasonably imagine a scientific cruise of the planets by a space-age Darwin. But they have no principles, no guidelines for discussing angels! So people dismiss the concept of angels as purely mythological!

Evangelical Christians take seriously the birth narrative that places the angel Gabriel at the home of Mary on an important historical night long ago. If we take the Scriptures at face value, we understand that there are angels. Condensing volumes of words, we find that angels function by:

(1) ceaselessly praising God, (2) being the media of God's service to man, (3) taking an active role in furthering the work of redemption, and (4) sharing God's constant care for His creation.

Our narrative brings into sharp focus that "Gabriel [the angel's name] was sent from God" (v. 26, KJV) to announce that redemption was coming to mankind

through the avenue of a timid girl to whom he compassionately says, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God" (v. 30).

Often we picture angels as Goliath-sized with deep, resonant voices, stern faces, and wings that could engulf us! We almost have a feeling that they are harsh. As I read the Word, I believe they must have soft faces (when visible) with marks of kindness, eyes that twinkle, and love written all over them by the fingers of God. After all, they are His messengers to His people.

The similarity between angels and New Testament Christians is striking. We are God's earthly messengers telling the world of His great love affair with His masterpiece—humanity. Believers vocalize the story of redemption to a lost world. Truly we are messengers with a mighty message!

Has God's redemptive story penetrated the depth of your spirit so that His message flows naturally from your lips? Be honest with yourself: who is the last person to whom you told God's message of salvation? How long has it been? Ask God to whom He wants you to tell His story. Make an appointment today with that lost person. Someone may be waiting for you to share the Good News with him!

II. There Is a Surprising Recipient and Response (vv. 27-38)

Have you ever been tempted to ask God, "Why Mary?" There were so many Israelite women to choose from across the land. Again, if I were writing the script, the qualification list would include chronological age accompanied by maturity, not a 16-year-old the age of a modern high school sophomore or junior; a homemaker who knew how to care for a baby, not a teenage baby-sitter-type; a wife with a husband who would be understanding; an upper-class person who could best financially care for Jesus.

Isn't it phenomenal that Luke is the only one of the New Testament writers who gives so much detail concerning the angel's announcement to Mary about a virgin birth? As a physician, he would know the birthing process as only a doctor would. The narrative tells us that the mysterious presence of the Spirit of God would cancel the natural human process so that Jesus would be conceived as no other human being was. God would be in Jesus as in no other earthly creature. For us the Incarnation is reality. It reaches to the heart of salvation for all who choose to believe in this God-man called Jesus.

At the time, Mary did not understand incarnation. But we post-Christmas, post-Calvary, post-Resurrection Christians do! Our faith reaches a climax because of the Incarnation.

Mary, the humble peasant girl, was chosen by God. She felt so insignificant to find favor with Him. Listen to her: "Mary was greatly troubled at his words" (v. 29).

What words? Gabriel's: "Greetings, you who are highly favored!" (v. 28).

In her heart and mind at that moment was "Why me, when so many others are better suited for the job?" Her humility is refreshing.

ILLUS. A story is told about a banker who always threw in a few coins to the cup of a legless beggar who positioned himself in front of the bank doors, selling pencils for a few cents to support himself. Most people would toss their coins or dollars into his cup and pass on to their important business. Each time the banker put in coins, he would take a pencil and tell the man that he was a merchant of pencils.

One day the legless man was not on the sidewalk. Time passed and the banker forgot about him until one day he walked into a public building. There in a concession stand sat the former beggar. He owned his own small business. He said how happy he was to see the banker because he wanted to thank him. It was his encouragement and show of respect by telling him he was a "merchant" that gave him the knowledge of life's worth. He no longer pictured himself as a beggar receiving gifts, but a merchant of pencils. He started selling enough pencils to support himself because the banker gave him self-respect.

It is wrong for anyone to get the idea that humility is a person walking around with a sign around his neck saying, "I am nothing, I am a nobody." Each of us is a person for whom the very Son of God gave His life.

Mary had humility with dignity. She was submissive to God's will. Whatever God wanted, Mary wanted. "I am the Lord's servant. . . . May it be to me as you have said" (v. 38).

Oh, how that quality is needed today. How often we mistakenly pray, "God, Thy will be changed."

Perhaps young, pliable Jesus learned at Mary's knee the concept of "God, Thy will be done." That attitude of submission sent Him to the Cross. This "highly favored" woman was in for suffering, pain, and sorrow because she knew how to pray, "Thy will be done." Many people have learned that lesson from a loving, devoted mother.

Mary had a choice. Gabriel was announcing God's purpose and plans to Mary. She had to choose to allow it to be carried out with full knowledge of the small-town gossips. What a courageous choice! What a courageous woman!

Thank God, Mary was His choice.

III. There Is a Surprising Message (vv. 31-33)

The Israelites anticipated a Messiah coming to redeem the world. Gabriel announces that the Messiah's time had now arrived!

ILLUS. A Methodist missionary tells of a letter from a Chinese pastor in a northwestern village province under the strictest Communist domination. The letter conveyed the fact that no longer could they sing Christian

songs or attend public worship. The pastor could no longer preach the Christian message. His letters to his missionary superior always ended with one word to let his boss know that the Christians under his leadership were still vitally alive in the midst of oppression. His one-word testimony: "Immanuel." The missionary knew what he meant—"God is with us!" (cf. Matt. 1:23). Even under cruelty and hatred, understand that God is with us!

Glory to God; He is with us. His kingdom will know no end. Even when the world, Satan, and evil try to dislodge our faith, "God is with us." Let that be the Christian's testimony. Let it ring from every church. Let it be sung by the choirs. Let it be preached and taught from mission station to mother churches. Let all the world know that "God is with us."

In a very pragmatic way, how is that demonstrated in you? How do people know that God is with you? Do they hear Him in your attitude? Do they see Him in your actions? Do they feel Him in your compassion? Do they see you going to places that Jesus would go?

"Immanuel!"

CONCLUSION

Let the surprises begin! Come, Lord Jesus!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ/Piano Prelude	
Moments of Friendship	
Advent Wreath Lighting	"Jesus, the World's Joy"
Hymn—Choir	"O Little Town of Bethlehem" (v. 2)
Prayer	
Hymn	"Joy to the World"
Hymn	"Rejoice, the Lord Is King"
Offering	
Choir Special	"Precious Jesus"
Scripture Lesson	Luke 1:26-38
Pastoral Prayer	
Solo	"That Beautiful Name"
Sermon	"THE SURPRISING BEGINNING STORY"
Benediction	

Pastoral Prayer

Pray for missionaries. Have pictures of the missionaries in the bulletin.

Creative Worship Ideas

Offering Thought

Love the brotherhood of believers. Honor all people everywhere. Give to the world care, love, and joy.

Scripture Lesson

This is a good time to have teens involved in the service. Make sure they have the scripture in time to read over it several times.

Benediction Idea

Christmas Child wrapped in hope, receive our hopeless lives and put yourself in them this week.

THE GLORY OF THE BEGINNING STORY

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 1:39-56

December 15, 1991

INTRO

Take a moment to put faces and names to people whom you personally know and hold in warm regard and affection. Whose camera image flashed before you? Who comes to mind when an intimate moment of burden bearing is needed? Isn't it true that they blend together with you in mutual trust, respect, and esteem? Do you know what we call such people?

Friends are people to whom we can talk without hesitation or embarrassment, folks with whom we feel so comfortable that we can take off our shoes and sit in their overstuffed easy chairs and laugh and cry without caring if they see or hear us, people who can put their arms around us when pain and suffering comes or when the joy of life explodes and still feel comfortable. Oh, for a multitude of friends or maybe a friend at the right moment—a friend to share our thoughts, our dreams, our plans, our secrets!

The angel is gone. Ringing in Mary's ears are his words directly from Jehovah God. No one knows the moment when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, but she knew. With all that was happening to her, she needed a wise and compassionate woman to share her innermost secret without ridicule. Her choice was a close relative named Elizabeth. Mary starts her 50-70-mile journey as quickly as possible to Elizabeth and Zacharias' home (vv. 39-40).

This was a major trip for anyone in those days, being made by foot or donkey over rough terrain. It would probably take most of a week. But Mary didn't care. She needed Elizabeth as a human confidante and friend. The age difference of a mid-to-late teen to a woman of approximately 60 years of age was of no consequence to either of them. There was the mutual respect and love that bonded them together.

My denomination historically uses the terms "brother" and "sister" as endearing titles to members of the congregation. Outdated in some regions, it still carries the idea that we, in the church, need the fellowship of friends who are like blood relatives, those with whom we can share our feelings. Whom in the church do you have as a "brother" or "sister"?

When Mary comes to Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth's womb stirs. The movement of the child inside is, as Walter Liefeld said in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, "A joyful prelude to Elizabeth's being filled by the Holy Spirit, who enlightened her about the identity of the child Mary was carrying" (v. 42).

The word "blessed" describes the happy situation of people upon whom God smiles. The Gospel writer here uses the blessing Elizabeth gave to her young relative to focus attention on Mary's faith.

After Elizabeth's surprising blessing on Mary, the young woman begins her hymn of praise that theologians call the Magnificat, in adoration to her dearest friend, God. Let's draw our attention to Mary's praise hymn.

gians call the Magnificat, in adoration to her dearest friend, God. Let's draw our attention to Mary's praise hymn.

I. Mary Sings of the Glory of Blessedness (vv. 39-45)

The Greek word is *makarios*, which means "happy." It also signifies divine approval. What Mary was saying was that her happiness came by the knowledge that God approved of her life.

I want nothing more than God's approval. When that happens, I have happiness. All other happiness is but momentary. All other approval rusts and rots. They can never bring lasting happiness or joy.

What brings God's approval, a smile to God's face, and a smile to our hearts:

A. An opportunity to observe the wonderful life God gives to us

B. That faith that leaps out to Him

C. A holy curiosity that asks what God wants in our lives

D. A life that cooperates with a trusting heart

Have you made God happy? Have you allowed God to make you happy? Do you feel His stamp of approval on your life? You can.

II. Mary Sings of the Glory of God (vv. 46-51)

God comes first in Mary's mind and heart. In her hymn of praise, God leads all other topics as a burst of spontaneous praise proceeds from her lips. One can feel the crescendo building to triple forte as a song of praise becomes ecstatic emotion, ironically with cool, rational thought.

A. The glory of God is viewed in His redemptive power (v. 47). Jesus appeared upon earth's scene to be Savior of the world (John 3:16). From His high and holy office, He has arrived to bring personal salvation. Our part in redemption is yielding ourselves to Him. Charles Morrison said, "The love of God is no mere sentimental feeling. It is redemptive power." Dwight L. Moody said, "The way to be saved is not to delay, but to come and take."

ILLUS. An evangelist was traveling by railroad many years ago. He was singing to himself the old gospel song "I've Been Redeemed." A man sitting near him joined him in singing the song. After they stopped singing, the evangelist asked the stranger, "Have you been redeemed?"

"Yes, sir," was the instantaneous reply.

"May I ask how long since?"

"Nineteen hundred years ago."

The astonished evangelist echoed in shock, "Nineteen hundred years ago?"

"Yes, sir," said his fellow passenger, "but I'm sorry to

say it's not much more than a year that I have accepted it."

God's redemptive power is available to everyone, and it happened almost 2,000 years ago. It's available now. Will you accept His offer of salvation?

B. The glory of God is viewed in His holiness (v. 49). Our God is a holy God. Holiness inseparably relates to His character and presence. It is the essence of His character, which determines the very nature of His attributes. Dennis Kinlaw said, "It is the outshining of the goodness of the living God." His holiness deals with both His morality and ethical style and is always connected with His love.

If we are to have fellowship with the Holy One, it can be only on the basis of holiness. He provides for us a holiness that comes through His Spirit's baptism in sanctifying power! Then 1 Thess. 5:23 is the appropriate prayer for everyone who encounters God.

Ladislav Orsy said: "Who is a holy person, then? The answer is in the direction of life: one who moves toward God steadily." Are you moving toward a holy life through God?

C. The glory of God is viewed in His mercy (v. 50). God's mercy is given to His people. This word is often translated as "having compassion" but has a much deeper theological significance, for it carries the idea of a combination of love and righteousness. Mercy implies that Jehovah "has entered into a covenant with His people. The result of this relationship is a readiness on God's part to relieve the oppressed and pardon the guilty. . . . Mercy is compassion in action" (W. Stephen Gunter, *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, 334).

William Cowper is credited with saying that many may dismiss compassion (mercy) from their heart, but God never will.

Do you claim Christ as Savior? Then how much mercy do you demonstrate to people?

Oh, for the glory of God to shine upon our darkened world!

