

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/1991



THE

# *Preacher's* MAGAZINE

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CHALLENGING YOUNG  
PEOPLE TO FULL-TIME  
MINISTRY

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TEN TRIED AND  
PROVEN IDEAS TO  
FIGHT DRYNESS

---

SUCCESS BY DEFAULT:  
THE NEW AGE  
MOVEMENT

---

HOW I DEALT WITH  
TEMPTATION

---

COMFORTING A FAMILY  
WHEN A CHILD DIES

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# ***SLOW ME DOWN, LORD***

*by Orin L. Crain*

*Slow me down, Lord.*

*Ease the pounding of my heart by  
the quieting of my mind.*

*Steady my hurried pace with a vision  
of the eternal reach of time.*

*Give me, amid the confusion of the  
day, the calmness of the everlasting hills.*

*Break the tensions of my nerves and  
muscles with the soothing music of the  
singing streams that live in my memory.*

*Teach me the art of taking minute  
vacations—of slowing down to look at a  
flower, to chat with a friend, to pat a dog,  
to smile at a child, to read a few lines  
from a good book.*

*Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me  
to send my roots deep into the soil of  
life's enduring values, that I may grow to-  
ward my greater destiny.*

*Remind me each day that the race is  
not always to the swift; that there is  
more to life than increasing its speed.*

*Let me look upward to the towering  
oak and know that it grew great and  
strong because it grew slowly and well.*

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# Serendipities of Work and Witness

by Randal E. Denny

Spokane, Wash.

**F**rom childhood I wanted to be a missionary. God never gave a clear call or opened missionary doors. With great joy I took teenagers to work on the Navajo reservation. Later my wife and I were excited to work for a few weeks in Honduras with pioneer missionaries Stanley and Norma Storey.

Since then I have traveled with my church on two Work and Witness projects. A recent project in Guatemala centered on construction of the Mexico and Central American regional office building. We did the things you expect to do—work, preach through interpreters, sight-see, and some shopped. After the dust has settled now, certain serendipities stand out to me. (*Serendipity*: an apparent aptitude for making fortunate discoveries accidentally.)

You experience genuine appreciation. One weekend our team of 22 visited the city of Quezaltenango, where we had built a church building a few years earlier. The people of that church expressed deep and genuine appreciation in many ways. They lavished their gratitude on us for being a part of a great church that brought them the good news of Jesus.

You experience gracious generosity. A church in Puerto Barrios heard that our Work and Witness team was coming through their town. They insisted on providing us a welcome. Even though many of the congregation are presently out of work, pastor and people shared with us a delicious feast. A spontaneous evening service began—and I was spontaneously notified that I would preach! The people hugged the whole team, knelt behind us at the altar, and prayed for us with fervent spirit. We who intended to be “giv-

ers” received much from them.

You experience family fellowship. Though you would expect to be strangers, there is almost instant bonding with fellow Christians. Language barriers and cultural differences and economic strata all seem to fall before the common bond of following Jesus. In Christ, we have an instant extended family. You could see it in their eyes. You could hear it in their singing. You could feel it in their prayers. Even though I can only “baby talk” in Spanish, I rejoice in Jesus’ family—new friends that touched my heart without successful “conversation.”

You experience refreshing enthusiasm. Anglo worship services in North America are tame in comparison to the lively, joyful expressions of worship in missions areas. You readily sense that their Christian walk has touched all of life—not just the reserved sections for religious duties. We pastors who are tired of coaxing testimonies out of reluctant saints bask in the enthusiasm of a holy love caught on fire! Since Latin culture is not tied so tightly to time schedules, they have the time for something good to happen—and they are excited about it!

You experience enlightened respect. For example, I have known missionaries Harold and Emily Ray of Guatemala longer than they want me to tell. Through the many years since our school days, we have had them in our churches to tell their story. Their selfless ministry has always provoked love and respect from me. But seeing them in action among their people and hearing the vivid experiences on the spot, I have *profound* respect for their contribution to the kingdom of God. In conveying to my family my deep, en-



lightened respect for the Rays, I was so moved to tears that I could not finish my explanation.

Watching Regional Director Jerry Porter provide instant interpretation during a meeting of Dr. Robert Scott, World Mission director, and the district superintendents of Guatemala, I was dumbfounded. Seeing our missionaries, national leaders of the church, and dedicated pastors and wives, I am reminded of the parenthetical phrase in Hebrews 11: “the world was not worthy of them” (v. 38). As a pastor with exposure to Work and Witness projects, I can never be the same!

But neither can my church be the same. Some pastors wonder, “Will Work and Witness take money away from our local church?” Here’s another serendipity! A few days after returning from our Work and Witness project, our church voted to build an addition to provide room for more growth. Two weeks after raising building pledges, our church surpassed its goal for Faith Promise for world missions. It won’t be easy, but it will be inspiring!

A word of caution: one fellow who went on our first Work and Witness team to Quezaltenango four years ago has just gone to Swaziland as a missionary. Well, you can’t win all the time!





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## Preacher's Exchange

**WANTED:** Early *Manuals* of the Church of the Nazarene (before 1928).

**WANTED:** Used, blue *Worship in Song* hymnals.

Contact: Rev. Jim Norcross  
910 N. 1st St.  
Lamesa, TX 79331

# Resign or Re-Sign

by Joseph Seaborn, Jr.

Marion, Ind.

## Celebrating the Call

"If God calls you to be a preacher, don't stoop to be a king." When Charles Spurgeon made that statement a century ago, he summed up the feeling of most of us in the ministry: When it comes to sampling life at its zesty best, ministry is the place to be. If the best life is supposed to include love and scorn, high moments and low, poison and praise, you won't find any better vocation than ministry for tasting it all. Not only do you as pastor have to monitor your own highs and lows, successes and shortcomings, but you also get paid to keep an eye out for how dozens of other people are doing as well. There they sit, scattered all in front of you every Sunday, with your being responsible for zeroing in on their needs and then saying 20 minutes' worth of something that will meet it.

In keeping an eye out for yourself and your people, you quickly discover two facts. One is that you yourself are most definitely human, a walking mass of impulsive motives. And the second is that your people suffer from the same malady. You give your best effort, and they forget to say thanks. And you wince; or you go out of your way to keep the peace between a couple of hot-tempered people, and they still meet and blow up, and it's weeks before the explosion settles down.

And if it's not people who drain you, a chock-full schedule does. And if not the schedule, it's the pressure of decisions. And when the decisions are made, you wrestle with the consequences. Real ministry these days is hectic and draining with far fewer people cut out to handle it than we usually think. The person who quips that any old Tom, Dick, or Harry could cut it in the ministry hasn't been around it lately. Ministry

today is no cakewalk. Most pastors today spend at least half of their time doing administrative tasks, or as one pastor dubbed it, "administrivia." When you add to that the need for keeping pace with moral shifts in society, the growing crowd of ethical issues that face our people, and the record number of options being offered for keeping a local church on track, it's no wonder that many pastors today are second-guessing their call and bailing out of the ministry in favor of more profitable pursuits.

In these days of candor, pastors too are more and more willing to say out loud that they are tired and discouraged with trying to buck the trends, that upstreaming in a downstream world is hard. There's too much to juggle, too many jobs to do to stay on top of it all, too much loss of image due to the scandals that have marred the headlines. You can hardly focus on pastoring for all the public embarrassment and management headaches you have to face.

How long the feeling lasts may vary, but all of us have felt it. You slump in a chair at the end of the day, vowing never to go back to the office again. Your mind staggers with overload. The muscles ache from hours of motion. Your body screams with fatigue. In the round of a single day you went from weary to worn to bushed—about as far down in the dumps as a person could go. You thumb around in the Bible trying to find that verse that says, "Be not dreary in well doing: for in due season you shall reap, if you mope not." But you check both Testaments, and it's not there.

Your mind and body, long drained beyond usefulness, balked at giving out one more good idea or doing one more good deed. But you kept pushing. And instead of thinking

positive and doing good, you slipped over into stinking thinking and halfhearted care. One pastor who got caught in that pattern said he would arrive at his church on Sunday morning so uptight that he dreaded to open the door, because it meant shaking hands with a bunch of people whom he honestly didn't love.

Most of us can remember with ease the day we grabbed our torch and set out to ignite the world for God. We felt unstoppable. Our note pads were piled high with truth that we knew without doubt would change the world. We were almost in the same orbit with God. A couple of lectures on evangelism had made it seem pretty simple; plus, with our zeal, what could possibly stand in our way? So we marched out and thrust in the flame, but nothing burned. Those people who were supposed to be so eager to help us spread the gospel slammed the door in our faces. And the few who did agree to help us got off to such a halting start that we wondered at times if we should keep on trying at all.

As reality set in, we began to realize that our ministry would probably never circle the globe, that we would have to back away from our original plan of a convert per day. But we absorbed the shock of the setback and kept marching nearly as briskly as we had hoped; at least we were going in the right direction.



Only now we were advancing with a lot more wisdom about the actual size of our Judea. We had learned to select a spot considerably less than global in its dimensions and turn our energies to it.

In a way it's a great relief to be out from under that original global burden and under one that's more our size. It takes a lot of pressure off. The ego suffers a little, but at least we wear our hat a bit more comfortably. Plus now we have the added consolation that unless something goes terribly wrong, we can't make a global goof. If we mess up in managing our local acreage, we'll probably get at least one more chance somewhere else. Since we have decided against taking the whole world as our parish, at least we'll have another option if the first venture fails.

But even local ministries come with a load of frustrations. You mark it down and highlight it in yellow: *every ministry, no matter how large or small, can present the pastor with enough problems to sap all the joy out of his work.* A church of 15 can cause migraines

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## You are definitely human—a walking mass of impulsive motives.

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just as painful as a church of 1,500. If people are not responding to the Word of God and moving together in unity, they are a pain in the neck to lead no matter how few and far apart they sit in the pews.

Some time ago I sat with a young pastor whose spirit was smothered with anxiety. He passed a handful of statistics across the desk to me.

"Look at this," he said, "I've been here five years, and the numbers have dropped off every year. Every week somebody tells me I've got to start feeding the people; and Pastor, I'm working myself to death and doing the best I can, and I can't get this church to budge. I've tried evan-

gelism, discipleship, children's programs—*everything*. Nothing works. I'm at the point where I can't even come up with a decent sermon. No inspiration. I'll be honest with you, I really don't care if I ever preach again."

That young pastor was facing what an alarming number of pastors are facing today. He was looking straight down the gun barrel of criticism. His personal pain was doubled because he was also having to live with the frustrating gap between what he knew his church could be and what it was. Instead of a church with its energies focused on growth and outreach, he faced a congregation in which inner tensions had all but suffocated him and stifled the mission of the church.

His predicament was echoed by another pastor. At 56, this man was hardly your version of an amateur suffering from the greenhorn syndrome. He had been pastoring for 33 years and until now had met with fair success. But something happened. As soon as we fell into conversation, I knew that something had gone terribly wrong. A handful of disgruntled people had moved in against him with hostile fury and all but stifled his desire to share the Word at all. He had called on Friday to see if I could possibly arrange to come and preach for him, because as he put it, "I can't get a sermon to come. When I read the Bible, nothing happens. I feel cold and numb. If you could help me for just one Sunday, I'll try to come up with somebody else for next."

That Sunday morning he and I sat on the podium with 275 people gathered on the pews in front of us. As the song leader was directing the music, the pastor leaned over and vented his hopelessness one more time. "They sure look like a dead bunch today. I doubt you'll even be able to wake them up."

Inside I groaned. Eighteen months before, he and his wife had unloaded the moving van and taken charge of what they believed would be the pastorate of a lifetime. Every day for the first few months he hit the office in the morning, bursting with enthusiasm. Untapped opportunities lay all around him. He and his wife had celebrated their anniversary at the church by throwing an

all-church party at the parsonage and giving their people a 15-minute speech on why they were glad to be among them.

Now here he sat, six months later, buried in gloom with roots of bitterness and resentment already growing in his soul. I wrestled to get the message out that morning. His dejected comments whispered just

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## Real ministry is hectic and draining.

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seconds before I stood to speak were weighing like lead in my soul. I felt out of balance, disoriented. Even as I struggled with the message, I guessed that my feelings of being smothered were only a fleeting hint of the terrible oppression that he fought against every time he stood in that same spot. If this was it, no wonder he couldn't find inspiration to preach. No wonder he handed his pulpit over to somebody else every time he got a chance. Even to stand before the people only pounded his spirit further into hopelessness. It was a vicious cycle, and for a few moments that morning I felt it and hated it.

At lunch with him and his wife I lunched through a few bits of advice, but I drove home fully aware that two or three sentences of hope would barely make a dent on the surface of his need. Something more had to happen. Other larger answers needed to emerge.

Every person in the ministry knows the staggering mood swings that go along with managing and ministering to people. Not just from month to month, as this pastor knew, but even from day to day and hour to hour. In the morning you pray over the body of a close friend killed in a car crash, and in the afternoon you visit the hospital to celebrate the birth of a firstborn son. One day you discover that the church is facing critical cash-flow problems, and your mind is thrown into a tailspin.

The next week a person calls and wants to talk about giving a major gift to the church. On the way to meet the donor and describe your church's need, you daydream about how large the gift could be. On Sunday you preach your heart out, give the invitation, and no one comes forward. The next service you leave off the invitation, and two people come forward during the closing hymn. The frustration at the lack of a response of the past week gives way to the surprised gladness of the present glow. If mood swings were made to be criteria for fixing salaries, pastors would be among the highest paid professionals around. You go from dreary to cheery to weary and back again—and all within the course of a single day. Up and down. Glad and sad. On and on.

You sometimes run into the no-

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## Pastors spend half their time doing "administrivia."

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tion that a pastor ought not to let his mood affect his work. At least not very much. It's the old idea that a professional should never give away his inner feelings, that he should always perform his work with poise and grace—no matter how delightful or difficult the circumstances. He should live in a mode of composure, sometimes even cool detachment. But for the pastor who really loves his people, that is impossible. He is called to identify with people, and when you identify, it drains off energy. You die a little at every funeral and get married again a little at every wedding. You hate family fights as you talk with a child who is torn apart by his parents' divorce. And you celebrate with a family who adopts two children orphaned by suicide.

Maybe it would help if a pastor could know what was coming, if he could get a half-day head start on the problems. But like the rest of life, ministry doesn't allow us to practice ahead. Whether we feel

competent or shaky, it's ready or not, here we come. We get up to a brand-new day without the foggiest idea of the detours our schedule will have to take that day. We plan a morning of study, only to find that we have to hurry to the hospital to be with a grieving family, or we plan an afternoon for visitation and suddenly learn that we are expected to speak at a 7 P.M. function because the other speaker is sick. So we end up studying instead of visiting. Any person who enters the ministry, banking on a snug-tight schedule with every little detail having a neat, preplanned slot and every issue coming with pharmacy-shelf neatness, is in for a shocker.

During my Sunday School days we had one teacher who was called the "Floater." This poor person was to be on standby for all the other teachers. If one of the regular teachers became ill or took a vacation, the floating teacher filled in. He often came to church on Sunday mornings and at the front door learned that seven junior-high boys were lurking in Room No. 4 waiting for him to enter the den.

The term *Floater* ought to be applied to every pastor. He has a schedule, but he has learned to sit loosely to it, refusing to feel guilty when all the items on the "Things to Do" list aren't checked off at the end of the day, and all the calls that a demanding member wanted him to make are not made.

In order to cope with the steady stream of crises that seem to line up to get to you, you simply have to make a few firm decisions. The one that comes into focus in this book is that you in your ministry must decide what you will spend your time looking at. A lot of a pastor's confidence and effectiveness has to do with how well he balances his view of all that is happening in his church. It is as important, for example, for a pastor to remember that his people are not all bad as it is for him to remember that they are not all good. It may be impossible to always change your circumstances, but it is always possible to change your view. When it gets right down to it, the pastor has the noble privilege of deciding what he will focus on in the complex life of his church. He can choose whether he will

spend more time curbing wrong or more time praising the right. No two pastors will ever approach the management of their church in the same way, but every pastor owes it to himself to choose his own view. He will do many things, but this one great step he must take—he must choose his own view.

He ought not to let his enemies do that, nor even his superiors. The person who is called to guide a congregation must decide for himself about how he will image his people and his work. Once that decision is locked in place, the ups and downs of a single week will not shake him nearly so much. Two or three hot-headed members erupting on him at the end of a service won't bowl him over quite as quickly. Nor will he live at the mercy of praise, moping if he doesn't get one standing ovation after another. As he goes about his work from day to day, he will do so with the assurance that he is doing his best for God, and no matter what anyone says, lots of good things are happening around him. When friendships get shaky and dividing issues outnumber uniters two to one, he will stick closer to his balanced view, love his people, and trust God with the process.

Vision is a marvelous thing, but visions are decisions of the will. It's tough to keep a dream alive and well when most of the dollar signs in your budget are followed by rows of zeros and the board is pitted against you like an angry nest of

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## In a single day you went from weary to worn to bushed.

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bees. Inspiration is wonderful stuff, and everybody ought to have some of it, but it's hard to be excited when you are being harassed by gossipmongers who slice away at your reputation every day. It's easy in times like that to get down on yourself and feel like Edmund in Eugene O'Neill's play *Long Day's Journey*



*into Night.* "It's a great mistake my being born a man; I would have been much more successful as a sea gull or a fish."

Ministers aren't kidding when they talk of troubles. It's the truth. Pick any ministry you want, and there will be enough problems in it to occasionally jerk the most optimistic person down off his toes. Ministries are few and far between that have no troublesome concerns stalking in the wings. More than likely, the best church you know about could be destroyed overnight if the right person made the wrong move. Even the best situation is fragile. Whether we know it or not, churches live on the brink. Something could go wrong at any time.

If you are going to survive in the ministry, you have to decide to see the good and give it a major portion of your time. Much of the spark of

ministry is lost because we, being very human, focus too long on the problem and too little on the progress. It's so easy to glance at God and gaze at the Goliaths. Along comes a troublesome issue or a cantankerous person, and before we know it, we are zeroing in so intently on the problem that worry muscles in and closes off our view of the steady progress that is still passing us by on the other side.

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## We grabbed our torch and set out to ignite the world for God.

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It took a surprising and unique message from God, but Bill finally came to realize that you have to choose your own view. A few years ago he hit rock bottom in his ministry. He had been pastor of his local church for five years with steady success. The numbers were on the grow. Year after year offerings kept climbing. The quality of Christian living among his people was on the rise. The church's reputation as an exciting, thriving congregation was spreading in the community.

And then it happened. Tensions sprang up about how to deal with the removal of a staff person. Nobody yelled or screamed, but subtle and powerful forces began to tear the unity apart. Attitudes were strained. The delicate nature of the situation was complicated even more because the person being released was the son of a prominent family in the church. Board members cornered Bill privately and attacked his handling of the problem. And in less than four months, the steady progress of five years had all but stopped. Bill's summary of his pain was sad. "I was as low as I had ever been in my life. There wasn't a day that went by but that my wife and I talked about resigning the church. There seemed to be no graceful way to back out. I didn't feel that I could say very much in

front of my board because for several of them this was an intensely family matter. I was really in a bind. It went on that way for several weeks. Pressure. Bitterness. Sin.

"One day I remember sitting in my study feeling like a solid mass of discouragement. I didn't feel like opening a single book, not even the Bible. I didn't feel like doing anything. I really didn't care. I was just sitting, leaning back in my chair with my hands folded behind my head. Just to have something to do I glanced around the room, looking at the lines in the walls. My eyes fell on my ordination certificate hanging halfway down one wall. For several minutes I kept looking at it, wondering if I would ever have entered the ministry if I could have foreseen this terrible day. Without much purpose I got up from my chair, walked over to the certificate, and took it off the wall. I held it up close and looked at it. I read the words about gifts and graces and the confidence the district had placed in me. Then I looked at the signatures at the bottom. They were so faded that I could hardly make them out. I held the frame at an angle to the light, and still they were just barely visible. Without much thought I slipped the certificate out of the frame and out from behind the glass and walked over to my desk to look for a black-felt pen. Having found one, I began tracing over the three signatures so that I could see them more clearly.

"As I was finishing the last stroke," said Bill, "a gentle impression formed in my mind.

"'About this church here, Bill,' the Spirit seemed to say, 'you can either resign and give up, or you can do what you are doing to this certificate and re-sign. Resign or re-sign?'"

"As I clapped the lid back on the pen," said Bill, "a powerful surge of release swept through my mind—a cleansing rush of freedom leaped through my soul. I couldn't believe it. It was like having God himself suddenly stand beside me in the room. If I could ever claim that God spoke directly to me, that was it. I could either resign to the attacks of Satan and let a few members collapse the church around me, or I could re-sign, put my name back on the books as pastor and leader, and go back to my work in His power to

### Try It

Augustine noted that present fleas always seem worse than past diseases. Take a moment to test out this thought in your own ministry. To check it out, you need to bring two thoughts to mind. First, think about a major problem that you successfully dealt with some time ago—a problem that is far enough behind you to no longer generate an emotional reaction when you think about it. Reflect on how you addressed it, and why you think it turned out for the good. Then think about a current problem you are facing. Take one that's dominating your thoughts, even when you are supposed to be doing something else.

Compare the two problems; the one from some time back and the current one. How are they different? How are they alike? Is the present problem more serious than the past one? Does the nearness of it make it seem so? Or is the present crisis a "flea" when compared with the much more serious problem from the past? What did you do in the past that might help you better manage the current concern?

start putting things back together.

"After the ink had finished drying, I replaced the glass and frame and hung the certificate back on the wall. I had already made up my mind. I would definitely re-sign. For the first time in a long time I prayed with joy, 'God, for You I will trace over the same area again. I will not resign. I will go back to rebuilding again.' As I walked out of that office that day," Bill concluded, "I was a different man. The obstacles were still there. The despair still lay all around me. But I had gotten a new surge of confidence from God. I had gotten a new way of seeing my task. If God saw enough good in my situation to make a new start, I would too."

And he did. It took time, but over the years God was able to help Bill restore that ministry, remove the hostilities, and turn the church again into a tool for righteousness in the community.

For most of us the change from discouragement to new hope will not occur in a single afternoon in the study. Dramatic turnarounds of attitude are exceptions and not the rule. Even if we mustered all the optimism possible to our personality, we may still only jolt a part of our people into excitement. Those who claim that a church can change at the snap of the fingers are either one of two things: naive or shallow. They are either counting up changes that don't even exist, or else they are not really calling the people to radical discipleship.

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## It's a great relief to be out from under that global burden.

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In our power we can't always change things. If a few people choose to resist our leadership, we can't force them to follow us. If no matter how hard we work there is still only a smattering of growth, we can't take all the blame for that. People have free wills, and not all their

choices are going to be good. No church is ever ravaged with such purity that sin never crosses the threshold. To lead people is to risk problems. But the pastor who pursues his work, aware of the bad without being glued to it, does himself a great favor: he gives himself the gift of a balanced view. When evil screams for attention and correction, the wise pastor will not avoid it, but neither will he worship it. He will give it due time, but he will soon be looking to the positive points once again.

There's too much worth applauding in our churches to let negative issues call all the shots. Every hard-working pastor has the right to celebrate. He has a right to turn his eyes to what is going right and, if necessary, mention it occasionally to the Chicken Littles who are sure that the sky above the church is falling in. The pastor with a balanced view always sees the good beyond the blatant bad. That's what leaders ought to do. They always see the silver lining in the cloud.

The pastor who preaches that his people must see the best in others must practice his own message. There will always be enough problems to prompt one to resign. But there will always be enough joys to inspire one to re-sign.

One way to break the habit of overfocusing on the bad is to go for a while overfocusing on the good. We may not change a single part of our situation, but we can work on our vision. We can make a decision to see and celebrate the good. If we can get into the habit of focusing on the good and true, we will give ourselves one of the greatest of all gifts—a discerning eye that sees the glory above the gloom. In pastoral work, both will always be present. But through the eye of faith, the pastor must make it a point to keep his eyes open to his whole work. As he does, he may be surprised at how large the good is when compared with the bad. Wasn't Augustine right when he laughed that our present fleas always seem worse than our past diseases? If the pastor can learn to celebrate his gains, the losses will more and more shrink down to the proper size. For the pastor it's a lesson worth regular review—his way of seeing will be his way of salvation.

After all, success in the ministry ought not to be measured only by how many problems you solved; it ought to be judged by the number of situations that because you led well, never went wrong. They will never all be counted, but if they were, their number would be legion.

What you discover again and again in ministry is that you help your own heart by what you decide to see

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## Every ministry can present enough problems to sap all the joy.

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and what you decide to overlook. In ministry we have options about what we will let stay in front of our eyes and what we want to let go by the way. Every church will have a few people who try to bluff the pastor, but even bluffers have a virtue or two. As one pastor observed, "Every person has a reverse gear. If you push gently and long enough, everybody will back up." Thankfully God limits certain species in the churches, but never mistake it, they clearly are there. They may seem nearly untouchable in their hatred, but they are real human beings who need a pastor's care. Of course every church also has its gentle souls who adorn everything they touch. And the pastor who is struggling with the dark, surly side of church life needs to remind himself often that there is a lot about his church that he can celebrate, no matter how bleak things get at times. Even if your days at a particular church are numbered, you can still decide to go away pointing back to the good.

Here's the point. A lot of joy and contentment in ministry is an inner decision of the will. When two or three features of church life take a downturn, we respond by turning time and energy their way. We zero in on the negative. Our perspective narrows to deal with the point of need. And in the process we lose

sight of the positive that is still happening around us. Focused as we are for the moment on the dark side of the church's life, we are terribly tempted to mistake the dark part for the whole. Three miffed members can feel like 30. A nasty divorce can make you feel like canceling the family. A broken furnace and two blown fuses can make it seem like the best thing to do would be to burn down the whole plant and start over. Two board members bickering causes you to wonder if it wouldn't be best to give everybody a gun and have them line up in a circle facing each other. Dark spots have a way of dominating the page. They throw off perspective. They cloud the eyes.

One antidote for overcoming the gloom of discouragement is to overdo our look at the good. As pastors we owe ourselves the benefit of a regular checkup in the matter of our perspective. As managers of people we can let 80 percent of our time be spent dealing with faults that come from about 20 percent of our peo-

ple. When we do, we are missing the fact that 80 percent of the church's life is moving along smoothly and growing quietly, but for the moment we can't see it.

When Moses raised a serpent on a stick, he knew very well that there were still plenty of snakes on the ground. The people were not to

keep riveted to the ground in fear—they were to turn their eyes upward in faith. Their healing and help came as a result of what they were willing to see. Like them, we too can look and live.

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### Try It

As pastors we are often hesitant to applaud ourselves for successful work. It strikes us as self-promotional and probably is. But in our heart we know that there are times when we say to ourselves, *Hey, with God's help, I'm responsible for that going right. I did that and I'm proud of it!*

Take the past six months. As you trace back across your ministry for the past half-year, what belongs in a list of "Things I Attempted That Worked Out Pretty

Well"? What belongs in a list of "Things That I Tried That Died"?

All success in ministry is partial. If you shoot for 100 percent, you'll likely, unless you are highly unusual, get about 50 to 60 percent of what you wanted. And frankly that's a typical success rate. If your lists are about equally long, you are probably meeting with reasonable success in your leadership and ministry. If you're achieving 70 to 80 percent or more of what you want to see done, that's called a *miracle!*



# Challenging Young People to Full-time Ministry

by Stephen Green

Cincinnati

**T**here was a time in the short history of churches in the American holiness movement when being a full-time minister was the socially acceptable thing to do. Religion departments were some of the largest in our colleges. The students that entered them were the brightest and best on campus.

Today we have a different scenario. Religion departments are decreasing. It is difficult to find young people who are even struggling with the call to full-time Christian service. I suppose we could get down on ourselves, but that only underscores the point. The fact is that most denominations are experiencing the same vacuum to varying degrees. In the city in which I live, many of the Catholic parishes are closing down because there are not enough priests to serve them.

Rather than say that the times we live in are grim, I would like to reflect upon avenues that the Spirit of God can take to stir the hearts of young people today. We must first look at some of the reasons that today's young people may not be going into the ministry as a life vocation.

## REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE AREN'T RESPONDING

### The Church's Loss of Influence

I am convinced that many young people do not see ministry as a vocational possibility for their lives because they do not observe the church making an authentic difference in the world. It seems that the world is less and less influenced by the conduct of the church. Ministries are designed for "inreach" and not "outreach." Even our outreach ministries are designed to create a

stronger inner circle. Numerous young people do not recognize authentic salt and light occurring in the world through the ministries of local churches.

### Damaged Leadership

Another reason that our youth are not going into professional ministry is because there has been an immense loss of esteem for authority. This damage in the perception of leadership has been taking place for years—leaders in government, big business, schools, etc., are self-serving, as the thinking goes—and has found particular and renewed focus in religious leadership since the Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart scandals. This loss of esteem for church leadership has caused many youth to look in other vocational directions in the hope of discovering what is vital and important. As a consequence, all too often "making a buck" replaces "making a difference."

If the church is not really altering the world and leadership is leading for its own benefit, then why not obtain the most one can gain in life? It is evident that this inclination has taken place in the 1970s and 1980s.

### Lack of Mission

I wonder if the churches that make up the holiness denominations have floundered in our generation with their sense of purpose. When we talk about the mission of the church, we get many confusing responses.

For example, those of us who have been a part of my denomination for years will say that the mission of the Church of the Nazarene is to "preserve our God-given heritage . . . especially the doctrine and

experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace" (1989 *Manual*, preamble). The rebuttal that we receive is, "What does that really mean as we close out the 20th century and move into the next?" "What does holiness look like in the 1990s?" "Is holiness only personal piety or does it make a tangible difference in the fabric of our world?"

The question of young people responding to a call to full-time service in such a movement remains: Is keeping a tradition going enough to capture the imagination of our young champions? Holiness will have to be articulated for the streets of the world if youth are to be responsive.

### Lack of Opportunity

Do we provide ample settings for God to address our young people concerning a call into ministry? We assume that the Holy Spirit will disclose His will to those who are to function in professional ministry in spite of too few opportunities to hear the call articulated. As I reflect back upon my own calling, I can recount many settings that were intentionally designed to convey the utterance of God, "Who will go for us?" If people are never granted the opportunity to hear God speak a word of commission, how will they ever respond, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa. 6:8)?

## THE BIBLICAL STRUCTURE OF A CALL

In understanding the form and function of the biblical call narratives, we can gain insight as to how an individual can be called into the life vocation of ministry. As the calls of Moses, Gideon, Samuel, and



Isaiah are studied, fundamental elements surface that seem essential to them all.

### **A Crisis in the Human Order**

The first element is the "context of crisis." By this, I mean that there is a problem that must be solved. In Moses' circumstance, Israel was in bondage. Gideon found himself among the people of God who were being oppressed by the Midianites. Samuel was in Israel during a time when the word of the Lord was rare because of the abuse of the worship officials. Isaiah found himself pondering what would happen to Israel in light of the political climate of the world following the death of the great leader Uzziah. Many other calls within the Bible presuppose a crisis within the human order. The Bible does not illustrate the call of God outside of the context of human predicament.

### **The Nearness of God**

A second primary component, within the call narratives, is that God makes His nearness known to the individual who is to be summoned into service. Moses was tending sheep, but God's nearness was experienced in the phenomenon of the burning bush. Gideon was beating out wheat when the closeness of God was apprehended in the Lord's messenger. Samuel was resting near the ark of God when he first encountered God's immediacy in the sound of his own name. Isaiah was most probably in the Temple when he sensed the presence of the holy God in a vision. Biblical faith insists that theophany, the manifestation of God, is the initiative of God. Human beings cannot manipulate God into disclosing His nearness. We cannot work ourselves into a spiritual frenzy and force God to signify His presence. Yet theophany is in a context. It is a condition when eyes are ready to see and ears are ready to hear, often through the work of God's people.

### **Experiencing God's Concern**

A third primary ingredient is the merging of the crisis with theophany, "theophany in crisis." This component is discerned when God's concern about the predicament is experienced and His commission is expressed.

Moses sensed God's interest when

he heard the words, "I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them" (Exod. 3:7-8, RSV). He realized his own appointment in the words, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt" (v. 10, RSV). Gideon discovered God's concern in his commission, "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?" (Judg. 6:14, RSV). Samuel's commission came as he ascertained God's concern, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel, at which the two ears of every one that hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfil against Eli all that I

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Too often "making  
a buck" replaces  
"making a  
difference."

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have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end" (1 Sam. 3:11-12, RSV). Isaiah's theophany in crisis was experienced as he understood his own sinfulness and the uncleanness of the world in which he lived. Though the distress brought about by the death of Uzziah may have induced him to go to the Temple, the great disaster of sin was revealed to him during this anxiety. His appointment was a consequence of the disclosure of defilement in his own life and world.

What all of this seems to be revealing is that an experience that we interpret as a call involves the merger of the world's problems with God's concern about them. Until a human being is persuaded that God has a deep interest for the destitution of mankind, he will never feel the burden that God wants him to do something about that need. No matter how much we perceive the nearness of God, we will never presume a call to minister until we encounter the brokenness of the world. And yet, a call to ministry is comprised of more than simply wanting to meet the needs of the

mass of humanity. It involves a confrontation with the living God of Moses, Gideon, Samuel, and Isaiah! This confrontation is what gives the authority and power to meet the real needs of the world.

### **Questions and Answers**

A final element in these call passages is dialogue. Most of the dialogue is comprised of questions and answers. The questions pertain to the feelings of powerlessness. The answers are comprised of the certainty of strength. The commission is larger than anyone has resources to handle. But the assurance is that God will provide the means needed for the assignment.

### **THE CONTEMPORARY HEARING**

What can be done to permit young people in our churches to hear God's voice summoning them into the vocation of ministry? To answer this question, we must understand both the phenomenon of the call and some of the occasions in which it can take place.

The phenomenon of God's call upon a person in our day and age is not all that different from biblical times. The same basic structure of the call narrative is experienced in us. This means that the plot unfolds in our understanding from the realization of human need, to awareness of God's presence and His concern about mankind's distress, to the compelling desire to take God's side in meeting the needs of people, and ultimately to the questions and answers over our ability to minister on God's behalf. The church must allow these steps to take place in the hearts and minds of our youth.

### **Articulate the Brokenness**

Mankind's distress is brought to consciousness by explicitly identifying it in society. It is not enough to articulate the world's brokenness in some fuzzy manner. It must be illustrated with concrete examples.

### **God's Concern**

We must paint not only the dark picture of human brokenness but also God's care and concern for the fractured. Biblical representation of God's concern is seen in the portrait we find on the middle cross. Only as we perceive God in the picture of Christ do we see Him and His consideration for the needy. Experienc-

*(Continued on page 25)*

# Charge to the Pastor

given by David J. Tarrant  
Erskine, Scotland

*Service of Induction for Pastor David Hurst, given at Govan Church of the Nazarene, Glasgow*

*Bible Reading: Rev. 3:7-8a*

**T**he words, my brother David, that the Lord has laid on my heart to give to you tonight are taken from Christ's message to the church of brotherly love, Philadelphia, as given to the apostle John on Patmos: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Rev. 3:8, KJV).

An open door creates interest. An open door is an inviting door, urging us to look through it, even to walk in. This is especially so if the door is one we have passed a thousand times, and it has always previously been shut fast. In this context, it is clearly a door of opportunity. God has provided it; He has opened it.

May I suggest four doors open to you, David, as you begin your ministry here in Govan.

First, you have AN OPEN DOOR TO PERSONAL ENLARGEMENT.

Or, if you prefer to call it, you have an open door to personal growth. You are a young man, and, by comparison with many in your congregation, very young in the faith. Some of your members were serving the Lord before you were born, even before your parents were born! But they have called you to be their pastor, which is a very great honor. Timothy was in your situation when Paul urged him, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). "You have the responsibility," Paul is saying, "to win the respect of believers far older than yourself, by cultivating those graces that, when seen in full blossom, are the marks of true maturity of Christian character." And what was true of Timothy is true of you also, David.

A pastor has absolutely no excuse for *not* cultivating these graces.

Others may say they are too busy to take time for spiritual exercises, but the full-time pastor never can! You have all the time in the world to draw near to God, to wait upon God in prayer, to meditate on His Word, and to read inspiring books. You must do so or you will be a failure, a castaway, a disqualified competitor. But let me assure you, taking time to be alone with God requires considerable personal discipline. It means disciplining yourself not to sit up late at night, watching television or in shallow chitchat. This is necessary if you are to rise early to seek God's face before the postman or the paperboy calls or the phone starts ringing.

Richard Taylor's book *The Disciplined Life* is essential reading for every pastor. The final chapter, "How to Become a Disciplined Person," is a blueprint for success in any field of living. "Take time to be holy" should be the pastor's theme song. But this time, like all the other hours of day and night, needs to be "redeemed," as Paul puts it (see Eph. 5:16, KJV). John Wesley said, "I am always in haste, but never in a hurry." That's worth puzzling out!

Personal enlargement includes the mental stimulation provided by an ordered program of continuing study. Your college course is finished; but woe betide if you let your mind stagnate! It also includes the development of your family life, of your friendships, of your cultural and artistic skills. But do not let any subordinate interest or activity take the edge off your thirst for a deepening knowledge of your Lord.