III. Mary Sings of the Glory of His People (vv. 54-56)

You and I are God's glory! Do we really understand that? Humanity tops the creation story. Christ died for people. We are the crown of God's glory. He came for us. He is present now because of His love for us. Isn't that thrilling? Doesn't that excite you?

Don't you think when mankind degrades himself by prostituting himself with other things that it hurts God? When we become so busy that we ignore Him or when we defy Him, we violate God's love. The senselessness of separating ourselves from Him defies imagination, but we do it in countless ways.

When God breathed in Adam's nostrils the breath of life, we became living spirits to fellowship with our Maker.

We glorify God as He glorifies us. How?

A. We glorify God by our commitment to Him. We want to be His people. We bond ourselves with the eternal God by never leaving nor forsaking Him. That truly is commitment.

B. We glorify God by our communion with Him. It defies our comprehension, but we have been given the privilege to talk with the eternal God through prayer. Edwin Keith said: "Prayer is exhaling the spirit of man and inhaling the spirit of God." There is nothing worse than to be ignored, and not to pray is to ignore God.

C. We glorify God by His communion with us. God reveals His will for us through His Word. We glorify Him by taking seriously His directions, by taking time to read and understand His Word, the Bible. When we don't feel like reading it, then is the time we most need to read it. Emil Brunner wrote, "The fate of the Bible is the fate of Christianity."

CONCLUSION

Glory is giving adoration to something. In Mary's case, it was giving adoration to God. The few verses that compose the Magnificat are but fleeting thoughts, for her glory to God was her life. Is our glory to God our lives?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude—Trumpet Trio	"I Want to Be like Jesus"
WELCOME TO THE CELEBRATION	
Moments to Welcome Our Guests and Friends	
Advent Wreath Lighting	"Jesus, the Hope"
Hymn	"O Little Town of Bethlehem" (v. 3)
Invocation	
HYMNS OF CELEBRATION	
	"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"
	"The First Noel"
CELEBRATION IN GIVING	
Offering	
Trio	"The Journey"
Scripture Reading	Luke 1:39-56
Pastoral Prayer	
Choir Special	"The Golden Carol"
Sermon	"THE GLORY OF THE BEGINNING STORY"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Invocation

"The Lord's Prayer" in unison

Moments of Welcome

Have ladies from the church bake homemade bread. During the welcome time have the head greeter introduce all guests and have the pastor hand a loaf of bread to each first-time guest, couple, or family. As the greeter begins the introduction, have him say, "Jesus is the Bread of Life. Today we give you bread as the symbol of His life. The people of our church have made this bread with loving hands for you."

Offertory Thought

As we give, let us remember those who have never heard Jesus' name, those who need a Bible in their own dialect. May our hands and hearts reach out to those who must rely on others for their next meal, those needing words and action of comfort, all who look to the church for help.

Benediction

May the glory of Your presence be taken with us this day. May it radiate to all.

THE STORY BEGINS HUMBLY

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 2:1-20

December 22, 1991

INTRO

Some years ago there was a Christmas program titled "Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus." The story line concerned a confused little girl who questioned whether there was a real Santa. She wrote a letter about her quandary to the *New York Sun* newspaper. The editor read the letter and mulled it over in his mind. He wrote an editorial appearing in the paper as a response to Virginia's quest for truth. He wrote about the spirit of goodwill and make-believe wrapped up in a mythical character that appears in a red suit with white beard and hair.

Some people are as confused about Jesus as Virginia was about Santa. As Christians, we need to respond to the Virginias who ask, "Is there a real Jesus?"

We can affirm, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Jesus." His story begins humbly.

I. Jesus' Humble Beginning Included No Room in the Inn (vv. 1-7)

Paying taxes is never a pleasure. Imagine having to travel 80 miles to register to do it! That's exactly what Joseph and Mary were obliged to do. Rome required their subjects to go to their own tribal city to sign up for the assessing of taxes.

Imagine the scene: two solitary figures, one walking, perhaps the other riding on a small donkey over some of the roughest ground in the country, going toward Bethlehem. Alternating riding and walking over the road would have been difficult. Since Mary was nine months pregnant, it was especially hard. Rounding the trail, they could see candlelight from houses in Bethlehem where families and friends were sharing a meal, playing games, or talking together. Exhausted and needing a place to rest, they headed toward the town's khan or inn. Bethlehem's khan offered the traveler only the shelter of its walls and roof.

The *Pulpit Commentary* describes a stable of limestone attached to the inn of Bethlehem. Since Bethlehem was a suburb only six miles from Jerusalem, it had a large inn that was often crowded with the poorer class of pilgrims who went to the Temple at the seasons of the great feasts.

When Joseph and Mary found no room in the inn, they were forced to stay in the stable where other unfortunate travelers probably bedded down with the animals. There, in that humble place, the Savior of the world would have His earthly beginning—where Mary and Joseph would first hear His cries of helplessness and human dependencies. Could Mary and Joseph foresee His strength of life that would someday transform our world?

One can only speculate what the innkeeper thought as the couple asked for room. His "rejection" may have been cruel, or it may have been with genuine regret. His

"no vacancy" sign has become the symbol of Christ's rejection throughout the ages.

A. Some exclude Christ in the political realm. The world does not want nor think it needs Him. They give lip service to Christ, but only if He is politically advantageous. They do not realize the outcome if Jesus were in charge of men who are in charge of governments.

B. Some exclude Christ in the intellectual realm. There is a belief that as long as we have our reasoning faculty, our applied knowledge, our intuitive powers, we don't need a divine teacher to instruct us. We become self-sufficient and happy with our intellectual maturity. Our little "inn" of knowledge will someday be exposed by His light of truth and knowledge as our prison of intellectual foolishness.

C. Some exclude Christ in the physical and material realm. We are in want of expensive cars, a bigger house, larger expense accounts, and more toys of life.

One bumper sticker boldly states, "The person who dies with the most toys wins." We have little concept of stewardship in giving our money, our homes, our cars, our clothes, and ourselves to God to use as He wills. We are too afraid He may ask us to give up something we don't want to surrender. If we are to be Christian, God not only asks for our tithe but asks for our all.

D. Some exclude Christ in the spiritual realm. Most people want a spiritual guide to help them along the way.

At this writing, our economy is waning. A television news commentator recently showed his audience a ceramic figurine designed as an icon of the Catholic church, representing the patron saint of real estate. It was designed so that people could put these figurines on the lawn and receive "help" in selling their property. These objects were selling so fast that the producers couldn't keep up with the demand. Folks want a "spiritual guide" to help them sell their houses!

Some people have room for a "spiritual guide" but no room for a Savior. There is little sense of sin today. Much is said about sin; however, very few sense the need to be forgiven. People reason, "Everybody does it!" "We can't help it!" "God loves us and won't send us to hell!" So why do we need a Savior? Many persons do not have an awareness of a deep, wide chasm between us and God that can only be bridged by the Savior, Jesus. People seem to have no room for the Divine Propitiation, the Reconciler, the Christ who redeems. They don't always oppose His right to their lives; they just don't have the time to open the door to Him. Things crowd Him out.

Dr. Marshall Lang wrote: "Alas, of what enlightening truth, of what blessed restfulness of heart, of what nobility of life, of what eternity of glory, do men bereave themselves by crowding out the Lord who loves them,

by excluding the Redeemer from the home of their hearts!"

II. Jesus' Humble Beginning Includes a Baby (v. 7)

Aren't babies cute? Have you ever seen an ugly baby? They have cute little dainty feet, adorable tiny hands, and little button noses. They are cute with a full head of hair or as bald as an eagle. It always amazes me how these cute little bouncing babies grow into 6-foot persons with hamlike hands, a beard, and great potential.

Little, cute Baby Jesus was to grow up to become a rugged carpenter. If Isaiah the prophet was telling us about His physical appearance, He was, in Isaiah's estimation, not attractive. But what potential! He was to become the Transformer of lives. He is the Son of God, Messiah, Redeemer, Savior! He is the King. His story becomes our story.

III. Jesus' Humble Beginning Includes People of Insignificant Status (vv. 8-20)

We are introduced to the common workingman of the East, shepherds. Perhaps we feel more at home with them than with the wise men of rank and lofty social status. Edersheim and Barclay both espouse the theory that these shepherds watched over the sacrificial sheep destined for the Temple and that these were special herders. Maybe that's why God chose these men to hear the first announcement of the Savior's birth. Their sacrificial lambs would symbolize the coming Lamb of God.

Even if they were the Temple shepherds, they were still looked down on by the mainstream of the culture. It was impossible for them to keep all the meticulous laws, for their sheep required that they perform tasks the orthodox viewed as unclean. God announced His Son to them. In the blackness of night, a divine glory and splendor came to these shepherds—the announcement of glad tidings of joy to all the world.

In His action, God provided for man's release from sin. He provided light to dispel the shadows of darkness. He provided love that would strike a deathblow to fear. Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was God's provision for the "insignificant" of humanity.

After hearing the angel's announcement, these insignificant outcasts started on the road to find Jesus. We also should take the road, not to Christmas, but to Beth-

lehem. With the shepherds, we may pay homage and honor to our Savior and King who lifts us from insignificance to significance. That's why He came to earth.

CONCLUSION

It was a humble beginning for Jesus. He has brought humanity to the brink of eternal life. Will you accept His gift of love today?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude

WELCOME TO OUR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION!

Welcome to Guests and Moments of Friendship

Lighting the Advent Wreath "Jesus, the World's Savior"

Hymn—Choir

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Invocation

Hymns

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

"While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks"

Offering

Doxology of Praise

Choir Special

"What Child Is This?"

Scripture Lesson

Luke 2:1-20

Prayer Chorus

"For God So Loved the World"

Family Altar Time

Dedication Service for Infants

Quartet

"Savior, like a Shepherd"

Sermon

"THE STORY BEGINS HUMBLY"

Choir Closing

"The Hallelujah Chorus"

Creative Worship Ideas

The Dedication of Infants

This is a special time in any church service and especially meaningful at Christmas. Give each child a New Testament as a gift from the church and pastor. The lasting gift will be meaningful to parents and later to the child. It makes a spiritual statement as to the importance of God's Word to all the congregation.

Invocation

Teen Sunday School teacher leads in prayer.

Offertory Thought

Make a covenant to God and fulfill it; let all peoples in all lands bring gifts to Him who is to be revered.

Family Altar Time

An opportunity for you to talk to the Lord around the altars of our church.

THE DAYS OF A NEW BEGINNING

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 2:21-40

December 29, 1991

INTRO

As we move on reluctantly from the excitement of the Christmas experience, there is one last event that bridges the birth of Baby Jesus with what will be the rest of His story. The shepherds have gone back to their bleating sheep. They will never again see angels in the skies of Israel nor hear the angelic choir strike up its hallelujah chorus. The angels' trumpets are silent. The angels have returned to heaven to watch the unfolding drama of the earthly visitation of God as He walks and talks among mankind.

Their next appearance will be to minister to their Master as He struggles in a human body, fighting the cosmic tempter, Satan, during His wilderness experience. It will be their job to be His encourager as He prays, meditates, and fasts for 40 days. Later they will be the great heralds of the marvelous news of the Resurrection.

Joseph and Mary are ready to begin their walk with Jesus. They desire to begin as good religious parents. Five times this passage notes their observing the ritualistic laws of Moses (vv. 22, 23, 24, 27, 39). Dr. Reuben Welch reminds us that three ceremonies were laid down by law relating to the birth of a male. First, the covenant sign of circumcision on the eighth day (Lev. 12:3) symbolized the child's entrance into the community of faith. It became his identification with the people of God. The faithful Joseph and Mary have their Child circumcised and give Him the name Jesus, as God's messenger prescribed. This act was the first shedding of blood and becomes the first symbolic act of identification with Israel and the world.

Second, the ceremony of consecration is the presentation of the child to God (Exod. 13:2). Welch states that Jesus' life would always be lived in obedience and devotion that would completely satisfy and express the meaning of this dedication service.

The third ceremony was Mary's purification. After a woman gave birth to a child, she was ceremonially unclean for 40 days and unable to enter the worship service of the community (Leviticus 12). An offering had to be presented to the Lord at the time of this ceremony. The two young pigeons offered as the sacrifice indicated the low income level of the family. The very poor would be allowed to circumvent the normal offering of a lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon for a sin offering. Possibly, these humble beginnings gave Jesus a compassionate heart for the poor.

At these ceremonies, two senior citizens come into view—Simeon and Anna. These two special people have something to say to us, as well as to Mary and Joseph.

This scriptural setting reveals to us the days of new beginnings.

I. A New Beginning Witnesses to the Divine Revelation (vv. 26, 38)

Just as a new year arrives on the heels of the old year,

so Simeon and Anna represent the past witnessing to the arrival of the promised Messiah.

These two servants of God had long anticipated the divine revelation of a coming Messiah. Their waiting was not done on a lonely isolated island, but in the hustle and bustle of life. Simeon was a layman. The Bible never declares him a professional prophet or preacher. The scripture emphasizes his righteousness and devotion to God! He served God throughout his life—that's why he could honestly look for the Messiah.

One doesn't have to be a "professional" to be holy and just before God. All are called to have pure hearts, clean hands, and to share our witness with the world.

ILLUS. The *Wall Street Journal*, on December 4, 1985, had a lengthy article by staff reporter Matt Moffett titled "Fundamentalist Christians Strive to Apply Beliefs to the Workplace." The article refers to "a growing number of believers . . . seeking to apply their spiritual convictions in the workplace." He continues a few paragraphs later, "A national committee of churchmen recently identified some 150 Christian workers' groups, ranging from the Christian Dental Society to the Rodeo Riders Fellowship. At Seattle's Boeing Co., about 200 employees in a group called Good News at Work gather in corporate cafeterias for breakfast and lunchtime Bible studies and inspirational talks. In the Arizona desert, as many as 40 construction workers building the Palo Verde nuclear plant conduct daily lunchtime Bible studies at the work site."

One ministry called "Hard Hats for Christ" ministers to itinerant construction workers. Founder of "Hard Hats," Jim Hodges, said: "It used to be you had to crawl up in a corner to have a Bible study. Now there are some jobs where you have to attend a Bible study to be a part of the 'in' group."

ILLUS. Biblical influence is evidenced in the charters of some companies. The bylaws of the Atlantic Stewardship Bank in Midland, NJ., commits 10 percent of its pretax profits to Christian charities, stating that its corporate purpose is "to bear witness to Jesus Christ." I called this bank in October 1990 to see if they were still operating and if their charter was still "to bear witness to Jesus Christ." I talked with one of their operators who assured me that this was indeed their purpose. He then transferred me to Mr. Paul Van Ostenbridge, president of Atlantic Stewardship Bank. He responded affirmatively. It was a blessing to talk with a bank president who enjoyed sharing the corporate philosophy of knowing and experiencing Jesus Christ!

What have you done recently to witness about the divine revelation? This week as you circulate in your areas of influence, ask God to direct you to someone in need of Him. Ask Him to provide opportunity for you to share what He has done in your own life—the difference Jesus has made. Kindly and gently share the Good News. To enhance your testimony to others this week, smile a lot,

be nice, be polite, be gentle, be bold, be honest, be God's!

Anna, the "professional" in this story, enters the scene. She is a 103-year-old prophetess from the tribe of Asher. Her professional prophetess roots date back to the Old Testament days in Exod. 15:20. Moses' sister, Miriam, appears to be the first. (References include Judg. 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; and Isa. 8:3.) The practice continues in New Testament days as indicated in Acts 2:17 and 21:8-9. The person for whom the tribe was named was the second son of Jacob by his wife Zilpah (formerly Leah's maidservant), and the name means "happy."

You don't have to be an "outstanding" person and do great, awesome things in order for God to use you. He simply requires your availability. He will accomplish much if you present yourselves unreservedly for service. Rotary International's motto is "Service Above Self." That could also be said of Anna and should be the motto of all Christians.

II. A New Beginning Looks Forward with Spiritual Eyes (vv. 25-38)

Luke demonstrates in this touching, moving scene the presence of Jesus in the arms of Simeon.

Simeon begins a psalm of praise concerning the Messiah, who has come to bring light and sight to lost humanity (vv. 29-32). He envisions a new beginning for the world.

A. God's servant is prepared for departure (v. 29). Simeon was ready to "go home" to be with God forever. He saw death as a release to eternal life with Jehovah (v. 26).

B. God's servant beholds God's salvation (v. 30). Jesus embodies the salvation of the world.

C. God's servant envisions the universal application of salvation (vv. 31-32). The echoing voice in verse 31 originated in Isa. 52:10 and Ps. 98:3. The parallel structure in verse 32 presents a detailed contrast of this universal application that brings "revelation" to pagans and at the same time "glory" to Israel.

D. God's servant envisions a spiritual choice for the world (vv. 33-34). Simeon predicts that this Child will bring mankind to moral and spiritual decisions. Some people collapse (*ptōsis*) or "fall." Others will "rise" (*anastasis*) or be resurrected to spiritual life. Those who reject Jesus reject the whole of God's revelation.

III. A New Beginning Looks Forward with Hope (vv. 32, 38)

Simeon and Anna fostered hope. They longed for the hope of a Messiah, and they discovered Him! Norval Geldenhuys, in the *New International Commentary*, remarks that Anna spoke about Jesus to groups of the righteous in Jerusalem who were looking forward to God's redemptive work brought through the emergence of the Messiah. "For this reason, the coming of Jesus became known in a comparatively wide circle, but only among those faithful souls who had earnestly hoped for His coming."

Hal Lindsey said: "Man can live about 40 days without food, about 3 days without water, about eight minutes without air, but only for a second without hope."

W. T. Purkiser said, "The future belongs to those who belong to God. This is hope." L. J. Suenens penned, "Hope is not a dream but a way of making dreams become reality." Are you part of that community of hope? Are you in the process of communicating your hope to others?

Find someone who has lost his hope, his dream. Help him rediscover the joy of making dreams reality through hope. For example, go to a rescue mission and volunteer to work for a night. Volunteer to help burned-out victims by gathering clothes or furniture. Listen to a friend who is experiencing a rough marriage or dissension with his children.

CONCLUSION

These are days of new beginnings. Be positive. Let the New Year begin!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	String Quartet
Your Church in Action	Announcements
Call to Worship	A Senior Citizen
Invocation	
Hymns of Worship	"What if It Were Today?" "To God Be the Glory"
Offering	
Read in Unison	"Doxology"
Choir Special	"Reaching"
Scripture Reading	Luke 2:21-40
Prayer Time	
Teen Choir	"Dare to Run"
Sermon	"THE DAYS OF A NEW BEGINNING"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Sermon Notes

The minds of our congregation members keep alert as they write down notes. As pastor, you can help them by producing notes that will leave blanks for them to fill in. Challenge the teens or anyone in the church to take sermon notes by having a pizza party, sub sandwich Sunday, ice cream social, etc. If they (1) are present each Sunday of the month, (2) take sermon notes, and (3) turn the notes in to the pastor immediately following the service.

Offertory Thought

Giving with joy is true giving.

Prayer Time

Have a fireproof container on the altar. Have people put hurts, temptations, frustrations on a piece of paper. They come to the altar and place the pieces of paper into the container. Remind people that God knows all our problems. Burn the papers.

Benediction

As you leave today, you will be entering the mission field.

A NEW VOICE FOR AN OLD NEED—RIGHTEOUSNESS

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 3:1-20

January 5, 1992

INTRO

Voices come in all pitches. The gravelly voice of the bass, the high soprano shrill enough to break glass, the beauty of the alto, and all ranges between the high and the low make us aware of the value of sound.

Luke opens his narrative by reminding his readers of secular and religious voices of the past who would figure into the scheme of the Christ story. The author helps his readers comprehend how the star of the story influenced the people. He acquaints us with Tiberius Caesar (Caesar is a title, not a name), who began his reign after the death of Augustus in A.D. 14.

Fifteen years later (v. 1) puts the date of this event at approximately A.D. 29. This Herod is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruler of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. Herod Antipas' half brother, Philip, ruled a group of territories to the northeast of Palestine, Iturea and Traconitis (4 B.C.—A.D. 33/34). Only a few inscriptions give a clue to another name in our text, Lysanias. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea from A.D. 26 to 36, and Luke's readers would later become better acquainted with Pilate.

In addition to secular voices, religious voices of the time are presented by Luke. He introduces us to Annas, whose official high priestly duties ended in A.D. 15. However, he continued as an unofficial adviser to his son-in-law, Caiaphas, who served from A.D. 18 to 36.

Bursting upon the scene is a new voice, radically different from both secular and religious voices of the time. Neither of those voices called for moving away from the evil of the day. In fact, they epitomized evil. The new voice of John the Baptist called for righteousness, a radical departure from evil. The people, feeling a hunger for truth, flocked to the banks of the Jordan to hear John's voice. Through this text, it is hoped that the voice of John will travel through history to your heart's listening ear.

I. Listen to the Voice of a Prophet (vv. 3-6)

Wilfred Winget, in *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*, said that a "prophet (from the Greek *prophētēs*, to speak for or before) is one called to discern God's purpose and action in history and to proclaim the divine word of judgment and grace" (p. 424).

"Prophecy seminars" are popular in our present day. Some people are enamored with the popular prophecy concept of "foretelling." However, the prophet's main responsibility to the people was to be a "forthteller" of God's truth. The biblical emphasis of the prophet was to proclaim God's word in the present tense to a needy people.

John fit the biblical role! Dressed in camel's hair, with long hair and beard (being a practicing Nazarite), fire in

his eyes, and a voluminous voice, he portrayed the part. More than his appearance caught people's attention; his straightforward honesty was appealing. He called them to "repentance," the main task of a prophet. John knew the sins of his people; they were obvious. Their need for God was also evident in their lives. John had come to make them aware of their need and to point them to the remedy.

John's message spans time, down to our age. There is still a need for turning from our sin and receiving salvation from God.

ILLUS. A young adult man who entered a bank in New York City attempted to get the loan officer to lend him some money. After completing the application he had been handed, he was surprised it took so long for a reply. He was becoming anxious, as he noticed that the loan officer kept going to his manager's desk.

Finally the paperwork was completed. He turned to leave but was startled as flashbulbs popped off in his face and people began to crowd around him. It occurred to him that he must have done something wrong, and that look appeared on his face.

However, he was relieved to learn that instead of doing something wrong, he had been "lucky" enough to do something very right. The bank manager handed his loan papers back with the reply that he would not have to repay the loan. The money he had borrowed included the \$1 billionth ever loaned by that lending institution. In honor of that fact, his debt would never be written in the books; he would never be required to repay it.

John was telling the people that a Redeemer was coming to do the same thing for them as occurred to the young man in the bank. He was talking about Jesus Christ, who was coming to take their debts and remove the sin obligation from the books. Sin, placed on Jesus, will never be held against anyone who accepts Jesus into his life because Christ paid the cost.

II. Listen to the Voice of Conviction (vv. 7-14)

John's message penetrated the hearts of his listeners. Their consciences were pricked. As he preached, they began to see the light of his sermon and began to feel the condemnation and conviction of their actions.

H. Orton Wiley stated in *Christian Theology*: "Conviction is that operation of the Spirit which produces within men a sense of guilt and condemnation because of sin." God convicts; we are to act upon that conviction.

God asks us to change our sinful actions and attitudes. Will you do something about it? God can make a difference in your life. Will you let Him make those changes?

ILLUS. T. DeWitt Talmage tells that as a boy he used to plow his dad's field with a team of spirited horses. He was a quick "plower." Once in a while he passed over

the sod without even turning it over, thinking it did not make any difference. After a while, his father came along to tell him he was not doing a good job because it wasn't plowed deep enough. Sometimes we are only scratched by conviction, refusing to allow the subsoil plow of God's truth to go deeper.

Conviction is not always negative; in fact, it brings hope as it brings change. Despair is replaced by hope. Accompanying conviction is the possibility of divine forgiveness and salvation.

ILLUS. Beecher told that his early life was much like a "corduroy" road in Indiana. There were beautiful prairie flowers on each side of the road, but the trail he traveled was filled with deep chuckholes over which he bumped his way home. He said, "About half the time I lived under conviction, and the other half of the time I was getting over it."

Has God been dealing with your heart about something that isn't what He wants? Is there unconfessed sin unknown to anyone else? God knows! He may have been trying to talk to you about it, but you have attempted to avoid His voice. It is important to hear God's convicting voice.

III. Listen to the Voice Demanding a Response (vv. 15-20)

Hearing the voice of the prophet and feeling the sting of divine conviction are the first steps. Acting on faith in Jesus is required before salvation becomes reality and change is initiated.

The crowd represents various occupations, each with its own set of responsibilities. Three times the question arises, "What shall we do?" (vv. 10, 12, 14, KJV). John gives to each group the appropriate response that would result in a transformed life. His authentic and authoritative voice is what they came to hear. But when God convicts them through His messenger, the changed life occurs through their response to conviction.

Has God convicted you of something today? Has dishonesty overtaken you? Are you having an illicit affair? Is taking God's name in vain becoming a habit for you? Has murdering someone's reputation slipped into your life? What sin has beset you? Conviction is God's first step. It is time to respond to that conviction by turning to Him. Acting upon your faith in Jesus is needed. Release yourself into God's hands. Ask Him, through Christ, to forgive you and to make the difference in your life.