Second, you have AN OPEN DOOR TO PASTORAL ENJOYMENT.

Someone [Spurgeon] said to a young man considering entering the ministry: "If the Lord has called you to be a pastor, don't stoop to be a king."

Being a pastor is the most rewarding and enjoyable activity on earth, but it is also the most demanding. You are literally *never* off duty. You will be wise if you set aside one day as your sabbath, your day off, to spend with your family or to work in your garden. But if you hear of an unsaved man in the hospital, perhaps a loved one of one of your members, who is not expected to live through the night, what price then your day off?

It's the enjoyment I want to stress—the sheer enjoyment of getting to know your people, of being trusted with their confidences, of being permitted to listen to their problems and to share their burdens, to be able to open the Word with them and pray with them, to mingle your tears with theirs—this is the very anteroom of heaven. Social workers are trained not to get emotionally involved with their clients—to do so would break their hearts. Pastors are trained to do the very opposite: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2, KJV). So that our hearts do not break also, we have to have constant recourse to the healing ministries of the One whose name is Comforter. You may find yourself asking the question: How is enjoyment compatible with pain sharing? The One who "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2, KJV) will help you find the answer.

Some young pastors have accepted the assertion that pastoral visitation is out-of-date, an anachronism in modern ministry. How tragic! It's as true as ever that "a house-going minister makes a churchgoing people." Often I have called on an unchurched family only to have the family say in wonder, "You're the first minister that has ever prayed in this house!" When someone says

that, you feel as though you are walking in the very sandals of Jesus himself! This door is open to *you*! Hundreds of Govan homes never yet have had this privilege.

Third, you have AN OPEN DOOR TO PULPIT ENRICHMENT.

The pastor who never visits in his people's homes may, in his sermons, answer questions that nobody is asking! But the visiting pastor knows the questions that are perplexing his people—how to make ends meet, how to cope with discord in the family, how to endure the pressures of chronic illness, the grief of untimely bereavement, or the uncertainties of job insecurity. He can apply the healing balm of the Word of God.

To excel as a preacher, David, you must study at least three books: the book of creation, the book of revelation, and the book of human experience. As you study them, you will be keen to see what others have made of them, especially gifted pastor-preachers of today and yesterday. But study alone will not give you inspired sermons. General Booth's telegram to the discouraged Salvation Army officer urged, "Try Tears."

Richard Baxter's formula was this: "I preached as never sure to preach again, as a dying man to dying men." *Do not ever think* that preaching is a secondary part of your ministry. It is still, even in these television days, God's medium for soul saving: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17, KJV) . . . "and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (v. 14, KJV). "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18, KJV).

Be sure you give your sermons a cutting edge. Determine before God what each sermon is intended to do. Then bring it to a climactic point where each hearer is challenged to make a personal, practical response, not sometime, not next Sunday, but here and now!

Fourth, you have AN OPEN DOOR TO PUBLIC ENDEARMENT.

A pastor should be loved by a wider group than that which constitutes his own congregation. He should be a well-loved public figure. I know that Jesus said, "If the

world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18). We have to be ready sometimes to draw the animosity of the world on our own heads. When we take a stand against the drink trade, or against desecration of God's day, we shall get some sour looks and sharp words. But, in general, a pastor and people with a lively concern for the welfare of the community around their church will win their favor as did the Early Church: "They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people" (Acts 2:46-47, KJV).

To win the love of people in Govan: (1) Be seen. (2) Be friendly. (3) Don't be in too much of a hurry. (4) Offer a helping hand. (5) Do something positive for the children and the elderly. (6) Keep them aware of what the church is doing. (7) Get involved in any community projects designed to benefit the people of your area. (8) Offer your services to the local schools, etc. Some schools have no regular chaplain. (9) Call regularly at the reception desk of your local hospital, or scan the admission list if permitted to do so, looking for new admissions from the area around your church, and visit them.

Brother David, it was prophetically said of Jesus 700 years before He came: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob . . . : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. 49:6, KJV). I believe God is saying to you, "It is a light thing, David, for you to be a pastor to the 50 or 60 people that constitute the Govan Church of the Nazarene; I will also give thee for a light to the hundreds of unchurched families of Govan, that you may bring My salvation to the entire area around your church." Will you accept this charge?

*My brother, the door is open to you*—the door to personal growth, to pastoral enjoyment, to pulpit enrichment, and to popular endearment. Will you keep it open? Only you can shut it!

## Our Pastor's Preaching Ministry

by J. Kenneth Grider  
Kansas City

His ministry  
Is positive  
And bright and sure  
And interesting  
And oriented  
To our needs.  
But it is more  
Than merely milk;  
It's like the lean  
In T-bone steak  
That truly meets  
The body's need  
As Paul has said.

The man of God  
Goes to the Greek  
And other helps  
And uses homiletic art  
And comes to us  
At worship time  
With answers to  
Our questionings  
And bracing for  
Our best resolves  
That's given us  
Attractively  
And suits us for  
Our servanthood  
To Christ the Lord.

# Kin I Have the Orange?

by Lois Hoadley Dick

Newton, N.J.

**A**ny questions?" I asked glibly. Children's church was almost over—five minutes to go! I had finished showing my rock and gemstone collection. Tying it into a talk on God's wonderful creation, I tacked on a moral at the end. The discipline in the gang of 50 kids was bad, but my attitude was even worse. I was there against my will.

I resented being down in the church basement on Sunday morning with two busloads of children of all ages. Upstairs I could hear the joyous singing, the special music, and the guest speaker.

To end my talk, I quoted the motto of Earth Crust Jewelry, my small business in gemstones: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Ps. 104:24, KJV).

I held up the fresh orange that I had used to illustrate how God planned the earth round instead of some other shape.

"Any questions?"

A tall, gangly 13-year-old girl stood up. "Kin I have the orange?" I dropped it on the table with a thump. Is that all she got out of my talk? Was she being funny? Or was she trying to disrupt the meeting even more?

Afterward, as the other children ran for their bus ride home, she came up to the display table and looked longingly at the orange. Suddenly I was prompted to ask a question. "Did you have breakfast, Arlene?"

"No, I never get breakfast Sunday mornings. Nobody's up, and there's nothing to eat."

I was appalled. Those children picked up by bus came from low-income housing projects. Is it possible they misbehaved simply because of the gnawing emptiness of their stom-

achs claimed their attention and made them restless?

I gave her my orange. Then I asked the Lord what I should do. That week I passed by a bread shop selling day-old loaves for 10 cents. Frozen for a week, they emerged soft and fresh. Several ladies donated large jars of home-canned jam.

The next Sunday, children's church began with bread-and-jelly sandwiches. Yes, I was down in the basement again. Since the snack was my idea, I felt obliged to demonstrate it to the other teachers. But this was the last time! After all, I *needed* the morning worship service.

The discipline was remarkably better. So I offered to bring bread each week. My obligations were now over. With a clear conscience, I could return to the morning worship service. After all, the pastor had given up on asking me to teach. He hadn't mentioned it for a month. They probably had plenty of teachers by now.

That week the pastor telephoned: "We really need teachers down there in children's church. We're adding another bus because so many children want to come. Will you organize children's church and be down there every Sunday for a while?"

*Organize it!* Be downstairs *every* Sunday? Oh, no! How could he? I opened my mouth to give all the reasons why I couldn't even help once on a Sunday morning. Before I could get a word out, I heard a voice, almost shouting at me in the quiet kitchen: "How can you say no to them?"

I put the phone down and looked around. I was still alone. No one else was in my entire house. I picked up the phone and heard myself saying, "All right, I'll do it."

Then I hung up, much annoyed—

why did I say that? Later, while dragging lessons and flannelboard out of the attic, a little bit of enthusiasm made its appearance along with the visualized songs and Bible verses.

By Sunday, joy had followed obedience. I couldn't wait to get to children's church. I realized that I had been too busy with gemstones, but here were "gems for His crown" just waiting to be won. I continued teaching for years until someone more experienced was provided.

Summing up what I learned, I discovered some very practical scriptural principles that faced me in those early days:

1. *Feed the hungry.* The children had a long bus ride; they were in Sunday School an hour, church time lasted one and one-half hours; then they had the long bus ride home. There is nothing wrong with snack and juice time in church. Even children of "pillars" found it difficult to wait until 1:00 or 1:30 for dinner.

2. *Clothe the needy.* Many of the children were ashamed of the way they looked. They needed clothes. The pastor organized a roomful of clothing and other items where a child, teen, or adult could pick out whatever he needed. For free! People and businesses gladly donated good used clothing and supplies. I was surprised to see Arlene pick out, first of all, a pair of kitchen curtains for her mother, then sweaters for herself. In a short time we had the best-dressed children's church in the county.

3. *Divide the group by age.* Adult help is needed. I made a simple flash card visual aid, which the pastor showed to adults on a Sunday morning. His brief talk emphasized how much American Christians have compared to other countries where

(Continued on page 53)



# Safety Tips for Accident-prone Pastors

by R. Robert Cueni

**A**ccepting the necessity of living with a certain amount of pain, preparing for the inevitability of change, and maintaining an updated plan of action are important factors in minimizing ministerial mastication and maximizing pastoral effectiveness. In and of themselves they are not, of course, enough. They are only part of the total program of tools, techniques, and helpful hints every minister learns from reading, training, and pastoral experience. Although difficult, it is possible to learn from the experiences of others. It helps avoid pain and frustration. With this idea in mind, here are a few helpful principles for living in the piranha bowl of pastoral ministry.

***It is not necessary to have a word from the Lord on every topic and in every situation.***

Pastors frequently face situations in which they search for something wise, comforting, or inspiring to say. How glorious it is to have something significant to break the deafening silence of the hospital waiting room or the funeral home lounge. But with experience, they learn to disguise the helplessness felt at a dying parishioner's bedside. They also learn a few things that are sometimes helpful to say. Mostly, they learn to accept that not much can be said.

Pastors need to remember that God is not mute in the midst of our silence. The voice of the ordained minister is not always needed.

***Don't succumb to the temptation to be an "aginner"!***

Aginnerers are difficult to befriend. Because they must be alert to imperfections, they never relax their fault-finding vigilance. Thus, they do not experience the blessedness of offer-

ing appreciation. To the aginner, living means cleaning out the barn without getting to ride the pony. While doing the dirty work, they never have any fun—a high price to pay for a few close friends who admire their analytical ability.

The world needs people who can see possibilities in spite of problems and are willing to emphasize positives in the face of negatives. The minister who resists the temptation to be an aginner is easier to be around, a more satisfied person, and a more effective pastor.

***Weddings marry the romantic and funerals bury the dead; do not expect either to be effective tools for church growth.***

Most ministers are periodically asked to function as community chaplain. If a family tells the funeral home director the deceased had no church affiliation, a pastor will be asked to conduct the funeral. Some ministers mistake this request as an opportunity for church growth rather than a simple act of kindness. Acting on that misunderstanding results in disappointment.

The same principle holds for conducting the weddings of the unchurched. Some clergy mistake the phone call that begins, "Do you do weddings for people who do not belong to your church?" as a query about membership. More typically, the caller is merely shopping for a religious building.

Performing weddings and conducting funerals for unchurched people are the caring acts of a loving pastor. A funeral ministers to a grieving family. The most realistic goal for the wedding ceremony is minimal embarrassment for all concerned. Neither weddings nor funerals, however, should be thought of

as effective methods of church growth.

***If it works, don't fix it. In fact, you may not even want to ask how it works.***

Upon arrival in a new ministry, it is wise to remind oneself: "This congregation operated before I came. It will probably operate after I leave. The people of this church already have ways of getting things done. I will not make changes until I am convinced the present ways do not work and neither the congregation nor I can exist without altering them."

Accept that there is more than one way to perform a function or solve a problem. The method the congregation currently uses may not be the best, especially true when "best" is defined as the way the minister thinks it should be done; but if it works, do not fix it. Standing aside and letting some things happen prevents pain, perspiration, and hassle. It also permits the minister time and energy to work on things that *need* fixing.

***Understand the difference between an incident and an issue.***

Although there is no simple method to discern issues from incidents in the pastorate, degree, frequency, and intensity are usually good indicators. One anonymous letter containing an unfavorable analysis of one's leadership probably indicates an incident. It does not mandate a career change to insurance sales. On the other hand, a unanimous resolution by the church board demanding the pastor be moved indicates a serious issue. Learning to make this distinction and to respond appropriately to is-

*(Continued on page 44)*

# Newcomer Assimilation

by D. Randy Berkner  
Woodbridge, Va.

Easier  
to receive  
new members  
than to  
assimilate  
them.

**P**eople initially seek a church for a variety of reasons: an invitation from a "satisfied customer," convenience to their home, worship style, a particular program (Vacation Bible School, musical concert, etc.), denominational loyalty, and advertising. Of course, there are "church shoppers" who drop in because your church happened to be next on their list.

While people seek a church for a variety of reasons, they generally stay at a church for only one reason—a strong sense of belonging.

Belonging is difficult to define. When does the "new kid on the block" *belong* in a local church? Admittedly, the newcomer will not have the depth and breadth of relationships that the "old-timer" has. However, an assimilated member:

1. identifies with the goals of the church.
2. is regular in worship attendance.
3. feels a sense of spiritual growth and progress.
4. has taken necessary steps of affiliation with the body.
5. has new friends in the church.
6. has a task or role appropriate to his spiritual gift(s).
7. is involved in a fellowship group.
8. feels trusted by the leadership of the church.
9. regularly tithes to the church.
10. is participating in the Great Commission.<sup>1</sup>

As one moves from the enrollment periphery into one or more primary groups, the incorporation process is under way. When pronouns identifying the congregation change from

"they," "them," and "theirs" to "we," "us," and "ours," the newcomer has a sense of belonging. Incorporation and assimilation involve the intentional or unintentional efforts by church members to help newcomers gain a sense of belonging and acceptance.

What can and should local church leaders do to enhance the newcomer's sense of belonging? "Most Protestant congregations . . . find it easier to receive new members than to assimilate them into the fellowship and to help these new members gain a sense of belonging."<sup>2</sup> Research reveals that a majority drop out during the first six months of association with a local church. "Some church sociologists estimate that between one-third and one-half of all members of Protestant churches in the U.S. are not comfortable with their church affiliation. Many do not feel that they have been welcomed into the fellowship except on a very superficial level."<sup>3</sup> If we are concerned about reducing our "backdoor losses," we must give higher priority to what we do when they enter our front door. Granted, church members are usually polite, even friendly, to newcomers. However, we must remember that "people aren't looking for a friendly church—they are looking for a friend."<sup>4</sup>

Large churches often attract newcomers by their wide range of quality programs. Sometimes those who remain impressed by the programs are unimpressed by the people. Lonely in a crowd, they drop out. On the other hand, in small churches newcomers often have a difficult time getting in! Certainly friendship

is the cement bonding newcomers to the local church, large or small. Win Arn's "friendship ratio" proposes, "Each new member should have a minimum of seven new friends in the church within the first six months."<sup>5</sup> He defines friends as those with "mutual interests and concerns" who are "in touch between Sundays," "know spouse's and children's first names," and "miss each other when they're absent."

What can and should local church leaders do to enhance the newcomer's sense of belonging? An adequate answer requires a look at

They generally  
stay at a church  
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belonging.

methods employed by those who have been most successful at this tough task. My January—March 1990 research project was designed to determine the assimilation attitudes and actions of America's fastest-growing churches. While the project information is *descriptive*, the local church strategy that follows is *prescriptive*.

RESEARCH PROJECT  
DESCRIPTION

From John N. Vaughan's 1988 list of "America's 500 Fastest-Growing Churches," I chose 125 non-Nazarene congregations from whom to solicit feedback related to newcomers' incorporation. Seventy-five Nazarene churches were selected from a list supplied by the Church Growth Division. A survey and cover letter were sent to pastors of these 200 churches, representing various theological traditions, geographic regions, and congregational sizes. Every non-Nazarene church had reported a worship attendance increase of at least 100 over the previous year's average.

Factors exist outside the control of the congregation that determine, to some degree, how many visitors will show up and explore the possibility of joining the church. Gribbon cites national contextual factors, denominational factors, and local contextual factors (the quality of life within the neighborhood).<sup>6</sup> Oswald and Leas believe "those factors which most significantly affect the growth of a congregation are outside the congregation's direct control."<sup>7</sup> "Those factors" include demographic changes, church competition, community facilities, and affluence. My recent research and pastoral experience in the laboratory of life confirm their thesis. Predictably, more churches are growing throughout the sunbelt than in other U.S. regions. A total of 38 percent of the "500 Fastest-Growing Churches in America" during 1988 were located in California, Texas, and Florida. Interestingly, 50 percent were either Southern Baptist or Assemblies of God.<sup>8</sup> Denominational culture appears to have a significant impact on growth patterns.

Why are Southern Baptists and Assemblies of God more successful in attracting and assimilating newcomers than other denominations? Dismissing the myth that many leave the more "liberal" for "conservative" churches, Oswald and Leas offer the following explanation:

Part of the reason certainly lies in their location and the culture of their churches. Their strength has been in the Southern states, which have been experiencing rapid population growth while maintaining a relatively stable culture conducive to church growth. The regional cultural style of the South still includes the highest rate of church membership and attendance. These denominations have traditionally placed more emphasis on "soul winning" than some other traditions . . . , they have *intentionally* reached out to new populations.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, my research survey served as a tool to determine the intentional efforts of growing churches to reach out for newcomers. Recognizing the existence of uncontrollable outside factors, I sought information related to factors within a congregation's control.

A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Of the 200 surveys sent out, 80 were completed and returned by pastors and/or staff members. Respondents represent several smaller churches, many medium-sized, and a few "megachurches" as indicated here:

Non-Nazarene Respondents (43)				
100-249	250-499	500-999	1,000+	
4	15	13	11	
Nazarene Respondents (37)				
100-149	150-249	250-499	500-750	750+
4	9	14	4	6

The following data compilation concerns both attitudes and actions within America's fastest-growing churches. Personal interest in the Church of the Nazarene led me to analyze its work separately.

Mission Statement

When asked, "Does your local church have a mission statement describing its purpose?" 81 percent of the non-Nazarene respondents gave an affirmative answer. Some 78 percent of the Nazarene churches responding have developed a mission statement. For the most part, they were group-formulated, comprehensive, and well-written for distribution in church bulletins, newsletters, etc. Almost all mission statements issued a clarion call to evangelism.

Commitment to  
Church Growth

A total of 79 percent of the non-Nazarene and 81 percent of the Nazarene senior pastors indicated their extremely high commitment to church growth (10 on the 0-10 scale). Some 58 percent of the non-Nazarene and 57 percent of the Nazarene professional staff members were given an extremely high rating (10). Only 28 percent of the non-Nazarene and 24 percent of the Nazarene respondents felt that their lay leaders possess an extremely high commitment to church growth. Other laypersons received slightly higher marks in non-Nazarene circles.

Assimilation of First-Time  
Visitors

There were 65 respondents who answered the question: "Approximately what percentage of the first-

time visitors are actually assimilated into your local church?" The average guesstimate was near 33 percent for both Nazarenes and non-Nazarenes. So two of three newcomers are not "hooked" by even these pacesetters.

### **Newcomers Assimilation Methods**

The following chart reveals a broad range of methods employed to incorporate newcomers into the life of the local church. Almost all of these survey churches have designated greeters, visitor registration cards, women's ministries, and a public ritual for receiving members. Most utilize singles ministries, church directories, phone calls, membership classes, athletic teams, and newsletters during the incorporation process. Furthermore, a majority of these churches use directional signs, information packets, display directories of Sunday School classes, prospect filing systems, visitors letters, pastoral or lay visits within the first week, cell groups, home Bible studies, greeter/usher identification and training, Sunday School greeters, a welcome center, recognition of visitors during worship services, organized discipleship training, men's fellowship, and a personal invitation to join the church. As one examines the "Newcomers Assimilation Methods Tally Sheet," it becomes clear that systematic processes are crucial to reaching and retaining newcomers.

### **AN APPEAL FOR INTENTIONALITY**

Kenneth Crow likens incorporation to "bridge building." Because we are influenced a great deal by primary relationships (not casual friendships), he calls on us "to *intentionally* build relationships strong enough to help them [prospects] come to Christ. . . . [For] prospects . . . need our help in becoming a part of the networks of the church."<sup>10</sup> Sullivan echoes the intentionality theme:

Functionally the task [social incorporation] has been difficult. . . . Most people are timid about initiating friendships. Lack of time to develop friendships is also a

## **NEWCOMERS ASSIMILATION METHODS**

### **TALLY SHEET**

First number is non-Nazarene, second number is Nazarene.	Systematic feedback from newcomers	8, 9
	Orientation session	8, 3
Parking lot/building directional signs	Sunday School class greeters	25, 24
Parking lot attendants	Visitor registration card	41, 35
Reserved parking for visitors	Welcome center	23, 23
Designated greeters	Love loaf	0, 9
Gifts to first-time visitors	Sunday lunch invitation to newcomers	5, 12
Introductory church information packets	Phone calls	33, 35
Display directory of Sunday School classes	Visitor identification labels	12, 19
Welcome notes in Sunday bulletins	Recognition of visitors during worship service	30, 25
Introduction of newcomers to pastor	Greeter/usher identification	27, 25
Prospect filing system	Church information and/or membership class	29, 34
Standardized visitors letter	Senior pastor's visit within week	4, 11
Personalized visitors letter	Layperson's visit within week	22, 24
Professional staff visit within week	Christian Service Survey	13, 14
Reception honoring newcomers	Organized discipleship training	29, 20
Cell groups within congregation	Women's ministries	36, 35
Home Bible studies	Men's fellowship	29, 27
Singles ministry	Athletic teams	29, 33
Church directory	Photo display of newcomers	11, 6
Regular greeter/usher training	Newsletters	31, 33
Friends Day emphasis	Get-acquainted public interviews	4, 4
Gospel presentation in homes	Personal invitation to join church	22, 27
Outreach secretary	Public ritual for receiving members	35, 37

factor, but probably the biggest impediment has been the lack of intentionality in the church's program.

We have assumed that, given time, people will form friendships. Unfortunately, that is not true in most instances. Given time, people tend to drift away from rather than become incorporated into the social fellowship of the church. . . .

Obviously, what is needed is intentionality, expressed in a structured program of social incorporation beginning immediately following contact with a new prospect.<sup>11</sup>

We wish to find the newcomer's

needs and fill them. We hope that he will stay with church.

Research conducted by The Alban Institute among 16 "successful" Lutheran, United Methodist, Unitarian, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian congregations discovered almost no **formal** assimilation systems. "For the most part what happened to help people become members was informal, unplanned, unsupervised, and unintentional."<sup>12</sup> Oswald and Leas observed that these churches were characterized by energy (activity throughout the week), identity (strong sense of "we," which determines who and what belongs there), and a *belief* in inclusion (saw themselves as friendly, open, interested in



newcomers but didn't do very much to help people get in). How does a congregation grow if it does little or nothing to encourage incorporation? These researchers conclude:

It may be that belief in inclusion is a powerful magnet that is non-verbally (or non-directly) transmitted to the newcomer. The new person, perhaps subliminally, gets the message, "We want you; we would like you to be a part of our fellowship," even though there was no greeter or official body to come right out and say it.<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to the Oswald and Leas report, my research reveals that growing churches consider the "we want you" communication too important to rely on subliminal messages. Almost all of the fastest-growing churches in America are evangelical and very intentional in their efforts to reach out and touch individuals.

An assimilation process that is clearly planned, agreed upon, and implemented with trained professionals and lay volunteers results in greater growth. Intentionality is the key. If allowed to "sink or swim" on his own, a newcomer will generally sink. He may become so disillusioned and disappointed that he never risks participation in church life again. Again, we are unable to retain two out of three newcomers. Furthermore, "two out of three people who join the church eventually leave it."<sup>14</sup> "For every 10 members our church [denomination] receives, over 5 members 'slip out the back door.'"<sup>15</sup>

Roberts' research reveals that social relationships, level of education, personal evangelism, membership tenure, residence distance from the church, and religious experience were significant factors in determining loyalty to the Church of the Nazarene. Income, gender, devotional practices, attendance, and age were not. Simply stated, those who have few friends in the church, those with high levels of education, those who do not share their faith, those with less tenure, those who live farther from the church, and those who have not experienced entire sanctification are more likely to

leave.<sup>16</sup> We can consciously cultivate a caring climate and adopt a systematic process that increases the retention rate.

We would be wise to study other organizations that develop strong loyalty and faithful participation. "The church is concerned about building good, responsible members, but our concern grows, not

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## People aren't looking for a friendly church —they're looking for a friend.

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from our institutional need, but rather from our conviction that the church is Christ's primary means today of drawing people closer to God and to each other."<sup>17</sup> I would warn against the wholesale adoption of corporation mentality. Yet, we can and should learn from the business world concerning customer relations. After all, we are in the biggest business in all the world. If *sales* motivate McDonald's to organize, shouldn't *souls* move us to add systematic planning to our sincere praying?

When we set out to intentionally cultivate a climate for church growth, we must begin to understand what newcomers are looking for and responding to. Edward Rauff highlights 12 reasons "why people join the church": (1) the influence of Christian people, (2) family relationships and responsibilities, (3) the search for community, (4) personal crisis, (5) a feeling of emptiness, (6) the end of rebellion, (7) the journey toward truth, (8) the response to evangelism, (9) the reaction to guilt and fear, (10) God's

kairos (God's time for me), (11) church visit to a special program or sacred act (wedding, funeral, baptism, etc.), and (12) the influence of pastors.<sup>18</sup>

Local church leaders who hope to enhance the newcomer's sense of belonging must put themselves in his shoes. Try to remember how it feels to approach a new church with knee-knocking fears of rejection, being lost, looking dumb, embarrassment, etc. "A recent Gallup Poll tells us that 75% of us consider ourselves shy, inarticulate, uncomfortable around strangers and hesitant to place ourselves in new situations."<sup>19</sup> Yet many people seek the church with high hopes for spiritual and social satisfaction. Few find spiritual satisfaction until they feel socially "at home" in the local church. We need to hear and heed Jesus' admonition: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12).

"Our Church Can Be Your Home" promises warmth, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. The following strategy, based on 16 years of pas-

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## Each new member needs seven new friends in six months.

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toral ministry experience and recent research, goes beyond welcome slogans and offers a practical plan to move the newcomer from fears to friendships, loneliness to leadership.

### A STRATEGY FOR NEWCOMER INCORPORATION

#### *Attractive Buildings and Grounds*

Someone said, "You can't judge a book by its cover." Yet, all of us form opinions about a place based upon outward appearance. The 12-foot-

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## Two out of three newcomers are not "hooked."

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high concrete block fence surrounding an otherwise attractive St. Petersburg, Fla., church communicates a "Keep Out" message to the public. Undoubtedly, it enhances security for insiders, but outsiders are turned off by this fortress mentality.

Visitors often gauge a church by the way it presents itself. We may unknowingly project a negative image via shoddy sign and building maintenance, junglelike lawns, and poorly marked (or unmarked) parking lots. Church members are often blind to these things, but they do not escape the careful scrutiny of the church shopper. Periodically, every church should examine its buildings and grounds through the newcomer's eyes. One way is to take a small group a block or so away from the church, give them pads and pencils, try to create a "first-time visitor" mind-set in them, and walk to and through the church property, focusing on these questions (adapted from "Making the Small Church Visitor-Friendly," by Gary Harrison, in *The Magnetic Fellowship*):

How does the parking lot look? Where should a newcomer park? Have we provided adequate parking for the handicapped? Why are the best parking spaces almost always reserved "For Pastoral Staff Only"? Schaller says, "No greater love hath anyone than someone who will give up a parking space to visitors."<sup>20</sup> Should we add directional signs? What can be done to improve the appearance of the grounds? Should we seed the lawn, plant shrubs, repair a sidewalk, patch a pothole, etc.? What about the physical appearance of the building? Are minor repairs left undone? Can visitors find the "necessary rooms" without having to ask the embarrassing question? What do the wall posters and bulletin boards say to the newcomer? Would visitors know how to find the sanctuary, Sunday School

classes, offices, etc.? Is the building clean and tidy?

The difference between a good and a great appearance is that little extra effort.

### *Climate Control*

Herb Miller says, "A cold church, like butter, will not spread. Growing churches have learned how to regulate the congregational thermostat, and they have set it on friendly."<sup>21</sup> As they cross the threshold of our attractive buildings, newcomers are nervously excited and a bit apprehensive. They long for a warm place "where everybody knows your name."

Donald Gerig identifies six atmospheric conditions that contribute to church growth: (1) a positive atmosphere (emphasizing what God *can* do, not what we cannot do; what is best in people, not what is worst; how we can build each other up, not tear each other down), (2) trust (earned, not demanded), (3) excellence (doing our best with the unique resources and limitations we have), (4) oriented to outreach (focused on needs of those outside the "fortress," spawns new ministries), (5) flexibility (willingness to get out of ruts), (6) a serving spirit (a conscious effort to serve rather than to be served).<sup>22</sup>

Climate is all-important to the farmer who anticipates fruit for his labor. Similarly, "atmospheric conditions" have to be right if the church is going to grow. Unlike the weather, a church's climate can be improved by effort. Pastors who model a positive attitude, trust, excellence, outreach orientation, flexibility, and

servanthood can certainly change the climate because these characteristics tend to be caught rather than taught. In addition, the wise leader makes "heroes" of those who practice these principles. By doing so, he changes the group cultural "norms."

However, laymen must also assume responsibility in climate control. The duty of the many should not be the task of the few. Pastors and people must cooperate in creating and maintaining a comfortable climate for newcomers. To get an accurate reading on the congregational thermostat, I suggest the regular use of comment cards similar to those found in restaurants. Several churches solicit feedback on "I Wish . . ." pew cards. Joel Heck suggests the formation and annual training of an assimilation committee charged with the task of building newcomer awareness within the congregation.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Initial Visit*

The "Head and Shoulders" commercial reminds us that "we never get a second chance to make a first impression!" Therefore, care must be taken to favorably impress those who visit our church. The royal welcome begins the moment that newcomer drives onto the parking lot.

Sharon Bushey argues for parking lot greeters, door greeters, welcome center greeters, escort greeters, sanctuary door greeters, ushers, and Sunday School class greeters.<sup>24</sup> Their very presence says, "We were expecting you today." Their cheerfulness creates a receptive attitude for worship. Their information guides the visitor through those first few awkward moments of disorientation. To these lay volunteers, Bushey offers some simple guidelines: arrive early (20-30 minutes prior to regularly scheduled meetings), report in, check your appearance, anticipate the newcomers, de-

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**We have assumed people  
will form friendships.**

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velop your skill of remembering names, welcome everyone including the children, be space conscious (2½ to 3 feet), and be enthusiastic.<sup>25</sup>

In their book, *Contact: the First Four Minutes*, Leonard and Natalie Zunin contend that every human relationship begins with a 3-5 minute conversation, during which both people decide either to part ways or to continue the conversation and the relationship.

... The first four minutes of a newcomer's visit to your group are the most important factor for determining whether he/she will come back to your group, join it, and become actively involved. ... Someone in your group needs to make that new person feel at home for four minutes and beyond.<sup>26</sup>

A well-staffed welcome center provides the visitor with an identification label and useful information concerning Sunday School classes, doctrine, programs, purpose, coming events, etc. Most of all, it gives him the "I'm special" feeling. The church receives necessary information for future follow-up.

Researchers Oswald and Leas tell us, "The newcomers who were not recognized felt slightly distanced from the congregation in not having their presence acknowledged in some way."<sup>27</sup> Because each visitor is different, there is no "right way" to acknowledge his attendance that first day. Extroverts may appreciate public identification such as the popular garment adhesive symbol (dove, rose, etc.) or pinned-on flowers, special name tags, and an introduction in the worship service. However, introverts may prefer to remain incognito. Discerning greeters and ushers can tell the difference. A small gift says, "We're so glad you came!" An invitation from our "Bunch for Lunch" volunteers reinforces that message.

Greeters should alert the appropriate people to the newcomer's presence. Introductions to Sunday School teachers, department supervisors, staff members, and the senior pastor will help the stranger to identify with the church. Oswald and Leas note, "The pastor's reaction to

the newcomer is often perceived by the newcomer as the single most important contact on an early visit and may tip the balance toward moving toward or away from affiliation with this congregation."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the bulletin welcome often encourages visitors to make themselves known to the pastor.

Equally important is the newcomer's introduction to persons or families who seem to match most

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**"We want you;  
we would like you  
to be part of our  
fellowship."**

---

closely the visitor's age, interests, occupation, and educational and denominational backgrounds. It is helpful to seat first-time visitors beside someone who can quietly assist them in the worship liturgy. We usually take their picture and place it on the "New Friends" bulletin board.

Oswald and Leas suggest that we help newcomers determine whether the church fits their expectations by asking them, "What are you looking for in a church family?" The purpose, of course, is not to trick someone into believing that our church has what he longs for but to direct that person to appropriate individuals and groups who assist in the assimilation process.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Immediate Follow-up***

Even if the newcomer enjoyed the initial visit, whether he returns is still up for grabs. In follow-up procedures, timing is crucial. The rule of thumb here is "the sooner, the better." Modern office machines enable us to send out "personalized" letters Monday morning. An incorporation secretary should file names, addresses, and family information for future reference. Lay volunteers should make phone calls to newcomers within 48 hours of their

visit. The Shepherd group leader in the newcomer's neighborhood also makes contact with the visitor within a week. A Church Information Class invitation is sent to each visitor.

Herb Miller claims, "No other single factor makes a greater difference in improving annual membership additions than an immediate visit to the homes of first-time worshippers."<sup>30</sup> That "immediate visit" may involve the pastoral staff, but experts agree that lay follow-up visits are far more effective. The twofold purpose of these "Barnabas" (encouragement) calls are to provide information about the church and to build bridges of friendship. One should attempt also to discern the spiritual needs in the home and notify the "Andrews" (evangelism) director of the unsaved persons. Trained "Andrews" (personal evangelists) would present the gospel during a subsequent visit to the home. New converts would then be linked with a "Timothy" for discipling.

A recent *Leadership* survey of nearly 700 people who had been contacted in the past year by the calling programs of three congregations encourages us to keep home visitation alive. "Nearly 80 percent felt good about the visit, and over 60 percent indicated it was either helpful or very helpful."<sup>31</sup> It is interesting to note that those who were negative complained primarily about the timing of the visit. There are "pros" and "cons" to appointments, but most people appreciate the courtesy of calling ahead.

Charles Finney once said, "We have been ringing church bells when we should be ringing doorbells. We have been doing by proxy what we should be doing by proximity; and we have been doing by purse what we should be doing in person." Amen and ouch!

### ***Small Groups***

Win Arn prods us to have "at least seven groups for every 100 members."<sup>32</sup> These "ports of entry" include Bible study/prayer groups, choirs, athletic teams, circles of concern, task groups, and various so-

cial groups. Because groups tend to reach a "saturation point" and close themselves to newcomers, Arn says, "One of every five groups in the church should have been started in the past two years."<sup>33</sup> New groups surface from felt needs within the congregation and often attract new members. Wise leaders encourage their development. David Womack's "pyramid principle" reminds us: "If a church wishes to serve more people, it must expand its organizational base of ministry."<sup>34</sup>

Church Information Classes (6-8 sessions taught by pastoral staff member) provide the potential member with knowledge of the church's culture (history, doctrine, government, "norms," purpose, programs, etc.). Christian Service Surveys and/or Spiritual Gifts Profiles might be administered to each participant in the class. Because financial participation in the church strengthens the ties, we issue tithing envelopes for these class members. Avoiding use of the term "Membership Class," we encourage everyone who wants to know more about the church to attend, whether or not he plans to join. Qualified individuals who desire to join the church are received publicly. Sunday night new member receptions serve two purposes: (1) they reinforce the newcomer's sense of belonging, and (2) they raise morale by highlighting congregational growth. We often include the new members "personality profiles" in the church newsletter.

### Continuing Follow-up

"Joining" doesn't necessarily mean "belonging." Assimilation is an ongoing process that requires constant monitoring. A system of monitoring attendance and of responding to changing patterns of attendance is another way of saying, "We care." Newcomers need to be encouraged and invited to get involved in a process of faith development through Sunday School classes, retreats, covenant groups, personal devotions, ministry involvement, etc. According to Schaller, "Adult new members who do not become part of a group, accept a leadership role, or become involved in a task during their first

year tend to become inactive."<sup>35</sup> The assimilation secretary (or committee) who carefully monitors attendance, group participation, ministry involvement, and friendships minimizes the losses.

### Listening to Dropouts


Criticism, like castor oil, is easy to get and hard to take. We don't like criticism, but critics often say things we need to hear. Henry Ford was always ready to profit from criticism. When he heard people criticize any automobile he was making, he listened carefully. Then he jotted down the criticism in his notebook. This attitude led to further development in his work.

Dropouts "consciously or unconsciously give the local congregation only six to eight weeks, once they have dropped out, to call on them."<sup>36</sup> If we cannot keep them in the church, we should hear their reasons why, respect their viewpoint, and work toward alleviation of correctable concerns. We are responsible to newcomers, not for them. We should recognize that not all of them will bond to our local church. When incompatibility becomes obvious and separation is imminent, a referral to another church is in order.