ILLUS. William Hinson, pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Houston, spoke at the National Conference on Preaching, as recorded in the May-June '89 issue of *Preaching*. He shared with those ministers that A. K. Chalmers, professor of homiletics at Boston University, loved to tell about the time he and some friends went to the mountains to go nature sliding or gliding. The guide brought them to a natural slide, and all of the group went down the slide—all except one. No amount of coaching or jovial harassment would con-

vince him to take the plunge. He absolutely refused; his courage failed him.

After the group tired of their fun time, they returned to camp. The man who refused to try it looked back up the slide of the mountain and said, "Look, that's where we slid down." Within the span of an hour or so he had begun identifying with an experience he never enjoyed!

Hinson's comment was, "Our pews are filled with folk who identify with experiences they have never shared."

CONCLUSION

As God deals with you, there are some very practical things you must understand. First, realize you have been listening to one of God's prophets. This prophet is not gifted in foretelling, but rather he is one who has been called by God to forthtell—to tell you straightforwardly that if you are living in sin, repentance is necessary.

Second, realize that the Holy Spirit is dealing with you, not the persuasion of man. God himself has been talking to you about your relationship with Him.

Third, realize that salvation is not simply for the other person. It requires your own personal decision. Put action to your faith in Jesus. Repent, confess, believe in Christ, and today you'll become a child of God. Will you respond now to the voice calling you to righteousness?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude to Celebration	Organ
Call to Celebration	Apostles' Creed
Fellowship Call:	
Getting acquainted with our church neighbors and friends	
Prayer Call	Board of Stewards Chairman
Hymns of Worship	"Come, Thou Fount" "How Firm a Foundation"
Offering	"Doxology"
Choir Special	"My Heart Is Fixed"
Scripture Lesson	Luke 3:1-20
Prayer Chorus	"I Love You with the Love of the Lord"
Prayer Time	
Special Music	"Create in Me"
Sermon	"A NEW VOICE FOR AN OLD NEED— RIGHTEOUSNESS"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Prayer Time

Allow time to break up into small groups of 7-10. Have a volunteer lead in prayer. After a few moments, the pastor will close in prayer.

Offertory Thought

May the precious items from life be given to God. May people praise Him all the day long. Let all things be His.

Benediction

This week may we be given challenges instead of ease, courage instead of contentment, power instead of weakness, hope instead of discouragement, and love instead of hate. Amen.

A NEW, OVERCOMING POWER

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-13

January 12, 1992

INTRO

The Church needs what Jesus modeled—power. If the Church were to turn the world upside down, it would need Christ's power. The power of Jesus' victorious gospel revolutionizes people across all social and economic barriers. It throws open prison doors and sets captives free, causes people to care deeply for one another, and stirs them to worship God!

Our world needs that transforming power. The good news is that the power of Jesus Christ is dynamically transforming people, not merely improving programs and conduct.

The Scripture gives us a better grasp of Jesus' overcoming power. Jesus wrestled with questions concerning His unique power. How should He use such extraordinary power? How should this power be exercised with His Sonship? How should He use this power to fulfill His ministry? Jesus was led out into the wilderness by the Spirit, conscious of these profound issues demanding answers.

In *Beacon Bible Expositions*, Reuben Welch said that Jesus' temptation experience was interrelated to Christ's baptism, as a matter of fact, "a sequel to it" (3:52). His baptism could not have been more dramatic. Heaven opened; a symbolic dove descended from the sky, representing the Holy Spirit; and an invisible Person spoke. Jesus heard His Father's call to the ministry of servanthood.

The desert experience in Luke 4 would tempt Jesus to forsake the road of suffering. If Satan could get Jesus, early on, to deny His calling, the world would go on without a true Messiah. That seemed to be Satan's intent. Jesus' baptism marks His call to ministry. His temptation marks His initiation *into* ministry. This incident reaffirms our faith that there is an overcoming power to resist temptation and sin.

I. Overcoming Power Comes Through a Person

Jesus who overcame is the One who will help us overcome today. We can, by Jesus' help, overcome Satan, temptation, and sin. We cannot overcome in our own power, but rather, by the power and authority of Jesus. The word "authority" means "a right to command." Because Jesus is God, He certainly has that right. He has power to take charge over Satan. As Christians we must turn to Him when temptation appears. We must not linger at temptation's shore lest we drown in its ocean.

ILLUS. C. H. Spurgeon gave an ancient parable concerning a dove who complained to her other bird friends that a hawk was thirsting for her blood. One bird counseled her to keep low to the ground, but the hawk can stoop for its prey. Another advised that she fly high, but the hawk could fly as high as she could. A third told

her to hide in the woods, but this was home for the hawk. Finally, one smart bird told her to rest in the clefts of the rock.

Spurgeon explained that the dove symbolized a defenseless soul; the hawk represented Satan. Nothing can protect us, not wealth, fame, or beauty. Our only defense is Jesus the Rock.

II. Overcoming Power Comes Through Obedience

What if Jesus would have accepted Satan's offer and obeyed him rather than the Father? He would have sinned by obeying the devil. Jesus could not have offered himself as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Our salvation would have been impossible!

Walter Liefeld, in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, related that the temptations of Jesus dealt with His Sonship and Messiahship and that it tested His perfect manhood. It also showed that as disciples of Jesus, we are to follow His example and become obedient to God.

ILLUS. A young-ninth century general led a group of 500 men against a king who commanded 20,000 troops. The king sent word that it was foolish for such a small force to resist his legions. The general of the 500 called one of his men forward and said, "Take that sword and drive it through your heart." The man instantly obeyed and fell dead before the messenger's feet. To another, the general said, "Leap into that chasm," and the man did. The general turned to the messenger and said, "Go and tell your king we have 498 such men. We will die but never surrender."

The courier returned with his message, a message that struck terror into the heart of the king's whole army.

Complete obedience on our part will strike terror into the forces of hell! We must obey Jesus. Are you ready to give up today? Don't! Are you ready to commit spiritual suicide and self-destruction? Don't. God has given you a ticket to spiritual success. On that ticket is the word "*Obey*." We must obey God! There's no other way around temptation.

III. Overcoming Power Comes by Worship

Satan wanted Jesus to worship him; however, Jesus knew His correct object of worship was His Father.

ILLUS. Felix, the youthful martyr of Abitina, was taken captive. He quickly confessed that he was a Christian. His captors asked whether he had attended meetings. To which he replied: "As if a Christian could live without the Lord's ordinance." Worship is a deep need in the Christian.

Satan wants us to worship him, counterfeit of God! The devil opposes God and any of His servants. If he tried to trick Jesus into worshipping him, he will certainly do the same to us.

Jesus is the Example of spiritual fidelity to God. He is the Example of the worship of God. As Jesus' disciples, we also will stay true to our worship of God.

G. K. Chesterton said that the tendency of the world is to see things in terms of indeterminate gray; but the Christian's duty is to see things in terms of black and white. Worship is our adoration and praise to the Lord. The devil will do anything to receive that adoration and glory. He will color any concept of worship, compromise any standard, and bend any rule to get our attention away from God and on him. Jesus saw through his charade. We must put our full attention on Jesus to discover overcoming power. Nothing must take our attention from Him lest it become our god. If that happens, Satan wins.

IV. Overcoming Power Comes Through Experience

Everyone will be tempted. J. Wilbur Chapman said: "Temptation is the tempter looking through the keyhole into the room where you are living; sin is your drawing back the bolt and making it possible for him to enter."

Temptation will come. We can learn by our successes and failures. If we fail, there is One who loves us and will point out how to succeed next time. Jesus died, not only for our sins but also for our temptations that we might live victoriously as Christians! Glory to God!

V. Overcoming Power Comes Through Revelation

George Macdonald said: "God hides nothing. His very work from the beginning is revelation, a casting aside of veil after veil, a showing unto men of truth after truth. On and on from fact divine He advances, until at length in His Son, Jesus, He unveils His very face."

God reveals to us the power; His name is Jesus! We cannot spiritually survive without God's power working in us. Overt temptations obviously require divine strength. Even more frightening are the subtle temptations that catch us off guard. They seem to sneak up like a lion in the bush. The power of God is especially needed to resist these subtle temptations. He reveals His strength in every situation.

ILLUS. Vance Havner told a story about an old shoeshine man in a barbershop who always had his Bible lying close when he wasn't reading it. One day a man came into the shop and said, "I see you are reading the Book of Revelation today. Do you understand it?"

The old shoeshine man replied, "Yes, sir, I know exactly what it means."

The customer asked, "You know what it means when Bible scholars have disagreed about it all these years! What do you think it means?"

The old man replied, "It means that Jesus is going to win!"

Ultimately God is going to win. And so will God's people. But we don't have to wait to the end! He has revealed to us that we can be victorious through His power. He's going to win through, and with, His people.

CONCLUSION

Will you accept Jesus' power today? Put yourself in His hands! What temptations are you facing today? Adultery, cheating, lying, deceit, idolatry, cursing, drunkenness, drugs, divorce? Whatever it may be, your power and strength are in the eternal Rock of Ages—Jesus! Like the shoeshine man suggested, you and Jesus are going to win!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	
Call to Celebration	
Choral Call to Worship	"Stand Up for Jesus"
Challenge of the Morning	
Invocation	Board of Trustees Chairman
Hymns	"He Abides" "There Is Power"
Giving Our Tithes and Offerings	
Giving Our Praise	"Doxology"
Praise in Choir Music	"All in the Name of Jesus"
Praise in the Word	Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-13
Praise in Prayer Hymn	"It Is Well with My Soul" (vv. 1 and 2)
Praise in Prayer	
Proclamation by Ladies Duet	"Exalt His Name Together"
Proclamation in Sermon	"A NEW, OVERCOMING POWER"
Proclamation in Closing	

Creative Worship Ideas

Call to Celebration

We have come to seek the Lord. He can be found in power today. We shall call upon His strength. He will not fail to come!

Challenge of the Morning

This is a time when the pastor gives a synopsis of the service. It can be in the form of a short illustration or a few sentences sharing what you perceive should be happening throughout the worship service.

Giving Our Tithes and Offerings

Lord, help us maintain the important balance between material necessities and spiritual happiness. Release Your people by faith to generosity in holy stewardship and trust in love.

Praise in Prayer

Dear God, forgive us for camping on the periphery of life and living on the border, never facing the central issues of our lives.

Proclamation in Closing

Challenge us to live above mediocrity through Your power!

A NEW SERMON TO A FICKLE CONGREGATION

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 4:14-44

January 19, 1992

INTRO

Temptation can make you or break you; it's up to you. You can yield to Satan, or you can yield to God. Jesus returned from the desert yielded to the Father, conqueror over the devil, and victorious over temptation. An intense sense of God's destiny lay in Jesus' mind as He felt called to tell the world the good news of salvation.

Jesus customarily went to the synagogue. No matter how dull or interesting the service, Jesus was present. Bruce Larson stated in *The Communicator's Commentary* that we are often tempted to rationalize that we can worship as well at the 18th hole or on the lake in a sailboat or under the sun on the tennis court. However, that wasn't Jesus' habit. On the Sabbath, Jesus intentionally sought out the faithful people of God. The scripture reference reveals that Jesus had been teaching and preaching in a number of towns in Galilee and that Nazareth, His hometown, was on the circuit. Luke, in retrospect, depicts the significance of Jesus' visit to Nazareth's synagogue.

Have you ever wondered how Jesus must have felt "going home" to preach? Joseph Excell said, "If ever Jesus could yield to misgivings of what was committed to Him, it would be in that place." In Nazareth He had first heard and pondered Israel's hope. Some of these very men taught Him the words of Moses, the wisdom literature, and the prophets. Many played games as children and swapped tales as teens growing up with Him.

After He was handed the scroll containing the Isa. 61:1-2 portion, He read and notably stopped mid-sentence to proclaim that He was the One Isaiah predicted would come to Israel and the world! His reference to the world infuriated His hometown "friends." It was acceptable for Him to be a prophet to the Jews. But when He mentioned the Gentiles, intimating that God would include "the heathen" in His salvation prophecy plan, it was beyond their comprehension. They thought: probably "Jesus has gone mad." "The preacher's gone too far." "Let's kick Him out of our church. Nobody unholy will get in here." Someone suggested that it would be best to get rid of Him, but they couldn't if they tried!

The new sermon given to His hometown congregation spans time and reaches us today.

I. Jesus' New Sermon Was Preached (vv. 14-22)

After His temptation in the desert, Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit. Leon Morris wrote: "Evidently it could be seen that Jesus was filled with the Spirit and this caused comment (in the community)."