### CONCLUSION

Pastors and laymen must avoid the temptation to play the "if only" game. "My church would grow *if only* it were located near the freeway in the sunny South!" Or, "My church would grow *if only* the denominational label were changed!" Anyone looking for an excuse can find one. Denominational, environmental, and contextual factors beyond direct control may lead us to build a case for nongrowth. Why not build a church instead? No factors have overwhelming influence on whether a church will grow or not. Even in No Hope, Ky., there's hope for church growth. From Fort Lauderdale to Fort Worth, from Colorado Springs to Palm Springs, from Pasadena, Tex., to Pasadena, Calif., from Stillwater to Grand Rapids, Christ is building His Church through men and women who refuse to build a case. Instead, they focus

on factors over which they *do* have control and cultivate a climate conducive to newcomer incorporation and church growth.

"Those who fail to plan, plan to fail," is more than a catchy phrase. It is an axiom of supreme importance in newcomer incorporation and assimilation. 

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3. Suzanne G. Braden, *The First Year* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1987), 10.

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14. Sullivan, "How Important Is Incorporation?"

15. Michael K. Roberts, "Slipping Out the Back Door: An Examination of Who May Leave the Denomination," *Preacher's Magazine*, Fall 1989, 20.

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18. Ed Rauff, *Why People Join the Church: An Exploratory Study* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 61-158.

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28. Ibid.

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30. Weedon, *Magnetic Fellowship*, 79.

31. Ibid., 84.

32. Win Arn, *Church Growth Ratio Book*, 25.

33. Ibid., 31.

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35. Schaller, *Assimilating New Members*, 77.

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# Hang-up of Modishness

by Raymond C. Kratzer

Yakima, Wash.

**T**he minister of God should be a paragon of exemplary living as a ballast to the changing moods about us. Customs, modes of living, and ethical standards have tendencies to change with the times. Often in dramatic changes there occurs a great loss of values that were once cherished and that cannot be easily recaptured when once they are gone.

For example, patriotism to our flag and our country has been severely damaged by snide remarks from news commentators, television personalities, and others. Some jibes were given to get a laugh from an audience. But in the process there was an erosion of patriotism without which our national strength cannot endure.

Likewise, some ministers find it an interesting pastime to make derogatory remarks about the church in the interest of eliciting a smile from others, not realizing that this may do irreparable harm to God's Church. Children and young people are especially impressionable. Unfortunately, the unwholesome habits of the secular world seem to attract some preachers to ape these customs in the church. They have the "hang-up of modishness." The Bible constantly urges us not to be fashioned like the world or poured into its mold.

New ideas constantly appear on the horizon in terms of churchmanship, procedures in church organization, worship modes, etc. Someone writes a book telling of his unique method—often quite diverse from our policies and procedures—and those who have the "hang-up of modishness" latch onto his plan as though they have discovered the panacea for miracle growth. Often the authors of the "miracle plan" in due season find themselves in hot

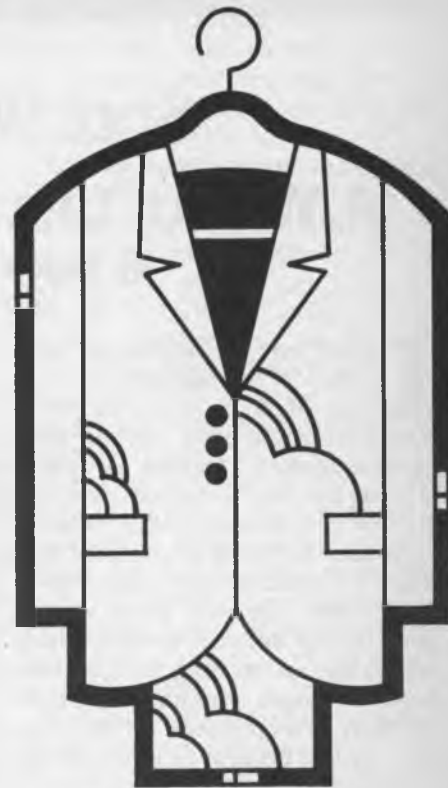
water, and their genius suddenly disappears.

This is not to say that we should not be challenged by every successful method. We should be "geared to the times," but we should also be "anchored to the Rock." The Bible emphasizes the "old paths, where is the good way" (Jer. 6:16, KJV). Wisdom suggests that we wait and watch before jumping to conclusions too quickly. There is still only one sure way of working the Kingdom. It is encompassed in the four-letter word: W-O-R-K!

Customs of dress often take a minister by storm. If he is addicted to "modishness," he will find himself sucked into the stream of extremism. As a spiritual leader, the servant of God should be aware of the impact of his personality upon his congregation and others. If he appears on the platform dressed like the latest dandy, his hairdo and whisker formation in perfect television conformity, his message may be lost in the maze of modernity.

To be sure, a spiritual leader would not want to dress like John Wesley to emphasize that he is an old-fashioned preacher. But neither should he dress like the latest Las Vegas entertainer, simply to prove his contemporaneity.

A certain dignity to the ministry is invaluable in drawing men away from the mundane things of life to the exhilarating life of holiness. God's servant must epitomize the highest and best in godly living in order to engender respect and confidence in the things of God. The family in the Old Testament who lived on the road where Elisha often traveled observed that he was "an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually" (2 Kings 4:9, KJV). When trouble came in their situation, they were confident that he



could help them. So he was called.

If a pastor unduly absorbs himself into the patterns and modes of the world, it may be that his life will make but a meager spiritual impression upon his circle of influence. When trouble comes, those whom he desires to help may not think of him but rather go to some less adequate source for help.

One pastor stayed so close to his people and so close to the Lord that when sickness or death came among his constituency, he would often be called before the doctor or mortician. His people depended upon the strength and comfort that exuded from him to sustain them in their sorrow and difficulty.

A quiet reflection at this point might be helpful. Ask yourself the question: "Who am I in the midst of God's scheme of things?" Am I a rubber stamp of the world around me or

*(Continued on page 36)*



## Soul Winning: A Way of Life for Bill Bright

by Angela Elwell Hunt

Largo, Fla.

I asked one of my routine questions, "What has given you the most pleasure in the last year?" and Bill Bright gave me an unexpected answer: "Leading people to Christ. Nothing compares with the experience because every person I introduce to Christ is liberated from Satan's kingdom into Christ's kingdom. They not only become children of God but also have the potential to live an exciting, joyful adventure. This man, who has been in the ministry of evangelism for 39 years, has not lost his zeal or joyous fervor.

Leading other men and women to Christ has been Bright's greatest joy every year since he was saved in 1945. In 1951 he founded Campus Crusade for Christ International to help take the gospel to every person in the world. "In order to do this," explains Bright, "we place a very strong emphasis on training and discipleship. True discipleship results in evangelism, and we are seeing many millions of people come to Christ because for 39 years we've trained Christians who are continuing to win and disciple others."

When God gave Bright a vision to win the entire world, the task was formidable. "How do you eat an elephant?" He smiles and answers, "One bite at a time. Obviously God never meant for me to reach the world, but to be a part in *helping* to reach the world."

The work of Campus Crusade began with high school and college students. "By concentrating on adults only, you're not producing leaders for the next generation," comments Bright. Campus Crusade's initial efforts have expanded to include over 40 different ministries in over 160 countries. The various ministries involve high school and college students, athletes, musicians, laymen, and others. "The list goes on and on," explains Bright, "but all of them have one goal—to

help fulfill the Great Commission. Our five-point plan includes exposing people to the gospel, winning them to Christ, building them in the faith, training them to be effective witnesses, and sending them into the world."

As we talk, it becomes clear to me that Bill Bright is probably unaware of how many millions of people he has influenced for the cause of Christ. He is a down-to-earth, friendly man who never speaks of an accomplishment without giving God credit for the plan or idea. He is, quite simply, a man who long ago sold out for God and now finds joy in helping others do the same.

Bill Bright grew up on a ranch in Coweta, Okla. With six brothers and sisters, Bill quickly learned to be responsible. His first job was gathering corncobs from the field to fuel the family cookstove.

"I was reared in a godly home by a saintly mother and a very humanistic father. I assumed that men were supposed to be strong, macho types because my father was strong and self-sufficient. Yet my mother's gentle influence had a tremendous effect on all of us, but not one of us knew how to become Christians because my mother had never been trained. She knew how to read her Bible and pray, and she was a marvelous example. But all through my high school and college years, as a professor, and later as a businessman in California, I had no knowledge of God except in a very general way. I loved my mother, but I just thought she was like women were supposed to be, and my father was like men were supposed to be."

It was not until Bright went to Hollywood, Calif., that he met people who were both dynamic businessmen and dynamic Christians. "I was working day and night to make my fortune, and I met people who were already more successful than I.

They had something that was obviously more important than money or success: Jesus Christ. So I was forced, as a matter of intellectual integrity, to study the life of Jesus for the first time. As I read the Bible, I discovered that I had missed the boat and was going in the wrong direction."

After Bright surrendered his life to Christ, he became an active layman and a deacon in his church. He met and married a fine Christian woman, and he did his best to serve God. But one night, six years after his conversion, Bright decided to defeat a problem in his life: "My wife and I were very materialistic. We grew up with voracious appetites for the things of this world. I'd been entrapped by a desire to have the biggest and the best of everything. But then I began to see things from a biblical perspective. God began to teach me the truth of what Jesus taught: lay up treasure in heaven; don't lay them up on earth, 'where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal'" (Matt. 6:19, KJV).

With an eternal perspective, Bright and his wife, Vonette, actually took a sheet of paper and drew up a formal contract. They signed away all personal rights to Jesus Christ. "I said from that day on I would never seek wealth or fame or fortune or applause or praise of men, but I would only seek to do His will. We realized that the only thing that really mattered in life was to do what God wanted us to do. If He wanted us to live on bread and water for the rest of our lives, it would be worth it." A few days after the contract signing, God gave Bright the vision for Campus Crusade for Christ.

With no possessions or personal ambitions to hinder him, Bright set about with a singleness of purpose to fulfill the Great Commission. Campus Crusade was founded, and in 1954 Bright wrote what is probably the most influential gospel tract ever published, the *Four Spiritual*



*Laws* booklet. The booklet was originally intended to help CCC staff members, but other people began to request the effective, simple message. Today over 500 million copies have been distributed in all the world's major languages. Millions of people have been saved through reading this clear gospel presentation.

Bright has a special burden for young people. "Young people need the Lord, and they need to recognize that He can meet their deep needs and insecurities. Teenagers are going through difficult times of transition; growing up, they don't even understand themselves and each other. Therefore, there is a tendency to be unduly influenced by peer pressure. They need to know Jesus, not only as Savior, but as a friend who can really meet the longing of their hearts. They also need loving, understanding parents and teachers."

Bright, the father of two grown sons, has developed good advice for Christian parents. In his travels, he has noticed that many people in government, the media, education, and liberal churches grew up in Christian homes but are now militantly antagonistic to conservative Christianity. Why?

"First, I want to applaud every father and mother who has a high standard of biblical integrity for their children. I wouldn't want this statement to be wrongly interpreted because I believe it is important that we encourage our children to grow up in the love and admonition of the Lord. But just this morning I was reading in Col. 2:20—3:4. It is impossible for a person to live a godly, holy life by imposing man-made rules; it leads to pride. Probably the number one heresy of the Christian body is legalism—man's effort to find God and serve God in the energy of the flesh. Often man-made rules imposed by strict fathers and mothers put such a burden on the children that they rebel. They're not really rebelling against the Lord, they're rebelling against the legalistic, man-made standards of parents who usually mean well but are not capable of communicating that the Christian life is a supernatural life. We can't live the Christian life in our human efforts.

"Wherever I go I meet people who say, 'Look, I was exposed to Chris-


tianity, but it was narrow and bigoted and arrogant. There was no love, only discipline and judgmental attitudes.' As a result, they've rejected all of the gospel."

Training and discipleship will make not only stronger Christians but also stronger and wiser parents. Bright is optimistic and excited about the future, for Campus Crusade for Christ has plans to carry its program throughout the world.

"I'm 68, and when most people are retiring, God has given me a vision that's bigger than anything I've dreamed of before." Bright leans forward expectantly. "We're in the process of developing a world strategy. We're already in 160 countries, and our goal is to be in every country in the world and in every community in the world. In cooperation with Christians from churches of all denominations and other Christian organizations, we are establishing 5,000 training centers to communicate the gospel to over 6 billion people by the year 2000, through 10,000 *Jesus* film teams and other evangelistic efforts. We are praying

that at least 1 billion of those will become Christians. We plan to establish at least 1 million churches and 5 million New Life home Bible discipleship groups."

This incredible vision, called New Life 2000, will keep Bright busy for the next several years. Although he says that his work is "all joy," with a staff of over 16,000 and a budget over \$150 million, Bright admits there are challenges. "Yet the conviction that Jesus Christ is alive and living within me, and that all the supernatural resources of Deity are available to every believer, enables me to look at every challenge and recognize that God has the ability to translate it into something marvelous. Lemons become lemonade. Problems become opportunities. It is not just a matter of positive thinking; it's a matter of biblical supernatural thinking."

Such biblical thinking will surely enable this man to continue his work of implementing the Great Commission throughout the world. For Bill Bright, winning souls is not just a cliché, it is truly a way of life. 

## Challenging Young People to Ministry

*(Continued from page 11)*

ing God's regard for the helpless and wounded, we are open to hear His call to us for service.


### Dialogue Through the Doubts

Allowing young people to question and listen for God's answers is of great importance. This time of questioning includes their dialogue with pastors, significant laypersons, years of training, trial and error of ministry in the church, and even years of professional service. The entire process is the question-and-answer period to God's call. It is wrong to rush this period or to doubt the call of a young person during this time. One of the saddest accounts that I hear, all too often, is how a pastor or teacher attempts to talk a young person out of his call. The idea behind this is that only those who are "truly" called will stick with it. This is wrong! We have no business creating doubt. Every call begins as a suspicion. We seek to discover if this call is from ourselves or God. The time of question

and answer is of vital importance.

### Special Emphasis

It is also essential for the church to provide opportunities for our youth to encounter the broken heart of God over the hurts of human beings and to see His charge to servants to meet those distresses. Such occasions can be a special emphasis day within the teaching and preaching ministries of the church on a given Sunday each year, an ongoing emphasis in youth meetings, children's church, camps, and mission trips. Events such as these are designed to open a young person up to the voice of God, though not to speak for Him.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest'" (Matt. 9:36-38, RSV). 



## But Where's the Gospel?

by Muriel Larson

Greenville, S.C.

**A** perplexed pastor exclaimed to his congregation, "We have more than 800 people on our church roll, but less than 300 attend our Sunday morning service each week. Where are the other 500?" Perhaps you could echo his question.

What happens to all the people who make "decisions for Christ," join the church, and shortly thereafter fall away? Why do they fall away?

A partial answer may be found in a pastor's statement: "I would estimate that less than 50 percent of the members of Bible-believing churches truly know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior!" How could that be so?

I have interviewed numerous church members. One recurring theme is that many of them went forward at some church or evangelistic meeting when they were younger and made some kind of religious commitment, joined the church, and were baptized—but not saved. Or someone may have witnessed to them and pressured them into "making a decision for Christ."

"When I was 12," said one woman, "a lady in our church asked me during an evangelistic meeting, 'Don't you want to see your mother in heaven someday? Why don't you go forward tonight?'" The girl did. Then a church clerk came and asked her if she believed in Jesus. Of course, she said she did. Then he took her name and address and talked her into being baptized. The girl was welcomed into the church

and duly baptized. But she did not know how to repent and trust in Christ for salvation. For many years she remained an off-and-on church member—until she truly came to know Christ in her 40s.

When his marriage got into trouble, one man went to see the pastor of an evangelical church. "You need to be saved," the minister kept saying. He invited the man to attend church that Sunday and come forward to "get saved." The man did as the pastor suggested—but the pastor's idea of "getting saved" was joining the church, getting baptized, and turning over a new leaf. His solution didn't work. The man was still the same old person and soon returned to his old ways.

In some churches the pastor mostly preaches simple salvation messages to the unredeemed people in attendance. God's flock starves on this diet only. In other churches, the pastor feeds his flock and then invites visitors to come forward to "be saved," to "receive Christ as Savior," to "move their letter," "join the church," or "receive baptism"—with no further explanation concerning salvation.

Many people have been misled into thinking that they have been saved and are going to heaven. But Jesus Christ said clearly, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

In one "revival" I was amazed that I didn't hear the gospel preached at all, even though the evangelist evi-

dently knew and loved the Lord himself. I think he really believed that he was preaching the gospel. He spoke against sin but didn't say much about repentance. He urged people to be "saved," to be "born again." He used "Christian jargon."

However, this evangelist did not actually tell us the good news of *how* to be saved, *how* to be born again: that Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification; that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin; and that we are to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved (see 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 John 1:7; Acts 16:31). This announcement is Good News.

The apostle Paul declared, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). According to Paul, he had delivered this message to the people of Corinth: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). That capsule of the gospel, along with other verses, can be shared in one minute of sermon time before an invitation is given.

### Effective Gospel Sharing

As a lost person at 24 years of age, God sent three witnesses to me. The first witness came to our home and shared the gospel with us, urging us to repent of our sins and to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. She also spoke of hell—and that part kept



me awake half the night. It convicted me of my lost, sinful condition before God.

The second witness worked with me at the office. This witness lived out Christ before me and other co-workers and shared the gospel in a clear-cut way.

The third witness I never met. He or she left a tract on my desk one morning. I was ripe for that tract, which quoted various scriptures concerning salvation. The Word of God got through to me. I bowed my head in repentance and gave my heart to Jesus. My life was changed that day. Eventually my whole family came to Jesus Christ.

What brought me through to that life-changing experience? The simple, basic gospel of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.

Dr. R. A. Torrey, the evangelist who won thousands to Christ around the world, wrote that a personal, experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior includes three things:

1. A knowledge that our own sins have been forgiven because Jesus bore them in His own body on the Cross
2. A knowledge that the risen Christ is delivering us daily from the power of sin
3. An absolute surrender of our wills to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master

### Essential Elements of the Gospel

The good news of Jesus involved a few essential elements.

First, *Jesus died for our sins*. The "Romans Road" method of soul winning clearly presents the way of salvation:

- a. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
- b. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).
- c. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).
- d. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

Only through trusting in Jesus' sacrifice for sin can a person be saved or

"born again" (John 3:3-16, 36). The Bible teaches that no one can earn salvation or absolution from sin by his works. Only by trusting in God's grace is salvation extended to us through Christ (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6).

Second, *Jesus was raised for our justification*. The "Romans Road" presentation of salvation contains one more Scripture reference: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Rom. 10:9-10).

Rom. 10:9 makes clear the necessity of a person believing in his heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. So, we must present a resurrected, living Savior.

Third, *We must make a commitment to Jesus*.

Many of us have been guilty of seeking to win converts to Christianity through "easy believism." Certainly we must not put artificial barriers between a lost person and Jesus, such as man-made perceptions of holiness. On the other hand, we must make clear that genuine acceptance of Jesus as Savior involves true repentance: turning from our sin, turning wholeheartedly to Christ. Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

The work of the Holy Spirit is the new birth—He convicts of sin, He draws to Jesus, He causes a person to be born into God's family (see John 16:8; 1 Cor. 12:3; John 3:5-8). As we pray, the Holy Spirit works. As we present God's Word, the Holy Spirit works. As we lift up Jesus, the Holy Spirit works.

Speaking of His death on the Cross, Jesus said, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). So when we lift up the crucified Christ, who has suffered for our sins, He draws people to himself.

Whenever we invite people to be saved, let's take at least a few minutes to tell them how!

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

## Freeway Message

### A Metaphor of Ministry

by Fletcher L. Tink  
Alhambra, Calif.

While driving onto the on ramp merging into the San Bernardino Freeway and in sight of downtown Los Angeles, I glimpsed at a fellow dressed in overalls and orange jacket, handwashing the yellow "Merge" sign by the side of the road.

It didn't seem to me that his job was that important. But if you live in dusty, smoggy Los Angeles, you know that it is!

I said to myself: "This fellow has contributed nothing to the construction of the city. He didn't build the freeway. He didn't even erect or paint the sign. All he does is scrub it clean."

Then a thought grabbed me. So it is with my ministry too. God has designed the destination. He has bulldozed and constructed the Freeway. And all along the way, He has secured clearly marked signs. But, sadly, over the course of time, corruption and pollution have blurred their message.

My glorious calling and my noble task is to don my overalls, risk the traffic, and scrub "Divine Freeway" signs clean.

# Ten Tried and Proven Ideas to Fight Dryness

by Robert Wido

Saegertown, Pa.

**S**amuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" tells of a ship blown off course, doomed by Fate to wander fruitlessly in its search for land. As the unfortunate sailors drift along aimlessly, they cry:

*Water, water, every where,*

*And all the boards did shrink;*

*Water, water, every where,*

*Nor any drop to drink.*

As a preacher of the Word this verse has taken on a new, more personal meaning. How is it that we have access to the most wonderful resource in the world, the Bible, but sometimes we feel like our spiritual wells have simply run dry? Try as we might, it seems nearly impossible to come up with challenging sermon topics week after week.

Perhaps we feel the pressure of a sermon coming due with regularity. Imagine a chef who spends hours and hours on his first day preparing a sumptuous breakfast, only to find that lunch is around the corner—and dinner will be called for shortly after that! Every minister understands the problem, whether we preach once, twice, or three times a week. I think of John Wesley—he is said to have preached three times a day every day, for 40 years. How could he preach so regularly without becoming dry and uninteresting? [Editor's note: He preached the same sermon 40 or 50 times.]

Dryness can cripple a person's ministry. So how do you solve the problem of "Preacher's Dehydration"? Here are 10 things we can do that will help us keep from drying out prematurely.

**1. Realize that devotional times and study times are not designed to meet the same need.**

Very few people wear tennis shoes with a suit. Neither will they wear black oxfords if they are going jog-

ging. Different shoes are designed for different purposes. In the same way, our devotional time and our study time are both designed to meet specific spiritual needs in our lives. Blurring this distinction can kill your ministry.

About two years ago I started getting to my study an hour earlier. I concentrated on studying some aspect of the Bible of special interest to me personally. At first I felt guilty—I was at the office, but I wasn't doing anything to produce immediate results. After all, I had two sermons to write for Sunday. I kept telling myself to stop relaxing and to start working.

Slowly I began to realize, however, that my job was "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). My church depended on me to lead them spiritually. Without spending quality and quantity time in the Word, I would not be in a position to provide the leadership they needed.

Someone once asked former Southern Baptist Convention President W. A. Criswell what advice he would give someone starting out in the ministry. Criswell answered: "Keep the morning for God. However busy you may be, keep the morning for God, and out of the praying, out of the Bible studying, out of the meditation, out of the baring of your soul before God, stand in the pulpit with unction and with power and deliver a message from heaven." I appreciate this advice from a pastor who understands how important it is to spend time in study if we are going to remain fresh and creative.

**2. Read widely in Christian literature, in religious literature, and in secular literature.**

I make a distinction between religious and Christian literature. *When Bad Things Happen to Good*

*People*, by Harold Kushner, is an important religious work, but it is, of course, not from a Christian perspective.

A seminary professor once told me that if a man does not keep up on his reading while he is in the ministry, he will do fine until he is about 35 years old. By then, he is completely out of material from seminary and will begin to drift into sentimental poems, old stories, and clichés. To be widely read enables one to be interesting. And to be uninteresting is the unforgivable sin of the preacher—from the hearer's standpoint.

To learn new things is one of the keys to being challenging and interesting. People buy books about subjects unfamiliar to them because they want to learn something new. The same principle works in the Spiritual realm: they want Scripture's truths packaged in a way they have not heard before. The only way to be consistent in having something new to say is to take in new ideas all the time. Most of us would be appalled if our child's science teacher used a textbook from the 1950s. "It is not up-to-date!" we would shout. Perhaps that science teacher is justified in saying the same thing about our "1950-era" illustrations and phrases.

One temptation I face is to read in order to find illustrations. I must be careful to avoid this temptation. The illustrations will come, but you will miss the point of the entire book if you look merely for colorful phrases to use in this week's sermons.

**3. Vary your preaching style.**

I am a creature of habit. I like to do things the same way, at the same time, day in and day out. This tendency finds its way into my preparation and preaching. I generally preach expository sermons, with an occasional topical or biographical

sermon thrown in for variety.

Looking at my preaching from the perspective of the "person in the pew," I wonder how much I am keeping his interest. If, indeed, variety is the spice of life, I fear that we may bore our people by presenting the Word of God in an "any style fits any verse" way.

When in seminary, I was asked to team-teach with another seminary student a class on church history. He and I jumped into the project with enthusiasm. About two months into the class, we noticed a sense of boredom permeating our group. So, I dressed up as Martin Luther and came into the class—beard, robe, and all. We spent an enlightening hour talking about the causes of the Reformation and some of the costs to Luther personally. It was months before the people stopped talking about Martin Luther coming to visit.

Reflecting on this experience, I keep thinking, "How would my congregation respond if Barnabas or John the Baptist came to talk with them?" Varying sermon style helps your congregation. It also helps you break the monotony of churning out a sermon (or two or three) each week.

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## Sometimes we feel our spiritual wells have run dry.

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### ***4. Keep a sermon idea file.***

If you read regularly, sermon ideas will come naturally strolling off the page and into your mind. But if you have no way of bringing them back to conscious memory, you will, week after week, struggle to come up with something new and fresh.

The logical solution is to have a sermon idea file. I keep a folder titled "Sermon Ideas." In it I file texts that are screaming to be preached. I put in sermon outlines that I think of as I drive my car or ride my bike, outlines that I hear other preachers use that might, someday, fit the needs of my flock. I also file half-

finished sermons that don't seem to fit my church at the moment. Someday they may, and when they do, I will have already done much of the work.

Andrew Blackwood, one of the great preachers of yesteryear, compared preaching to gardening. We must plant ideas in our minds months in advance and allow them time to grow and mature into usable sermons. The sermon idea file will help you.

### ***5. Try to work one week ahead.***

Although this sounds like an impossible goal, it requires absolutely no extra work. And think of the benefits: it eliminates the "Saturday Night Special." It saves the pastor a lot of gray hair and sleepless nights. Imagine how it would feel to come into your study on Monday morning (or Tuesday, if you take Monday off), and have your Sunday morning and evening sermons already finished, ready to deliver! Sound impossible? It isn't really. Get in the habit of working one week ahead. Continue to write your Sunday sermons a week ahead.

Some will object, "But how can you be excited about something you put together two weeks earlier? If you write it the week you deliver the sermon, it is fresh in your mind." I discipline myself to spend Friday with my Sunday morning sermon. I read it and reread it. I change a few important lines and rethink it carefully. By the time I have gone over the sermon a number of times, the excitement comes back. I am ready for Sunday. In like manner, I spend Saturday afternoon with my evening sermon.

Initially, the hardest part of this plan is getting a week ahead. How can you set such an ambitious goal in light of the fact that you are already feeling as fresh as a week-old fish? The key lies in using those precious weeks when we do not have to preach—the district superintendent will be speaking or a music group is scheduled. Instead of kicking back and relaxing, work on your regular weekly fare—one, two, or three sermons. Then, when your special event is over, keep on working as always. Suddenly you are a week ahead.

A fellow pastor of mine plans his sermons on Saturday evening be-

cause, he says, "it allows the Lord to speak to me out of my spiritual need of Him." This kind of sermon planning may engender a bit of excitement—or dread—but it will eventually cause your sermon work to become an exercise in frustration. That would be like setting off on your vacation without plans or direction. After all, the Lord is in charge and He will direct, right? But I doubt you would have a very good time. Fear might replace the joy of the trip. The same thing may happen to our preaching unless we work ahead.

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## To be widely read enables one to be interesting.

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### ***6. Concentrate on the things that are important and meaningful to your people.***

While the Olympic Games were in full swing, I spoke on "running the race." During elections, I talked about our responsibility to the government. One of the most interesting sermons I ever preached was aimed for St. Patrick's Day. I prepared a biographical sermon on St. Patrick, the pioneer missionary who brought the gospel to Ireland. The people were thrilled. Now they had a way to tell people about who St. Patrick really was. The next week, several came to me to thank me for a great chance to share their burden for missions with their friends.

A word of caution, however. We must always be careful to avoid focusing undue attention on a person or family in our congregations. To preach about financial responsibility the same week that a family has publicly declared bankruptcy will certainly cause that family to feel uneasy. No one likes to be pointed out as an example—whether a good example or bad.

I am the pastor of a church in a small town. When people ask me how many people live in our town, I ask whether I should count my wife

and myself. In a town our size, everyone cares about everyone else. Private business becomes public property. Therefore, it is important to read the local paper. My people may well be thinking about a sick neighbor, or a factory about to close, or a school board issue that they are about to vote on. One of the things that I need to work on more is to read my local newspaper. It acts as a very accurate thermometer to help me understand what is happening in the lives of my people.

Another good way to find out what your people need, and how you can deal with their needs, is to ask them. As I visit my people, I ask them, "If you were the pastor of this church, what would you preach about?" Of course, just because someone suggests a sermon idea, that is no guarantee that I will use it. Yet, sometimes the answers to this question force me to get deeper into the Word and discover my people's needs and interests. One key to keeping fresh is to learn new things.

**7. I try to broaden myself by taking an interest in activities not related to the church.**

God has gifted me with more interests than I have time for. I like to hunt and fish, play golf, and go to football games, wrestling matches, and shopping malls. I love cars, refinishing furniture, reading, collecting stamps, looking at church buildings, and playing chess. I believe that being an interesting and growing person is part of God's design. Nothing is longer than a sermon by a person who has learned nothing new in 10 years. All that some people preach about are old experiences and books long ago forgotten.

In later stages of starvation a person's body starts to feed upon itself. After all available nutrition is sucked out, all that remains is a slow and painful death. The same thing can happen to the preacher who refuses to take in nutrition in the form of new ideas and new challenges. Slowly, our minds and souls are eaten away, and we stand in the pulpit as starved men being asked to feed the multitude.

**8. Once a year read an exceptionally good book about preaching.**

We live in an era when innumerable books on preaching are rolling off the

the presses. A noted scholar on preaching recently commented that 10 years ago one or two significant books on preaching could be expected each year. Last year, at least a dozen important, significant books were published. Keeping up with this flood of information is almost impossible for the parish pastor. But if this much attention is being paid to the subject, we certainly should not ignore it in our reading.

However, my reading time is limited. So I am extremely selective about how I use those precious hours when I settle down for a blessed evening of hot tea and a good book. I want to make sure the book is something interesting and, most of all, profitable.

Some of the most profitable reading a proclaimer of the Sacred Word can do is about our high calling: preaching. If the last book on preaching that you read was for a seminary class, let me encourage you to get out those old textbooks and begin reading through them again. It is amazing how a few years and several hundred sermons can give you a whole new perspective on what was once dull, required reading.

Better yet, take a close look at some contemporary books on preaching. For starters, look at John Stott's wonderful book *Between Two Worlds*, or *Preaching to Convince*, by Jim Berkley. Both books are relevant, highly readable, and well worth the time and effort to read them carefully.

Preaching is the one task the clergy person does that no one else does. It behooves us to do our very best.

My father is an orthopedic surgeon. He has been in practice for over 30 years. The earliest recollections of my father are when he was studying for his state board examination. Later recollections, when I was in grade school, picture Dad in the living room, reading *Orthopedic Digest*, while the rest of us watched TV in the family room. Even now, after practicing for 30 years, he makes a habit of attending several good seminars a year designed for orthopedic surgeons. He listens to cassette tapes and watches special videotapes about new forms of surgery and physical therapy. When I think of the time and energy he spends

keeping up with his profession, I feel vaguely guilty that I have a hard time reading one good book a year about preaching.

**9. The creative use of sermon series will help you keep your preaching fresh and interesting.**

Some sections of Scripture do not lend themselves to a 25- to 30-minute sermon. Take the Ten Commandments, for example. Can you imagine preaching on all 10 in one sermon? That would be tantamount to eating a large pizza in one bite—it could be done, but who would want to do it?

Therefore, treat some sections of scripture in a series of sermons: the General Epistles, biographies of Bible characters, and the Sermon on the Mount. It's amazing how one short sermon of our Lord can occupy the preacher for months! I would love to preach a series on "The Six Woes of Jesus to the Pharisees" from Luke 11. Maybe that sermon should wait until I am about ready to move!

I asked a very well known preaching scholar what advice he would give to help preachers stay fresh in the pulpit. He immediately answered: "Use series as often as you can. That way you needn't be thinking of a new idea every week." His advice is sound and practical.

**10. Last, give yourself a break by having a periodic film or a special speaker.**

When God gave the Law to Moses, He made it clear that man was designed to work for six days, and then rest. But sometimes the pastor gets the idea that he is above that law. If we preach Sunday after Sunday, morning and evening, we are sure to get "Preacher's Dehydration." One solution to the problem is to plan a special activity on a regular basis. The people will appreciate the change, and you will appreciate the break.

One product appearing on shelves of drugstores is skin moisturizer. A person rubs the cream on dry areas and, almost as if by magic, the dryness goes away.

Although no one sells sermon moisturizer this easy to use, the above 10 suggestions should help you fight that constant battle we all face: "Preacher's Dehydration." ✠



# The Pulpit's Missing Link



## —“Unction”

by Morris Chalfant

Bourbonnais, Ill.

**I**s the unique condition of the minister in the pulpit that our unaffected forefathers called “unction” outmoded today? Or is a reassessment in order?

Certainly “unction” is a word little used among the ministry today. What is unction? It is a quality that can be sensed by those who listen to one who preaches the Word of God. Unction is not animation or sentimentality, nor is it only emotion. Unction is a quality that pervades the man of God and his preaching. Unction is *the anointing of the Holy One*, according to the dictionary.

An old country minister was praying earnestly for unction. Someone asked, “What is unction?”

“Brother,” he replied, “I don’t know what it is, but I know what it ain’t!”

In 1 John 2:20 we read these words: “But ye have an unction from the Holy One” (KJV). The Greek word for “unction” is *chrisma*. This means “an unguent, or smearing, that is (figuratively) the specific gift or endowment (*chrism*) of the Holy Spirit.”

Unction is that indefinable, indescribable something that an old, renowned Scottish preacher describes:

There is sometimes somewhat in preaching that cannot be described either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Lord; but if there be any way to obtain such a thing it is by the heavenly disposition of the speaker.<sup>1</sup>

One of the pioneers of the holiness movement portrayed unction as

not a gentle dove beating her wings against the bars outside of the preacher’s soul; rather, she must be pursued and won. Unction cannot be learned, only earned by prayer. Unction is God’s knighthood for the soldier-preacher who has wrestled in prayer and gained the victory. Victory is not won in the pulpit by firing intellectual bullets or wise-cracks, but in the prayer closet; it is won or lost before the preacher’s foot enters the pulpit. Unction is like dynamite. Unction comes not by the medium of the bishop’s hands, neither does it mildew when the preacher is cast into prison.

Unction will pierce and percolate; it will sweeten and soften. When the hammer of logic and the fire of human zeal fail to open the stony heart, unction will succeed.

When Paul preached to the Corinthians, he deliberately decided against any academic or erudite approach in presenting the gospel: “My speech and my preaching,” he later told the Corinthian Christians, “was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4, KJV). Paul had this unction.

Paul had the same evidence as he preached at Thessalonica. Weeks after being in that city, he wrote to the converts there and said, “Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” (1 Thess. 1:5, KJV). Again Paul received unction.

This spark of vital fire is not equated with emotionalism. Rather, it is the witness of the Holy Spirit to the validity of the message. It will convince the intellect, warm the affections, and move the will.

Much of our preaching and teach-

ing lacks this unction. How desperately we need it! Without unction our powder never fires! In our day with professionalism surrounding the pulpit ministry, we must take care that we do not obscure the need for this unique pulpit quality. We need the man of God to enter the pulpit and be able to have said of him, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One” (1 John 2:20, KJV).

Hear E. M. Bounds on this important matter:

This unction comes to the preacher not in the study but in the closet. It is heaven’s distillation in answer to prayer. It is the sweetest exhalation of the Holy Spirit. It impregnates, suffuses, softens, percolates, cuts, and soothes. It carries the Word like dynamite, like salt, like sugar; makes the Word a soother, an arraigner, a revealer, a searcher; makes the hearer a culprit or a saint; makes him weep like a child and live like a giant; opens his heart and his purse as gently, yet as strongly, as the spring opens the leaves. This unction is not the gift of genius. It is not found in the halls of learning. No eloquence can woo it. No industry can win it. No prelatical hands can confer it. It is the gift of God—the signet set to His own messengers. It is heaven’s knighthood given to the chosen true and brave ones who

(Continued on page 33)



# I Preach

by Croft M. Pentz  
Union, N.J.



# Too Long

**A**n elderly couple were members of the local assembly. Both were hard of hearing and were unaware that their whispers could be quite loud.

One Sunday morning as the pastor was completing one of his usual one-hour sermons, the wife whispered to the husband, "He preaches too long." The words were loud enough for the pastor as well as a number of the people in the front of the church to hear.

Some pastors don't quit when they are through. They don't know when to put the caboose on the train. A sermon need not be everlasting to have eternal values!