Can people see the Spirit of God in us? Are they aware that we have been in contact with God? Do they see God's Spirit in our actions, words, philosophy, secular activities, "religious" talk, and motivations? They did in Jesus. It should be visible in us.

Isaiah's prophetic sermon that Jesus fleshed out described the sinner's plight. The modern-day sinner's condition remains the same!

A. The sinner is spiritually poor (v. 18). A definition of "poor" from *Funk and Wagnalls' Dictionary* is: "Lacking proper ability; unsatisfactory." That is spiritual bankruptcy! There is no source within us to bring about our salvation. Jesus is the only satisfactory answer to our poor spiritual condition!

B. The sinner is spiritually captive (v. 18). The sinner in Jesus' day and the sinner today have been taken prisoner, held in confinement. Satan's spiritual cell will not let them free. They cannot break free from Satan, from bad habits, from their attitudes. Only Jesus can unlock spiritual prison doors!

C. The sinner is spiritually blind (v. 18). Delilah teased Samson until he finally told the truth about his source of strength. She betrayed him by hiring a barber to cut off his hair (Judg. 16:19-20). The Philistines promptly "gouged out his eyes" (v. 21). That is what Satan does, he gouges out people's spiritual sight. They no longer can see God's hand in the world or God's work among people.

ILLUS. Many people are like the fish that exist in an exceptionally large cave in Kentucky stretching for several miles in an underground river. The fish are blind. They have eyes but cannot see. They have lived in darkness so long that their eyes are of no value.

Sinners become so accustomed to spiritual darkness that their spiritual sight is gone. Only Jesus can open their eyes again.

D. The sinner is spiritually oppressed (v. 18). The word "oppressed" conveys the idea of being burdened or forced down. Satan does that to sinners and attempts to do that to saints!

The Savior is our provision. The spiritually poor can become rich in Jesus, not materially, but in deep peace, satisfaction, joy, eternal life, and even a room in God's house!

Jesus preached the truth to His nervous congregation.

II. Jesus' New Sermon Was Rejected (vv. 23-30)

Jesus wanted people to understand and accept the God of Israel. No imitation gods would be acceptable! Jesus preached the message from His Father. It seems that they would gladly listen to His message of spiritual liberation; but they refused to believe, or recognize, or accept the truth. Their rejection splashed out in harsh words. Their anger spilled into an ugly scene in the synagogue. Jesus' direct message was rejected by His peers. He displeased them because He proposed a non-traditional way of life. He spoke to them with sincere concern, but it fell on deaf ears. They took Him to the

edge of a cliff to cast Him down. Murder was in their hearts! They wanted to kill the Lover of their souls.

Dr. Leon Morris noted: "As far as we know, Jesus *never* returned to Nazareth. Rejection can be final. What a sad commentary."

III. Jesus' New Sermon Was Demonstrated (vv. 31-44)

After rejection in His hometown, Nazareth, Jesus went down to Capernaum to begin teaching. In Capernaum, another Galilean town, He began His healing ministry. What He preached back in Nazareth was demonstrated.

A. Jesus demonstrated His love through authority (vv. 32-37). Reuben Welch wrote in *Beacon Bible Expositions*: "It would be hard to imagine a more tragic contrast than the recognition of Jesus by the demon and the blindness of His own people" (3:59). In this scripture, Jesus exorcised the demon out of the man, delivering him from the tyranny of destructive forces. Welch continued: "The people recognized His authority but not the significance of His action, which was that through the power of Jesus, the Messiah, the kingdom of evil was beginning to fall and the healing, saving reign of God was being established" (ibid.).

That is significant if it is occurring in you. Is God's kingdom being established in you? Let it happen now. There will come a time when every knee, including yours, will bow and every tongue shall proclaim Him Lord. Don't wait until that day of judgment and ultimate recognition. Those who accept Jesus now will reign with Him forever. Those who let Satan rule with authority in this life will dwell in hell with him in the next.

B. Jesus demonstrated His love through compassion (vv. 38-41). Peter's mother-in-law had a high fever. Luke uses a medical term to indicate the fact it was a "high fever," while the other Gospel writers use only "fever." Jesus looked down with compassion on this sick woman and healed her. Compassion should be a consistent quality in Christians.

ILLUS. Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler once visited Scotland to find someone who had known Robert Murray McCheyne.

When he found someone who had known him, Dr. Cuyler asked, "Can you tell me some of the scripture texts that McCheyne used?"

The old man replied, "I don't remember any of them." "Then can you tell me some of the sermons he preached?"

Again, the reply was, "I have entirely forgotten them." Cuyler said, "Don't you remember anything concerning him?"

"Ah!" said the man. "That's an entirely different question. I do remember something about him. When I was a lad, I was playing along the roadside when McCheyne came by, and putting his hand on my head, said, 'Jamie, I am going to see your poor sick sister,' and then looking into my eyes, he said, 'And, lad, I am extremely concerned about your soul.' I have forgotten his texts and his sermons, but I can still vividly feel the tremble of his hand, and I can still see the tear in his eyes."

Compassion is demonstrated in life's experiences! Jesus demonstrated it by coming to the world to bring salvation.

CONCLUSION

There are many sermons to preach to our world—sermons on deliverance, social justice, healing, peace, etc. Whatever we preach must be lived before others so that they can see the gospel demonstrated. If God has spoken to you about your spiritual condition today, come to Him. Let Jesus change your life! Let Him unlock the spiritual prison doors of confinement. Walk out into the light of day. Be liberated now and for all eternity! Don't reject Jesus today. He desires to be Savior and Lord. Jesus' concern for you sent Him to the Cross. Don't be a part of a fickle congregation that rejects the Lordship of Jesus!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Fellowship—Greet One Another
Musical Call "The Solid Rock"
Prayer Call Sunday School Superintendent
Hymn of Worship "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"
Giving Our Tithes and Offerings
Worship in Dedication of a Sound System
Proclamation in Special Music "The Solid Rock"
Proclamation in Sermon "A NEW SERMON TO A
FICKLE CONGREGATION"
Proclamation in Closing

Creative Worship Ideas

Dedication of Sound System

Leader: Ps. 96:1-2

Congregation: Ps. 108:1

Leader: Ps. 100:1-4

Statement from head trustee covering the system

Litany of Dedication:

Minister: To the services of our sound system that it may enrich the hearing of the gospel,

People: We dedicate this system of sound.

Minister: To the wisdom and knowledge of people who handle such technology that comes by Your impulse,

People: We dedicate this amplifier of sound.

Minister: To the aging and aged of our church whose hearing has become impaired,

People: We dedicate our system of hearing sound.

Minister: To the spirit of voice through song and sermon,

People: We dedicate our sound program.

Minister: To the end that our hearing and thoughts may be lifted up and heard in praise and thanksgiving, our wills be strengthened in active faith, and our lives dedicated to the ongoing kingdom of God around the world,

People: We dedicate this sound system and pray that we may always sing and preach the old, old story of Jesus and His love—with enthusiasm!

Prayer of Dedication

A NEW CATCH—DISCIPLESHIP!

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 5:1-11

January 26, 1992

INTRO

I received a phone call that seemed strange. A lady's voice on the other end of the line asked if this was the Church of the Nazarene. She got my assurance that it was and I was the pastor. She asked how she could be a member of the church. She knew nothing about our church, the theology or doctrines, standards or policy, nor had she ever been inside our building or met any of our people. All she wanted was to be "a member."

Some people desire to be a disciple of Jesus like the lady on the phone—by long distance. They don't know what Jesus taught or care about His discipline or desire to sacrifice for His cause. They wish to be *long-distance* disciples.

Discipleship demands involvement. That is what Jesus conveys to Simon Peter in our scriptural text when He tells Peter he would "catch men" (Luke 5:10). Men cannot be "caught" without personal involvement. As their fishnets were barren, so were their lives; but, as their fishnets would be full, so also would their lives! Often we feel empty, alone, unwanted, and unsatisfied. Jesus steps into our boat and tells us to launch out deeper. As we obey Him, our nets will be filled with satisfaction. We will call others to share in the excitement.

Let's examine the concept of discipleship.

I. Discipleship Includes Listening (v. 1)

The word "listening" means making a conscious effort to hear. It involves paying attention to what is being said, as well as being influenced or persuaded by it.

People were constantly around Jesus. It seems He would become tired of the constant press of humanity. However, He seemed to thrive on that pressure. He was able to keep going because of their spiritual hunger.

What drew people to Jesus? He preached with authority. Luke 4:32 tells of the surprise and amazement of the people concerning His authoritative preaching. His sermons abounded in wisdom and grace. His direct simplicity aimed at their level of understanding and drew people to His message. His illustrations were rudimentary, yet provocative, coming to a sharp point. His love, sympathy, and concern poured out to the open-air congregations. He spoke truth. Certainty that caught the attention of people. He desired for people to know and experience God! When Jesus spoke, people listened!

Being a born-again, honest disciple brings a desire to listen to Him. How is that accomplished? Make a conscious effort to hear Him. Here are some ways it can be done:

A. Read God's Word. Get familiar with the Bible. Use a Bible translation that is accurate, readable, and understandable to you. If you cannot understand the version, you will lose interest, and your Bible will gather dust. God gave His Holy Word to be read and comprehended.

B. Use as companions, devotional books that supplement God's Word. Good devotional material doesn't usurp God's Word; it adds insight to the written Word. Ask Christian friends what material they use. Talk with the Christian bookstore manager. Speak to your pastor. The devotional, as well as the Bible translation, should fit you.

C. Let God use you. Sound Christian counseling by mature Christians can help discern God's message. Experience helps mold us into God's new creation. Other people have been through similar circumstances. Their wise counsel can help.

D. Let your conscience be God's avenue to reach you. Many people have been taught right from wrong since they were young. Moral, ethical, and spiritual insights have been ingrained over the years. God uses the conscience to speak when decisions are to be made.

E. Prayer is listening to God. He answers prayer by saying, "Yes, I thought you would never ask"; or "Yes, here is more"; or "No, not yet"; or "No, I love you too much!"

What has God been saying to you? Are you making an effort to listen? Be a good listener this week, and witness the impact it has on your life!

II. Discipleship Includes Encountering Jesus (vv. 2-3)

It appears that Simon and the boys weren't paying attention. Jesus gets Simon's attention by using his boat. This wasn't a speedboat, but an oar-powered vessel that needed arm power. Simon became the human motor. When he was trapped out there, he had to listen! He encountered the Lord of life. The meeting was unintentional, but so effective. Jesus would change Simon forever.

Jesus seeks an encounter with us. He patiently waits for our willingness to meet Him. But people often are too busy making a living, investing in the stock market, putting pieces back together, looking for the tricks of life, and running in circles. STOP! Go where Jesus is waiting. There are practical ways to find Him.

A. Pick a location. Don't be limited to meeting Jesus where others go for their meeting with Him. You go where you can get alone with Him.

B. Pick a time. Don't be under false guilt about when or how long this encounter will be. Mrs. Williamson used to say that God didn't get up before 10 A.M., but John Wesley would have disagreed! We live in the 1990s with schedules that would have astounded our forefathers. But we must learn from their example that it still requires time to encounter God. You must also learn to fit into God's schedule.

C. Pick a reason. The reason you, as a disciple, should

encounter Jesus is because you love Him! Keep the love relationship alive and functioning.

III. Discipleship Includes Obedience (vv. 4-6)

Almost every sermon conveys the idea of obedience. Can you catch a hint of reluctance and frustration in Simon's voice when Jesus tells him to shove off to deeper water and let his nets down? Do you see yourself in Simon when he says: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!" (v. 5a, RSV). Do you hear his whining tone uttering through gritted teeth, "But at your word I will let down the nets" (v. 5b, RSV)?

We are so much like Simon! We often say, "I really don't want to do this, but I will." Sometimes we forget how much God wants to do through us but often cannot because of our reluctance or refusal. Let God have His way. His ways are the best ways.

He asks obedience from us.

IV. Discipleship Includes Worship (vv. 7-9)

Worship is an outward act brought about by an inner awareness of our defect. Simon realized his defect when he looked into the face of God. His confession is the first act of his worship. When you realize the holiness of God and your need to worship Him, you feel awe toward our Lord.

ILLUS. Over 60 years ago the great English preacher W. L. Watkinson told a story about a certain goldsmith business that owned a large iron safe with many locks. He related that no one person had the ability to open the safe. The keys had been distributed to many trustees, and all of them had to be present with their keys in order to open the safe.

An important part of our Christian faith is accountability to each other. God's saints meet together in adoration and praise to Him and to encourage one another. Christians bow down in adoration and humility before God in true worship.

V. Discipleship Includes Abandonment of Self (v. 10)

True discipleship equals total abandonment of self to follow Jesus. It is natural for fear to override our spiritual inclination to become His follower. These first disciples feared. The Master calmed them and reassured their misgivings with His words: "Don't be afraid" (v. 10). He does that with us. Some are afraid to launch out into the sea of discipleship because it may cost them friends, money, time, habits, energy, family, and a host of other "important" items. There is fear of the unknown that God may ask of us. Satan fans our fears and makes people feel that God is not worth the effort. He blinds people to God's good intent. Often people think that God wants to tear away the "good stuff" and remove all the fun out of life. But if He takes something from us, He replaces it with something better. He adds a dimension to life we never suspect—spiritual satisfaction.

VI. Discipleship Includes Evangelism (v. 11)

We must not be allowed to hoard the goodness and greatness of a loving God. Jesus gives a sense of urgency. The final breath comes for all of us, and then we shall face eternity in heaven or hell.

ILLUS. A couple in my church were driving home after work and were involved in a head-on collision with another couple. Both men in the cars were killed. Both wives were hospitalized in serious condition in two Kalamazoo, Mich., hospitals. I was asked to conduct the funerals for both men.

On a cold Tuesday in January, I conducted one funeral at 11 A.M. and the other at 2 P.M. Little did they suspect on Friday when they left work that eternity would begin in a few minutes.

We face people daily who will step out into eternity—with or without God. As disciples we must evangelize our world, helping people prepare for eternity. Believers know the importance of God's transformation. We are new creations by God's hand through Jesus Christ. We must become involved in Christian witnessing and ministry to people in need of Jesus. The Great Commission compels us to participate in God's great master plan of evangelizing the world.

CONCLUSION

Discipleship is involvement! Simon would never have caught the great amount of fish had he not listened to Jesus. Are we ready to pay attention to Jesus' call? Peter would have settled for an empty net had Jesus not come along. Intentionally plan to meet Jesus.

All night Peter's nets were empty, but at the Master's command, Simon obeyed. His nets filled with fish. Do you obey God's voice instantly? The catch made Simon aware of who Jesus was. It caused him to worship. Jesus fills our nets. We are humbled and awestruck by His commands. We are drawn to worship Him. Simon understood that it was Jesus who made the catch. Launch out into the sea of life with Jesus. Whatever you do, make sure that others come with you!

What will you do with Jesus' call for discipleship today?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Piano and Organ Duet
Announcements and Moments of Acquaintance	
Scriptural Call	Ps. 118:24
Choral Call	"Arise, My Soul, Arise"
Invocation	Children's Ministries Director
Hymns	"My Jesus, I Love Thee" "Stand Up for Jesus"
Stewardship Thought	
Offering	
Doxology of Praise	
Choir Special	"He's Still the King of Kings"
Scripture Reading	Luke 5:1-11
Family Altar Time	
Special Music	"Take My Life, and Let It Be"
Message	"A NEW CATCH—DISCIPLESHIP!"
Closing Scripture	2 Thess. 3:16

Creative Worship Ideas

Sermon Schedule

Prepare your sermons a quarter in advance.

Stewardship Thought

He has made all. All is His. Let us be great stewards of His trust in us.

A NEW START THROUGH HEALING

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 7:1-50

February 2, 1992

INTRO

The head of a great medical service at a university hospital once related to a friend that when one sends for his doctor, he should also send for his minister. His statement indicates that God helps in two ways. One way is through the science of medicine and surgery, while the other is through the power of faith and prayer.

Emotions run high when the subject of healing is discussed. Extremes are always used as examples; one extreme insists God wants to heal everyone.

ILLUS. My sister-in-law attended a church that opposed doctors and hospitals. They believe that if God wanted someone to live, He would perform a miracle and heal them without medical assistance.

At the age of 45, cancer cells began to invade her body. Pain became so intense that my brother, who did not agree with her beliefs, finally forced her to go to the hospital. As she was lying in the hospital, members of her congregation came into the room and told her she would not be allowed to go to heaven because doctors had treated her. What started as a treatable small cancerous spot killed her one year later!

The other extreme holds that God has no interest in our lives. He is up there somewhere, detached from us and incapable of feeling with us.

Luke shares in his Gospel that God does care about His people and the concern is seen through His Son, Jesus. The ingredients of healing reveal God's interest in people.

A Roman centurion came to Jesus in need of a favor. His slave was very ill and needed healing.

I. Faith Is an Ingredient of Healing (vv. 1-10)

A job description of a Roman centurion would include some of these qualifications:

1. A man who can take charge of others
2. A man who laughs at danger
3. A man who is reliable and steady in action
4. A man who can be patient and disciplined
5. A man (when pressed into action) who is bold, ready to hold his ground at his post to the point of death

This description does not portray a weak man, but one who has strength, power, and courage. He appears to be self-reliant and possessed with an exaggerated ego. Not apparent in a typical portrait of a centurion would be humility, love, concern, compassion, religion, or faith. There seems to be a genuine difference in this particular centurion. He demonstrated compassion for a slave that was considered a "living tool" by the government. Usually when a slave was past his prime, he would be thrown out to die, but not this one. Instead, he had a compassionate owner who valued him. The soldier had a unique relationship with the Jews and a deep, re-

ligious interest. Although he was a Roman, he had a synagogue built for the Jews.

The typical relationship between Jews and Gentiles was, at the least, very strained. Jews despised Gentiles and Gentiles hated Jews. William Barclay suggested that in this story there was a close bond between the Gentile centurion and the Jews. His religious views were put into action when he built the synagogue out of his own resources.

Coming to Jesus reveals his humility and faith. Here stood an officer who knew how to command; yet, he also saw in Jesus a superior spiritual officer who deserved a salute of respect. Demonstrating true respect for greatness, he saluted Jesus by placing his faith in Him. To Jesus he said, "Say the word, and my servant will be healed" (v. 7).

Life would be transformed if we could only have a faith like that today. Fear and mistrust have imprisoned our hearts and actions for too long. God wants us to release our doubts into His hands. Faith in Jesus must be implicit trust in His great power and ability, not only for deliverance from physical ailments but for the daily transformation of our lives. Have you given a salute of respect to Jesus by making Him the object of your faith?

II. Compassion Is an Ingredient of Healing (vv. 11-17)

At a funeral service, everyone has gathered to pay final respects to the deceased. People are sitting; soft sobs can be heard among the crowd. The hurt and frustration over the death of this loved one has taken its toll on emotions of family and friends of the deceased. Death's finality is sinking into their hearts and minds.

While waiting for the minister, flashes from the past explode from their memory banks. Good times, fun experiences, guilt, arguments, and happy moments all rush together like paint spilled on a canvas. Suddenly they are all brought back to the present as the clergyman enters the room. Instead of going to the podium, he goes directly to the coffin. He places his hand upon the coffin and says to the body, "Rise up!" Suddenly the heart starts, the blood begins to pump, color is restored, breathing begins, consciousness returns, and the once-lifeless body sits up!

"Impossible," we say. "Preposterous, absurd, ridiculous!" This modern-day parallel of Luke's story is extremely difficult for us to grasp. Yet Luke included this particular circumstance for a reason. The Gospel writer had eyewitness accounts to authenticate his facts. Luke shared with Theophilus and his friends some important qualities concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

A. Jesus is Lord of life. He brings life to living.

ILLUS. A wife got separated from her husband at a county fair one hot August afternoon. She searched all

over the fairgrounds trying to find him. On the other hand, he made the most of his separation by enjoying the rides. When she finally found him, he was getting off the merry-go-round. Irritated, she said, "Now look at you. You spent your money, you got off right where you got on, and you ain't been nowhere!"

This is an accurate picture of living without Jesus. He has come to release us from frugal living and to give substance and meaning to life. Do you lack meaning and purpose? Let Jesus touch you and bring life back to you. He is Lord!

B. Jesus is power over death. Many people have told about coming back from the jaws of death. I have heard of people who have been pronounced clinically dead, only to be revived to the surprise of medical personnel. Others have shared death experiences of their spirit leaving the body, and yet they could watch what was happening in their hospital room as medical people talked about their death.

These have told of coming to the outskirts of eternity, being met by a bright light or person, and being told they were to return to earth. Within moments, they returned to consciousness in their natural human bodies.

I do not understand this, but I do understand that Jesus is power over death! Jesus conquered death. The Scripture is filled with affirmations of Jesus' power over death—not only physical death but also spiritual death (see John 3:16; John 16—17; Philippians 1; Colossians 2; and Hebrews 2).

C. Jesus is compassion. Jesus demonstrates compassion for the widow. His heart reached out to restore life to her son and joy to the widow. Jesus was moved at the distress of others, revealing His pathos, sympathy, and empathy while freely giving away kindness and love (see Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Luke 10:33; 15:20; and Heb. 4:15; 5:2).

As Jesus was moved with compassion, we followers should also show compassion. Healing comes through a compassionate heart.

III. Understanding Is an Ingredient of Healing (vv. 18-35)

John the Baptist needed Jesus to heal his doubts. He had a preconceived idea of the Messiah and how He would accomplish the goal of salvation. John envisioned the Messiah as a winnowing fork of judgment destroying all who disagreed with truth (Matt. 3:12). John saw Him as an ax of total destruction of wrong (Luke 3:9), destroying anyone not doing right. Then comes Jesus, who was caring, helpful, inspiring, and healing. John couldn't understand Jesus' action. Is it any wonder that he sent two disciples to Jesus to ask if He was the Messiah?

Reuben Welch shares in the *Beacon Bible Expositions* that Jesus' reply to John was an interpretation of himself in the mode of Isaiah 29; 35; and 61. Jesus wanted it to be clear to John that what He was doing was

the work of the Messiah. Jesus was exposing the true nature of men's hearts, revealing their innermost secrets (3:85, 86).

Before you can be healed, you must understand Jesus. You must see Him for who He is. Your faith reaches out to the Messiah as God has revealed Him to you. You see Jesus as much more than a good man doing good deeds, a prophet, or a great preacher. He is Lord. He is Savior. He is Redeemer. He is God!

CONCLUSION

The final section (vv. 36-50) summarizes the ultimate healing process. Faith, compassion, and understanding are necessary ingredients. The stories culminate into a final display of a sinful woman who has found God's healing through the love of Jesus. The most important and lasting healing comes when Jesus heals the spirit by forgiving sins (vv. 48-50). Physical healing lasts for a time, but the body still gets old and deteriorates. However, spiritual healing lasts for eternity. If you understand Jesus, come to be healed today.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude to Celebration	Woodwind Ensemble
Call to Celebration	
Choral Call to Worship	"How Majestic Is Your Name"
Invocation	Youth Leader
Hymns	"A Closer Walk with Thee" "His Grace Aboundeth More"
Offering	
Offertory Hymn	"All for Jesus"
Special Music by the Choir	"God's Family/ God's Wonderful People"
Scripture Lesson	Luke 7:1-17
Prayer	Anointing for Healing
Special Music	"Something Beautiful"
Sermon	"A NEW START THROUGH HEALING"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Call to Celebration

Come, Father. Fill our cups. Overflow them with Your blessings!

Anointing Service

Ask those who need a special touch from the Lord because of physical need to come to the altar. As they kneel, take the anointing oil as pastor and place it upon their foreheads. The church board members should be standing behind these individuals and praying for them as elders of the church.

Offertory Thought

Who are those who are rich? Those who will be remembered by posterity? Those who have given to the Lord have worshiped Him!

Benediction

My broken heart and body are healed by the healing hand of God. I will praise Him in the marketplace this week!

THE HEALING OF LEGION

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 8:26-39

February 9, 1992

INTRO

This incident in Scripture is one of excitement and, paradoxically, one of exasperation. On the one hand, a miraculous healing demonstrates the love, compassion, and power of Jesus. The story tells of a man driven to insanity because of evil that possessed him. It goes on to tell of the full health of the man after his encounter with Jesus. The exasperation is evident in the reaction of his neighbors. They should be excited; instead they reject him, the healing, and Jesus.

Scripture reveals that the man called Legion was caught in a dark, demonic power of evil that either he brought upon himself or that circumstances had ushered in upon him.

A. Legion was absorbed with evil (v. 27). He was opposed to anything good and desired anything bad. Anyone who would trespass his living space would be ravaged by Legion. Inside of him right and wrong were distorted. He was stubborn and selfish with an evil purpose at heart.

B. Legion was feared by people (v. 29). His demonic spirit was accompanied by enormous physical power. People of the community feared him, binding him in chains from head to toe. They even hired guards to keep watch over him. When demonic power took over, he broke the chains as if they were plastic, and the guards vanished!

C. Legion was isolated (vv. 27, 29). He did not live in town or with his family. He lived among the tombs far away from people. Townspeople probably drove him to the tombs, but he desired isolation.