Some of the greatest lectures of all time were short. Look at the brevity of the 23rd psalm, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Of course, certain Bible studies may be longer than the average sermon. But few ministers can keep people's attention after 30 minutes. The evangelist may, but then that's for only a few services. Why do some ministers preach too long?



## Lack of Preparation

A veteran pastor, appraising his sermons, found the most successful were those delivered at funerals. As he carefully studied these, he found they were the shortest and the best prepared of his sermons.

The minister who preaches long usually does so because of lack of preparation. He repeats himself. He goes from Dan to Beersheba, saying very few worthwhile things in between.

If some ministers' sermons were put into print as preached, they would not sell. There is so much repetition, wandering, and irrelevance.

Writing helps a minister greatly. A writer is told how many words are needed for the article. In some cases not only how many lines, but strokes per line.

1. *Spiritual preparation.* Before the minister prepares a message, he should prepare himself. The greatest sermon anyone may preach is the life he lives. As he has the proper relationship with God, the Lord can lead him in preparation of the message. It is not getting a sermon but a message from God.

2. *Scriptural preparation.* Every minister should make a careful study of God's Word. He should read the entire Bible each year. He should be a "man of the Book."

The message should contain much of God's Word. Faith comes through the Word (Rom. 10:17). The Word is powerful in revealing man's sin and shortcomings (Heb. 4:12). It is the

greatest power in preaching (2 Tim. 3:16).

The prophets could stand and say, "Thus saith the Lord." People need more of God's Word and less of man's opinions and logic.

The radio or television speaker has a certain amount of time to fit in his sermon. Whether he's through or not, at the end of the hour the program ends. This kind of preparation requires discipline and forethought.

3. *Systematic preparation.* The best type of preaching anyone can do is expository. As the preacher expounds God's Word, the people can follow in their Bibles. When he completes the passage, he quits and will continue the study at the next service.

## Lack of Organization

The minister may prepare carefully, doing much research, knowing the customs and cultures of the Bible passage. He may have valuable material, but unless it is properly organized, he will wander and be long in his preaching.

1. *Have a goal for every sermon.* Too many aim at nothing and hit it every time. Without a definite goal you will accomplish little, and you are wasting both your time and the people's.

2. *Pick a certain subject and stick to it.* Don't wander.

3. *Use notes.* Few are blessed with photographic memories. Most forget easily. Nothing is more embarrassing when speaking than to lose the train of thought. God can and does bless notes.

4. *Use an outline.* There should be some order in the message. It is similar to building a home. You don't start with the roof. Lay the proper groundwork, then build to the climax.

5. *Have an introduction.* This prepares the people for what you are planning to say. TV programs know if they don't get the viewer's attention in the first few moments, he will switch channels.

The introduction could be current events, humor, sports, great people of the past and present, etc.

Don't make the introduction too long. The ideal sermon has about a 3- to 5-minute introduction, 20-minute body, and 3- to 5-minute conclusion.

6. *Use illustrations.* They are like windows letting light into the sermon. No house is built without windows. Likewise, no house is built with all windows. Be careful not to use too many illustrations, lest you have little time for God's Word. Of course, the Bible is filled with great illustrations.

7. *Have a conclusion.* The conclusion to the sermon is what the summation is to the attorney. You have presented your case. Now you must convince the people to make a decision.

The sermon may be great, but without a good conclusion it can be a failure. Work at making a good conclusion for every sermon. And quit when you are through.

The conclusion gets the people to sign their names on the dotted line. Make the conclusion convincing.

### Lack of Consideration

Always have the people's welfare in mind. From the time you start preparation until the completion of the sermon, think of your people and what's best for them.

1. *Consider the people's needs.* Be specific! A physician examines the patient, treats him, and leaves. Likewise, address God's Word to a certain need, then when you are through, stop.

Remember, God knows the people's needs. If you get the mind of the Lord, He will help you prepare accordingly.

2. *Consider the people's time.* The seats become uncomfortable after 30 minutes. To hold the people's

attention beyond that time will take a superspeaker.

You may feel inspired and free, but are your people responding? They may be there in body, but are they with you in spirit? Their minds may be elsewhere.

3. *Consider the people's ability to absorb.* People can only absorb so much. It's better to have them wanting more than to have them bored with too long a sermon.

4. *Consider the people and the application.* Are you getting through? You may wax eloquent, but do the hearers understand? Are you speaking or communicating?


A grandmother took her granddaughter to hear the late Dr. Henry

Ironside, pastor of Moody Church, Chicago. She said, "Today, you will listen to the greatest preacher I have ever heard."

On the way home from church the granddaughter said, "He's not great; I understood every word he said."

Discipline yourself by the clock. People do it in radio and television. All vocations live by the clock, except some preachers and their preaching.

Rarely do you find long sermons interesting. Of course, storytellers are interesting, but that's not preaching. That's entertaining and playing upon people's emotions.

It's better to have the people say, "He doesn't preach long enough" than, "He preaches too long." 

## The Pulpit's Missing Link—"Unction"

(Continued from page 31)

have sought this anointed honor through many an hour of tearful, wrestling prayers.<sup>2</sup>

When preachers lack unction, no one is fooled. That preacher has not gone far who, after he has ministered the Word, needs the backslap of friends or the stimulant of others' flattery in order to "feel good." The preacher who is elated over human praise for his preaching will sink under human criticism. This proves that he is walking in the flesh. A pastor can be inexpressibly happy after preaching a word from heaven even if his congregation storms at him. The man who has gotten God's word in the prayer closet neither seeks nor expects encouragement from people for the delivery of that word. He must be the servant of the Lord and not the tool of mankind. The Spirit himself bears witness of God's approval. God says, "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but . . . doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6, KJV).

E. M. Bounds asked,

How and whence comes this unction? Direct from God in answer to prayer. Praying hearts only are the hearts filled with this holy oil; praying lips only are anointed with this divine unction.


Prayer, much prayer, is the price of preaching unction; prayer, much prayer, is the one, sole condition of keeping this unction.

Without unceasing prayer the unction never comes to the preacher. Without perseverance in prayer, the unction like the manna overkept, breeds worms.<sup>3</sup>

Preaching God's Word brings people together. Preaching God's Word gives life to the spiritually dead. Preaching God's Word solves people's problems. Preaching God's Word heals wounded spirits. Preaching God's Word sets people on fire.

Preaching God's Word with unction is the crying need of preachers today.

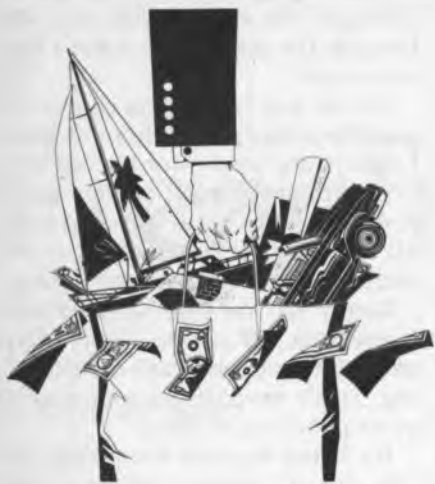
Let us ministers enter the pulpit dreaming dreams that become realities, holding hopes that become meaningful, but above all, bathed in holy love, remembering the old adage, "Faith is often caught rather than taught." To succeed at that, we need this holy unction.

Let us have an "updating" of holy unction in the church. She always needs her preachers to have the courage to stand against those who want a lukewarm pulpit ministry. Let us not be so afraid of becoming fanatics that we become Laodiceans in our preaching. No man of God needs to be ashamed to have it said of him, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One!" 

1. E. M. Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1949), 73.

2. *Ibid.*, 77.

3. *Ibid.*, 82.



# Stewardship: What Is It?

by Velva Lorenz

Stockton, Calif.

If you mention the word *stewardship* to a group of fellow Christians, there is a good chance that most will immediately think of money for church budgets, collection plates, and pledges.

Perhaps that is because churches, often struggling with monthly expenses and mortgage payments, may tend to stress this one area to the diminution of others.

This emphasis might begin quite early. I recall, as a child, tightly grasping my nickel meant for the offering plate, reluctant to relinquish it. With a warning shake of her head, my mother would try to make plain to me that it was God's, anyway. At that time, I didn't understand. Consequently, as I grew up, it left an impression in my mind that, as money was the only thing I ever gave the Lord in tangible form, equating stewardship with money seemed reasonable.

As I matured in faith, however, I gained clearer understanding of the all-encompassing breadth of stewardship. God gave us the care of all He made. His Word reveals that being a steward for Him involves doing His will in everything. Someone said, "Stewardship is everything we do after we say, 'I believe.'"

Paul entreats us to offer ourselves



as pleasing and living sacrifices to God, dedicated to Him. If we are to offer our everyday lives to Him, we would do well to focus on the scope of that offering, in four different areas.

### Stewardship of Body and Mind

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you . . . ?" (1 Cor. 6:19). If we eat too much, drink too much, exercise too little, smoke, or use drugs, we increase the risk for disease and ill health, even death.

A special mention of sexual sins in the Bible emphasizes its seriousness. Anyone who engages in sexual immorality sins against his own body—a body that is a member of Christ himself (1 Cor. 6:15-18). There is pressure from the media and elsewhere to make sexual permissiveness seem harmless. Often glossed over is the ugly truth that sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies are often the result.

Drug abuse is a menace to both body and mind and has no place in our lives.

The body and mind are incapable of being separated and cannot perform apart from one another. If we allow worry and fear to take over, the result can manifest itself in any number of stress-related diseases.

### Stewardship of Gifts and Abilities

As God's people, we each have been given a gift or gifts by the Holy Spirit "for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:4, 7). We share in God's plan

to serve others and build up His Church with our gifts, all working together. Gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, ministering, teaching, giving, discernment, and pastoring are but some of the gifts mentioned in Rom. 12:8; Eph. 4:11; and 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28.

Some may protest, "But I cannot preach or teach or heal or do anything that would make a difference." Be assured. Each of us is a part of the Body of Christ. Paul tells us that, although there are different kinds of services, different kinds of gifts, and different kinds of working, God is present in all of them, in all of us.

We only need to discover what our gifts are and use them to glorify God. We can share in His plan by doing the tasks given us, administered in love—love that is patient, kind, humble, truthful, unailing, and unifying.

### Stewardship of the Earth

Every steward for Christ should feel concern for the land in which we live, remembering with awe and thankfulness, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Ps. 24:1).

He made it for us to care for with love and wisdom. Instead, the earth has been poisoned and abused.

We need not continue as we have. In our role as caretakers, we dare not permit such precious resources as our rain forests to be further destroyed. Or ignorance, carelessness, and indifference to allow continued pollution of our water and air. How can we leave such a legacy to our children?

*(Continued on page 36)*





# Moving Expenses: Reporting Requirements and Deductions

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

**T**ax laws and reporting requirements directly impact the reporting and deductibility of moving expenses. There are requirements for reporting direct payments as well as reimbursements of moving costs by the employer. New requirements were effective beginning in 1987.

The concept of reporting and deducting moving expenses is different from the concept used for the reimbursement of normal employee business expenses. In the case of a normal business expense reimbursement, the employer does not report the reimbursement as income, and the employee does not need to deduct the expense. However, with moving expenses, the employer must always report any reimbursement for moving expenses and any direct payment of moving expenses as wages paid to the employee. Therefore, the employee must always claim and deduct the expenses on his tax forms in order to avoid income tax on the reported "income." You will not be able to deduct moving expenses if you file Form 1040EZ or Form 1040A, since moving expenses must be deducted using Schedule A of Form 1040.

## Mandatory Employer Reporting Requirements

Employers, including churches, must report as taxable wages any amount that the employer reimburses an employee for moving expenses and any amount the employer pays directly to a provider for expenses relating to the move of an employee. The amounts to be reported would include direct expenses, such as the travel costs of the employee and members of the employee's household en route to the new home, as well as the actual cost of moving personal effects. It would also include any indirect expenses related to the cost of pre-move house-hunting trips, temporary living quarters at the new job location, and the expenses of selling, purchasing, or leasing a residence.

The amount of employer-paid or

employer-reimbursed moving expenses would be reported on Form W-2, Box 10 along with the employee's other taxable wages. The amount included in Box 10 for moving expenses would be reported as a separate amount in Box 18 and identified as "moving expenses." To the extent that the employer can reasonably assume that the expenses are deductible by the employee, no withholding is required for a lay employee, nor are the amounts included in Boxes 11 or 12 as wages subject to Social Security tax. The employer is also required to complete Form 4782, "Employee Moving Expense Information," and give the form to the employee by January 31 of the year following the payment. The completion of Form 4782 is not an option by the employer. It is mandatory. The information on the form is used by the employee in completing appropriate tax forms in order to deduct the expenses.

## Eligibility for Deduction of Moving Expenses

Generally, eligibility to deduct moving expenses depends upon the passing of two separate tests: (1) a mileage distance test and (2) a period of time worked test. To be eligible to deduct moving expenses, the distance between the new job location and the former home must be at least 35 miles more than the distance between the old job location and the former home. This 35-mile test applies to both self-employed individuals and employees. While the moves made by most ministers would easily meet this test, it is possible that some moves might fail the mileage test.

The "period of time worked" test requires that the individual must remain in the new locality as a full-time employee for at least 39 weeks during the 12-month period immediately following arrival at the new job location. The minister not employed by a church but serving in a truly self-employed ministry must work full-time for at least 78 weeks during the 24 months immediately

following arrival at the new location. Where a joint return is filed, moving expenses may be deducted if either the individual or the spouse can satisfy the time test based on individual work records.

## Deductible Moving Expenses—Form 3903

The law now distinguishes between two types of moving expenses: (1) direct expenses that are fully deductible and (2) indirect expenses that have certain limits.

Direct expenses are fully deductible and include the traveling cost of the individual and members of the household en route from the old home to the new location. Included are the costs of transportation, meals, and lodging along the direct route to the new location. Food and lodging for one day before departure after the old residence is unusable and food and lodging for the day of arrival at the new location are included. The cost of meals must be reduced by 20 percent before they are deducted. Either a deduction for the actual cost of gasoline, oil, and repairs (but not depreciation) during the trip or a deduction based on a standard rate of 9 cents per mile plus parking fees and tolls may be taken. Direct expenses also include the actual cost of moving the personal effects and household items. This would include the cost of packing and transportation plus storage for up to 30 consecutive days. Insurance for the goods in transit and the cost of moving a pet or shipping an automobile are also deductible. The costs of connecting or disconnecting utilities are deductible except for the cost of connecting a telephone at the new home.

Indirect expenses that are deductible within certain limits include the cost of premove house-hunting trips; temporary living quarters at the new location; and expenses of selling, purchasing, or leasing a residence. To be deductible, these expenses must be incurred after actual employment has been obtained. For the self-employed, expenses for pre-

move house-hunting trips or expenses for temporary living quarters at the new location are not deductible unless substantial arrangements have been made to begin work at the new location. The Tax Code does allow a deduction for expenses incurred in looking for a new job in the same line of work; however, these expenses are deducted as miscellaneous expenses subject to the 2 percent Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) floor, and the cost of meals must be reduced by 20 percent before they are deducted.

An overall limit of \$3,000 is applied to indirect moving expenses. Of this amount, no more than \$1,500 can be incurred for temporary living expenses during a 30-day period and for house-hunting trips.


### When Are Deductions Taken?

The reimbursements and direct payments by the employer for moving expenses and the deduction for moving expenses will generally oc-

cur within the same tax year. However, if the reimbursement occurs in a year other than the year the expenses are paid, the individual may elect to deduct the expenses in the year of reimbursement provided that (a) the expenses are paid in a prior year, or (b) the expenses are paid in the year following the year of reimbursement, but before the filing deadline for the tax return.

The expense deduction using Form 3903 is not a direct adjustment to income on Form 1040 as it has been in some previous years. The deductible expenses are taken

on Schedule A as an itemized deduction not subject to the 2 percent AGI test. Of course, in order for them to be deductible, itemized deductions must exceed the Standard Deduction allowed by the Tax Code.

For more information, you may want to secure IRS Publication 521, *Moving Expenses*. It is available from the IRS (1-800-TAX-FORM). 

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

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## Hang-up of Modishness


(Continued from page 23)

am I the harbinger of spiritual certainties? Does my life reflect the Spirit of Jesus or does it produce a fuzzy image with little character or distinctness?

It's nice to have the latest gadgets, to be attired in the sharpest wardrobe, and to be conversant with the newest fads. But if we lose our uniqueness as a "set apart" group, the gospel also loses one of its basic strongholds.

Every minister needs to discover how his life can have its greatest impact during the few short years God gives him to live. If he has unconsciously been impaled upon the "hang-up of modishness," he should strive to get his feet on the ground and deliberately move beyond the temptation to conform. The Bible says, "Be not conformed . . . but be ye transformed" (Rom. 12:2, KJV). Live in contradiction to the extreme modes of the day, not to be odd, but to be more useful.

Remember that we are ambassadors of the Most High God. Therefore, any attitude, any mode of attire or behavior, or any activity that might reflect derogatorily upon the One we represent should be avoided. We have been set apart and ordained to stand in Christ's stead in a world that needs the Savior. If His representatives misrepresent Him, to whom will they go?

Let us follow Him "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22, KJV). Life is too short to inhibit our effectiveness by the *hang-up of modishness*. May we ask the Lord to transform this deterrent into a springboard of dynamic spirituality so that His gospel may have free course through our personality. 

## Stewardship: What Is It?

(Continued from page 34)

We have no choice but to assume an active custodial role—that of protecting and renewing an earth under siege.

### Stewardship of Property

There is little doubt that money is a delicate subject with most people.


People want to own and possess but not share the material blessings God has given us. We should not, as His children, however, have to be reminded that nothing in the world belongs to us (Job 41:11). As we accept this and transfer ownership of all our property to God, then we become the responsible stewards He wishes us to be. Yet, we often forget that one of the gifts is that of giving. If we set aside our "first fruits," we demonstrate that God the Giver has first claim on us and all that we have. We may believe that money and possessions are not one of God's concerns. However, the many parables that relate to this subject, as well as the hundreds of references in the Bible that allude to finances and property, should make us aware that it is a subject in which God has great interest.

In one familiar story, a young rich

man asked how he might be saved, having kept all the commandments. Jesus replied that he must sell everything and give to the poor, then he would have treasure in heaven. Unable to give up his great wealth, the man went away in sadness. His love of property kept him from eternal life.

Just as we brought nothing into the world, we will take nothing out. He has given us money and goods to use in serving others and to spread His Word. All property belongs to Him; we are but stewards of it.

What is stewardship, then? "Stewardship is the acid test of where our faith and hearts are," says Donald A. Abdon, in his book *Training and Equipping the Saints*.

The final truth for us is this: As managers, we are entrusted with Spirit-given gifts to be used faithfully and wisely. We receive the grace of God and are rewarded, not by how much or how many gifts are given us, but by our faithfulness and vigilance in using them. As His stewards, we offer our very lives in joy and thanksgiving, gladly caring for all that He has assigned to us. 

# Fruit Bearing Through Spiritual Growth

by Wilma Gibson Shaw

Rocklin, Calif.

**R**ecently our area was infested with the medfly. Larvae existing in the fruit meant the loss of millions of dollars and created a lot of controversy. Unless eliminated, the pest would jeopardize the future of orchards, growers, owners, the market, and the economy of the state. Add to that potential infestation in other areas. The little fly was ruining the fruit. People suffered from this far-reaching contamination.

The antidote is malathion. No manpower was spared; no financing was withheld. We must get rid of this small but destructive insect. The offensive action called for aerial spraying. Helicopters flew over most of our homes.

We Christians want our lives to bear spiritual fruit. As pastors' wives our influence touches more people than most women—our circles include families, parishioners, friends, community, young and old, rich and poor. God's Word says, "I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Phil. 4:17, KJV). We attend schools and seminars to learn our role. Some of us may be more productive than others, but we all desire to grow spiritually and to bear precious fruit. As malathion sprayed on fruit rescues it now and for the years to come, so we responsible Christians want to do away with anything that hinders the growth of spiritual fruit. Let the Holy Spirit hover over us.

## YOU ARE IMPORTANT IN GOD'S PLAN

You have a divine mission. You are a coworker with the Almighty. You may be a homemaker, but you are also the shepherdess of God's flock. Your husband may stand up front. He

may receive the praise, and, at times, you may feel insignificant. But you are part of God's team and a very valuable member. Your pastor-husband needs you. He needs your support. Before God you share in any praise or acclaim he receives. My father, a district superintendent for 36½ years, said that the second question a church board asks when calling a pastor is, "What is his wife like?"

This hard work is based on the happy conviction that through your loving, patient, persevering effort you are protecting the sacredness of your lifelong marriage bond as well as your husband's ministry. You strengthen the very roots of the family, church, and society. That's important business. You are an important person!

## YOU CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

Proverbs 31 paints the perfect picture of the wife of noble character. It says, "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised" (v. 30). This adorning isn't something you put on, but something you put in that beautifies your life. With my nose and my chin, my mother said we'd better work on the inside and make it attractive. I will ever be grateful that she taught me the value of personal devotions. And she taught by example. I saw her pray; I heard her pray. She insisted that I read and pray. Life's problems are so big—raising children, making decisions, financial matters, personal relationships, difficult situations, marital clashes; discouragement and defeat may surround us. We have one solution—take them all to Jesus and tell them to Jesus *alone*. Jesus

hears. He cares. He answers prayer. Do you want to grow spiritually? Spend time reading God's Word and in prayer. Pray your problems! If necessary, pray them out loud to Jesus! This can be therapeutic.

Today many helps are available. Daily devotional readings such as *Streams in the Desert* and *Come Ye Apart* are printed and available. Aids to Bible reading are suggested. Underline verses that speak to you. Box in verses for easy retrieving. Use different colors to code information. Claim God's promises. "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you" (Josh. 3:5). "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power, . . . and you will be changed into a different person. . . . do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you" (1 Sam. 10:6-7). I can insert my name to God's promise.

Hazel Lee was my roommate. She introduced me to the Personal Prayer Notebook. This changed my praying. On Sunday I focused on Adoration and Worship, Monday on Intercession for New Christians, Tuesday on Thanksgiving, Wednesday on Intercession for Missions, Thursday on Intercession for Christians, Friday on Personal Confession, Saturday on Petition and Personal Needs. I learned to keep a Prayer Diary and Answered Prayer Log. You may think, There isn't time. What really is important to you? What do you want most? We all are given 24 hours a day. We make time for what we want most to do. We really do want a life that bears spiritual fruit.

## YOU ARE A BUILDER

People grow weary of folk who in-

cessantly criticize and complain. Each person is part of the problem or part of the solution. Learning to be realistically hopeful in every conversation is an art. Fault-finding damages not only your family's self-confidence and the people you serve but also *you*. A steady conversation of where you used to live—the town, the people, the weather—and the way they did it there is most obnoxious. If you would build where you are, those wonderful memories of the past are yours alone to enjoy. Your words, based on a sound trust in God and in man's potential for good, will hearten and encourage others.

### DON'T BECOME UNINTERESTING

One man said to his wife, "You can become fat, but don't become uninteresting." How do you keep "interesting"? Form the habit of reading. In some intimidating circumstances, you must provide conversation. What do you say? What can you talk about? Do you curl up inside and feel defeated? This is not necessary. You grow as you read. Reading provides material for conversation.

Let me encourage you to read *God of All Comfort*, by Hannah Smith. This book helped me as much as any other to understand a real experience with Jesus Christ and His teachings about holiness. I have been able to share time after time and have put this valuable reading material in the hands of others. Hannah Smith explained it far better than I could.

Two doctors of philosophy sat in our congregation for several years—both brilliant scientists. My preacher-husband, reaching for guidance, asked a general superintendent for advice. He replied, "When they come to church, they are in need of spiritual food. Feed them." People have spiritual needs, and they expect us to share spiritual truths. These we glean from reading. If you don't read, you will have little to give.

Read a variety of things. For short, up-to-date information to be used in conversation, get acquainted with *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, etc. Don't neglect your local newspaper. Sports-

minded little boys sat at my table, so I read the sports page. Players' names and batting averages were important to them. My reading kept me in the conversation—and I put on perfume so that they knew a girl was present.

### YOU ARE GOD'S AGENT FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Brooke Shields' mother has served as an agent for her daughter, and it has brought wealth and fame. What

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## Trust in God and in man's potential for good heartens others.

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is on your priority list for your children? First, you want them to have a genuine Christian experience. You are God's agent to set the priorities. Then you work toward the goals. It takes determination and unfaltering persistence. Your assignment is to be a spiritual leader in your home. The devil says, "Your husband is the leader, so let's wait for him." However, you can read the Bible stories, teach the Christian lessons, train them to pray, and pray with them and for them. You can organize the devotional times, family or personal. The devil fights devotional times with all his might. May the Holy Spirit lay on us the importance of training our children.

### YOUR WORLD IS TROUBLED

Pastor's wife, you are daily confronted with the ills of our world—divorce, heartbreak, child abuse, abortion, homosexuality, drunkenness, narcotics, and much more. How can you help? What can you say? For certain, you cannot run away from all of it. Some social ills have touched ministers' families. More and more strikes our church families. Prayer changes us; prayer changes people; prayer changes circumstances. Let people be assured


of our prayers. At times, more is needed—counseling, healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling.

We can spend time listening, but there is need for more. Difficult situations and long-term counseling should be done by a trained counselor. Perhaps your husband or other staff members are more qualified. However, there comes a time when it falls your lot. Find help at the library. Books like *Competent to Counsel* and *Reality Therapy* are excellent. The Dr. James Dobson series of books will help. I have brought books from my husband's library. You can get names and authors of books that are helpful. Pray much in secret that God would use you in time of need.

### YOU ARE BLESSED

We have a joyful mission—this fruit bearing. We are blessed beyond measure. This week stop and count our blessings—"name them one by one." My husband and I celebrated our 32nd year at Concord, Calif. I am most grateful for those beautiful years of problems and difficulties, victories and triumphs. Recently, a church member gave me a book, *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*. Paul E. Billheimer, the author, summarizes:

All born-again people are in training for rulership. Since the supreme law of that future social order, called the kingdom of God, is *agape* love, therefore their apprenticeship and training is for the learning of deep dimensions of this love. But deep dimensions of this love are learned only in the school of suffering. Even after the new birth and the filling with the Holy Spirit, which are only beginning experiences, greater dimensions of this love are developed only by exercise and testing. Purity is one thing and maturity is another (p. 10).

I bow humbly before you and before God, confessing my faults in the matter of love. Learning *agape* love is the greatest business of life. I ask that God teach me—and all of us—*agape* love through family relations, through wrongful suffering, through life's failures, and then through aging. Remember, pastor's wife, my friend, "You are destined for the throne! God is training you now" (Billheimer, 130). 



## Worship— a Meaningful Experience

by Wayne Holmes  
Cincinnati



**R**ecently, I sat down with Pastor Stephen Green and asked him the following question: "What makes a meaningful worship experience?" His answers were not only very thoughtful and applicable to an adult experience but also are relevant to a children's church setting. For that reason, I want to share with you his five-point answer and how I see these as beneficial to creating the children's church experience.

**1. "For meaningful worship to take place, the people must experience the presence of God."** This is true for children as well as adults. We must always remember that we are not entertaining or babysitting. We are ministering to children. Through prayer time, open altar, a Bible story, or some other method, children need to sense that God himself has met with us and has smiled His approval on what we have done together.

**2. "Worship leaders must be prepared both spiritually and functionally."** One of the hardest tasks I encounter is preparing for children's church. Countless hours go into study, research, preparation, recruitment, and training. I heard one speaker say that he felt it was 10 times harder to prepare for children's church than to prepare for an adult worship experience. This was a former senior pastor speaking. Although he may be exaggerating, his point is true. It is much more difficult to put all the pieces together to form a meaningful experience for

children. One reason is that we do not give it the priority it deserves. More people are won to God before the age of 12 than after. Since that is true, we should make children our number one priority. Not only must the worship leader be prepared functionally, but also he must be prepared spiritually. We cannot lead children into the presence of God if we are not accustomed to being in His presence ourselves. If this does not happen, we become children's workers and not children's ministers.

**3. "As participants, remember that God is the audience."** If children become spectators and not participants, we do them a grave disservice. Worship is active, not observational. To experience the presence of God means that we must make a conscious effort to seek Him. Through music, Bible memory, games, and other activities, we call upon children to share in worship. A balanced program uses all of our sensory perceptions.

**4. "Imagination must be captured, leading people into the wonder of God."** A children's church program that does not call upon the imagination of children will soon be old and useless. Imagination is a God-given ability to see things that are not, that could be, or that stretches us to see the eternal. The more a child's imagination is challenged, the greater will be his sense of the wonder and awe of an almighty God who created the heavens and the earth.

**5. "Enthronement—God has**

**been brought to a place of sovereignty in the heart, and His glory is proclaimed."** God must be Lord of our lives. This is the mission of children's ministry. If God is not enthroned in the hearts of children, at least we want to plant the seeds of the gospel in hopes that it will one day come to fruition and call the children back to the God of their youth. Many children to whom we minister are hurting from situations in their lives that threaten to destroy their wills and spirits. We cannot prevent these forces from damaging them, but we can show them a God who loves and cares for them. We can point them to the Savior and an old rugged cross that has power to change lives and bring healing to broken hearts. We can demonstrate the enthronement of God in our own hearts. In so doing, we offer hope in hopeless situations. Finally, we can give a blessing that pictures a special future for them. Jesus said:

And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward (*Matt. 10:42, NASB*).





# Success by Default:

by Samuel L. Dunn  
Seattle

**T**he New Age movement is enjoying outstanding success and growth. Adherents to this movement number in the millions, with disproportionate representation among upper income and more highly educated people. Because many of the ideals stated by New Age adherents have a noble sound, and because many New Age doctrines appear similar to Christian doctrine, some Christians have been subtly but surely brought into the New Age fold, not realizing the danger to their faith.

While not unified in terms of beliefs or doctrines, certain features of the New Age movement are prominent. Among the beliefs commonly held are:

1. The physical and spiritual worlds constitute a unity.
2. Humans have an extraordinary potential to do and be good.
3. Out-of-body phenomena can be experienced.
4. All persons are immortal.
5. All traditional religions are essentially good but limited.
6. Pollution of the earth must stop.
7. The individual's physical health is important.



8. Jesus was a true spiritual leader, but Christians have corrupted His message.

The success of the New Age movement may be laid, partially, at the feet of traditional Christianity. Traditional Christianity has defaulted on some of its central beliefs and message. The New Age movement meets basic human needs in ways that many Christian groups do not.

It is my assessment, however, that Christianity provides ultimately satisfying answers to the deep-felt questions faced by modern humans. Problems of dislocation, alienation, future shock, restlessness, techno-shock, and mortality are not foreign to Christian thought and practice. Christians have completely fulfilling solutions that assuage the fears of modern life, and even more, promote the good life for all. For Christianity to meet the challenge of the New Age movement, Christianity must take the initiative by promoting its answers to questions of import to the modern mind. The understandings of the Wesleyan tradition are especially rich and can be made attractive to the modern seeker.

## Similarities to Christianity

Christianity and the New Age

# The New Age Movement

movement have some things in common and desire many of the same ends. Preserving the natural order, eliminating pollution, developing human potential, immortality of the person, and importance of the spiritual world are areas in which Christians share many ideas and goals with the movement. Christians should not be bashful in promoting these notions, even though New Agers are saying many of the same things.

## *Pollution and the natural order*

Christians believe that God created the cosmos and the earth and pronounced them good. Humankind has been given stewardship responsibility for the natural order. Humans must redeem, restore, preserve, and protect the environment for the long-term use of the race and for all God's created order. Christians should not pollute the environment and should lend their voices and hands to those who aid in the physical restoration of the earth.

## *Development of human potential*

From one perspective, this is at the heart of the Christian message. Christians see each individual as a creation of God's image. It is His desire that all live life at the fullest, in close communion and fellowship with Him. Christians believe that we are on a pilgrimage of faith that leads to full liberation, freedom, and the realization of the best of our human potential. Life in Christ liberates the individual by freeing him from the shackles of sin and prejudice, freeing him to a life of peace, holiness, and justice.

Fall 1991 \$4.00

# GROW

*A Journal of Church Growth, Evangelism and Discipleship*

Church  
Growth  
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Welcomes  
you to the  
Evangelism  
Conference  
Fort Worth  
Oct 29-31, 1991





## HARVEST NOW

**E**ating, sleeping and personal grooming are fairly routine. They are also high priority. They are routine because they are very important. But there is another factor involved in their priority.

Hunger drives us to eat. Weariness compels us to sleep. Self respect motivates personal grooming. If only other high priorities in our lives had such built in motivations.

Self discipline has its rewards but, they are generally long range—too remote to powerfully motivate us.

Witnessing about our faith in Christ has its rewards too—"They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars." What a reward! But is it really a powerful motivator?

Perhaps the urgency of winning people to Christ strengthens motivation.

That's the purpose of the Easter '91 to Easter '92 theme "Harvest Now."

Dr. M. V. Scutt was right on target when he wrote our beautiful theme chorus, "Someone You Know Needs Jesus Now." Is it a member of our family? A friend? A close associate?

Motivation builds as we begin to consider our relationship to the person, their deep need for Jesus now, our obligation to be a witness for our Lord and the challenge to rise above past failures and give witnessing the rightful priority in our lives.

"Harvest Now" is a high priority because it is important. And it is important because "Someone You Know Needs Jesus Now."

*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.

**This Conference Edition  
of**

**GROW**

**Welcomes you to**

***VISION '91***

**Quadrennial Conference  
on  
Evangelism**

**October 29-31, 1991  
Fort Worth, Texas**



DISTRICT	GOAL	APRIL	MAY	DISTRICT	GOAL	APRIL	MAY
Akron	513	13	43	New England	725	6	7
Alabama North	466	45	1	New Mexico	312	56	12
Alabama South	275	NR	4	New York	761	12	4
Alaska	200	61	0	North Arkansas	320	15	56
Anaheim	650	122	12	North Carolina	500	46	68
Arizona	700	0	3	North Central Ohio	546	0	64
Canada Atlantic	100	4	42	North Florida	500	3	3
Canada Central	218	0	0	Northeast Oklahoma	533	0	93
Canada Pacific	103	27	2	Northeastern Indiana	600	45	47
Canada Quebec	200	NR	0	Northern California	600	25	23
Canada West	400	0	0	Northern Michigan	128	18	NR
Central California	500	0	28	Northwest	555	27	10
Central Florida	1,000	76	33	Northwest Indiana	433	9	47
Central Latin American	114	0	0	Northwest Oklahoma	558	30	17
Central Ohio	912	103	79	Northwestern Illinois	610	0	0
Chicago Central	700	0	0	Northwestern Ohio	450	58	6
Colorado	700	35	165	Oregon Pacific	902	0	0
Dakota	200	18	0	Philadelphia	600	0	21
Dallas	525	25	45	Pittsburgh	380	0	64
East Tennessee	329	24	41	Rocky Mountain	195	10	6
Eastern Kentucky	308	0	0	Sacramento	600	0	14
Eastern Michigan	750	5	0	San Antonio	471	0	0
Florida Space Coast	400	8	5	South Arkansas	264	0	0
Georgia	500	NR	15	South Carolina	587	23	57
Hawaii Pacific	157	15	1	Southeast Oklahoma	300	42	27
Houston	400	7	24	Southern California	441	NR	0
Illinois	600	52	39	Southern Florida	1,100	49	25
Indianapolis	400	22	47	Southwest Indian	56	NR	NR
Intermountain	471	79	19	Southwest Indiana	600	7	39
Iowa	311	20	14	Southwest Latin American	80	20	0
Joplin	462	0	0	Southwest Oklahoma	601	0	0
Kansas	473	0	5	Southwestern Ohio	644	35	96
Kansas City	633	0	7	Tennessee	602	54	44
Kentucky	500	70	18	Upstate New York	500	32	14
Los Angeles	1,406	0	6	Virginia	325	26	107
Louisiana	300	7	5	Washington	497	0	0
Maine	112	42	4	Washington Pacific	700	26	13
Michigan	450	40	63	West Texas	825	22	106
Minnesota	165	15	49	West Virginia North	605	17	23
Mississippi	308	2	0	West Virginia South	315	NR	14
Missouri	477	30	10	Western Latin American	172	0	0
Navajo Nation	100	NR	NR	Wisconsin	329	8	11
Nebraska	300	13	40				
TOTALS FOR USA/CANADA					39,610	1,701	2,007

## REGIONS

Africa	11,580	NR	NR
Asia-Pacific	5,500	NR	NR
Caribbean	14,904	418	201
Eurasia	3,540	NR	NR
Mexico & Central America	6,500	NR	NR
South America	10,000	NR	NR
TOTALS FOR WORLD REGIONS	52,024	418	201





**Missions Come Home**

# Missions Come Home



From my vantage point at the Hammond organ, I surveyed what was happening in this throbbing sanctuary with over 300 joyous Haitian Nazarenes crammed into the pews and filling the choir loft and the platform. My ears set my heart to tingling with excitement as I joined in the enthusiastic singing in French and Creole of the hymns, gospel songs, and choruses that Mary and I had learned to love so much during our fourteen years in Haiti. It was the opening night of the Haitian Pastors' and Leaders' Conference in Lake Worth, Florida, April 19-21, 1991.