D. Legion was destined for destruction if left to himself (v. 27). Scripture reveals his utter lostness and self-destructive path (v. 27). He is gripped by sin and oppressed by dominance of evil demonic power.

Though written almost 2,000 years ago, the story of Legion is up-to-date in 1992! Demons still roam and cohabit our world today, whether in civilized societies or in heathenistic societies openly practicing witchcraft and sorcery. Other demonlike activities include drugs, alcohol, abuse, prejudice, sexual immorality, greed, hatred, and murder. The healing of Legion applies to us today.

I. Legion Was the Recipient of Healing

Legion was tyrannized by evil. Living among the graves, he was lost in the graveyard of despair, struggle, emotional distress, and insanity of sin.

When Jesus looked at Legion, He saw what he could be. Jesus saw his potential. We, too, are objects of God's love. No matter how much sin, God loves you in spite of what you have done.

Sometimes it is difficult to accept that concept. Some

people think that God can't love them because they have cheated on their spouses. They find it difficult to forgive themselves, or their spouses can't forgive them. The good news is that God loves and forgives!

Some people feel worthless. Homelife is unhappy. Emotional and/or physical abuse by parents has resulted in feeling unworthy of love. The good news is that God considered them worthy, so He sent His Son into the world to die for them.

Some people have degrading habits. They have groveled in the dirt and filth of life and feel they can never be clean. God came to clean them up, to make them holy and pure, to make them white as snow. We are recipients of redemption—the aim of God's healing.

II. Jesus Is the Source of Healing

Tired, at the end of his strength, Legion came to Jesus. When Jesus stepped ashore from His boat, Legion appeared. Sick of sin, tired, hopeless, he saw Jesus, the Source of healing and life. Immediately Jesus soothed and calmed his fears and healed his emotions and spirit. Legion had no ability to control his own destiny. It had to come from Jesus!

Jesus Christ is Sovereign Lord over the dark, demonic power of evil and sin. He controls us as we allow His healing, creative power to transform us. That is what happened to Legion when he came to Jesus. Christ intercedes for us.

ILLUS. A man during the Civil War was sitting on a park bench in Washington, D.C., crying. His son, under great distress, had deserted his post in battle and was to be shot by a firing squad soon. The father had come to the capital to see President Abraham Lincoln but couldn't get past the front gates. People passed by, but nobody stopped to listen.

Finally, a little boy paused and asked the man why he was crying. In his emotional distress, he told his story. He ended by saying that if he could talk to the president, he knew his son would be pardoned.

The young boy asked the man to follow him. When they came to the front gate of the White House, the little boy said to the soldiers, "It's all right, he's with me." The man followed in amazement. The front doors, guarded by soldiers with rifles and bayonets, opened when the little boy said to the detachment, "It's all right, he's with me."

Again he followed in amazement. They came to the room where President Lincoln was conferring with his generals and cabinet members, guarded by yet another detachment of soldiers. The young boy pushed inside and jumped up on the president's lap. Conversation stopped as the boy said, "Daddy, there's a man I want you to meet. He needs your help."

The man was brought in to talk with the president. His son received the presidential pardon because the son of the president took an interest in his plight.

Jesus, God's Son, has taken a personal interest in you! He pushes through the heavenly courts and says, "It's all right; he's with Me." Your pardon comes from the hand of God through His Son, who loves you. Jesus has the authority from God to forgive us. He brings healing power to your lost spirit.

III. Change Is the Result of Healing

When Jesus spoke, casting out the demons, the most natural event took place—change. The rough and tough became soft and pliable. The naked became clothed. Insanity became sanity. Confused chaos became clear confidence. Sadness was replaced with joy. As Jesus comes into our lives, we can expect change. We need not fear change when Jesus is in control.

ILLUS. Two caterpillars were crawling along the earth when they were engulfed by a large shadow. As suddenly as the shadow appeared, it disappeared. The two butterflies-to-be had momentarily been blocked from the sun by a large monarch butterfly that had flown overhead. As the beautiful monarch flew off, one caterpillar looked up and said to the other, "You couldn't pay me to go up in one of those things." Change is hard, but God intends for us to be changed after we meet Him.

IV. Villagers Show the Rejection of Healing

When healing occurs, the natural reaction should be joy, but that didn't occur to the Gerasenes. They were so disturbed that they asked Jesus to leave their town. Think what Jesus could have done if they would have accepted Him. His healing ministry. His love and compassion. They were so concerned with their ceremonially unclean swine that they forgot about people! Jesus could have healed their sick, their lame, their blind, their deaf. However, they pushed Him away.

It has been observed that the Gerasene people hated having their routine of life disturbed. They thought life should roll along well without disruption. They couldn't see that sometimes change brings positive results. One author related that he felt more people hate Jesus because He disturbs their routine than for any other reason.

When Jesus comes, He disrupts habits. When Jesus comes, He tells the employer to treat the employee fairly. He tells the employee to do an honest day's work. When Jesus comes, He tells spouses to treat each other with dignity and respect. When Christ comes, He tells us to love people.

If we, like the Gerasenes, tell Jesus to go away and leave us alone because we don't want to change, we reject His offer of new life. We need to accept change. It may not be easy. Emotionally, change can be disruptive, but God helps us as we look to Him. We must not stagnate. There is an abundance of opportunities if we accept God as Lord of life and change.

CONCLUSION

God's healing Agent, Jesus, whose authority drives out any demon, stands ready to do that for you! Simply ask Him to do His holy work in you. You are the object and recipient of His love. Allow the Source of all healing to put His power into you. He soothes and calms your distraught spirit. As you feel His healing touch, you will experience the transformation of new life. Do not reject Him. Don't turn Him away.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude to Worship	Vocal Soloist for 10 Minutes
Call to Worship	
Moments of Fellowship	
Invocation	Sentence Prayers by Congregation
Hymns	"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" "He Brought Me Out"
Offering of Love	
Special Choir Music	"I Am Loved"
Bible Reading	Luke 8:26-39
Prayer Preparation	
Prayer Around the Altar	
Hymn	"Just as I Am"
Sermon	"THE HEALING OF LEGION"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Call to Worship

A symphony in worship is about to begin. There is the melody of God. There is the harmony of people. Come hear the music that God and people make.

Offertory Thought

Father, You have demonstrated Your giving power through Jesus. Oh, how much we need to emulate Your giving love. Amen.

Benediction

If we obey God by keeping His commandments, out of all people we will be His treasured possessions.

A NEW START THROUGH SPIRITUAL HEALING

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 19:1-10

February 16, 1992

INTRO

Picture a hot day in Jericho almost 2,000 years ago.

A Mardi Gras atmosphere of festive joy permeated the roadway as Jesus entered Jericho on His way toward the Cross. In Jerusalem, He would be first handed over to the Jewish leaders.

A blind beggar sitting along the road heard the crowd whizzing by him. He asked what was happening. Someone told him that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by that very moment. When he heard of this miracle-performing Prophet, the poor blind man probably began to shout out to Him. He didn't want to miss this golden opportunity to be healed.

Jesus didn't disappoint him. He healed the man right there in front of the crowd. A fantastic feeling flooded over him and spilled out to the crowd as they began praising God. Shouts of joy praising God for healing the blind beggar caught the attention of the people of ancient Jericho. As Jesus entered the street of what Jewish historian Josephus called "a divine region," people gathered to catch a glimpse of Him.

Jericho was famous for its palm trees and balsam groves. Rose gardens were well known. All of this combined to make Jericho a wealthy area with huge taxes.

Tax gatherers were notorious as renegades and traitors. They would assess a certain value and then charge more. There were many taxes, including a 1 percent income tax; a ground tax for produce grown; a tax on roads, harbors, the markets, carts, wheels on carts, animals that drew the carts; import duties; export duties—anything was taxable. People didn't like tax collectors. Honest folks grouped the collectors in the same category with robbers and murderers, and they denied them access to synagogues.

William Barclay recorded that a Roman historian once found a monument to an honest collector. Zacchaeus, chief tax collector for the region, would not have qualified for a monument built in his honor because he was much too dishonest—until he met Jesus! Being short in stature, he climbed a sycamore (fig) tree. This tree was very easy to climb because the trunk was short and the lateral branches spread wide in all directions. Because of their hatred for Zacchaeus, the Jews made it difficult for him—even in his venture to see Jesus. As Jesus passed, He caught the eye of Zacchaeus perched in the tree. Leon Morris expressed that Zacchaeus was part of Jesus' divine mission. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Come down immediately. I must stay at your house today" (v. 5).

The crowd gasped in horror. The Scripture says they "began to mutter" (v. 7). There was a low grumbling that passed through the crowd. "How could Jesus go to such a sinner's home?" "How could the holy Jesus lower himself?" "Why?"

Because Jesus loved all people. The reason He came was to talk with sinners and to heal spiritual lives.

I. Spiritual Healing Comes Because We Are in Need (v. 10)

ILLUS. A Nazarene pastor, Dr. Harold DeMott, wrote in the Lansing, Mich., South Church of the Nazarene newsletter that a problem in their church office reminded him of Isa. 59:2. This scripture tells that sin separates one from God. He said that the disk drive malfunctioned on their computer; consequently, the computer was unable to address or retrieve any information they needed. He said how extremely frustrating it was to know that the diskette held all the detail needed, but the computer could not retrieve it.

After the office staff made two or three telephone calls, it was decided that the disk drive needed to be cleaned. They purchased an inexpensive cleaning kit, cleaned the disk drive, and the problem was solved.

Dr. DeMott compared the computer problem to the spiritual realm, as even a small amount of sin hides God's face from us so that He will not hear us. He challenged his people to keep their lives pure and clean with communication channels open between them and God. He said, "May He always hear our prayer from hearts made pure by the Word of Christ."

Zacchaeus was lost and defective because of sin. What Jesus did to heal the blinded eyes of the beggar, He would do for the blinded spiritual eyes of this chief tax collector.

II. Spiritual Healing Comes Through Salvation (v. 9)

As we look at Zacchaeus, it appears that he had it made. He had material wealth, friends, and a nice home. However, in spite of all this he was unhappy, lonely, an outcast from the accepted way of life. Despised and hated by average Jews, he longed for true happiness and satisfaction. In Jesus of Nazareth, he would fulfill his desire. There was a spiritual longing by a man empty without God. The reason Jesus came into the world was to bring God to empty, lonely people. Salvation is an opportunity for God to fill each part of the heart.

Righteousness, holiness, and salvation are the essence of our personal relationship with God. He desires for us to be involved in life experiences—including Zacchaeus' and ours! Every type of evil is included in His deliverance. There is no limit to the salvation that God, through Christ, brings. Jesus came to give forgiveness to Zacchaeus that hot day in Jericho. Jesus came to redeem him from the ownership of Satan and sin. Jesus has come to bring God's way of salvation to Zacchaeus and to us.

ILLUS. A clergyman went down into a coal mine during lunchtime to share Jesus with miners in the bowels of the earth. On his return to the shaft, he encountered

the foreman and asked him what he thought of God's way of salvation. The man responded, "Oh, it's too cheap; I cannot believe in a religion like that." Getting on the elevator that would take them to the top, the minister asked how long it would take them to get to the top. "Not long, only a few seconds," said the boss.

The pastor asked, "Well, that certainly is very easy and simple. But, do you not need to help raise yourself?"

"Of course not," replied the miner. "As I have said, you have nothing to do but get into the cage."

"But what about the people who sank the shaft and engineered and built it? Was there much labor and expense to it?" asked the preacher.

"Sure there was! The shaft is 1,800 feet deep, and the cost enormous for the owners."

Just like that, God's Word tells you that whosoever believes on the Son of God has eternal life. It was not cheap! God's work to bring us out of the pit of destruction and death was accomplished at a vast cost, the price being the death of Jesus on the Cross.

III. Spiritual Healing Comes Through Change (v. 8)

Salvation is a free gift that Zacchaeus accepted. However, Zacchaeus wanted others to know that he loved God. The best way to demonstrate that love was to make restitution for the things stolen. Zacchaeus voluntarily confessed his need and spontaneously offered restitution for the things he stole. He wanted everyone to know that Jesus made a difference in his life. His testimony was supported by his words and actions. Jesus does not want a mere change of words, but a change of life! The change comes when we fall in love with Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Today God wants to heal your heart made defective by sin. He sent Jesus to bring salvation and to ransom you from the hands of Satan. Your changed life will show the world that Jesus makes a difference. Will you let Him heal your spiritual heart now?

ILLUS. A woman was taken to Bellevue Hospital in New York City after suffering an attack from her knife-wielding husband. She was inflicted with a knife wound to the heart. It was a delicate operation 70 years ago, but

it was performed, and the flesh wound closed. The patient made good progress for two days, but on the third day there was a relapse, and she died. The operation had been successfully performed, but it could not cure the wounded heart.

Jesus came to heal broken hearts. His healing power accomplishes this wonderful spiritual operation. He is the Great Physician!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Organ
Your Church in Action	Announcements
Welcome to Our Guests and Announcements	
Choral Call to Worship	"Under His Wings"
Invocation	Church Board Secretary
Hymns	"Ye Must Be Born Again"
	"Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus"
Offering	
Doxology of Praise	
Choir Special	"He Shall Reign"
Getting to Know You	
Prayer	
Congregational Special	"Make Me a Blessing"
Scripture Lesson	Luke 19:1-10
Message	"A NEW START THROUGH SPIRITUAL HEALING"
Closing Thought	
Closing Song	"Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing"

Creative Worship Ideas

Offertory Thought

A commitment of self must come before stewardship. May it be our gift today.

Getting to Know You

Pick a family or a single person from the congregation and interview them by asking pertinent questions. How long have you been a Christian? How did you come to know the Lord? What makes you pick this church as your church home? Etc.

Closing Thought

He was poured out like honey from the jar. Let us be witnesses of His sweetness!

HEALING OF THE CHURCH COMMUNION

by Derl G. Keefer

Luke 22:7-23

February 23, 1992

INTRO

I recently noticed that someone had dropped a breakable object. Glass particles were scattered on the sidewalk. Those pieces of glass remind me of the church that has been split into denominations, splintered into theological camps, fractioned by belief and/or disbelief, harassed by personality quirks, damaged by gossip, and attacked by Satan. Often the church needs to be healed. It desperately needs someone to put the pieces back together again. That "someone" is Jesus.

Sitting in an Upper Room almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus was aware of the working of the human mind. How easily the mind forgets events, facts, and people. William Barclay tells that the Greek linguists used an adjective to describe time. The Greeks said that time wiped out all things, as if a mind were a slate, and time an eraser that wiped it clean.

Jesus used two ordinary, common objects to help the disciples remember who He was and why He came into this world. The bread and juice would become symbols of His body and blood, elements of the sacrament that would remind them of Him every time they were taken as objects of faith. The symbols would acquire new meaning as Christians participated in Communion.

Bread was made by beating out the grains of wheat by the heavy strokes of the flail, then grinding the grain into flour between heavy millstones. Finally, dough was made from the flour, formed into loaves, and baked in a hot oven. Jesus told His men that as bread had to be prepared that way to become usable, so His body would be broken for their benefit. The brokenness happened as He said it would when He was beaten in Caiaphas' palace and scourged in Pilate's hall. The mountain of the world's sin weighed and pressed His spirit and soul in the agonizing moments on Calvary's hill as His body writhed in pain.

The fruit of the vine was placed under the press until the juice of the grapes flowed out in a steady stream of purple liquid. Christ said that in the same way His blood would flow for their redemption. His prophecy came true when, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He sweat great drops of blood. On the cross of Calvary, His loving hands were pierced through with great spikes as the blood splattered. His head was crowned with thorns in a wicked portrayal of a king's crown as blood flowed down His face and into His beard. In the end, a spear pierced His side as blood gushed onto the ground—all for our salvation.

At the foot of the Cross we are healed of our sins. Also, the church, the corporate body, are healed at the Cross. Because of this, we hold Communion to be a holy, sacred time. Only as a result of ignorance or foolishness is it ever considered mundane, routine, or dull. God's healing power is revealed in Communion.

I. The Healing Begins with an Invitation (vv. 15-17)

A Princeton Theological Seminary professor, E. G. Homrighausen, from a compilation of sermons in a book titled *Communion Meditations* (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951, 107), said, "The Gospels take for granted that God always takes the initiative. What God does is always the important matter. He is the first and the last, the one upon whom all else depends."

Mankind did not invent this feast of holy Communion. God provided it for our benefit, to strengthen our faith. He invites us to come and dine at His table of faith. His invitation includes forgiveness from sin that has separated man from God. His invitation includes justification, the acquittal of sinners from all guilt of sin. His invitation includes reconciliation, the restoration between God and man. We can enjoy fellowship once again.

ILLUS. Several years ago many lives were lost in the Alps due to the use of defective ropes. The Alpine Club took up the subject of what should be done to secure quality ropes. After discussion of the composition of materials and how to control the ropes that were sold, it was decided that the Alpine Club would inspect each rope. Each rope would be marked by a crimson thread sown into it to guarantee that it was inspected by the club.

The *Christian Herald* writer who reported this story commented that when climbing spiritual altitudes, the rope that is safe for us is the one that also has a crimson thread woven into it. That stain was put there by the blood of Jesus on the Cross.

II. The Healing Gives Strength to an Aching Heart

Our lives are often shattered like the glass I saw on the sidewalk. A shattered life of an aching heart takes many forms—death, alcohol, abuse, accidents, gossip, infidelity, age, harsh words, doubt, bigotry, bitterness, etc. Tell God about the pains you experience. There may be something in your heart that no surgeon's scalpel can reach, but God can heal you today. If you need strength to hold up under pressure, turn to God. He has given many healing instruments to help our hurting hearts. These instruments of love include caring friends, changing circumstances, new understandings, fresh starts, new outlooks, new friends, new life-styles, or new hearts.

ILLUS. A general had won many victories. The king asked that general for the loan of the sword that had accomplished so much. After examination of the weapon, the king returned it with the message, "Tell the general that I find his sword no better than any other."

The general sent his reply with a messenger, "Tell the king that he should have sent also for the arm that is accustomed to wield the sword!"

God wields the swords of strength for us. Communion reminds us of His strength.

III. The Healing Brings Fellowship

Some relationships are broken to pieces like glass strewn on the sidewalk. Friendship, harmony, or the love bond is shattered. Words, actions, insinuations, looks, and attitudes have disrupted fellowship. Within the church, this disruption of fellowship can be devastating. It impedes church growth, discourages new converts, lowers morale, limits vision, ruins building programs, dampens corporate and individual worship, eliminates programs, and reduces giving. If split fellowship has happened in the church, it must be healed quickly. All participants must work toward fellowship under God's direction. Fellowship will be achieved if we sense God's love, acceptance, and forgiveness! Jesus modeled this for us.

ILLUS. A young woman was employed by an artist to sit as a model in his studio. She noticed an unfinished picture of the Crucifixion. She asked the artist, "Who was that wicked man on the cross? What was his crime to be so punished?"

The painter had no sympathy for the Christian faith or life-style and coldly let her know he didn't appreciate the figure on the cross.

She responded, "I would think you would love Him if He died for you."

Many persons, like the artist, don't love Jesus and have no fellowship with Him. Communion is a reminder of His fellowship with us and our fellowship with Him. It also reminds us of our need for fellowship with others in the family.

IV. The Healing Ends with Celebration

Jesus knew He was headed to Jerusalem for one purpose—to die. The end was near. The strain, stress, and suffering as a sacrifice on the Cross lay ahead. At the Passover table He previewed the divine purpose (vv. 15-16). The intensity was great as He bared His emotions. Along with the glumness come the words of joy and celebration. Interwoven through the conversation is the assurance of the new Kingdom. Thanksgiving was offered in blessing and in prayer (v. 19).

Included at any Passover is the psalm with hope and praise. Even in darkness of night, spiritual victory pulsed through the conversation. Communion celebrates the victory that Jesus won for us! At the Communion altar, celebrate His victory over death, hell, and the grave.

Every Communion confirms our acceptance by God through Christ. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

CONCLUSION

God's healing sacrament, Communion, is available to all who know Christ as Savior and Lord. It is an expression of eternal and universal relevance. Communion symbolizes God's desire to heal the whole world. Sins are forgiven. The fellowship of believers is filled with dignity and purpose. Come, accept His invitation to partake of the elements as brothers and sisters, with genuine humility and joyous faith.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Prelude	Piano/Organ Duet
Welcome to the Church!	
Welcoming Chorus	"Jesus, Be Lord of All"
Moments of Friendship	
Invocation	Church Treasurer
Hymns	"A Glorious Church" "The Church's One Foundation"
Offering	
Doxology	
Choir Selection	
Scripture Reading	Luke 22:7-23
Prayer Hymn	"I Need Thee Every Hour"
Family Altar	
Special Music	"Break Thou the Bread of Life"
Message	"HEALING OF THE CHURCH COMMUNION"
Communion	
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Communion

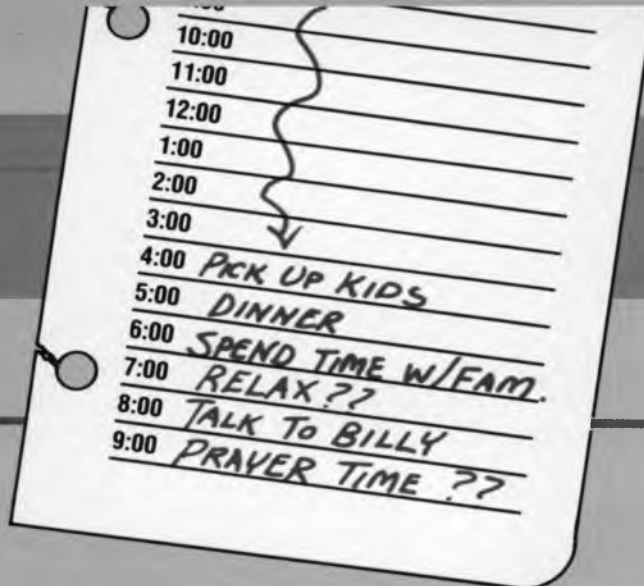
Have elders pass Communion elements to the congregation. Have the congregation stand and get into family units. If singles or teens/children are present without parents, etc., "adopt" them into someone's family. Have the heads of household pray after elements have been consumed. Hold hands as family members. At the end, sing "I'm So Glad I'm a Part of the Family of God."

Offering Meditation

The bounty of our labor we give to You, our Father.
Not with regret, but with joyful hearts, we give.

Benediction

What excitement we felt from Your service. Help us take excitement to others.



One Good Reason to Read

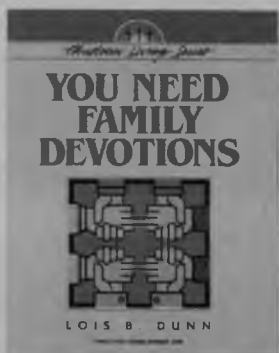
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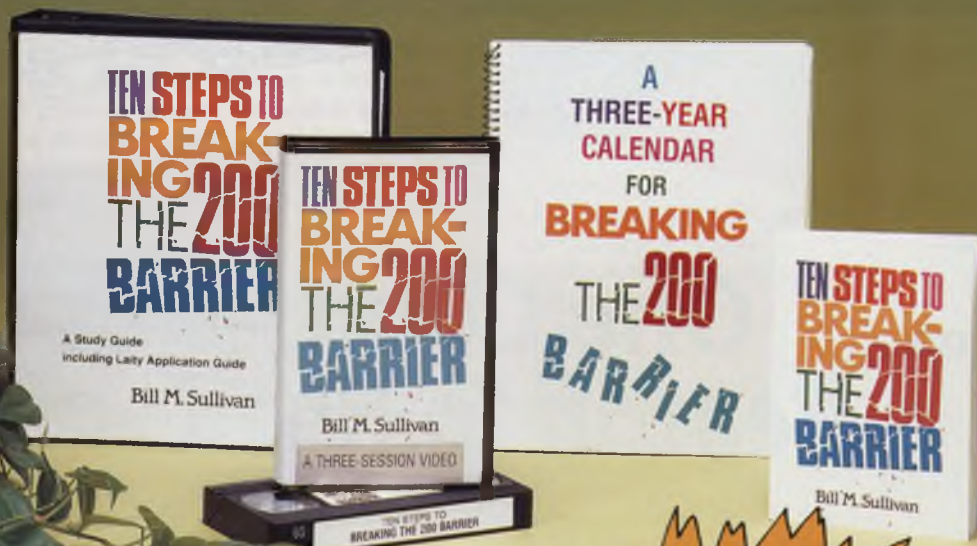
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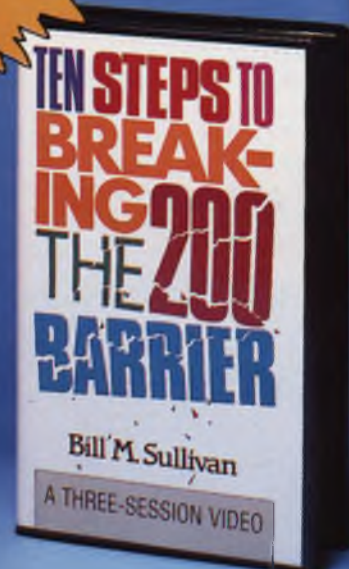
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