Three months before this we were to have been in Port-au-Prince for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Church of the Nazarene in Haiti, but the disappointment of the cancellation due to political unrest did not matter so much now. This was Haiti right here in all that was the best of the "early church" atmosphere these Nazarenes had brought with them when they migrated to these shores.

Seventeen special musical numbers later (not too far exaggerated), mine was the last of many introductions and I was up to preach the first message of

what was billed as a "Conference on Holiness Evangelism." Could I do it? After formal greetings in French, I launched into the Haitian preaching style of code-switching back and forth between French and Creole. Sensing the Lord's anointing, I knew that this was going to be one of those great times that every preacher dreams about. The Haitians pull the "preach" out of you with their exuberant "Amen's," "Hallelujahs," and "Praise-the-Lord's!" It almost makes you think for a moment that you are a great preacher. I knew that without the Lord's help I wasn't. But these were my people; I belonged to them, and they belonged to me.

For a while, as I was preaching, it seemed almost as if I were on "automatic pilot" as my consciousness carried me along at two levels. It was like that, each of the three nights. The message continued, but at the same time, I was looking over the congregation while I spotted and recognized old friends and new—from five districts in the U.S. and from the Quebec district in Canada. Half of the 38 Haitian pastors in North America were here. There was host pastor Dorsainville Gracius. Pastor Delanot Pierre and Pastor Sidel represent those from Miami. Luc Pierre from Brooklyn and Pierre-Michel Paul from Montreal were pastors in whose dynamic churches I had preached. But just as exciting were the new people I did not know who had found the Lord through the witness of these Nazarene Haitians in the land of their adoption. No one takes their evangelistic responsibility more seriously than these Haitians, and no one wears the name of "Nazarene" more proudly.

The message terminated in an altar call to those who did not yet know the cleansing, filling presence of the sanctifying Spirit. The orchestra (including two trumpets, a sax, three guitars, and percussion) led us in a rousing rendition of the invitation hymn which soon resulted in the response of a filled altar. Pastors and others came immediately to pray and counsel with the seekers, and the whole congregation joined in

concert prayer as only Haitians can pray. The intensity of the Lord's presence together with the victory and rejoicing testimonies that followed set the tone for the rest of the conference. Everyone seemed to understand that getting people sanctified is what it is all about.

Fellowship took over with handshakes and hugs, exclamations of joy at seeing old friends and making new acquaintances. I had the chance to greet the pastors and their wives and meet their children, some of them called to ministry. Most of the children preferred to talk with me in English, while I talked with their parents in Creole. I was especially delighted to see Betty and Odine, daughters of Massillon Pierre, one of our greatest Haitian pastors, who died last year in the Bahamas. He was personally involved in planting more than 40 new churches in his ministry lifetime in Haiti, the Bahamas (where he pioneered the district), and in Miami (among converts from his Haitian church in Nassau, which his wife Rose now pastors). We honored Pastor Massillon in a special tribute on Saturday night. His son-in-law, Joel Sejour, who pastors in Miami, is one of several dozens of young men who were called to preach under his ministry.

I was fascinated to observe the interaction of the pastors and laymen (in English) with several people who have fostered the planting and development of Haitian churches. There was obviously strong mutual bonding and respect on both sides. That is the secret of effective development of ethnic ministries. Dr. Robert Spear, district superintendent of the Southern Florida district, has gone beyond the line of duty to nurture Haitian churches and pastors and is typical of many of his colleagues on other districts. Paul Bickes of Lake Worth, Florida, represents a number of pastors who have fostered the planting of more than one language congregation (Hispanic, Haitian, and now Finnish congregations!).

Warren Whiting, treasurer of the Southern Florida district, exemplifies hundreds of lay people who have given their time, talents, and money to see the ethnic harvest multiplied. I was intrigued and sympathetic with Warren



and the Haitian pastors as he helped them and some of their treasurers learn the intricacies of the IRS and Social Security requirements, to say nothing of the task of reports for denominational statistics! And finally, there is Michael Funk, multi-cultural consultant for Church Extension Ministries, without whose pro-active advocacy of ethnic ministries the conference never would have taken place. The Haitian Nazarenes know that there is a worldwide denomination that loves and cares for them.

When the General Board decided to open the field of Haiti in January 1950, they did more than they knew they were doing. Now the Haitian church has come into its own in our own land, to bless and challenge us and to renew our vision.

by Paul Orjala,  
Pioneer Missionary  
to Haiti

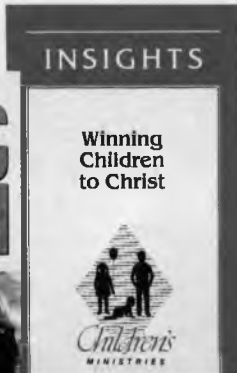




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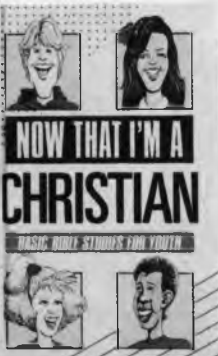
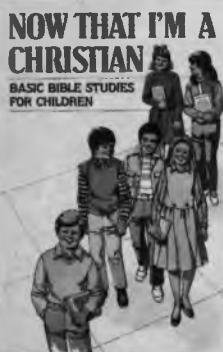
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## Growth Markings & Main Points

**T**he best way to determine what will work is to look at what has worked.

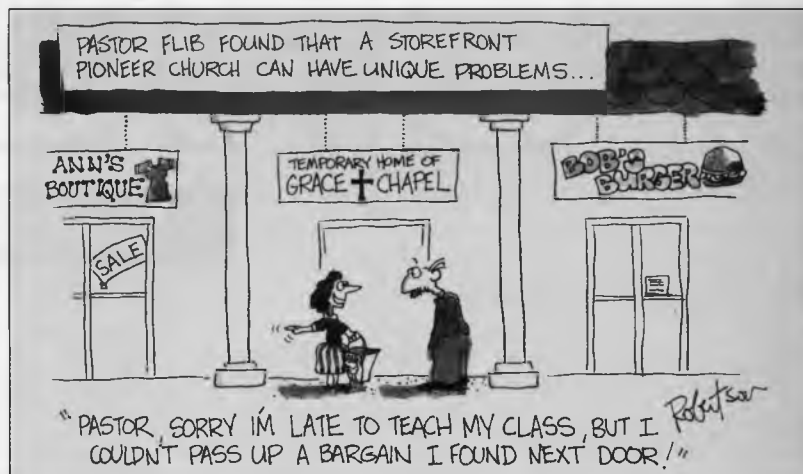
**Bill M. Sullivan**

**S**ome open country churches have become quite large as they have expanded their vision, identified the many undisciplined persons in their ministry area, and devised programs and ministries to engage people's interests and needs.

**George G. Hunter III**

**I**f unsaved people like what they see of Christ in you, even though they do not know it is Christ, they will respond to your explanation of the vibrant hope of a Christ-filled life.

**Joseph C. Aldrich**



**M**inistry is love in action—it is, in fact, doing love.

**W. Charles Arr**

**P**roper teaching will show that all possessions, including church property, belong to God and are to be used in any way necessary to win the neighborhood in which they are found.

**Jerry L. Appleb**

**T**o help the evangelist and church planter identify receptive soil there are a number of indicators, most of which point to people in transition or trauma.

**Eddie Gibb**

**W**e never find the perfect time to start a church. There are always enough negative circumstances to test our faith.

**W. Thomas Younge**



**W**hat will it take before we realize that God means business when He tells us to go to Nineveh? For us modern Jonahs the inner city is our Nineveh.

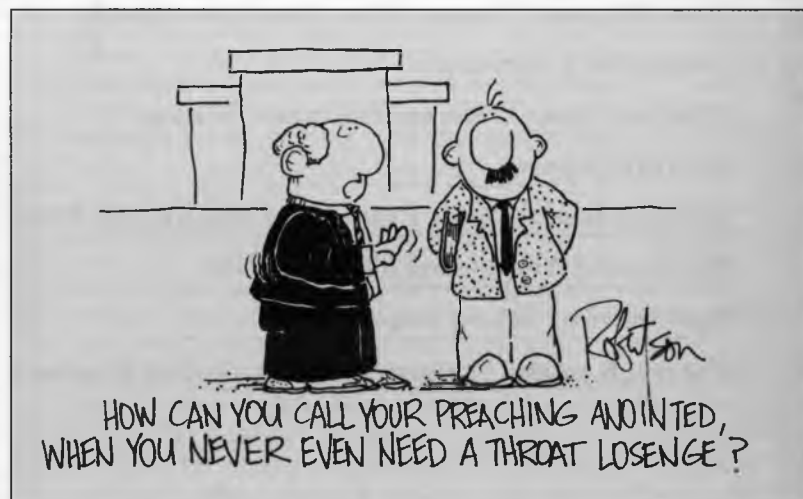
**Earl Parvin**

**N**o one can be fully biblically sound and spiritually renewed without being tremendously concerned about the multitudes of unreached men and women and, indeed, of unreached segments of society.

**Donald A. McGavran**

**T**he mission of the church is to grow up, grow together, grow out, and grow more.

**Kent R. Hunter**





# GROW

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# Everything I Ever Needed To Know About Church Planting I Learned In A Preschool

## **The First 365 Days Of A New Church**



I stood next to the photographer in utter disbelief. It dawned on me that the 184 yelling, excited, enthusiastic people I was trying to get in some semblance of line for the official "1st Birthday" picture was in fact the Temecula Valley Neighborhood Church. I found myself muttering, "I can't believe it; praise the Lord, I can't believe it". What I couldn't believe was that God had gathered such a group together in just 365 days.

I remembered the road that led us to this beautiful, booming valley nestled 30 miles inland, midway between San Diego and Los Angeles. It was a valley filling rapidly with young families looking for an alternate lifestyle from the Los Angeles area. Our family made the decision to move and plant a church in Temecula, knowing full well that God was leading and He would provide for our needs. With twenty years of ministry both in the U.S.A. and Australia, a daughter in college and a son in high school, it did not make financial sense to become a church planter; but the leadership of the Lord was unmistakable, and so with excitement we followed.

# Church Planting In a Preschool

We soon discovered that our district superintendent, Dr. Maurice Hall, and the district church planting committee were solidly behind us and had arranged for us to tele-market for the initial prospect list. Their support gave us courage.

At the time of our move to Temecula in May of '89, we did not know one person who would become part of the new church, nor did we know where we would hold services. The Lord soon opened the way for us to use a new day care building where I would learn so many lessons on church planting. The district provided a Criss-Cross Directory and a "Phones For You" manual, and we began to appeal to area churches for phone callers. Nearly 80 people responded and helped dial 17,000 numbers which resulted in 166 attending the first service on September 23, 1989. Of that number, there were about 115 prospects, and the real work had begun...Follow Up!

Those early weeks were unpredictable as the attendance oscillated between 65 and 109. Each Sunday was an adventure in faith as our disappointments were balanced with positive surprises. Monthly outreach emphasis kept us focused on finding new people as everyone experienced the thrill of introducing friends to their happy "baby" church.



visions of creating a real sanctuary but soon realized that if it were to be done at all, it must be done simply. And so we soon learned to worship with pictures of skunks, pumpkins, and Mickey and Minnie Mouse painted on the "sanctuary" walls with a variety of paper chains and pinatas dangling from an eight-foot ceiling. So many things once thought necessary for worship took on little importance as God came and met with His people week after week.

Keeping it simple also applied to the schedule, organization and planning. Children have short attention spans and so do new churches, which meant our goals were short range and announcements usually kept to "next week." For the most part, we asked people to attend Sunday school, worship, and a home "Friendship Group" sometime in the week since most people in our valley commute several hours a day. Our "menu" was short and simple, but attractive.

The real strength of our church soon became the loving-family atmosphere that characterized our gatherings. People love to welcome new people and are sensitive to the feelings of first-time attenders primarily because they themselves could easily remember the feeling. Disposable name tags helped to create an atmosphere easy to enter and meet new friends at the fellowship time following each service. We made it a policy that people could only be considered new for the first five minutes of their first service, and after that they were one of us. Frequently, by the second service they had responsibilities and felt their lives were vital to the ministry of the church. A recent newcomer put it best when she said, "I feel good when I come. I feel like everyone loves and accepts me."

The official Grand Opening was carefully planned for Easter Sunday 1990, and we went back to the phones to notify the community again as our own people dialed the phone 7,000 times. Those called in August had now become the callers in March, and they demonstrated genuine excitement about their new church over the phone. As a result, we celebrated our first Easter in the LaPetite Preschool with a congregation of 202. The excitement was anything but "la petite."

Easter was closely followed with special meetings with Dr. Earl Lee, the organizational service with 73 joining the church, district assembly, and outdoor services and barbecues in the summer months...WHAT A YEAR!...365 days packed with phone calls, new people, emotional upheavals that parallel those experienced by parents of newborn babies and the lessons learned that only experience can teach. Lessons learned, I might add, by a 46 year-old pastor in a preschool.

I had learned quickly that "Keep It Simple" was more than a motto...it was a must if we were to survive. Setting up the rented day care was to become an arduous task that required moving everything in the building aside, covering it with plastic sheeting, and carrying in all we needed for the Sunday School, nursery, children's church and worship. Diapers, altars, carpet, sound systems, chairs, hymnals, and countless boxes of incidentals were moved weekly (often weakly). At first I had great





Perhaps the greatest lesson I learned about church planting in the first 365 days is that new churches, like babies, are shaped by genetics as well as environment. Before God can plant a church, He first must plant a vision in the hearts of the ones planting, and then the church takes on the characteristics of the vision. Long before the first phone call was made or worship service was conducted, we prayed that God would show us the kind of a church He wanted to plant in the Temecula Valley. That vision to a large extent has been the inherent genetic force molding and guiding the attitude, atmosphere, and actions of the "baby" born on September 23, 1989, in Temecula, California. At the first birthday party, you could really see the resemblance the church had to the "genetic vision" God put in our hearts many months before. The attitude of the people is positive, their hearts are open and loving, their hands are eager to serve, and their feet are ready to go. Our vision was of a church concerned for the whole world, and it is exciting to know that before the second birthday arrives the church will have gone overseas on a work and witness mission.

At one year, the "baby" has a lot of growing to do, but most of the characteristics of this beautiful "child" are already formed and will be a permanent part of her life and ministry for decades to come.

"Pastor Coil! Pastor Coil! You have to get in the picture, too!" My thoughts were snapped back into the present as I looked at the people lined up for the picture, hands waving in the air with all the excitement of a child celebrating his first birthday. I ran to find Marsha and Chad and stand with all the others that God had brought together on a beautiful day for our first birthday party, September 23, 1990. Two songs used in service that morning summarized all Marsha and I felt at the moment the picture was taken...*Happy Birthday* and *To God Be the Glory*.

Year two began with the confidence that what God had begun, He would be faithful to complete; and it would not depend on our power or might, but His Holy Spirit would be at work across the beautiful Temecula Valley fulfilling the vision planted in our hearts many months before.

—by Pastor Kenn Coil

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# A Six Year Miracle at Liberation Community



## An Urban Ministry To Reach the Poor of Fort Worth



**O**n the east side of Fort Worth, Texas, lies a neighborhood called "Polytechnic Heights," made up of an equal number of Black, Hispanic, and Anglo residents. "Poly," as its residents refer to it, has become one of the most deteriorated, neglected, and abandoned neighborhoods in Texas, complete with all of the accompanying features—crime, drugs, prostitution, and poverty.

In August 1985, the West Texas District Church of the Nazarene launched an urban ministry into this neighborhood—a church and social ministry called Liberation Community. Since that time, the church has grown to a congregation of about 150 with both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking services. The social ministries have expanded steadily, supported by a budget of just under a million dollars in 1991.

---

**The ministry of relief is much like the attention given by the Good Samaritan to the immediate needs of the victim lying beaten alongside the road to Jericho.**

---

Liberation Community actually began as a vision over 7 years ago when I would sneak across the street from Nazarene Theological Seminary with a few other seminarians to meet for prayer, worship, dreaming, and reflection on urban ministry at the old convent that stood there. The sister who met us at the door and showed us to a stuffy old room probably didn't realize that she was offering us not only "liberation" from our studies, but also a chance to build "community" with one another.

Now that my wife and I have lived in the inner-city of Fort Worth for 6 years, it still seems to me that "liberation" and "community" are the two

main ingredients for authentic Christian ministry today, especially a ministry which insists that the church's primary place in the world is with the poor and the marginal of society. "Liberation" and "Community"—these are the aims around which the present-day ministries of Liberation Community revolve.

### **LIBERATION**

The ministry of liberation, as the word itself makes clear, is basically a ministry of freedom—a ministry that seeks to unshackle the poor from whatever it is that binds them—illiteracy, unemployment, hunger, lack of opportunity, discrimination, homelessness, overcrowding, etc. This ministry of liberation operates for us at three levels: relief, empowerment, and justice.

**Relief** simply points to the ministry of emergency assistance that attempts to provide food, clothing, and crisis counseling to those in need. Each month we assist over 200 families with basic needs, and we currently distribute over 50,000 pounds of food annually. The ministry of relief is much like the attention given by the Good Samaritan to the immediate needs of the victim lying beaten alongside the road to Jericho. The Samaritan cleaned him up, bound up his wounds, and took him to an inn, paying for his immediate shelter needs.

When Anita and her 12 children escaped an abusive and life-threatening situation in Waco, piled their family belongings in an old van, and drove to Fort Worth, it was the emergency assistance ministry of Liberation Community that helped her find a place to



# Liberation Community



live, provided furniture and appliances, turned the utilities on, and opened a door into the life of her family that brought them into our church. Five years later, Anita is now the director of our emergency assistance ministry and a model of compassionate Christianity.

**Empowerment**, the second dimension of liberation is the primary focus of our ministry at Liberation Community. It has been said, "Give a person a fish, and they eat for a day; teach a person to fish, and they eat for a lifetime." Our empowerment ministries attempt to teach the poor "how to

fish," so to speak, by providing training, development, lift, and opportunity to those who otherwise might be "locked out" or who, simply, have "checked out" of society.

The ministry of empowerment includes providing adult education to over 200 adults each year in the form of English as a second language, G.E.D. preparation (high-school equivalency), nutrition training, and budget/finance training. In addition, we place approximately 100 adults each year in permanent employment through our daily job club and job placement efforts. Both of these

ministries are designed to encourage responsibility, independence, self-worth, and family stability among poor families in our area.

Homeownership for low-income families has been a major area of empowerment ministry for us in the last two years. In our neighborhood, Polytechnic Heights, over 20 percent of the housing stock is currently vacant and boarded up due to neglect, foreclosure, and deterioration. Liberation Community has been successful so far in receiving over 50 houses by donation and then pulling private and public resources together to rehabilitate the houses and finance loans to qualified low-income families for homeownership. Central to this ministry is an intensive education component that teaches basic home repair skills, landscaping and energy-saving techniques, and budgeting skills. Homeowners who complete the course of study and purchase one of our houses are eligible for membership in our Liberation Homeowner's Association, a tool for leadership development and community organizing. This group of highly motivated, energy-filled new homeowners is setting their own agenda for future action in our neighborhood in areas such as street repair, code enforcement, and crime prevention.

Two years ago, Liberation Community joined forces with the City of Fort Worth to provide a rental assistance/self-sufficiency program at a local apartment complex. The program, called Operation I Will!, subsidizes rent for approximately 100 families while providing case management, support, education, and nurture leading to independence and self-sufficiency. A significant number of the families placed in Operation I Will! came from backgrounds of homelessness and overcrowding and are now finding new paths to responsibility and productivity.

**Empowerment** is not only for adults, of course. Liberation Club is our empowerment ministry to children, ages 5-12, that combines music, crafts, education, and recreation to produce something like a year-round Sunday school or Vacation Bible School on Saturdays. The children in our neighborhood, many of whom lack significant adult role models and attention at home, respond incredibly to



this ministry. In a neighborhood where between 50-75 percent of our youth drop out of high school, reaching the children early is indispensable not only for the future of the church, but for the future of our society.

The final dimension of liberation is **Justice Ministries**. If our ministry of relief gives a person a fish so that they can eat for a day and our ministry of empowerment teaches a person to fish so that they can eat for a lifetime, then our justice ministries attempt to make sure that persons have equal access to the fishing hole and that the fishing hole is free from pollution upstream. Justice ministries, therefore, works to achieve more structural and social forms of liberation for the poor by providing legal aid, advocacy, avenues for social action, voter registration, and community organizing.



## COMMUNITY

Building a Christian community is the second major ministry of Liberation Community and one that fits hand in glove with the ministry of liberation. Even though numerical growth is not a preoccupation for our church, we do believe in kingdom growth which is the conversion, nurture, and equipping of persons to be the church as a faith community. In fact, we have discovered that a ministry of liberation is impossible without the experience of Christian community to ground and guide it. In addition, we affirm that liberation is somewhat hollow and unfinished without the further liberation experienced within the community of faith.

We have grown as a community from just 5 people in 1985 to 150 people worshipping in both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking services. This growth as a church, however, has certainly not been the product of bringing together



people of like backgrounds in a homogenous environment. In our services each Sunday, Hispanic, Black, and Anglo brothers and sisters worship together and share their faith with one another. Our church has grown because its door is open to the community with more than just words. All of its energy and resources are devoted to meeting the needs of its community. We are here to serve. Meeting human need is not, for our church, just a door to evangelism. It is evangelism. It is the good news—in action.

All of this makes our church rather unconventional and unique both in terms of design and mission. We have found it best to utilize alternate structures for being the church such as the development of a non-profit corporation with its own board of directors and budget. We operate on much more than just the tithes and offerings of our members but receive funding from a variety of individuals and churches nationwide, foundations, corporations, and government at all levels.

As God continues to bless the ministries of Liberation Community, we are open to new directions and ministries as they arise. Our plan is to

be an instrument and avenue for further inner-city church planting and development of the church's resources for social ministry in Fort Worth.

Central to this task is the indispensable process of developing leaders, a process that has been greatly enhanced in the past three years by the development of Texas Nazarene Bible Institute, a multi-cultural extension training center of Nazarene Bible College. This school, with a faculty made up of qualified area ministers, provides contextual ministerial education for our people whether they hope to be pastors, teachers, or workers in compassionate ministry. The real strength of the educational process of TNBI is its ability to combine what is learned with its practical application in concrete ministry settings.

Nothing could be more exhilarating than the steady development of a practical and relevant ministry preparation process that will be critical for the future of urban ministry in Fort Worth and that is already making a great difference in the quality and direction of our own ministry.

—by Brian Stone, Pastor



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# 1,500 Members Join Wichita First Church

## Pastor Gene Williams Receives 1,000 New Nazarenes

**T**wo young men recently gained special recognition within a six month period at Wichita First Church. John Garland was the 1,500th member to be received into church membership by Pastor Gene Williams during his 20 years as pastor of the Wichita church. And Mark Troyer became the 1,000th new Nazarene to unite with the church during the same period.

While these men had no idea they were making history for the local congregation, they have much in common—both are college age, both sing in the choir, and both are involved in the singles ministry of the church.

When Pastor Williams was asked, "How does a church add one new Nazarene and 1.5 new members a week for twenty years; does one set out with this as a goal?" he answered, "Not really."

Williams continued, "The goal is to be a faithful, fruitful pastor. I try to focus on serving God over the long haul and center on ministry rather than total members or ministerial success."

Williams explains in this first-person account: "I happen to be a gardener. Where I live in Kansas, the soil is terrible. It is heavy gray clay. My first attempts to garden were really frustrating. My onions and radishes became trapped by the clay and I had to take a knife and dig them out. I grew up in Tennessee where you simply pull vegetables out of the garden. Now, I had to dig them out.

"To improve my garden, I began a program of mixing leaves, grass, and anything else I could find to enrich the soil. After several years of this effort, I am now a proud gardener who once again pulls his onions and radishes. It did take time, however, to build up the soil that is now productive.

"Our church is like that, too. Over the years we have built up the base and now it is very productive.

"The most critical single factor on my part is staying twenty years.

"In the same way that my garden base would revert to unproductive clay without my personal attention, so would the church. No, I did not do this by myself. For that matter, I never made one radish or onion.

"I have, however, worked at the job of adding those ingredients that God has used. I have lots of dirt under my fingernails. We have used every means possible to sow the seeds of God's love in receptive hearts—special events, music, friendship teams, plus youth and children's programs.

"Still, the key, I believe, has been twenty years of hands on ministry. Personal involvement in as many areas of ministry as possible has helped create an air of excitement that has caused our people to plant seeds of their own.

"Actually, we accidentally realized that we were coming to these two historic moments. The length of our stay created a sense of curiosity about how productive the years have been. We had not kept a running tally.

"As we checked on the record, we suddenly realized the harvest was a good one. We could see that we were coming upon these two significant moments. Then we began to count and plan to make celebrative experiences out of this record so the people could share in the victory and we could rejoice together.

"And rejoice we have!"



**Dr. Eugene Williams receives John Garland—1500th new church member in 20 years.**



**Mark Troyer becomes the 1,000th new Nazarene to join the church under Pastor Williams' ministry.**

# Stewardship: Giving what you've got



SEPTEMBER IS STEWARDSHIP MONTH

# METROPLEX CHAPEL THRIVES IN TEXAS

## 675 Members Join in 8 Years



**M**etroplex Nazarene Chapel, founded in February of 1983, meets in a 20,000 square foot retail shopping center located on the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Expressway. Metroplex Chapel started in American Airlines Learning Center. The worship attendance now averages 725. 1,172 attended on Easter, 1991.

When asked to summarize the church's amazing growth, Pastor Garlow responded: "This church existed in my heart for seventeen years before we ever held the first service. God planted the idea deep in my spirit when I was a college student at Bethany Nazarene College. But I knew it would not be a traditional church. It would be different. Over the years,

I became increasingly restless with what I saw around me in most churches. I believed there was a better way to let people know of God's amazing love. That's what our various ministries intend to accomplish." But the church is not built on a reaction against tradition; it stands firmly on the side of Christian caring for everyone who participates in its life and ministry.



# Metroplex Chapel



Part of Metroplex's widening influence shows in a few sentences taken from the *New Life News*: "People deserve to have a church that isn't boring...a church that is alive. People deserve to be loved and cared for when they come to church. No person should ever leave the church as alone as he or she felt when they came to the church."

Is there a human being anywhere who is not hungry for that kind of caring which shows in the people-centered ministries offered by Metroplex Chapel? The inspiring list includes twenty-four different ministries such as divorce recovery, hope for addictions,



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**"This church  
existed in my heart  
for seventeen years  
before we ever held  
the first service."**

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home Bible studies, healing teams, financial freedom classes, boot camp for New Christians, pre-marriage classes, counseling with the fees determined by the one seeking help, men's ministries, women's ministries, and helps for becoming a Christian. For teens, a contemporary concert series and recreational center is open every Friday and Saturday evening from 7:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m. with an attendance of over 500.



Everything about Metroplex Chapel is planned to meet needs people feel and all the ministries focus on capturing the interest of contemporary folks.

Even the worship service makes good on the newsletter's promises, "Ever wished for a church where the music was alive, exciting and contemporary? Ever wished you could hear a sermon that was relevant to you? Ever wished that church could be warm and caring—actually enjoyable and maybe even

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**"People deserve to have a church that isn't boring..."**

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fun? Then come on by to Metroplex Chapel."

Though Metroplex is admittedly unique to Dallas/Fort Worth and amazingly led by creative Jim Garlow and his staff, its commitment to offer loving acceptance and understandable biblical answers to human needs could be immediately implemented by hundreds of Nazarene churches. Such a ministry given in the name of Jesus would help and heal thousands in the Nazarene sphere of influence.

ANNOUNCING

# VISION '91

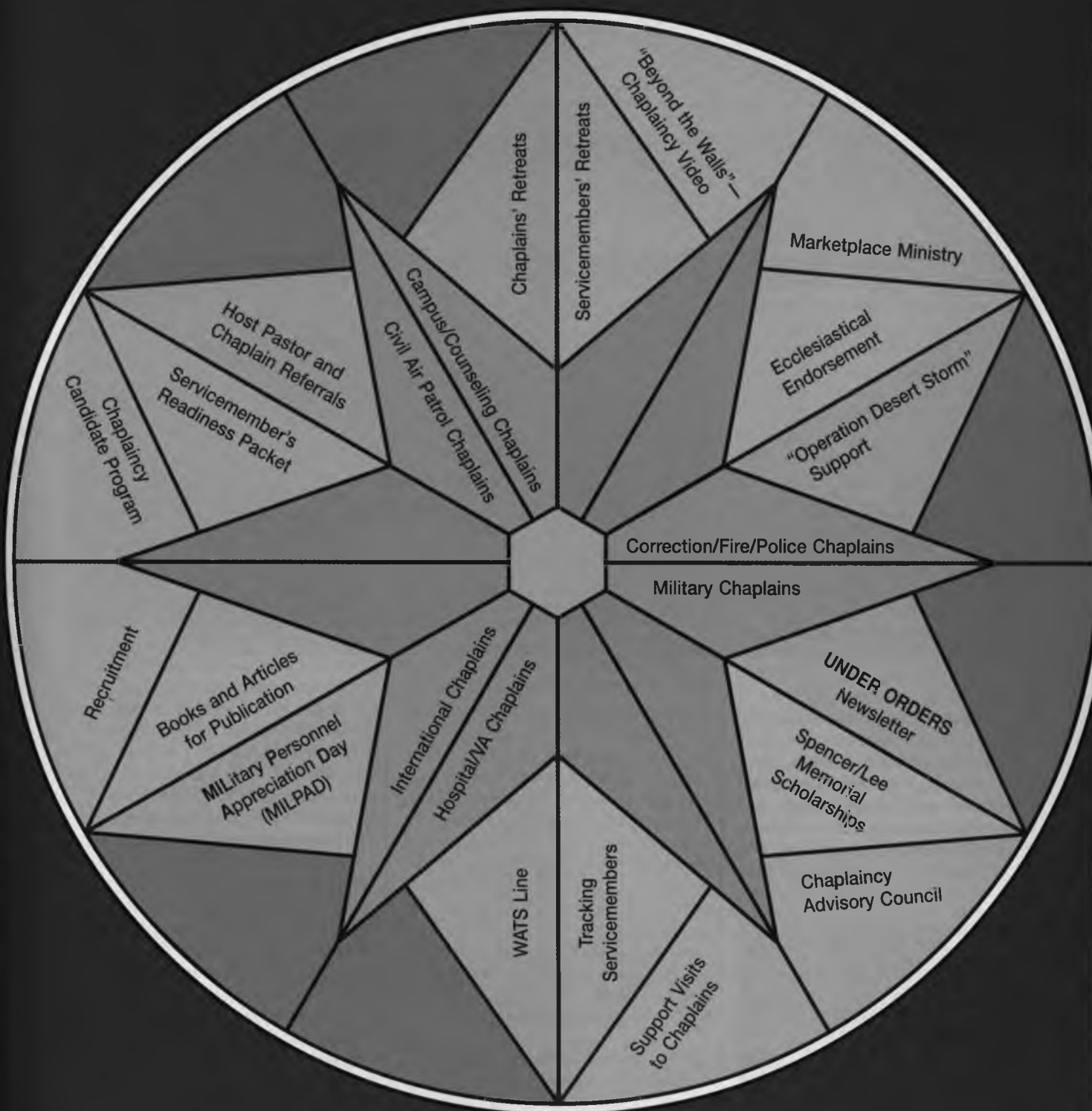
*Entering the decade with the harvest in view . . .*



**U.S. Quadrennial Conference on Evangelism  
October 29-31, 1991**

*Fort Worth/Tarrant County Convention Center  
Fort Worth, Texas*

# A KALEIDOSCOPE OF SERVICES FROM CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES



For information, contact Chaplaincy Ministries, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131  
(816) 333-7000, ext. 279  
CH (COL) Curt Bowers, USA (Ret)

# A First-Person Account: Ministry in the Workplace

## Nazarene Minister Serves Full Time as Industrial Chaplain

**I**n 1987 I felt a need to change from being a parish pastor — the first step toward my becoming an Employee Assistance Chaplain. As I considered my future ministry, the Lord led me toward the chaplaincy.

As I thought about this change, I considered many factors, among them the continual call of God upon my life to minister to others in the name of Christ. Increasingly, the chaplaincy seemed to be the place God wanted me.

Chaplaincy, to me, represents a ministry of helping people in crisis. I thought hospital chaplaincy would be the way to go, so I concentrated on meeting the requirements for that task. Fifteen months of Clinical Pastoral Education began in June 1988, soon after I resigned my pastorate in Tecumseh, Michigan. About halfway through my CPE residency at Catherine McAuley Health Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan, I became interested in working with mental health and chemical dependency. That emphasis occupied my final six months of CPE and especially prepared me for this work.



Job hunting for a hospital chaplaincy assignment proved discouraging. No positions opened, even though responders to my inquiries assured me that I was well qualified. Then came a lead on a position as an Employee Assistance Chaplain for Waste Management, Inc.-Mideast Region. At first uneasy about the prospect, I prayed about it, then I picked up the phone and contacted the corporate director of Employee Assistance. During the interview that followed, I felt a peace about taking the position. The director said, "I think we have a good match." Since July 1989, much has happened to confirm that fact.

### What exactly does an Employee Assistance Chaplain do?

Simply stated, I am a spiritual resource and support person for employees needing help with alcohol/drug problems and related concerns. This means I am an extension of

Christ to care for people who need help. I am a listener, a giver of counsel, and a social worker. I become a liaison to arrange admission into a chemical dependency treatment center. I am available as a spiritual counselor. As an EA chaplain, I am in a position to give a caring response to troubled employees and their families.

I am amazed at how often the title "chaplain" brings opportunity to bear the good news of love that does not fail, strength that is available from outside ourselves, grace that enables us to face reality without alcohol or drugs, and mercy that brings confidence that failure is not the bottom line. As a chaplain in the workplace, I have many opportunities to be a positive influence for God.

I have been able to write my own job description. I have chosen to be low-profile. Like a pastor, I find people often appreciate my presence more than my words. Comments such as,





"Rev. Jim, thanks for listing," or "I am so glad there was somebody I could talk to" are often expressed in support of this ministry.

### **This Ministry Touches 3,000 People**

As regional EA chaplain, I am responsible for our divisions in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. We have 3,000 employees in 60 locations, including managers, supervisors, salespeople, office personnel, mechanics, truck drivers, heavy equipment operators, lawyers, engineers, and even welders. In responding to employee needs, I spend an average of three days per week on the road, driving about 900 miles a week. In addition to alcohol/drug problems, I am involved in job stress, marriage and family needs, and other personal is-

ssues that often affect the employee's job performance.

I find this work interesting, challenging, and fulfilling. I have discovered the gifts and graces God gave me are well suited to this workplace ministry. It is a compassionate ministry. The opportunities to be a positive influence for Christ to people are great. This work is part of the plan for God for my life and ministry. One Scripture that helps me work the plan is found in Romans 12:6-8: "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us each exercise them accordingly; . . . if service, in his serving, . . . he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (NASV).

As I read the gospel accounts of the ministry of Jesus, I appreciate how many times He addressed the needs of people in workplace or marketplace environments. He ministered to trou-

bled people where He found them.

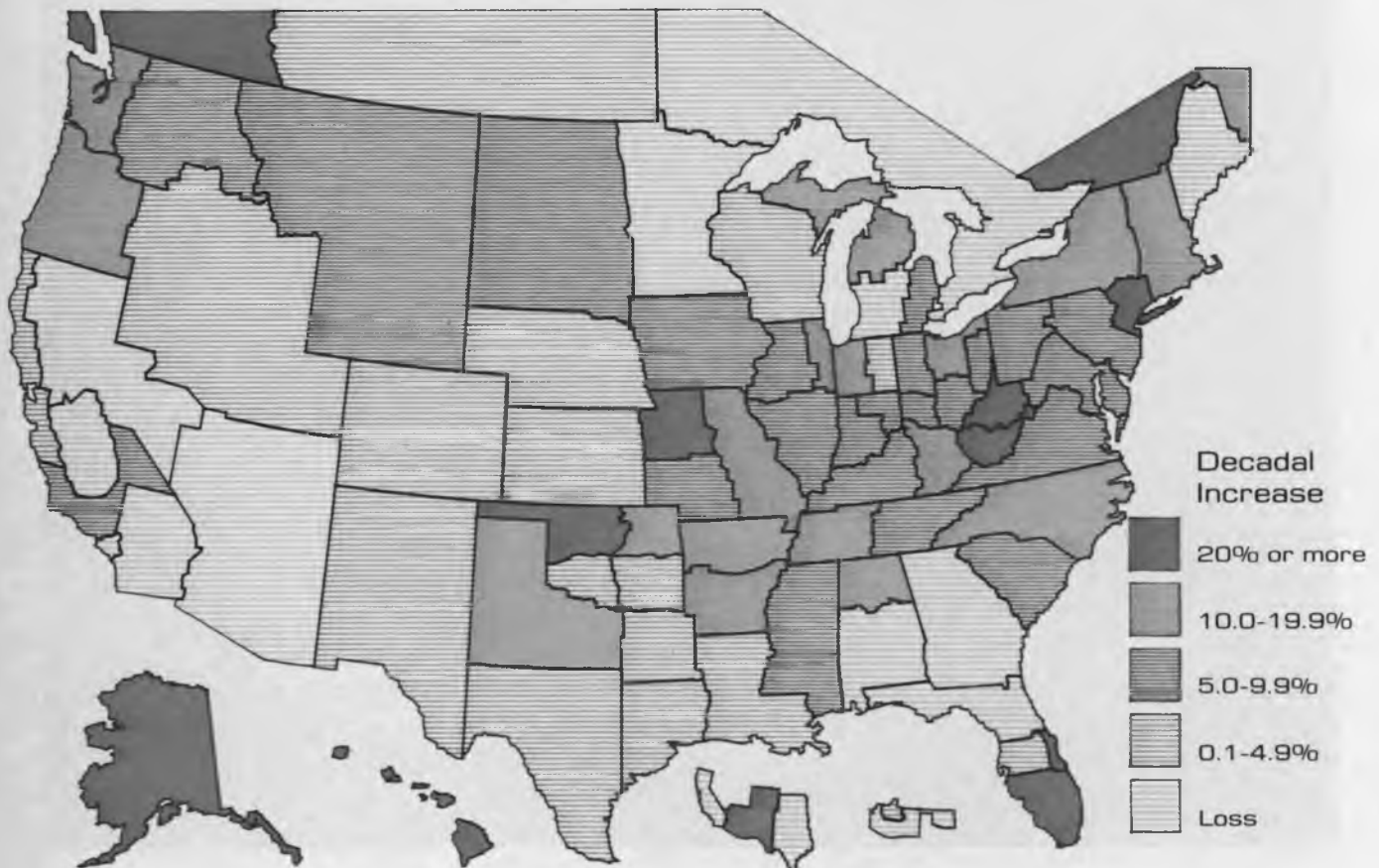
My feelings for this ministry can be summarized in a Norman Rockwell-type painting that captured my attention a few years ago. The 1920s workplace office includes a wooden desk and two chairs. An obviously troubled person sits in one. In the other chair sits Jesus. On the door is the title, "Counselor." Being Employee Assistance Chaplain involves many different people, various situations, and a variety of approaches, but they all have the common theme of compassionate ministry and care for others.

That is what I do every day in this ministry as Employee Assistance Chaplain for Waste Management of North America, Inc.

—by Chaplain Jim Vander Schuur

# INCREASE IN POPULATION PENETRATION 1980 to 1990

## Nazarene Districts in Canada and the United States

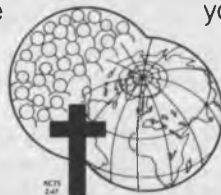


Recently released figures from the 1990 United States census and estimates from Statistics Canada have allowed the Church Growth Research Center to analyze where Nazarenes are making inroads into the general population.

During the 1980s, the membership of the Canada Quebec District increased over 200 percent. During the same time, the population of Quebec itself increased only 5 percent. As a result, the proportion of Canada Quebec's population that are members of the Church of the Nazarene has more than tripled in the last decade.

Florida Space Coast penetration has nearly doubled. Southwest Latin American and New York districts have increased their penetration more than 50 percent. In fact, Nazarenes are reaching a greater proportion of the population in 70 of the 85 districts in these nations.

Local churches can analyze their neighborhoods as well. As the latest census data is released, the Church Growth Research Center can help you obtain figures for your local area. And information on your church's membership and attendance for the last 15 years is available now.



How can 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**

## **Baby Bust**

1965 to 1975 are now being called the "Baby Bust" years . . . sharp decline in number of births. Oldest "busters" now turning 26 . . . typical age for young adults to turn back toward traditional values, including church.

**There are fewer young adults now than in decades . . .** not as large a field for evangelism. But millions of these young adults still need the gospel.

**Some sociologists expect a change in attitude among "busters" as compared to "boomers" . . .** those born between 1945 and 1964. Boomers expected the world to make the world better . . . caught up in idealism of early 1960s. Busters are more pragmatic . . . the world is the way it is and we have to make do with what we have.

Many exceptions to such generalizations, but they indicate the need to use new approaches in reaching today's young adults. **"Be all you can be"** . . . focusing on individual's abilities, not society's problems . . . may find more receptive ears among those looking to the church for answers.

## **Baby Bust Pastors**

**Incidentally, less than one percent of current Nazarene pastors were born after the last "Baby Boom" year of 1964.** Not only are there fewer people to become pastors . . . could also mean Nazarene churches are less willing to have young pastors . . . and possibly there are fewer young adults open to such a selfless life as pastoring requires. But the number of people receiving local minister's licenses is still high, despite shrinking population . . . so Nazarene young people still seem to be responding to the challenge of ministry.

### **Strong Nazarene Identification**

Recent study by City University of New York surveyed enough respondents to give a valid analysis of Nazarenes. First conclusion is that we have strong denominational identification . . . one denomination has **2 million members**, but only **660,000** American adults identify that denomination as theirs. Nazarenes have **560,000** members in USA . . . and 549,000 adult Americans describe themselves as Nazarenes . . . and another 600,000 call themselves "holiness" Christians.

### **Typical American Nazarenes**

Typical American Nazarene owns his or her home, is married, and is employed full-time . . . most live in households with children present. **Half of adult Nazarenes are under 40 . . . 80% have at least a high school education . . . and half have a total household income of at least \$25,000 annually.** And they are more likely than other Americans to belong to a political party . . . with Republicans somewhat ahead of Democrats.

### **Growth by Church Size**

Largest and smallest Churches of the Nazarene have best overall growth rates . . . at least during last fifteen years. **Churches with 1,000 members or more grew about 20% in five years . . .** but only a dozen churches are that large . . . so less than a thousand members a year are added by this group.

**Churches under 100 in membership collectively grow about 8% in five years . . . netting over 2,000 new members annually.** Of course, not all churches in this group grow well . . . but gains outweigh losses substantially.

**Toughest churches to grow are those between 100 and 250 . . .** barely 4% growth in 5 years. Still, that works out to over a thousand members annually. "200 Barrier" at work here . . . hard to move a church from 100 to 250 . . . but not impossible or losses would outweigh gains.

**Churches between 250 and 1,000 grow about 6% in five years . . .** producing over a thousand net gain each year. Of course, individual churches in any group have differing growth rates . . . but overall, these trends by size have been borne out for fifteen years.

**Churches in urban areas . . . with more people to evangelize . . .** tend to do even better than those in other regions. But small-town and rural churches gain about 2,000 members each year . . . with those under 100 netting a thousand of them.

# **RESEARCH AND TRENDS**



# HOW WE DID IT

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## Churches With More Than 50 Membership Gain in 1990-91 Assembly Year

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*Churches grow in a variety of ways. Some congregations grow in cities, while others increase in size and spiritual influence in more quiet suburban or rural places. Leaders of churches with unusual growth were asked how they did it. Their responses make it sound like New Testament Christianity can happen almost anywhere.*

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### COLORADO

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Pastor Matthew A. Kindler of Colorado Springs Crossroads Chapel (Colorado District) "The most significant reason for our growth of 73 last year is a biblical foundation that the laity hold the key to evangelization of their friends, family, and co-workers.

We do our best to equip all who attend in the area of soul winning. They learn how to share Christ and give their testimony of what God has done for them. Everything that happens at Crossroads is designed for outreach and evangelism. We not only want to minister to people, but we want people to have a place to serve others when they get saved."

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### CALIFORNIA

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Pastor Yeghia Elijah Babikian, also the founding director of the Armenian Extension of Nazarene Bible College of Armenian Bible Church of the Nazarene (Los Angeles District) "This was a foundation year for our new church which grew from zero to fifty members. Most of the converts and new members are recent immigrants of Soviet Armenia who had a great affinity for the gospel. One amazing conversion was Knel Sharlakian, 51, a former Communist in Soviet Armenia. When he heard the gospel first, he said, 'It is sad that only one congregation heard today's message; the entire Armenian nation should have heard it.'

"New ministries for future growth include distribution of sermon cassettes, publications of a periodical, and a full time pastor."

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### OHIO

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Pastor Bob Huffaker of Grove City Church (Central Ohio) "We have increased 250 in the last 18 months in worship attendance mostly due to the new direction in our services. We have opened up to a more celebrating praise, with praise choruses, scripture songs, and more of an open type of worship. Many new people are coming because they are hearing about the excitement

and enthusiasm that are happening within the church. Another reason is because the people have been willing to change.

New elective classes have been established. There is a divorce recovery class, a class for the handicapped, and a class to help hurting women. Other ministries are Loaves of Love (a loaf of homemade bread is given to each new visitor), cell groups have been organized, newcomers dinners are offered every three months, and expanded ministries have been started through our youth groups. All of this made it possible for us to add fifty members last year."

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### INDIANA

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Pastor J. K. Warrick of Indianapolis Westside Church (Indianapolis District) "We have cultivated a spirit of revival in our regular worship services. Our intent is to gather to praise the Lord. An invitation is given in every service. Last year the church received 60 persons by profession of faith and grew to 872 members.

Each year we list the names of those we wish to see converted throughout the coming year and set special days of harvest such as Friendship Day, Easter, Christmas, and musical concerts. Twice each year we have Seasons of Prayer—each Saturday evening of September and the Saturdays of Lent—to pray for our church family.



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# HOW WE DID IT

Our Sunday school classes are beginning to function as true care centers and cell groups. We are starting new classes each year—12 in the last three years. We have a small group devoted to calling every Monday evening on the visitors from Sunday.

Recently we sent 100 people out to a small community nearby to plant a church and thus make room for additional growth here. This is the third church we have either sponsored or helped sponsor."

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## COLORADO

**Pastor David M. Ralph** of Denver Westminster (Colorado District) "Our gain of 60 members started with a belief that growth starts in the mind. That is why we came to the conviction that evangelism is the cutting edge of church growth. We fill our staff positions with evangelistic growth in mind.

Then we began to see that evangelism results cannot be sustained without backup ministries that assimilate the new converts into the church body. So music, youth ministry, pastoral care, children's ministry, and lay development helped support the success of our evangelism ministries.

Soon we will begin programs to reach baby boomers. And double services are coming in the next month to use our facilities for great growth."

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## INDIANA

**Pastor Verdean F. Owens** of Kokomo First (Northwest Indiana) "Our gain of 54 is a result of God using a spirit of anticipation on the part of the congregation. We also have a

strong musical program, preach the Word, and enjoy a good spirit of unity and cooperation throughout the church."

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## ARIZONA

**Pastor Robert J. Shepherd** of Tucson Mountain View Church (Arizona District) "The most significant reason for our growth is prayer and obedience to go and to minister. Prayer has given us both a vision and a plan for ministry. Methods may change but God still leads us to the lost if we pray.

One dramatic conversion was the salvation of a Mormon mom who came to a Sunday worship service and found God's grace to be very real. She is growing and showing unconditional love to her sons whom she has raised for twelve years in the Mormon Church.

One new ministry is our Wednesday night small groups which provide need-oriented ministries. We have gone from 96 in attendance on Wednesday nights to over 150. It is exciting to see Wednesday nights alive and well in our church."

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## TEXAS

**Pastor Larry D. Dennis** of Richardson (Dallas District) "The most significant reason for our growth of 72 members during the year is the fact that our church is unified and corporately has accepted the vision to 'reach those around us with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.' This is our mission statement, and we are trying to apply it to every area of our church's ministry. The church is developing ownership of this. It has

been carried out at the grass roots, where we are working with our community in a free after-school daycare program, canvassing our neighborhood with literature and invitations to our local services, placing American flags in front of 7,500 homes with an invitation to attend our 4th of July musical, and it proceeds all the way to presently purchasing a new site to relocate our entire church plant. We are unified in the vision of reaching the lost. It is the heartbeat of our entire church family."

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## CALIFORNIA

**Pastor Mel Rich** of Olive Knolls Church (Central California) "The primary strategies for this year have been the training and deploying of lay pastors to lead home care groups. Our church has a clear purpose—people catching the vision with a willingness to try new things; it is a total team effort.

We have added a second children's choir, single mom's support group, divorce recovery workshops for adults, and support groups for children involved in divorce. Other groups will be added as needs are identified and leaders are trained. We are now beginning building a family life center—38,000 square feet. The church gained 62 members last year.

New convert David Anderson, 40, electrical contractor, recently shared this testimony with the church: 'There have been no short cuts in becoming a man of God. The lessons I have had to learn have been slow and many of them painful. He has given me new values regarding life and business. He has been teaching me discipline and self-control. Yet, through all this, I still look forward, awaiting the new lesson for the day.'



# ROOTED IN CHRIST

— Personal Growth Helps for Leaders —

## Cultivating Christlikeness

### WEEK ONE

#### A CHRIST-LIKE EXAMPLE

**“. . . Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27)**

My teen years were spent, in part, in Hong Kong where my parents were missionaries. On Sunday evenings I attended English services at an inner city mission led by an Australian missionary doctor. My admiration for him bordered on hero-worship. As he stood before us with open Bible, quietly expounding God's Word, it would seem to me that his face glowed with a heavenly aura. When I visited his clinic as a patient, he always concluded his examination by placing his hand upon my head and praying for me. It felt to me like his were God's hands.

One day I came home from school with a high fever and sharp head pains. It was as if an axe were splitting my skull with every heartbeat. I cried out for Dr. Halverson. My father called him. It seemed like an eternity before he could get away to come. Racked with pain that now enveloped my whole body, I rolled from one side of the bed to the other. Finally I heard my father say, "Here comes the doctor." An incredible peace

came over me. I was going to be alright now. My last memory before slipping into a three-day coma was a fuzzy image of the doctor leaning over me. I could tell that his face was troubled. We didn't know it at the time but I was in the throes of cerebral spinal meningitis. He warned my parents the prognosis was not good. Word was sent out through the churches. Hundreds prayed for me, including one Chinese Christian who prayed all night. God touched me. I made a rapid and complete recovery. Far more people died of spinal meningitis than survived during those years. Later I mused: if I had not survived, how would I have recognized Jesus among the millions upon millions of angels and saints in heaven? My heart answered: Jesus would look just like Dr. Halverson.

### WEEK TWO

#### THE NEW SELF

**"Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:12).**

In "The Happy Hypocrite" Max Beer-bohm tells about a princely rake named Lord George Hell, debauched and degenerate, who falls in love with a saintly girl. In order to win her love, he covers his bloated features with the mask of a saint. The girl is deceived and becomes his

bride. They live together happily until a wicked lady from Lord George Hell's profligate past turns up to expose him for the scoundrel she knows him to be. She challenges him to take off his mask. Embarrassed, he takes it off only to make the surprising discovery that beneath the saint's mask is the face of the saint he has become by wearing it in love.

Paul teaches us that growing in Christ's image involves not only the gracious work of God within, by the Spirit, but through our own conscious efforts to conform to Christ. So, again and again he counsels: "Lay aside the old self," "Put on the new self," "Do not sin," "Be renewed in your minds," "Do not yield the members of your body unto sin but yield yourselves unto God." Growth in grace is not automatic. It requires a personal decision, conscious endeavor and positive disciplines. It involves daily and hourly *metanoia*, repentance: that is, turning away from evil and doing what is right. It means sometimes sacrificing even the good in order to attain the best.

John Wesley used to counsel young preachers to preach the experience of heart holiness until they had it. There is something to be said for wearing the mask of saintliness until we become who we really are in Christ. We tend to become the kind of persons we image ourselves to be. "Surely your dreams will find you out."

# ROOTED IN CHRIST!

## WEEK THREE

### ON CONTROLLING ANGER

**"Be angry, and yet do not sin . . . do not give the devil an opportunity" (Eph. 4:26-27).**

The priest of a large cathedral-like church always began his services by greeting the worships, "The Lord be with thee." They were accustomed to respond in unison, "And with thy Spirit."

On one Sunday he greeted the congregation in his customary way, "The Lord be with thee," but there was no response. The public address system had malfunctioned. He tapped the microphone a few times. It was dead. In exasperation he looked around and spied the custodian sitting off to one side. At the very instant he spoke to him to complain about it, two tiny wires touched restoring the current and carried his angry protest booming throughout the cavernous sanctuary, "There's something wrong with this stupid microphone." To which the people responded, "And with thy spirit."

A pastor-friend of mine got carried away in the heat of a church league basketball game and angrily protested a referee's call. The resulting exchange became so heated that the pastor was thrown out of the game. He was never able to recover from that incident. His credibility was so damaged that he was forced to leave his church before he wanted to. Temper is a gracious gift of God. What the immune system is to the body, so is anger to the spirit. It is a vital and necessary defense mechanism designed by God to sensitize us against the intrusion of influences which would threaten or even damage us. It is the backbone of the soul. Yet, like all of God's other good gifts, it needs to be disciplined and controlled by the Spirit. Paul's counsel is timely, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger . . . be put away from you, along with malice" (Eph. 4:31).

## WEEK FOUR

### WHEN WE "MESS UP"

**"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).**

Craig Rench tells about the time when, while his wife was busy in another part of the house, his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter engaged in a little creative activity. She climbed up on a chair, opened the cupboard, took out the sugar, and poured it all over the living room couch and carpet. Then she climbed back up again, retrieved the honey jar, and poured it over the sugar. Then she sprinkled cinnamon over the sugar and honey, just like she had seen it sprinkled over sugar on toast. When her mother came into the living room she announced cheerily, "Mommy, I did it all by myself!"

For every deliberate malicious deed there are a thousand unintentional foul-ups which we do "all by myself." We seek to be creative, take the initiative, and make a positive contribution only to discover, in retrospect, that we have done more damage than good.

The "good news" is that our heavenly Father knows our frame and that we are but dust. He is the "Father of all mercies, the God of all comfort" (II Cor. 1:3). Hence we may come "boldly to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace in the time of need" (Heb. 4:16), even when we mess up "all by ourselves."

We need to give others the benefit of the doubt when they "mess up," and extend to them mercy and compassion.

## WEEK FIVE

### FIT FOR THE KING

**Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than men" (Col. 3:23).**

Brian Mittman tells about having dinner at a smart London restaurant with his parents. The setting—complete with chandeliers crystal and silver—was unbe-

lievably elegant. The food was superb. Nonetheless, his mother felt it needed a little salt. Trying all three silver shakers on the table, she discovered that each contained pepper. She called the waiter. Alas, when he tested the shakers, he discovered that they were all filled with pepper. Horrified, he immediately brought her a salt shaker.

When it was time for dessert, the maitre d' appeared, insisting that they all choose something "on the house" because of the oversight. His mother protested: "It's not that important."

"But madame," he replied in all seriousness, "what if you had been the Queen?"

What would it do for us if we performed every act, spoke every word, wrote every letter, fulfilled every assignment as if it were for Jesus? Mother Teresa urges her sisters and workers to see in every derelict's face the countenance of Jesus, in every child's hands the baby hands of Jesus, and in every unborn fetus the image of God. In so doing, every work site becomes an altar, every endeavor an expression of worship and every labor a sacrifice of praise. "Truly I say to you," says Jesus, "to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:37).

## WEEK SIX

### EMPOWERMENT

**"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).**

Lloyd Olgilvie, pastor of Hollywood First Presbyterian Church, is an avid sailor. He tells about the time when the sailboat he was on got caught in the doldrums far from the Southern California shore. For hours there was not a breath of wind. Finally they started the auxiliary motor and begin to make their way slowly back to harbor. On the way they passed another sailboat dead in the water. One of its occupants, obviously inebriated, was standing on deck blowing for all he was worth into the flaccid sail, hoping that by his efforts he could get the boat moving.

That describes so well much of our efforts in the church. We run to and fro across the face of the earth to attend the

latest conference, sit at the feet of pastoral superstars, fill glossy notebooks with surefire ideas, and purchase the latest video cassettes. Then we hit the ground in our home church running. Computers begin to hum. Laser printers churn out multi-colored copy. Phone lines crackle. Committees organize. Seminars are planned. Power lunches are consumed. Coffee is consumed by the gallon. Lights burn late into the night. Three-ringed binders proliferate. Mission statements are formulated, objectives defined and planning cycles are put into place. Target dates are set.

What is desperately needed is a mighty wind from on high. That is why Jesus told his disciples: "wait for what the Father has promised . . . the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:45). Where there is a Spirit-empowered "will," there will emerge a thousand Spirit-enabled "ways" to get the task accomplished.

## WEEK SEVEN

### BROKEN PIECES

**"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight: I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:18).**

Robert Schuller Jr., while preaching for his father on national television, told this story. During his teen years he developed a interest in a certain girl. The house rules, however, forbade him to go see her except on weekends. He was to devote his evenings to homework and family responsibilities. After dinner one night he told his father that he was going to the library to study with his friend Alvin. Instead he spent the evening with his girlfriend. When he came home his father met him at the door. He had a tea cup in his hand, one of his mother's finest pieces of china.

"Where have you been?" asked his father.

"Studying at the library."

"With whom?"

"Alvin."

"But I ran into Alvin at the grocery store, and he knew nothing about studying with you. I called the library. You weren't there. Where were you?"

He then confessed that he had spent the evening with his girlfriend. A look of deep sadness and disappointment

clouded his father's face. He said nothing. But as he turned away, the tea cup tipped out of its saucer and shattered on the stone tile.

Robert was so ashamed of himself for his duplicity that he carefully picked up the pieces and spent painstaking hours gluing them back together again. He placed it, cracks and all, back in his mother's china cupboard where it serves as a continual reminder that sin involves more than breaking God's laws: it breaks the heart of God.

## WEEK EIGHT

### FORGIVING GRACE

**"Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found" (Luke 15:22-24).**

During a college chapel service Bob Benson Sr. told a story that I shall never forget. He let himself in the back door late one night. As he flipped on the kitchen light he saw, in the middle of the floor, a chair. Taped to its back was a cardboard sign on which this crayoned message was scrawled in a twelve-year-old's handwriting: "Dad, I really blew it today. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Mike."

Without taking off his coat, Bob immediately went up to his son's bedroom, pulled back the bed covers, sat on the bed and pulled him up to a sitting position. With an arm around him, he aroused him: "Son, I just read your message in the kitchen. I didn't want to go to bed without letting you know that I forgive you."

"Thanks Dad," said Mike, as he slumped back into a deep sleep.

Sensing our unspoken question, Bob continued, "Are you curious to know what it was that Mike did?"

"Yes," nodded a thousand heads.

"Well, I don't know," he answered "The reason I don't know is that I didn't ask. And I didn't ask because there is nothing that my son could ever do that is beyond my willingness to forgive!"

That is our heavenly Father's kind of love!

## WEEK NINE

### FORGIVING LOVE

**"And Peter went outside and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62).**

I was walking down the road one day when I came upon a great hulk of a man, sitting on a rock, his face buried in his hands, saying over and over, "He didn't even mention it." I paused, wondering if I dare disturb him. I touched him gently on the shoulder. His head came up. I was shocked. It was Peter, Simon Peter.

"Forgive me, Peter, but I couldn't help but overhear you saying, again and again, 'He didn't even mention it.' What are you talking about?"

"My denial, man," he snapped. "I'm sorry, C.S., you probably don't even know what I am talking about. Sit down here and I'll tell you all about it."

Beginning with the Last Supper Peter told me about his final journey with Jesus after his arrest. He confessed his loss of nerve and his denial. At the very moment a rooster crowed, Jesus turned toward him. Their eyes met. There was something in that look which broke Peter's heart. He went out and wept bitterly.

Peter then told me, with mounting excitement, about the breakfast meeting he and the other disciples had that very morning, with Jesus Himself, who was very much alive, risen from the dead, right there below us on the beach. Amazingly, not once during breakfast or the leisurely conversation that followed did Jesus bring up the matter of his denial. It was as if it had never happened. Three times however, Jesus asked him, "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you really love me?"

As I took my leave of Peter, I thought to myself: How like Jesus, not to even mention it—our sin, our failure, our denial. All Jesus is really interested in is, "Do you love me?"

# ROOTED IN CHRIST

## WEEK TEN

### CHOSEN

**"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:4).**

The cartoon series opens with a lunch hour baseball game. Two captains have been selected. They start to call out names: "Harry," "Bobby," "Skip." With each name that is called, the clutch of boys around home plate diminishes.

The eye naturally comes to focus upon one familiar little face that, which each name called, droops with increasing sadness. His shoulders are stooped, his glove drags the ground. It looks like another one of those days when nobody will want him to play on their team.

It comes down to the last selection. The captain studies the motley figures huddled together. At long last he calls out the greatest name that one little boy could ever hear: "Charlie Brown." The last frame shows Charlie with his head high, back straight, feet churning and glove twirling around his wrist. Underneath is this caption: "Happiness is being chosen to play on the team."

It is an incredible revelation, but every human being is already pre-chosen by God from before the foundation of the world to live in union with Jesus as one of "the Beloved," exhibiting His holiness "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6).

The Psalmist exulted, "For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:13-14). Wonderful indeed!

## WEEK ELEVEN

### CHRISTIAN SELF-ESTEEM

**"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (I Cor. 12:7).**

The work of Christ through the church is not nearly so damaged by pride

as it is by false modesty and an exaggerated sense of self-worthlessness.

Brother rabbit was hippity-hopping through the forest one day when he came upon brother squirrel, sitting at the edge of a meadow, crying his eyes out.

"What's the matter with you, this fine day, brother squirrel?"

"Every morning I come out to gather nuts," he whimpered, "only to see yonder mountain. It is so great, so mighty, so awesome, towering over all of us little creatures of the forest. Next to it I feel so small, so powerless, so insignificant."

"It is true," replied brother rabbit, "that you are not as mighty and as awesome as that mountain. But neither can that mountain crack a nut!"

To each of us are given special gifts, wonderful abilities and unique opportunities which no one else on the face of the earth has. There are some "nuts" we can crack, some people to whom we can relate, some ministries in which we can become involved more effectively than anyone else.

## WEEK TWELVE

### RENEWED IN CHRIST

**"Put on the new self [which is] being renewed . . . a renewal in which . . . Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:10-11).**

It was the eighth day of a backpacking trip. During the morning we walked beneath tall spruce, beside swift flowing streams, and through wild flower-carpeted meadows in the California High Sierras. It was one of our most enjoyable hiking days.

After lunch, however, we encountered a steep ridge. We could see the switchbacks snaking up the mountain. Since we were hemmed in by a rock cliff on one side and a steep canyon drop-off on the other, we had no choice but to forge ahead. The sun was hot. The trail dusty.

Finally, at mid-afternoon, we made the pass. We were about to drop our packs for a long well-deserved rest when Dwayne motioned us over to look down the other side. Nestled among the pines was an emerald-green

pocket lake. "Let's go for it," we shouted as we raced down the trail.

We dropped our packs, stripped off most of our clothes, and dove in. And we scrambled out! We had failed to notice a mini-glacier that fed directly into the lake on the other side. But in the fifteen or twenty strokes it took me to swim in a tight turn and climb out on a rock, all of the fatigue, perspiration and aches of the long hard hike had been washed out of my system. I felt as if I had been "born again!"

When life's trail gets dusty and the burdens heavy, Paul invites us to "dive in," to immerse ourselves in Christ, and find wonderful renewal and refreshment for our spirits.

## WEEK THIRTEEN

### COMPLETE IN CHRIST

**"We proclaim Him, admonishing every and teaching every man . . . that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28).**

We were created with an irresistible urge to show off. Children worry their parents to death with, "Mommy, Daddy, look what I made. Look at my picture!" Why do musicians invest hours in practice but to perform? Why do artists labor over their paintings but to exhibit them? Why do authors chain themselves to a cluttered desk, suffering cramped fingers and aching shoulders as they scrunch over their typewriters if not to have someone should read what they have written?

Actually, this deep passion for creativity and desire to show it off is testimony to the image of God within us, for God is a showoff. He created man, in part, so that he could show off the wonders of his creation. "The heavens declare (show off) the glory of God; and the firmament his handiwork (artistry). Day unto day pours forth speech and night unto night shows forth knowledge ('Look at what I have done. Enjoy!')." (Ps. 19:1-2)

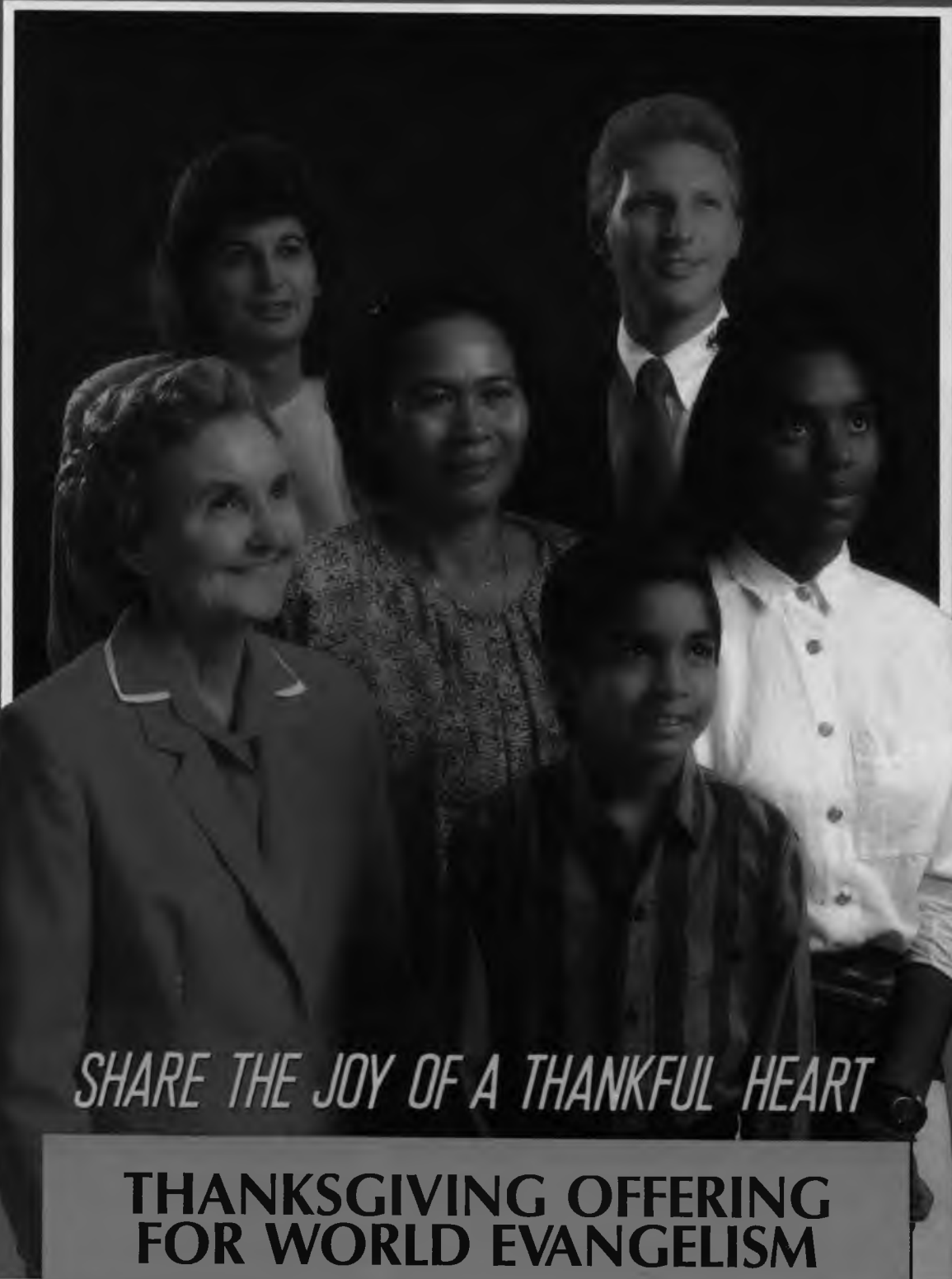
God has created us, redeemed us, and raised us up out of our sins so that, someday, he can show us off before the hosts of heaven as choice and chosen exhibits of His love, His mercy, and His marvelous grace.

—by C.S. Cowels



# "Let light shine out of darkness"

2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV



*SHARE THE JOY OF A THANKFUL HEART*

**THANKSGIVING OFFERING  
FOR WORLD EVANGELISM**

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE



- (upper left) Roger Hahn, Southern Nazarene University Professor, and Clarence Kinzler, Northern California District Superintendent, discuss pastors for the new century.

- (upper right) Don Dunnington, Southern University Academic Dean and Stephen Nease, Nazarene Education Commissioner, discuss ways Nazarene youth respond to a call to ministry.

- (center) Jonathan Salgado, Professor at NBC and Lyle Pointer, Professor at SNU, share teaching experiences.

- (lower left) Confluence Participants consider Robert Smith's presentation.

- (lower right) Bill Sullivan, Church Growth Division Director, listens to a conference presentation.



# Clergy Preparation Discussed by North American Educators

## Church Growth Division Sponsors Colorado Conference

**B**reckenridge, Colorado, was the site of the second annual conference of Nazarene academic leaders from religion departments of the church's North America educational institutions. The group met in an ongoing series of conferences to discuss ministerial preparation for the new century. Called the Scholars' Symposium on Church Growth, the conference was sponsored by the Division of Church Growth and held June 10-12, 1991. Wilbur Brannon chaired the conference. Additional Church Growth Division personnel included Bill M. Sullivan, Michael Estep, Curt Bowers, and Pat Warren.

Five papers dealing with theological foundations for church growth were presented and discussed. It is expected that these papers, along with other matters, will provide input for a similar conference planned for 1992; eventually these discussions will likely shape the way ministers are prepared in the denomination.

Brief summary quotes from the discussion papers are published here as news and information. In defense of the presenters, it should be noted that space limitations keep GROW from publishing the complete text. Persons wishing a more thorough understanding of the conference should read the full papers which are available from Wilbur Brannon at Nazarene Headquarters.

### CHRISTOLOGY: IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

by Robert W. Smith, Point Loma Nazarene College

... From my limited perspective, I see the Christian church struggling to understand its identity in the world. And because identity and mission are interrelated ideas, the uncertain identity of the church has restricted the effectiveness of its mission. Further, I would contend that the identity crisis in the church is the direct result of its failure to develop a clear, biblical agenda for ministry. The contemporary church is not convinced that Martin Luther was right when he chose to develop his theology and ministry from a "theology of the cross" over a "theology of glory."...

A ministry shaped by the cross begins with the conviction that the church is powerless before the institutional structures of our world—like Jesus was. It does not possess the physical resources to compete with the major entertainment

corporations to capture the interests of people. Its bottom line has little or nothing in common with Fortune 500 companies. It exists in a state of perpetual dialogue seeking to understand how a social institution can maintain a sense of biblical integrity in a world dominated by successful secular institutions which frequently operate with organization principles which are grounded in the impersonal. Nevertheless, countless congregations are held hostage in ministry programs which exploit individuals and leave them without hope for their future. The Gospel is God's message of hope in a desperate world. And its hope resides in Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God. . . .

How, then, does a community of faith live between the threat of desperation in the present and the vision of the kingdom which is future? Perhaps it is too simplistic to answer "by faith"—even though from Mark's perspective faith is the correct response. Perhaps the objective of ministry is to provide direction for people through the crucial process. And if a minister, called of God for service to humanity, is to fulfill a divine purpose in this world, perhaps that minister will have to set aside the lust for personal success so that the ministry of the personal may take place. Ministry that is willing to challenge the secular values of its culture places the minister in a continuing situation of risk. What if people fail to recognize our intent? What if they are comfortable with their relationship to the world and are not interested in change? The minister can find solace in the Jesus model, for his actions were a scandal to the religious people of his day . . . To confront and dismantle cultures' values demands that ministry take on a positive role in reconstructing the values of a community of faith which attempts to experience Christlikeness in the daily routine of life. The risk is obvious. Are we willing to be distinguished from the norms of our cultural setting because of our relation to Jesus Christ? . . .

To so live requires a restructuring of one's life and character from a biblical perspective as interpreted from the teaching of Jesus. Prophetic ministry, then, is the lens through which a community of faith examines its cultural setting and determines how a Christian is to live in such a world.

Prophetic ministry does not preclude the necessity of traditional pastoral care. Neither are the administrative needs of the church forgotten. Works of mercy are intensified, not set aside. Practical theology is, however, transformed—transformed because it begins to reflect the prophetic model of Jesus who was not willing to allow God's people to be overwhelmed by secular values without confrontation. Thus, the prophet model influences how we minister to people facing personal tragedy

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and death; it affects the urgency of our personal counseling because we realize the threat posed by the impersonal values of our world; it challenges church programs which trivialize the Gospel for the sake of entertainment; it helps us as we develop a style of worship that centers on God rather than on human experience; it enables a church to establish priorities which are born out of its interpretation of the Gospel and to stand firm in its new identity; it affords an interpretation of the New Testament ministry of the Holy Spirit which is true to the Scriptures. It does not, however, permit the church to Christianize the methods of secular institutions because they seem to bring the results we desire.

What influence can the prophetic ministry of Jesus hold for the contemporary church? If it is our desire to only grow a big church, it does not seem realistic to model our ministry on the prophetic Jesus. If, on the other hand, we desire to build a great church at the dawn of the twenty-first century, then the prophetic model may be worth any risk implicit within its vision of ministry . . . .

Contemporary ministry is difficult at best; at worst, nearly impossible. The intent of this paper is to help us see the need of a prophetic ministry in the modern world. May the presence of God the Holy Spirit provide the strength we need to fulfill the challenge.

## **DIVINE-HUMAN SYNERGISM IN THE MINISTRY—THE GROWTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

by Dennis Bratcher, Southern Nazarene University

The questions: What aspects of ministry do we control and are responsible for and what aspects does God control and is He responsible for? How, in what way, and to what extent, does God involve Himself in the work of the church? . . . How do we integrate our obligation to be effective ministers with our trust in God that He will build His church? . . . And in light of a major concern of these conferences, what responsibility do we have for the growth of the church? . . . And how shall these issues affect how we train clergy for ministry?

It seems to me that our primary responsibility for ministry revolves around fulfilling the church's mission. This includes the proper training, maturity, leadership and spirituality to call and guide the people of God into faithful response to Him. The most important thing a minister should do is to lead the people in authentic worship/service to God . . . .

Secondly, we are responsible for service in our world. This is a broad area; wisdom and discretion are necessary in deciding how best to accomplish this service . . . But who is better able and better equipped to offer comfort, direction, counsel, acceptance, affirmation, and hope than the community of those who have encountered the God who is the author of those things?

The church, both corporately and individually, must not

only advocate a lifestyle of service, it must practice it. Insofar as it does, it is the people of God . . . .

**We must take seriously** the various biblical perspectives that affirm that it is by the Spirit of God that the temple is built, that it is God who builds His church.

Let me quickly qualify this perspective by recalling that when the people of God are authentically the people of God in the



**Bratcher:** "Fire within students a vision."

world, there is a ministry to the world that has the potential for extensive numerical growth. Conversion, people coming to faith in God through Jesus Christ, is an outgrowth of the church being the people of God in the world. *If no one ever responds to the One to whom the people of God are bearing witness, then there might be questions raised whether the community of faith is living out its mission.*

Yet, it will not always be so. The pervasiveness and reality of sin in our world, and the radical call to discipleship and servanthood that lie at the heart of the Christian message, work against the church ever achieving astounding success at extensive growth. The church simply cannot bring about the Kingdom by its own efforts at numerical growth. . . . We are responsible for being the people of God, authentically, dynamically, vitally, and obediently. That is our part in ministry. . . . It is God who works in the hearts of people, by His grace, to call them to encounter and reconciliation to Himself. It is God who takes our service to Him and to the world and uses it in His own way. That is God's part in ministry. By His Spirit, He builds the temple. . . .

To me, then, one of the primary functions of theological education is to fire within students a vision for transforming the world. Theological education should strike a spark of wonder at the transforming of God's grace at work through the earthen vessels of very fallible human beings gathered as the people of God. . . . It should also provide the tools and some raw materials through biblical and theological study that will allow the student in the course of his ministry to fan that spark into a light brilliant enough to be seen by the world. It is that light, that passion, that he communicates to the people as he calls them to intensive growth in the things of God. It is that light which becomes Isaiah's light to the world. . . .

**With the mission of the church** as the people of God in view, it becomes imperative that the minister be fluent in the culture around him. Any program of education or form of training that lessens exposure to the broad range of society is debilitating to the minister and shortchanges the church. The churches of the twenty-first century will be increasingly multifarious and diverse, even in smaller communities. We can no longer assume a homogeneous congregation, either in race, ethnic background, economic status, regional subculture, family-unit makeup, or a dozen other monolithic categories to which we are accustomed.

Human need will demand that the minister be able to function with high education professions as well as blue collar workers and welfare mothers, not to mention the farmer with a graduate degree in agronomy and a six figure income. All this calls for as broad-based an education as possible. . . .

Finally, the challenges facing our society, and our world, are becoming increasingly far-ranging and complex. . . . Family problems and divorce, teen sexual activity, drug use and suicide, the AIDS epidemic, New Age ethics, and a host of other problems are creating a multitude of persons in crisis. The extent and depth of human need on just the emotional and spiritual levels is staggering.

**The church cannot despair** of any solution and retreat in spiritual escapism and pray, "Beam us up, Lord." Nor can it stick its head in the sand and attempt to retreat to a mode of operation that only works with the lovable, problemless, two-parent families of suburbia.

If our ministers are to lead the church in being the people of God, they will need a more integrated education than in the past. There will need to be more attention given to areas like sociology, psychology and sociology of religion, and counseling. We cannot train ministers to be professionals in these areas and they should not attempt to be. But a more integrated approach to pastoral training is crucial if the church is truly going to meet the world. . . .

We may have to give up some of our time-honored "sacred cows" to accomplish this. We may have to rethink exactly what should be taught and how. But whatever decisions are made and whatever direction theological education goes, we must allow the mission of the church as the people of God to be the governing factor. We must remember the difference between cutting down trees and building the Kingdom!

## IMAGES OF THE CHURCH: IMPLICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

by Edwin H. Robinson, Nazarene Theological Seminary

. . . It is my opinion that we have adopted, mostly unconsciously, contemporary economical, organizational, and institutional images of the church that have contributed to the confusion of ministerial expectation and roles such as entrepreneur, fund-raiser, chief executive officer, curriculum writer, charismatic orator, architect, and master plumber. As the world in which local parish ministry occurs changes rapidly, so the concepts of ministry also change. Change is not inherently detrimental, but this rapidity of change without some essential understandings of what ministry is has precipitated a "noise" of prescriptions for ministry that may not be grounded

in the true nature of the church. What is needed is a return to some basic images that represent more clearly our understanding of the church as "the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word" (*Manual, Church of the Nazarene*, Article XI). . . .



Robinson: "Among ecclesiastical bodies we are unique."

**The image of confessing community** infers unity of belief and sharing of daily life. The image of community infers the parish ministry image of pastor and priest. . . .

**The image of covenant people** infers a history and relevant message which defines the character and call of the people identified with the message (covenant). This historic, yet relevant defining message infers the image of prophet, both in the context of forthteller (proclaiming the Word, "message" of the Lord) and the storyteller (reminding the people of the historic nature of the Word). The image of prophet is not always synonymous with preacher, for at times the preacher preaches pastorally or priestly, but the preacher often fulfills this prophetic image.

**The image of this ministering body** represents the common life of the Christian community characterized by mutuality of gifts and vocations. The key here is the interdependence of the members of the Body of Christ in fulfilling the mission of the church. The perception of the ministerial role inherent in this image is that of the equipper/enabler.

Hence, three images of ministry emerge from the primary images of the church presented in the *Manual* doctrinal statement: 1) Pastor/Priest; 2) Prophet; 3) Equipper/Enabler.

**PASTOR/PRIEST** . . . Pastor/priest promotes unity within the congregation as a representative or symbol of the life and identity of the entire community. The pastor "represents" the congregation in times of personal crisis, not because lay persons are incapable of such care, but because he is a "community person," personifying the ministry of the whole congregation, the royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9). The pastor/priest promotes unity as he calls the community to authentic Christian worship by painting a picture of the holy, by proclaiming the authoritative message of the gospel, by bringing memory of the story through scripture, creed, proclamation, and sacrament. The pastor/priest promotes community as he calls the community to authentic Christian living among themselves and among the world by true service, justice, intimacy, and faith. Simply stated, the pastor/priest is to be a community person and, as such, an instrument of community building in the cultural context in which social communities are being destroyed.



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**PROPHET** . . . In the midst of an apathetic culture in which persons feel little and suffer even less, the need of a pastoral ministry that prophetically proclaims the passion of God is crucial. This cultural apathy grows in proportion to an increasing feeling of being controlled by events and authorities who render the people helpless and hopeless. The feeling in modern society that systems are so large and omnipotent that nothing can be done renders *status quo* as acceptable and injustice as inevitable.

Apathy is not a characteristic of the people of the covenant, called to live out the story in the character of God, both in His power and in His suffering. But such a people requires pastor/prophets versed in the story themselves, skilled enough to tell it with passion, and resolute enough to persevere in telling it, knowing it will cause suffering (perhaps even personal rejection) and corporate judgment. . . .

**EQUIPPER/ENABLER** The image of the equipper/enabler is perhaps the most prominent in the modern pastoral dictionary. The image finds its locus in Ephesians 4:11-12. I read very few philosophy statements from seminarians that do not have this image as primary.

Ephesians 4 suggests that certain leadership functions were established in the New Testament era of the church. The offices existed for the equipping of the saints so that all might do the work of ministry. . . .

There is no strong desire on the part of today's clergy to move back to a medieval understanding of priesthood in which the official priests were the only ones called to witness, serve, heal, or offer forgiveness. On the contrary, with Luther, we would assert that the essence of "called minister" is not essential ontological. It is relational (whom it serves) and functional (what it does for those it serves). Ordained ministry is not a status. It is a function. . . .

It is in this ordained function that the parish minister operates to enable, equip, and empower the church to fulfill its call to preach, evangelize, witness, teach, heal and serve. This is the church's mandate for ministry that all Christians share. Their enhancement, equipment, and empowerment is accomplished through the means of teaching, training, caring, communing, worshipping, envisioning, etc.—the holistic functions of pastoral/priestly/prophetic ministry. . . .

One thing is clear for me as I have studied these images. No single image will suffice for describing the role of parish ministry. The images of pastor/priest, prophet, equipper must exist in creative tension and complementarily for an adequate understanding of ministry. . . .

Just as the church cannot adequately be described by a single image, so the nature of ministry cannot be so described. But the multiple images are not without mutual connection. They must be allowed to operate on and with each other to portray a holistic understanding of the roles, competencies, and objectives of the parish minister.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CLERGY PREPARATION

Since confusion exists in the minds of both clergy and congregation concerning the expectations of today's parish minister, those of us involved in the task of initial and con-

tinuing clergy education must take a hard look at what we can do to provide some clarity. I do not harbor lofty dreams of solving the problems of unclear expectations. As long as more than one person serves on a church board, the expectations will vary. . . . I suggest the following educational implications for clarifying the images of parish ministry:

1. Persons preparing for parish ministry must have some sense of a macro-perspective of ministry. . . . The key is integration of the parts into some awareness of the whole. . . . Perhaps we need to make space and time in our curriculum for reflecting on the understanding of the components and integrating them into an understanding of the whole. . . . A macro-perspective is essential if the minister is to understand who he/she is called to be, regardless of the parish, and to survive the crucible of mixed pastoral expectations in that setting.

2. Persons preparing for ministry should understand issues of community development as they relate to the "confessing community." The issues of congregational identity, authority, story, vision, and shared life might become the rubric around which the integrative task could be structured. The place of corporate worship, sacrament, rite and ritual, Christian education, celebration and festival, congregational fellowship, socials and institutional organization, corporate language, and the ordering of space all play a role in the formation of persons in Christian community. . . . Institutions of clergy preparation should, themselves, represent models of community life in their experience of intimacy, service, justice, creativity, and faith.

3. Persons preparing for ministry must develop an understanding of and appreciation for the "one story," the gospel. . . . Biblical studies that facilitate an understanding of the greater story of the scriptures should be encouraged. Biblical theology must bear the task of pointing toward the whole rather than impartially delineating the various theological themes with the biblical record. Systematic/constructive theology must bear responsibility for placing the whole of special revelation in terms of the story. Biblical exegesis courses should continually call the exegete back to the largest framework of the gospel. Practical techniques of small group Bible study should encourage the leader to continually place the individual passage in the context of the whole of the biblical revelation.

4. Persons preparing for ministry must consider the relationship of ordained ministry as a representative of the whole community and the whole faith community as ministers. Why be ordained? The question is not absurd to the young people being called to myriad ministries that do not require ordination. . . . With the current trend toward highly structured lay ministry programs, it is imperative that clergy understand their role in relationship to the many lay pastors. Theological faculties must assist clergy to understand this relationship theologically, historically, and functionally.

5. Persons preparing for ministry must be strongly encouraged to make pastoral education a lifelong effort. We often expect too much from the initial task of clergy preparation. As those of you who are involved in this portion of the task know, there is no way to develop every foundational understanding and

functional competency needed for ministry in any undergraduate or graduate program. Time limitations and lack of learning readiness force much of the development of pastoral competence to take place following graduation from our institutions. The complexities of localized ministry mandate continuing education for clergy. Perhaps the initial preparation for ministry should entail foundational understanding and basic skills for the beginning pastors such as preaching, pastoral care and administration. Mandatory continuing education could then address the issue of developmental skills necessary for changing cultures and a growing pastor. It is surprising that the Church of the Nazarene has not yet required continuing education for its clergy. Among professions and ecclesiastical bodies we are unique.

**CONCLUSION** . . . Hopefully, in the search for common understandings in the midst of diverse expectations, the church will reach back into its early history to rediscover more complete, authentic images of parish ministry. We must learn to integrate the roles of pastor, priest, prophet, enabler as a part of one whole. We must learn what it means to recapture the biblical expressions of the Old Testament's people of covenant in the renewed community of the New Covenant in Christ. We must learn to see the representative and empowering relationship of the ordained ministry to the community of ministers.

These lessons of clearer imagery can only be learned if we begin with authentic images of the church. These lessons will only be retained if we use the language of these images often enough so they not only become a part of our vocabulary, but a part of our daily practice.

May parish ministers in the present and those yet to come not be confused as to what it means to be a Christian minister in the 21st century. . . . While we must always try to conceptualize ministry relevantly to the time, we must always be careful that our conceptualizations do not become expressions of the kingdom of the times rather than the kingdom of God.

## THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY: BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

by Don W. Dunnington, formerly from Trevecca Nazarene College and now Southern Nazarene University.

. . . What is a call? How does it come? How do we come to the conclusion we are called? What does it mean? Is it for a lifetime? What shapes and forms our ideas about a call?

As we think about equipping clergy for the 21st century, we must give new consideration to the call in the understanding and experience of those who will serve Christ and the church in Christian ministry. Conversation about the idea of calling is important in order to clarify the issue for many of our youth and middle age people who seek to know and do the will of God.

Often when preachers speak publicly about a call to ministry, it comes across as a very neat, clear cut, easily identifiable experience. God calls, you hear, you obey. When I talk with students and others who think they might be called, however, it never seems quite so simple and settled. Their age

or experience seems to make little difference. For all of them there is a struggle to interpret what is taking place in their lives.

This discussion also seems important in light of reports of declining enrollments in religion departments and fewer traditional college age students feeling called to pastoral ministry. The language long used in our tradition to speak of a ministerial calling, "called to preach," is also diminishing as students express a desire to "minister," but not to "be a preacher." Our response to these concerns is critical for the future ministry of the Church of the Nazarene.



**Dunnington:** "There is a struggle to interpret what is taking place."

. . . (Our) review of examples from the Old and New Testaments suggests several general observations about the nature of the call from a biblical perspective:

1. God's call comes to different types of people. Moses was likely educated in Pharaoh's courts, but was working as a shepherd when God's call came from the burning bush. Gideon was a farmer. Isaiah was an aristocrat and political consultant. Peter was a fisherman. Matthew was a tax collector.

2. The call comes to people in different ways. God's method is not always the same. Each call seems couched in the historical circumstances of the recipient.

3. The special call of God comes to individuals for varying purposes. Abram was to move to an unknown land. Joshua was to lead a conquest. Amos was to deliver a message outside his homeland. Paul was to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles.

4. Though the specifics vary, each call is related to the saving, redemptive work of God. It is to serve in that cause, to identify with that purpose, to work for God in that endeavor.

5. Each experience of call requires faithful obedience and commitment.

6. The call is received in the context of the covenant community. Those who are called are members of the community of faith and serve in relationship to that community.

7. Each person is graciously endowed and enabled to fulfill the call despite personal limitations and/or resistance to the carrying out of their specific assignment.

8. Biblical personalities were sustained and strengthened during their ministry by an awareness of the call of God upon their life.

9. Scriptural evidence is conclusive that Christian ministry must have its genesis in a definite, divine call even though the nature of that call will likely vary from person to person.

. . . With calls that are so different, we should be willing to admit how potentially difficult it is to precisely define the call of God. It is, however, possible to speak about some of the enduring characteristics that mark the call of God to

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Christian service. Robert Schnase, in a recent helpful discussion of calling, has identified these in a well-organized manner: a) God acts first; b) Genuine response; c) Christ the center; d) Uncertainty and unworthiness; e) Openness to the needs of others; f) Profound joy; g) Personally addressed; h) Outside confirmation; i) Passion; and j) Pattern over time.

... Reflection on the place of the call in the life of ministers has led me to these conclusions:

1. We must reaffirm our understanding that all Christians are called to ministry, while continuing to recognize the importance of certain men and women responding to a call to full-time Christian service in order to fulfill particular functions within the community of believers.

2. We must recognize more clearly that God works through the church to provide ministry for the church and the world. . . . This means pastors and other church leaders must be diligent in the search for capable young people upon whom they may lay the challenge of the ministry.

3. The church must be generous in its allowance of how God's call comes to a person. . . .

4. The church must guard against any form of exploitation of its ministerial candidates. It is not uncommon to discover students seriously questioning their calling who, at some earlier point, when they mentioned to the church that they felt called, were quickly pushed, encouraged and identified as "preachers."

## WORSHIP AS A CATALYST FOR MINISTRY

by Max Harris, Nazarene Bible College

What is worship like in the Church of the Nazarene as the 1990's begin? . . . If there is a crisis of worship, does it have any relation to how we have educated the men and women who study worship in our religion departments and how they saw worship modeled in the worship services of our schools?

... As I reflect on my observations of Nazarene worship, I see a threefold movement or pattern. The first movement is the movement of preparation and covers the time of worship from the opening words of music until the preacher stands to preach. The second movement then begins and is the movement of preaching. The third movement is normally characterized by either an altar call or some response on the part of the hearers to the sermon. I will call it the movement of response/altar call.

... What kind of ministers are formed and what kinds of understandings of mission and ministry tend to develop from these worship characteristics? I believe Nazarene ministers are formed by their worship experiences to understand that worship, mission, and ministry are so nearly synonymous as to basically define who a minister is—the one who preaches and calls to response—what the church does in ministry and

missions—save the lost and sanctify the saved—and what worship is—the celebration of one's personal experience of salvation.

**The formation of ministers in this way** through their worship experiences has both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of persons formed for ministry by experience centered worship are (1) their training to lead the celebrations of what God has done for all who have responded to God's call; (2) their willingness to own the emotions as a part of worship; and (3) their openness to the Spirit's moving in a service.

The dangers those equipped for ministry in experienced



Harris: "What is the relationship between how we educate and how we worship?"

centered worship face are (1) the substitution of emotionalism for true emotion; (2) the use of pragmatism in making decisions about worship services rather than exploring the biblical, historical, and theological dimensions of worship; (3) the mistaking of personal religious experience for license to promote individual piety so that there is a loss of the corporate dimension of worship and the social dimension of mission; and (4) the unwillingness to pay the price of effective worship planning so that the riches of the church's calendar and of her worship resources are pushed aside. . . .

## CONCERNS

1. Is the threefold movement in Nazarene worship the most biblically and theologically adequate and practically effective to glorify God, reach the lost, and build up the saints?

2. It has been observed that as a church matures its worship style tends to move from an emphasis on freedom to an emphasis on form. Is that happening in the Church of the Nazarene? Is there any need to give help to our pastors and people as this transition takes place? If yes, what?

3. . . . As the Church of the Nazarene grows large and older we find greater diversity in culture, education, and personalities. Should we purposely plant congregations or encourage existing congregations to develop diversity in worship that reflects this diversity in the church?

4. What about the increasing number of ethnic churches?

5. . . . How are we to address the tension that often arises at the interface of cultural change and heritage?

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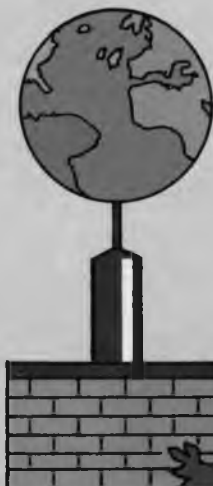
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# First Anaheim District Hispanic Convention

## Nine Congregations Celebrate

**D**istrict Superintendent Thomas Goble led the first Hispanic Convention on the Anaheim District on April 20, 1991, at the Santa Ana Edinger Church.

The program offered spirited singing, fervent prayer, reports from the churches, and inspiration from Scripture. Rev. Raymond Lopez, superintendent of the Western Latin District, was the preacher. Department resource leaders from the district included Mrs. Evelyn Sutton for NWMS, Rev. Ken Wilson for Sunday School Ministries, and Rev. Rick Bell for NYI.

The convention's purpose was to build fellowship among the Hispanic churches, to strengthen friendships among the people, to rejoice in the victories, and to accomplish pre-district assembly planning for the Latin

churches and missions. About 200 people attended the conference.

The Anaheim District has nine Spanish-speaking congregations, three fully organized churches, and six missions. The churches are located at Bell Gardens (Jaime Torres, pastor), Costa Mesa (Noe Guevara, pastor), and Huntington Park (Orlando Baldelomar, pastor). The missions are located at Anaheim First (Joaquin Rodriguez, pastor), Chino First (Adolph Perez, pastor), Santa Ana Edinger (Joel Ortiz, pastor), Santa Ana First (Miguel Cosme, pastor), South Gate First (pastor to be announced), and Stanton Lighthouse Community (Antonio Alvarado, pastor). More than 700 persons attend Nazarene services each Sunday morning in these congregations.



*Christmas is coming soon, and what an appropriate time to remember the evangelists and song evangelists who were a part of your church's life this year.*

## People to Remember

Evangelists who served  
our church

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

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*An adequate budget for evangelism at the beginning of each church year is imperative for each congregation.  
 A revival savings account is useful in building toward adequate support for the evangelist.*

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*To Be Launched . . .*

# **The Small Church Institute**

An Expansion of  
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A National Training Event

*Where:* St. Louis, Mo.

*When:* May 1992

*What:* Training Sessions

*Content . . .*

## **Four Growth Lessons**

Will be taught

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# Meniffee Church Shares Holiness Message With Three Groups

**New Church Averages Over 100 Each Month**



# Menifee Church Shares Holiness Message



**M**enifee Valley Church of the Nazarene is located just two miles from Sun City on the Southern California District. Planted in a fast growing section of California, this new church seeks to serve three target groups: the unchurched, young families uprooted from church homes in other areas, and seasoned Nazarenes who have moved from Los Angeles and San Diego.

Pastor Rob Altice, when asked to describe the most important part of the Menifee Church story, responded without hesitation, "Sometimes in the beginning, I wondered why the Lord sent me here when other churches were starting up all around us. As I prayed, the Lord impressed me with the real reason. I am here to preach holiness. In these months I have found that as we gather in new Christians, they soon begin to search for something deeper in their Christian walk. The same thing is true of those who attended churches of other denominations before they moved to this area.





Holiness is the answer to the deep hunger in the human spirit." Pastor Altice reports that the same message has grand attraction to seasoned Nazarenes, too.

Menifee Church held its first service on October 15, 1989. It was organized on January 13, 1991, with 53 members — 33 joined by profession of faith. Original community contacts were made through the Phones for You program. Now the church averages over 100 each month with a high of 154 on Easter.

## **"Holiness is the answer to the deep hunger in the human spirit."**

The greatest problem this young church faced after being in existence for only three weeks was finding a meeting place. Originally the baby congregation met in a Sun City retirement center, but they were informed after three Sundays that they had too many children. With no notice and little money, how could a beginning church find a home. Trying to maximize their resourcefulness, and with no other alternatives, the startup congregation met in the pastor's backyard with 65 people in attendance. Then it rained the next Sunday, and 45 people crowded into the parsonage. Later they moved to a middle school, and now they are meeting in a newly constructed elementary school.

Sunday school is held in a variety of classrooms and the congregation worships in the school's cafeteria. Each Sunday, the members come early to set up the worship service which is held amidst school lockers and school decorations. But singing and praying turn the school into a beautiful place of worship.

Paster Rob, his wife, Pam, and their two daughters are having a grand time in their first church as they sow seed, cultivate new converts, and lead people into the abundant life. Menifee Church, in true Nazarene tradition, is well on its way to making a vital spiritual contribution to a growing community.



A CALL TO PREACH

*A CALL TO  
REAP THE  
HARVEST*



Photo by Brad Eisberg, Media International



Nazarene church growth has led some to believe there is an endless supply of ministers and missionaries to continue the work. Yet the trend is fewer young people are responding to the call to pastoral ministry. God still calls: "Who will go for me?" More must answer: "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

Pastors, take this opportunity to appeal to youth. God needs them and calls them through the church.

**YOUTH MISSION COMMITMENT DAY**  
**Sunday, November 3**

**A day designed to challenge our youth to full-time Christian service**

# REVIVALS REVIVALS REVIVALS

**SURPRISED INVESTMENT CROSSES GENERATIONS**—A heart-warming surprise awaited Evangelist Vernon Sprague following the first service at a recent revival meeting at the New Beginning Church in North Canton, Ohio.

In the opening service, Sprague gave thanks for individuals from his past who had invested caring to lead him to the Lord.

Following the benediction, a member of the church told Sprague that her husband was one of the men he mentioned—a former pastor in North Canton where Sprague grew up. The amazing rippling effect of the gospel goes on clear into eternity—that man's influence continues wherever Sprague ministers in sermon or song.

Pastor Paul E. Sarsany reports, "I felt every message of the series was divinely ordered." As a result of preaching on the spiritual responsibility men have for their families, twelve men prayed at the altar in the closing service.

**100 FIND HELP IN REVIVAL AT MARSEILLES**—God used three new approaches to bring revival to the Nazarene congregation at Marseilles, Illinois: 1) twelve people enrolled in discipleship classes before the revival; 2) a prayer vigil involved 24 people who gave an hour per day to prayer for the revival for ten days prior to the series; and 3) the revival schedule started on Saturday evening and closed on Wednesday.

Pastor Duane Kaufman reported that more than 100 persons found spiritual help during the revival. Kaufman credits the average attendance of 180 per service to the Saturday to Wednesday scheduling of services. He said, "On Saturday evening, the people had opportunity to get acquainted with Evangelist Jimmy Dell. Then others joined them on Sunday. Everyone enjoyed Dell's ministry so much on Sunday that they wanted to come back for the week-night services. Dell is a strong communicator, enthusiastic and positive. He is an exciting man who challenges people for Christ. The children adored him; he communicates well with all ages."

**PASTOR'S VOICE HEALED IN REVIVAL MEETING**—Here is the first person report from Pastor Dale Siverly of Mount Carmel, Illinois First Church of the Nazarene: "This health problem plagued me for years."

Many times my voice was barely audible. While there was usually little pain, I often found myself without a voice. This situation became more troublesome after I answered God's call to preach. I needed to be able to speak clearly to preach and to do my ministry in funerals, weddings, witnessing and visitation.

I tried to accept this affliction as my thorn in the flesh. I told the Lord I could handle it if He would just allow me to preach. I usually had enough voice to preach.

I sought help many times. I have been to several doctors who did their best for me. Medications sometimes cured the latest bout, but sooner or later, the problem always came back.

Then it was time for our fall revival last year. Evangelist Joyce Hughes was our preacher. Having been healed of cancer, she knows what it is to suffer. Early in the meeting, she began to announce that she would share her experience of healing on the last night and pray for those who wanted to be anointed according to the biblical pattern. Along with the congregation, I looked forward to that service with expectancy.

Midway during the revival, the Lord impressed me that I should go forward for healing. In that last service, I joined the evangelist as we prayed for people who wanted to be healed.

Then I knelt. Christian friends jammed the aisles trying to get to the altar to pray for their pastor. As Rev. Hughes anointed me, the saints prayed in unison for my healing. At that moment, I did not care if the Lord healed me or not; I just wanted the perfect will of God. His presence filled the sanctuary for God's glory, I am pleased to testify that since that night I have never had even a hint of a voice problem. The Father added another miracle to my life and I praise Him for it."

**MANLEY AND COBB LEAD REVIVAL AT LOGAN, OHIO**—Pastor Darwin Pressler reports, "It was the best attended, most intense, and greatest response of any revival we have experience in the eleven years I have served this church." The pastor continues, "On Sunday morning after Manley finished preaching, he announced there would be no standing or singing during the altar call. A board member led the way and the response continued for more than an hour—seventy five people sought spiritual help in that service alone."

One remarkable victory was the conversion of a couple in their sixties who had been attending Sunday school for 20 years. They sought the Lord in this revival meeting for the very first time. Now they are growing in the Lord as they work through the "Basic Bible Studies for the New and growing Christian."

**FOURTH OF JULY TENT REVIVAL IN MANNINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA**—Four West Virginia churches—Mannington First (Pastor Carl Smith), Fairmont First (Pastor Thomas Rawlings), Fairmont Central (Pastor Wade Hunt), and Shinnston (Pastor Larry Kale)—joined efforts for a tent revival over the fourth of July last summer. The Crane-Dixon Quartet provided music for the services.

Evangelist Lawrence Walker reports, "There were seekers in every service except one. No pull for money. When given the opportunity to be in a camp meeting atmosphere, Nazarenes came. The holiday provided an opportunity they might not have had ordinarily."

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Revival reports—The church wants news about how God used revivals to change ordinary people and renew churches; one purpose of GROW is to report such miracles of grace. The editor welcomes revival reports, which should be typewritten in concise dates, and accurate spelling of church, city, and individuals' names. Your name, address, phone number, and mailing date should be typed on all items. We want to hear from you, even though revival reports cannot be acknowledged or returned because of the rush of publication deadlines. Revival reports can be sent to GROW Editor, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131.

# REVIVALS REVIVALS REVIVALS

# A Convincing Medical Study About Prayer and Healing



**T**he therapeutic effects of intercessory prayer, one of the oldest forms of healing, has had little attention in medical literature. Science tests the effectiveness of a new drug or medical treatment by setting up experimental groups of people who receive the tested treatment and control groups who do not receive the treatment. It is normally a double-blind study which means that nobody in either group knows to which group he has been assigned.

A study was done by Randolph C. Byrd, M.D. and summarized in the January 1989, *Journal of American Medical Association*. The question: "Does it do sick people any good for other people to pray for them?" Dr. Byrd, then at the University of California, San Francisco, randomly assigned half of 393 patients over a ten month period at San Francisco's General Hospital's Coronary Care Unit to either the experimental group whose health was prayed for or to the control group who weren't prayed for.

The praying was done by born-again Christians who had an active Christian life as manifested by daily devotional prayer and active Christian fellowship with a local church. Members of several protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church were represented. Patients and intercessors were not matched by religion or denomination. Each patient was assigned to three to seven intercessors. The intercessory prayer was done daily outside of the hospital until the patient was discharged.

Each intercessor was asked to pray daily for a rapid recovery, prevention of complications and death, and other areas they believed would be beneficial to the patient. The intercessors received only the patients first names, diagnosis, and update reports on condition. Patients in both groups were equally sick. All patients agreed to be in the study and signed a consent form but none knew in which groups they had been placed. In addition, neither the medical staff, doctors in the unit, nor Dr. Byrd knew to which group patients had been assigned.

The group that received the benefits of intercessory prayer had fewer episodes of congestive heart failure, cardiopulmonary arrest and pneumonia. Diuretics, antibiotics and intubation/ventilation were needed less frequently.

There were two factors which could not be controlled. First, the extent patients prayed for or didn't pray for themselves. Second, the extent others, outside of the controlled study, may have prayed for patients in both groups.

The study concluded that intercessory prayer has a beneficial therapeutic effect on patients in the coronary care unit.

Dr. Jon Thompson, editor of the *Southern Medical Journal*, which published the full study in July 1988, wrote that the study met his standards as a properly designed and executed scientific investigation.

Some in the medical community are appalled by the study and one doctor called it an attempt to return medicine

to the dark ages. Others say there are phenomena that science cannot account for and anything that helps the patients get well is valid. Dr. Thompson said that prayer "...is about as benign a form of treatment as there is...there is no danger whatsoever".

It may be that some believers in the faith need no such study to confirm that which they already believe based on the teachings of the Bible and their own personal experience. It may also be that there are those who have frequently prayed for loved ones who have lost the battle for life and whose faith has been shaken. Maybe this study will be an encouragement to reaffirm that prayer does work. The study certainly carries a positive testimony for prayer to the medical community and to others who may not be quite convinced as to the power of prayer. It is amazing that this study was approved by a hospital and designed by a physician. Had a minister carried out this study it would not have carried nearly the weight that it does. A big "thank you" to Dr. Byrd for the study and to Dr. Thompson for making it available to the public in the *Southern Medical Journal*.

—by Chaplain (Colonel) Vernon Swim, USA (Retired) Director of Pastoral Care, Memorial Hospital Colorado Springs, CO.

# Wrong Leg Amputated

## Urban Poor Served by Liberation Community

**R**uby Dobbs had not worked for three years when she first came to see us for food assistance. Previously employed in a good job as the manager of a security company, Ruby lost her job due to a circulation disorder which left her hands and feet numb. The pain in Ruby's feet made it almost impossible for her to walk into my office. Her hands were cracked and dried. She was unable even to hold the hand rails in our building. She insisted that she could make it. As I talked with her, I soon discovered the terrible reality of her sickness; like a broken limb on a tree, the extremities of her body were slowly dying.

Ruby's application for Social Security Disability had been denied, leaving her without a source of income. For support, she relied on her



daughter who was herself a single working mother trying to raise three children. Ruby's daughter worked in

a nursing home as a nurse's aid while Ruby stayed with the children as the sitter. However, sometimes Ruby became very sick and could not take care of herself, let alone the children. Having no medical insurance, home health care was financially impossible for Ruby. Over and over her daughter took off work to tend to Ruby's health needs until she was fired. Thus began the long downward spiral: welfare, food stamps, and eviction.

I convinced Ruby to reapply for her Social Security benefits even though housing was her most pressing problem. I called several places explaining the situation by was unable to secure a place for her to live. I finally drove her to several of her friends' houses until we found



someone who would allow them to stay for a few weeks until we worked out something more permanent. I spent the next few days putting together all the documentation for the Social Security Administration.

After three months of waiting, we received word that Ruby's application was denied again. During that time, all of the toes on Ruby's left foot had to be amputated. But the worst was yet to come.

During this time of waiting, the family had moved repeatedly, staying with friends and family. I received a call from Ruby's daughter informing me that Ruby was back in the county hospital. The county hospital, of course, serves primarily low-income families and indigent persons and, though often herded through its facilities like cattle, the poor of our community find it their only source of medical assistance. Inasmuch as we were in the process of making arrangements to file for reconsideration concerning her Social Security Benefits, I went to the hospital with the necessary paper work. When I arrived in her room, her right leg had been amputated at the knee. She was in near shock. The night before they had taken her in for emergency surgery in hopes of saving her leg. The gangrene was worse than they thought.

I stood there filling out paper work for benefits that should have already been in place. "Why?" I asked myself. I was angry and shocked. "Why the wait?" "Why the struggle?" Working with the congres-

sional representative for our area, we pushed the paper work through. Her first check would finally arrive nearly a year after we had begun.

That's when I learned Ruby's shocking secret—the county hospital

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### **"The county hospital had amputated the wrong leg"**

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had amputated the wrong leg. Ruby told no one until days later out of embarrassment and horror.

She was the victim of a system that views the poor, in the words of a former U.S. president, as a "faceless mass of people, waiting for a handout," Ruby suffered a devastating blow. She now would have to return to the same hospital to have the other leg removed. According to

Ruby, the difference between having one leg and no legs is beyond belief. She now is completely dependent and at the mercy of others.

We continue to work with Ruby and her family. Our church has become her family, and we have tried to bring virtually every ministry of Liberation Community to bear on her life and the life of her family—, legal aid, justice advocacy, emergency assistance, employment assistance, adult education, and counseling.

Ruby's long road is not over yet. her total disability has opened up whole new sets of problems that most of us would dream unimaginable. Her plight highlights a great need in our nation. How many more people are like Ruby? As we offer relief and empowerment, press for reforms, and work for justice, we are thankful for a gospel that is big enough to handle all the needs of the human person.

—Mark East,  
Director of Justice Ministries,  
Liberation Community





# YOU *the* CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

## YOUTH MISSION COMMITMENT DAY

November 3, 1991, is Youth Mission Commitment Day in the Church of the Nazarene, a day set aside for every local church to give young people an opportunity to respond to God's call to full-time ministry or missions involvement.



A packet of information about implementing Youth Mission Commitment Day will be sent to every church in early September.  
For more information, call (816) 333-7000, ext. 209.

**God Helps Nazarenes Plant New Works Everywhere**

# NEW WORKS VICTORY REPORT



## **80 GONVERTS IN ONE YEAR: Charlotte Matthews-Mint Hill Church**

(North Carolina District) had 289 for a recent monthly worship average. The church was organized on June 18, 1989, with 12 charter members. Pastor Jerry McGee, a former evangelist, is the pastor. District Superintendent D. Eugene Simpson reports this new church has led 80 people to Christ since last August. The church meets in a shopping center and has now expanded to four stores.

## **LAY COUPLE STARTS NEW CHURCH: Punxsutawney Church**

(Pittsburgh District) was recently organized with 25 charter members—13 by profession of faith. The church was planted by Jim and Donna Hetrick, lay leaders on the Pittsburgh District. When time for organization came, they urged District Superintendent Roy Fuller to appoint a pastor. Rev. Paul R. George, Sr., is the new pastor. The church is selfsupporting.

## **VISALIA FIRST CHURCH JOINS DISTRICT TO PLANT CHURCH:**

**Visalia First Spanish Church** (Central California District) was recently organized in the facilities of Visalia First Church with 15 charter members—10 by profession of faith. Pastor David Estrada is serving both as pastor of this church and as Spanish ministry coordinator for the district. District Superintendent Wil Spait reports that this is the first fully organized Spanish church on the district, though other ethnic missions are meeting and growing.

## **18 MEMBERS BY PROFESSION OF FAITH AT MELBOURNE, FLORIDA: Melbourne Trinity Church**

(Florida Space Coast District) was organized with 25 charter members on March 31, 1991. Pastor and Mrs. Glen Matthews moved from Michigan to start this brand new church. Services started on November 4, 1990. Of the charter members, 18 joined by profession of faith.

## **CHURCH PLANT STARTS WITH MOBILE CHAPEL: Exposition Park Church**

(Los Angeles District) started in a mobile chapel sponsored by Los Angeles First Church in March of 1989. On May 19, 1991, the new church was organized with 31 charter members, all joining by profession of faith. Harrie P. Trotman is the pastor of this group which now meets in more permanent quarters.



**“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching; rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”**

**Paul to Timothy as found  
in II Timothy 3:16 (NIV)**

## **GROW — A JOURNAL OF CHURCH GROWTH, EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP**

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# HARVEST NOW — INTENTIONAL OUTREACH IN THE PRESENT TENSE

**H**arvest Now—that is a magnificently inspired theme which focuses clearly on our reason for being.

The harvest metaphor comes from Jesus and underscores the need to bring outreach activities to completion quickly. The words of Christ carry heavy weight with us and motivate us to work long and hard. Winnable people must be won.

Then when “now” is added to the theme, we are pressed with spiritual urgency to move to reaping as the natural result of our planting and watering. Reaping is the reason we do everything else—we desire a harvest for our Lord.

What an inspiring mental picture—to think of every pastor, evangelist, educator, and layman bringing an abundant harvest of souls to our Master in the next few weeks and months!

Every harvest, whether it be wheat, corn, apples, sugar cane, strawberries, or radishes, means stepped-up concentrated efforts to get the crop in at the most opportune time under the best possible conditions.

Sometimes to avoid threatening weather in agricultural activities, harvest hands are forced to work most of the night. Then, all available persons are put into the field, even those who know comparatively little about farming. Every effort, however small, is needed and valued. The storage barns are made ready. Equipment is brought to its most efficient condition. And no expense is spared to finish the work quickly before the storm.

The harvest, whether on the farm or in the Kingdom of God, requires intentionality. We must reap because we have been working toward that end for months and years. Though the harvest must be preceded by careful planting, cultivating, weeding, and watering, a time comes when the harvest must be gathered in.

HARVEST NOW is that kind of emphasis.

- Intentional harvest starts with serious expectation. Do we plan to have a harvest? If we answer that harvest is God’s business, which it is, then we must seek the divine mind to see when and how we are to harvest in our churches, communities, and connections. Some of the people to whom we have witnessed wonder right now why we have been so kind and friendly but have never given them our reason for caring.

- Intentional harvest demands purposeful activity. A little while ago I served as the evangelist in two small churches in different locations. In each place, near the end of the evangelistic series I was asked to react to what I had seen and felt during those short days of ministry. I challenged each pastor to make it a high priority to give one day each week to outreach activities.

Think of the possibilities. If every church could win five families per year for Christ, Nazarene church membership rolls would be filled to overflowing—what a harvest we would enjoy. But because of pressing needs, it is easy to give all the time to maintenance and mercy. But without new converts, a church focused on maintenance and mercy soon becomes ingrown or self-centered—maybe both.

Every church needs a growing edge, even if some nonproductive activities have to be eliminated. The idea is to purposefully give congregational attention to a critical few programs—maybe no more than three or four—that really bring about spiritual and numerical growth. Prioritize and expend energy on efforts that produce fruit. No church can do everything, but every church can do more harvest activities.

- Intentional harvest cures congregational hypochondriacal symptoms. In Christian activity, when no new converts are added, congregations, along with their leaders, tend to take their pulse and worry about their health. The exercise of reaping, hard as it is, makes harvest hands forget petty aches and pains. In the thick of the harvest, they forget to eat. Sleeping time is even shortened. But the results is worth the effort, and a sense of vigorous spiritual health follows. The Kingdom harvest is like that too!

- Intentional harvest produces leader satisfaction. Leading a person to Christ is the most fulfilling experience known to the Christian. Remember the exaltation right after a fruitful altar service where people found eternal life or the fullness of the Spirit. Remember the ecstasy after your personal witness was accepted by a friend. Remember the joy at the district assembly when it was reported that ten new persons had found Christ through the ministry of your church. Remember the excitement when fifteen new converts were baptized in your church. Remember the sense of accomplishment when new converts were welcomed into the membership of the church. And recall the fulfillment when a new believer testified to a call to the Christian ministry.

Gathering the harvest is exciting business.

Harvest Now—that stimulating slogan must become a reality wherever Nazarenes serve. Much more than a theme for us, it is at the heart of our work.

We respond with joyful commitment to this challenge. Intentional outreach gives us a clearer vision of what our Lord wants done.

Best of all, God is with us to help us achieve intentional outreach now.



—NEIL B. WISEMAN  
Editor, GROW





### *Peace and justice*

Christians desire that peace come to earth. The ultimate goal for them is Christlikeness, the life of peace and holiness. They promote peace among their neighbors and among nations. Christians believe that persons of all races, nationalities, and colors can be God's children, and all must share in a world of peace and justice. Christians believe that the final and best world order will be one in which all wars have been banished, where the lion and the lamb lie down together, and where all may enjoy the fruits of the earth.

These are examples of ways in which Christians share goals with many in the New Age movement. Christians must not take a backseat in working for the betterment of individuals and for promoting peace and justice. Christians must work with all individuals of goodwill, including adherents of New Age thought, to promote the common weal.

### *Differences from Christianity*

While orthodox Christianity may have some things in common with the New Age movement, important differences must be pointed out. These differences must be articulated by Christians, first, so that they don't become deceived by the goodwill and nice-sounding ideas put forward by New Age proponents, and second, because the Christian message gives a much more realistic picture of the human and spiritual condition than does the New Age movement. The Christian message will ultimately be more satisfactory in interpreting and describing life, for it more correctly describes the human condition and the facts of history.

One note of caution should be expressed. There is no specific and established set of beliefs for the New Age movement. For almost any doctrine espoused by one subgroup, there will be another subgroup that does not accept the given doctrine. The New Age movement is amorphous and heterogeneous. In talking with an individual New Age proponent, care should be taken to determine what that person actually believes. Describing some of the more common notions, we must use broad brushstrokes.

### *Spiritual and physical unity*

The New Age movement teaches an essential unity of the spiritual and physical worlds. The spiritual and natural worlds constitute an organic unity, with plants, animals, humans, rocks being essentially alike, and with each such unit having a consciousness as a portion of a total cosmic consciousness. God is identical with the cosmos and its consciousness. To New Age proponents it is appropriate to say that we are God and God is us.

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## Christians have been subtly brought into the New Age fold.

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On the other hand, Christians believe there is a God, a spiritual personality different in kind and extent from the physical world. God precedes the cosmos; God is the Creator of the cosmos. The physical and spiritual worlds are not the same in kind and extent. God is wholly other as well as immanent. Each person is a distinct personality, not just a portion of a cosmic consciousness. Animals, plants, rocks, and humans are essentially different from each other.

### *Human potential*

The New Age movement teaches that humans individually and collectively have almost unlimited potential for development and good. By discipline and education, in time each individual, using the power within himself and in the cosmic mind, can overcome evil, sin, poverty, hatred, discrimination, and enmity between individuals and nations. Each person is essentially good; the task is to strip away those ideas, concepts, myths, and old religious practices that inhibit development. By evolutionary processes human personality will flower and blossom as a new creation in a new cosmic order. Nations will increasingly learn to live and work together in peace and justice.

Christians, also, believe that humans have great potential for good. However, that potential is limited by sin and evil. There is no historical or scientific evidence to believe that evolution or education will allow humans to transcend their humanity to become gods. Evolution and education may move humanity downward as well as upward. Based on common experience and historical fact, Christians believe that humans also have enormous potential for evil. Finally, Christians believe that the only way to realize the human potential for good is through Christ.

### *Immortality*

Most New Age adherents believe in the immortality of the personality. A significant minority, if not a majority, believe in reincarnation. Through an eternal chain of reincarnations the personality moves from existence to existence, with previous existences influencing and informing later existences. A given existence may or may not be in human form.

Christians, also, believe in the immortality of the person, but not in reincarnation on this earth. Christians believe that each human spirit is a new distinct creation of God, not tied to previous existences in other human or nonhuman forms. For Christians the nature of life after human death is finally determined by the nature of the individual's appropriation of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

### *Spirit contacts*

Some New Age adherents, apparently a minority, practice communication with spirits of persons long dead or with spiritual beings not of humankind. Sometimes this communication is carried on through the work of an intermediary, or a "channeler." The communication is known as "channeling." In most cases these spirits purport to bring words of wisdom and advice to the recipient, helping the recipient solve problems, achieve growth, and develop inner forces.

Christians believe in the existence of spiritual beings other than humans, alive and dead. Angelic and demonic spirits exist. It is the belief of orthodox Protestant Christians, however, that we are not to attempt contact with the spirits of departed humans. Orthodox Christians accept

that we must not solicit support from demonic forces. Christians are to pray to God in Jesus' name for spiritual support.

### *Jesus Christ*

Belief in Jesus is at the heart of differences between orthodox Christianity and New Age doctrine. For many, if not most, New Age adherents, Jesus was a good and holy man, a person who overcame limitations of His culture, tradition, language, and religion. Jesus succeeded in tapping into powers of the cosmos and hence was able to live a holy life and perform seemingly impossible acts. It is appropriate to say that Jesus was divine, but not in a unique sense, since all individuals may achieve divinity. Jesus is a god, as we may be gods.

For Christians, Jesus was more than a good man, a great teacher, a visionary who foresaw the new spiritual age. For Christians, Jesus is "The Way." Jesus is the Christ, truly human, truly divine. His life was the primary model of how life can be lived. His work, death, and resurrection provide the means for reconciliation with God so that the person can be released to an eternity of spiritual communion with Him. In summary, belief in Christ as uniquely divine/human is the dividing line between Christians and all others, even others of goodwill and good intent.

### **Strategies for the Future**

Many analysts looking at the future predict that the decade ahead will be one of growth for religion. The futurist Naisbitt, alleged to be a New Age adherent, in the book *Megatrends 2000*, predicts that all kinds of religion, traditional and New Age, will see significant growth in the years ahead. Growth in all kinds of religious practice will occur because of spiritual hunger and the alienation brought about by modern society. Because of this extraordinary spiritual hunger, and because orthodox Christianity has answers that square with reality, Christianity has a phenomenal opportunity to proclaim its message and to gain converts to the faith in the period immediately ahead. Certain strategies may be useful in thinking about and preparing for expanded ministry and evangelism.

### *Ministry to the successful*

Evangelicals in many denomina-

tions and local churches have ignored or written off those who appear to be successful by the world's standards. There has been a tacit assumption that individuals of high socioeconomic levels or those who have obtained higher degrees are self-satisfied and have less need for the gospel. To put it another way, the church has not felt it had the lure and fishhooks necessary to catch these individuals.

We now know that successful people suffer from alienation, future shock, shattered marriages, bad health, and other problems, just as those who are not so successful. In fact, a by-product of success may be the education and leisure to think and worry more about the search for answers to the meaning of existence. The church can use this quest as an entrée as it ministers to the needs of the successful.

### *Holistic ministry*

As churches plan their activities and ministries, service to the whole person should be implemented.

While not neglecting spiritual instruction and development, churches should plan activities that help the individual understand his body and improve his physical health. Programs to help couples enrich their marriages, programs for successful parenting and for good mental health can be helpful in development of the whole person. Recreational activities can be useful tools. All these activities can provide truly Christian and useful service. They can also serve as a nonthreatening way to get non-Christians acquainted with Christians and the church.

### *The church as family*

In a society of high mobility, many people find themselves at long distances from family and friends. In the new setting they don't know whom to call for recreation or for support in time of trouble. They don't know what to do to celebrate holidays; eating a Christmas dinner alone or with just the family isn't at all appealing to many. It may be relevant to point out that crime and suicide rates go up at holiday times.

People always need help and advice. Getting laid off, having sick children, getting through a death in the family all are times of especially high stress, which can be partially alleviated by the friendly voice, by sympathy, by care, and by advice.

The church can help in this situ-

ation. By demonstrating love and care to specific individuals for specific needs, members of the church become a surrogate family, providing support that might formerly have been given by the extended family network. Following the biblical admonition that Christians should love and care for each other is still an outstanding way to promote the gospel.

### *Emphasize sanctification*

This is not a recommendation to emphasize spiritual jargon. In fact, traditional church jargon should be de-emphasized. Rather, this is a call to focus on the exceedingly rich reality of sanctification as it relates to development of the person. The concept of spiritual empowerment can be utilized to its fullest. The reality of the unity of life is critical with its attendant concept that all of life is to be lived with the empowerment of the Spirit. Power to realize one's true potential is available for all who desire it. True Christianity helps the individual strip away the sin and sins that serve as a brake on enlightenment and growth.

### *Holiness living*

Another traditional Christian theme is attractive to the modern mind. The understanding that one's thoughts and actions impact, and are impacted by, the world and that one's personal demeanor will influence one's health, development, and growth, help to demonstrate the importance of bringing one's life into conformity with natural law. It is a small step to understanding these moral issues and another small step to traditional concepts of holiness.

### *Jesus Christ*

As a final suggestion, the person and work of Jesus Christ should be emphasized: Jesus as Model, Jesus as Lord, Jesus as the Efficacious Means, Jesus as the Great Liberator of the human psyche. All these ideas can serve as springboards for discussion and spiritual growth.

### **Conclusion**

Christians must be vigilant in protecting orthodox doctrine, faith, and practice. While there is much that is good and noble about certain aspects of New Age thought, it ultimately is not satisfying to the human soul and does not square with human experience. The orthodox message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the true answer to humanity's deepest needs.

## Singing Theology: The Wesleys on the Trinity

by Barry E. Bryant

London

**O**ften I have been in church when someone would announce a hymn number, and most people would not even bother to open the hymnal. They knew the words by heart. I haven't met anyone yet who could recite a sermon by heart. This isn't to condemn preaching. It is to commend hymn singing as an important way of teaching Christian truths. Why? We remember them. We whistle their tunes. We recall their words in a time of crisis. Our spiritual lives are enriched by them. We learn from them. Hymns find their way into our hearts perhaps like nothing else can. But whether we know it or not, when we sing a hymn we are singing theology. If we are to sing theology, we better make it good theology.

Some have guessed Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns. Most of them are successful expressions of good theology. Charles was a master of biblical English. He could express simply many complex issues of Christian theology. He understood the people of his day. All these things helped him write hymns that gripped the hearts and minds of early Methodists.

Even so, the Wesleys thought the hymn had a greater purpose than to sound good or to make people feel good. It was supposed to teach. They deliberately used the hymn to teach the early Methodist societies good theology. When they published *A Collection of Hymns for a People Called Methodist* in 1780, John called it "a little body of experimental and practical divinity."<sup>1</sup> It has since been adopted as one of the standard books on Wesleyan doctrine. When the Methodists sang their hymns, the Wesleys wanted them to be "singing theology."

Their hymns on the Trinity are good examples of what the Wesleys taught by singing theology. The Trinity was an important Christian truth to them. First of all, they taught:

### A Trinity in Unity

For Charles, God was Three in One, and One in Three. Here is a sample of the phrases Charles used to describe this:

*One undivided Trinity*  
(Collection, Hymn 251)

*One inexplicably Three,  
One in simplest Unity*  
(Collection, 252)

*Jehovah in three Persons*  
(Collection, 253)

*Three uncompounded Persons  
One,  
One undivided God proclaim:  
In essence, nature, substance  
one.*  
(Collection, 255)

These hymns are simple. They are beautiful. They are inspiring. But they also teach good theology.

In all this Charles seemed most concerned with teaching these three ideas: (1) the Trinity is made up of three Persons equally divine; (2) yet, there is only one God, not three; and (3) each Person of the Trinity plays an important role in the life and salvation of the believer. They were convinced that without an understanding of God being Three in One, there could be no salvation at all. This is what most pastors learn in church history 101 but soon forget. In doing so, perhaps we also forget the importance of the Trinity to Christian life and salvation. The Wesleys did not want the early Methodists to forget. They wanted the Methodists to realize:

### The Importance of the Trinity to Salvation

This is probably the most interesting bit the Wesleys taught through their hymns on the Trinity. Oddly enough, for the Wesleys salvation begins with "an image of the Triune God" (Collection, 248). We must never forget that Adam and Eve were created by a Triune God, "The Triune God of holiness" (Collection, 254). Charles wrote:

*And all the glorious Persons  
joined*

*To form Thy fav'rite, man.*  
(Collection, 248)

In the creation of Adam and Eve the image of God was given in the image of the Trinity.

*Stamped with the Triune  
character;  
Flesh, spirit, soul, to Thee resign.*  
(Collection, 253)

In the Fall this triune image of flesh, spirit, and soul was marred. It became sick with sin. Another part of the image of God was lost. This was the image of holiness, love, and liberty. For this lost image Charles wails,

*Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
In council join again  
To restore Thine image, lost  
By frail, apostate man.*  
(Collection, 357)

*Bring back the heavenly  
blessing, lost  
By all mankind, and me.*  
(Collection, 243)

*Come Father, Son, and Holy  
Ghost,  
Whom one all-perfect God we  
own,  
Restorer of Thine image lost,  
Thy various offices make  
known.*

(Collection, 253)

Created by the Trinity, in the image of the Trinity, only the Trinity can restore the image lost by Adam and Eve and heal the image that was marred. For the Wesleys, salvation is about restoring the lost image of a Triune God.

It is through entire sanctification



that the image of God is restored. The Wesleys believed that in entire sanctification a Christian believes,

*And the whole Trinity descends  
Into our faithful hearts.*

(Collection, 254)

*And when we rise in love  
renewed,  
Our souls resemble Thee,  
An image of the Triune God  
To all eternity.*

(Collection, 248)

*Come Father, Son, and Holy  
Ghost,*

*Restorer of Thine image lost,  
The flaming sword remove.*

(Hymns on the Trinity, XXX)

Then a person is entirely sanctified, and the image of God is restored. Then the Christian is able to love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and neighbor as self.

For the Wesleys, the doctrine of the Trinity was not ivory-tower theology. It was grass-roots theology. It has to do with salvation and entire sanctification. Through their hymns it became "singing theology" and eventually found its way into the hearts and minds of the Methodists. But their teaching on the Trinity did not end with that. They also taught:

### The Importance of the Trinity in Worship

For the Wesleys the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not only save us. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit help us

in our worship. To put it another way, the Three in One help us to worship the One in Three. As Charles would say, "Him in three Persons magnify" (Collection, 247). This was so important to the Wesleys that they published 24 hymns called *Gloria Patri, &c. or Hymns to the Trinity* (1746). Hymn IV is a good example of its contents.

- 1 *Praise be to the Father given!  
Christ He gave  
Us to save,  
Now the Heir of Heaven.*
- 2 *Pay we equal Adoration  
To the Son:  
He alone  
Wrought out our Salvation.*
- 3 *Glory to the Eternal Spirit!  
Us He seals,  
Christ reveals,  
And applies His Merit.*
- 4 *Worship, Honour, Thanks,  
and Blessing,  
One in Three,  
Give we Thee,  
Never, never ceasing.*

(Gloria Patri, IV)


The most striking thing about these hymns is their worship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

*To Father, Son, and Spirit  
Ascribe we equal glory!*

(Gloria Patri, IX)

This reminds us to keep a balance in our worship. We worship God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Worship of each Person in the Trinity is a bit like a three-legged stool. Take one

leg away, and the stool easily falls down. You need all three for it to work. This is a lesson for those who would worship the Son above the Father or the Spirit. It is also a lesson for those who would worship the Spirit above either the Father or the Son, as in charismatic circles. It is only proper that since we are created by a Triune God, in the image of a Triune God, and saved by a Triune God, worship must be worship of a Triune God.

Somewhat prejudiced, I think the Wesleys provide the best example of how we should be "singing theology." Their hymns on the Trinity are an example of the theology they sang. As leaders in worship, we might not be able to use all of the Wesleys' hymns on the Trinity. But we can be more careful in the hymns we select and the truths they contain. This is an important reminder in an age where pop culture has invented disposable music and brought into the church music that is mostly shallow and often misinformed in its teaching. The hymns of John and Charles Wesley are still here to remind us the hymn can do more than inspire or bring tears to our eyes. It can also teach good theology and direct our worship to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. 

1. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver Beckerlegge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 7:74 (hereafter cited as *Collection*).

## Safety Tips for Accident-prone Pastors

(Continued from page 15)

sues and incidents minimizes pastoral discomfort and enhances effectiveness.


### Be aware of Bell's Syndrome—the bane of a competent minister.

Unlike Murphy's Law, Bell's Syndrome is not among the widely known principles of human interaction. Bell's Syndrome holds that *improved performance raises expectations*.

No matter how many young people are participating in the youth program, people will claim they know some who are not being reached.

Church music programs never meet with everyone's approval. No matter how good, "It is still not the Mormon Tabernacle Choir." Every improvement in communicating the church's business and programs will be matched with a higher level of expectation.

The congregation cannot be administered so that every member will offer the pastor uninterrupted praise. The wise, happy, and effective minister accommodates this unchangeable principle of human behavior. The alternative is to make the pastorate much more difficult than necessary.

Pastoral ministry requires hard work and is not always appreciated. Even though careful observance of the safety rules helps, every minister loses an occasional pound of flesh. This risk does not mean the pastorate should be shunned as a dangerous occupation. Every occupation has hazards, and many are more difficult than ministry. Few careers, however, can be as rewarding, not just in spite of, but because of hazards. 

From *What Ministers Can't Learn in Seminary*, by R. Robert Cueni. Copyright © 1988 Abingdon Press. Reprinted by permission.





## Pastor— on a Pedestal or Pathway?

by Bruce Edwards

Venus, Tex.

**T**he proper perception of God's pastoral servant has been difficult to discern.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and lawyers for their wrong perceptions of John the Baptist and of himself. They had called John a legalist for having strict diets of food and drink. They even suggested that he was controlled by demonic forces! Yet religious leaders criticized Jesus for His freedom in dietary matters, as well as His association with "undesirable sinners."

How is a pastor perceived?

### INCORRECT PERCEPTIONS

The pastor and his family are often misunderstood. A common fallacy about the pastor is that he is somehow above the foibles that others experience. People make statements like, "I can't believe my pastor would do that," or "The preacher's son doesn't act as he ought." Such statements reveal that often Christian people think their pastors should be a breed apart from others. Congregations should remember that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

The pastor must confront the image of infallibility. Some believe a decision is correct merely because the pastor made it. This myth is dangerous. The pastor should be willing to admit his faults and even to confess and apologize when his leadership falters.

Another misconception suggests that the pastor is to be pleased or to be served by the church. Some people think that everything should be approved or directed by the pastor. The leaders should encourage each one to grow and participate in the church.

Pastors are often guilty of inadvertently promoting these misconceptions. We try to do everything instead of delegating ministry to deacons and members to exercise spiritual gifts.

No matter how much we appreciate attention, we do our people a disservice if we emphasize our own personalities over God's glory.

Therefore we should be careful not to be seen as infallible in decision making.

Another misconception is that the pastor and his family have no problems. Those who are closest to us know better. People assume that since we understand biblical truth, we automatically practice effective Christian living in all circumstances. We must allow ourselves to be vulnerable. People need to see us as we are. They need to know that we struggle even as they do.

One misconception is that since God called him, the pastor has no needs! God does provide for our needs, but His provision is usually through the church. The misconception sets up a problem of neglect and a lack of education.

A pastor's needs can be divided into two basic areas: (1) ongoing needs, and (2) emergency or critical needs. Ongoing financial needs can be adequately met by God's people if they are sensitive to the financial climate of the community, the average income of church members, and the specific size of the pastor's family.

Emergency needs should be met by proper planning. For example, health insurance for the pastor's family is a necessity in American churches. In times of crises, a congregation should realize that the pastor and his family need to be ministered to.

In each congregation there are some who have a skeptical perception: "The pastor doesn't do anything!" This incorrect assessment is often held by people who don't comprehend the pastor's busy schedule. This insensitive view is usually held by dissidents in the church.

A vital and caring pastoral ministry will help diminish the widespread impact of negativism toward the pastor.

### SIMILARITIES WITH LAYMEN

A key ingredient in a proper image of the pastor is his ability to be himself. Bridges need to be built in all of our relationships. These bridges to other believers are built as we share our similarities with them.

We need to be ourselves. If people place pastors on pedestals, those barriers need to be destroyed. We can share our similarities through empathy in counseling, fellowships, small groups, and committees. The problem of "the infallible pastor" grows as the church grows. The pastor necessarily is involved with a smaller percentage of the people. The preaching ministry builds bridges of communication. Sermon illustrations can reveal how even pastors have made mistakes in the past as well as relating how God brought us through those situations with grace and growth.

### DISTINCTIVES OF THE PASTORAL SHEPHERD

The position of responsibility assigned to the pastor is like no other. The pastor and his church can have a love relationship unlike any other. The shepherd and his people form a

*(Continued on page 52)*



# How I Dealt with Temptation

A Nazarene Pastor

Breezing through *Christianity Today* magazine, my eye caught a headline announcing that a well-known, respected leader had left the helm of a Christian organization. Having read one of his books, I was deeply saddened to learn the reason: an adulterous relationship. His subsequent repentance and book are very insightful. Yet how sad that it happened.

I recalled the words of my practices professor in seminary: "It doesn't matter how ugly you are, some women will find you attractive." I assumed he was talking to me.

Sexual temptation is as much a part of a pastor's life as financial and political temptations. Ironically, the answer lies in our private world of the inner person. I write to share a battle that I had in my private world. This article is written anonymously to protect those involved.

I had been the pastor for several years in a beautiful suburb of a major city. The first few years were a struggle, but the congregation had grown in every way. Then it began to plateau. Bad things began to happen. Within a span of two years, six couples connected to the church became involved in adulterous relationships.

The toll on my time and psyche as a pastor was tremendous. Much of it was self-imposed because in the previous six years there had been no divorces in the fellowship of our church.

Hours upon hours were spent in pastoral counseling. Although all but one marriage was saved, I was exhausted. The church was hurting; attendance was down; and my self-esteem was at an all-time low.

Toward the end of the ordeal, I hired a new church secretary. She was intelligent, hardworking, attractive, and somewhat lonesome because her husband worked long hours.

My wife and I were close to them socially. We shared many common interests. They became the ones we preferred to be with when there were spare evenings. It was the classic scenario.

I'm not sure how interested she was, but I found myself under a load of temptation that seemed irresistible. I loved my wife, and we had a great relationship. Yet, sometimes I sat in my study totally distracted because this woman was working in the next room.

How I dealt with it may seem simple, but it was not easy. Gratefully it was effective.

When temptation seemed to rise to the point of overpowering me, I would kneel in my study and pray something like this: "Lord, thoughts going through my mind are wrong. I know what adultery does to people. I don't want to sin against You. I don't want to destroy her home, my home, the ministry that You have given to me, or this church, which is already hurting. Please deliver me from this temptation!"

Then I would wait in silence until my inner spirit came under the control of the Holy Spirit. I did not leave until I sensed victory over that temptation. I repeated this process on several occasions. No one else knew. My relationship with my secretary remained on a proper friendly level. God proved His promise that "no temptation" will come except what "is common to man," and He

will "make a way to escape" (1 Cor. 10:13, KJV).

A person would be foolish to think that victory in one circumstance is sufficient for the rest of life. Situations change. All of us are subject to a myriad of approaches by Satan. We are his most sought after trophies.

The mind is a powerful thing. In it we can actually live out situations. It is here that Satan gets us to compromise. Hence Jesus' warning about committing adultery in our hearts—our spiritual minds. People are usually shocked when a Christian leader compromises sacred ethics. Since others see only the outside, where behavior appears holy, compromise can be occurring in the mind while the "outside of the cup" is clean.

I sincerely believe from Scripture, observation, and personal experience that a Christian can resist even the most blatant seduction. The resistance must first be made, not when the physical opportunity arises, but in the mind when the temptation first presents itself. One must say a definite no at that point. Joseph said, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Otherwise we are vulnerable to our emotions and physical drives if and when a ripe situation presents itself.

The gratifying result of allowing Christ's victory to be mine is that we are still best of friends with that couple. Although they no longer live in the same city, we still see them occasionally and thoroughly enjoy their company. I can only imagine what things would be like otherwise.

# One Way to Happiness

by **C. Neil Strait**

*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

**T**he late Karl Menninger, the great psychiatrist, was one time asked what help he would offer a lonely, unhappy person. He said, "Lock the door behind you, go across the street, find someone who is hurting, and help them." (Quoted by John C. Maxwell, *Be a People Person* [Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1989], 16.)

All of us, at some time, go through a moment in our life when there is crisis and criticism. Unhappiness knocks at the door. What is a pastor to do? Menninger's advice is good.

A number of years ago, while in pastoral ministry, I was going through a rough time. I was trying to juggle a couple of crises, was working with a staff problem, and trying to iron out a misunderstanding between two friends. One day, sitting at my desk, it occurred to me that what I needed was a change of scenery.

I thought of three people in my congregation who were going through rough times. One, a youth, had gotten in trouble with the law. Another elderly man had lost substantial money in an investment. A third man had lost his job, and his self-image was shattered. In one day I went to each of these and tried to take Jesus into their lives. It was a long and taxing day. But when I pulled into the garage, just before midnight, I felt I had done ministry in the name of Jesus. It was therapy for me.

The next morning, after my devotional time, I made a decision that impacted the remainder of my pastoral ministry. Every Monday, as I began my week, I asked three questions as I put my week together: (1)

Who is hurting that needs their pastor? (2) Who is missing that I need to visit? (3) Who needs a word of encouragement? It revolutionized the way I thought, prayed, and planned. I felt better about myself and, consequently, was better able to handle and to deal with problems.

I have three observations to share with you concerning Menninger's advice:

1. If we focus on problems too long, we develop a problem syndrome. Negativism creeps in and challenges any positive possibility.

2. When we focus on others, our own problems seem small. As I drove home that night after I had visited those three individuals who had deep needs, I must confess that what I was dealing with seemed much smaller than it had the day before.

3. I believe there is a spiritual principle at work when we are serving, helping others. I think it is a part of our Lord's words, "Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 6:38, KJV). So many times we interpret this to mean that money or gain will come to us. I rather think it can be interpreted to mean that God will give us His presence, His strength, His care.

So, Pastor, you may be knee-deep in problems to the point where all other possibilities are blocked out. But maybe what you need to do is "lock the door behind you, go across the street, find someone who is hurting, and help them." Remember, when you do, the God of all grace and comfort goes with you, which will be strength and encouragement.

## Idea Mart

### Thanksgiving Interest Center and Sermon

by **Blair F. Rorabaugh**

*Uniontown, Ohio*

**A**rrange two horns of plenty on a table. Leave one empty. Display in the other some spiritual objects. I used a Bible, a cassette tape to symbolize music, a church manual, a radio for Christian broadcasting, a pen from one of our church colleges, a youth Sunday School paper to represent the youth program, a Sunday School quarterly, a missionary reading book, an Alabaster box, and in the bottom of the horn of plenty I placed a small cross.

For my Thanksgiving sermon I took the opportunity, using the symbols, to express thanks to each of the auxiliaries, those who lead our singing, play the instruments, lead our youth groups, teach our classes, etc.

Frequently I referred to the empty horn of plenty. The rest of the world knows little of many of the helps that our families have to raise their children. There are whole countries without a Christian radio station. Some have few Bibles, no Sunday School materials, no youth retreats and camps.

My final thanks was for the Cross. It is behind all the gifts we have received. All the gifts are from God. We have a responsibility to the rest of the world to share. It is not enough to say, "Thank You." Our lives and offerings must demonstrate it.

Contrasting the full and empty horns of plenty was a good thought provoker and opportunity to express appreciation to our people.

# Comforting a Family When a Child Dies

by Al Miles

St. Paul

**A**fter a child dies, many of us who offer support to grieving family members feel helpless. Some worry that they will either say something inappropriate or not know what to do. Consequently, they either withdraw or distance themselves from these hurting families, leaving them feeling neglected or abandoned. However, these reactions are not due to a lack of compassion. One reason for helplessness is that the death of a child seems absurd. Children simply are not supposed to die.

Many people are nearly as uncomfortable with silence as they are with death. Clergy and other caregivers often want to talk when confronted by death. But our silent presence reduces the feeling of neglect and isolation that grieving families so often experience.

Since 1985 my ministry has brought me in contact with more than 225 families whose children have died. I have heard members of those families often repeat phrases of disbelief, such as "This isn't really happening," "I'm having a nightmare," or "Tell me this isn't true." Or they may use phrases that express their wide range of emotions: "Why did God take our child?" "Doesn't God have any mercy?" "This is so unfair!" and "I can't go on without my child." Often these statements are accompanied by intense, sudden outbursts of emotion—labored breathing, weeping, moaning—or equally sudden periods of intense silence. These are normal, healthy reactions to loss.

Clergy can offer a great deal of support during this time by listening intently and using short phrases of compassion and condolence, such as "I'm very sorry," "As you've said, 'This is really unfair,'" and "You will remain in my prayers." It

may be appropriate to embrace family members, but if people are uncomfortable with our touch, we should respect their boundaries.

In most instances, clergy should refrain from sharing their personal experiences of grief or loss with the family. When we tell our story, the focus shifts away from the family's grief to our own situations. In addition, people grieve in various ways. One person's experience of loss may differ significantly from another's. If a grieving family knows that we, too, once had such a loss and asks us about the death of our child, we should certainly answer their questions. But we should then bring the focus back to them.

Platitudes should be avoided. These may include: "You now have a little angel in heaven"; "You two are young, so you can have other children"; "Your child is better off now"; "She doesn't have to experience the many trials and tribulations of life"; "You seem to be handling this so well"; "This experience will make you a much stronger person"; "God promises never to give us more than we can bear"; "We shouldn't grieve as others do who have no hope"; "We know that in everything, God works for good"; and "This is God's will."

Though well intended, such phrases discount or minimize a family's loss. They tend to make the expression of grief more difficult. Some even imply that it is a sin to grieve. But grief is not a sin. God has given us the ability to grieve so that we may sustain life's many sorrows. Grieving is essential to the healing process.

Grieving people are sensitive to verbal and nonverbal messages. If you serve in a cold-weather area, always remove your coat, gloves, and overshoes when visiting a family,

even if you plan to stay only a few minutes. Keeping these outer garments on can make the family feel that we are either pressed for time or uncomfortable or both. Use the words "death" and "died," instead of such euphemisms as "expired," "passed away," "perished," or "succumbed." Such words do not describe fully the reality of what has taken place. They seem to be an attempt to soften what has occurred. Refer to the child by name. Families have often stated to me how much they appreciate this. If you do not know or have forgotten the child's name, ask the family.

At our hospital, we encourage, but do not force, a family to spend as much time as they can with their child, not only while the child is sick or dying but also after his death. This is done whether the child is premature, an infant, adolescent, or young adult. Many families say they are comforted by holding and kissing their child and by expressing their love in words.

We ask families whether they would like to be photographed with their dead child. Even if they decline, we let them know that the child's photograph will be taken and kept at the hospital. In the weeks, months, and years following the death, families often change their minds and want these photographs. When an infant has died, other remembrances are offered to parents, such as the child's handprints, footprints, a lock of hair, or birth and baptismal certificates. Families may dress their infant in clothes brought from home or provided by the hospital. They can also give their child a bath and remain with their infant for hours after she has died.

Many families feel helpless shortly after their child's death. They will

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# Seven Lessons in Transient Aid

by David W. Waltner

Rawlins, Wyo.

**I** picked up the young hitchhiker at a local restaurant as he complained, "This ain't the United States, man. This has got to be the Yukon!" There was a blizzard along Interstate 80, and this was the second call I'd received to put someone up for the night.

Anyone in the pastorate has had to deal with transients and the special problems associated with this concern. I have served as pastor along Interstate 80 for the last six years. I've had my share of experiences. Before moving to Wyoming, I was the pastor in a small community "off the beaten path" and still had to deal with transients. This issue is relevant, not only to those of us who pastor along main travel routes, but to every pastor with a concerned heart for people in need.

Thinking about what I've done—right or wrong—in helping individuals in need, I've come up with seven principles I'm seeking to implement into my own personal transient aid ministry. Any pastor who has dealt with transients on a regular basis can expand the list, but I offer it with the prayer that it may help another shepherd be effective in fulfilling Jesus' admonishment found in Matt. 25:34 ff.

## **Principle I: Treat Everyone Fairly**

We don't often like to admit it, but we all have our prejudices. Some are more obvious than others. Some relate to what an individual looks like, how someone dresses, and even how he talks. Often we hide our prejudices in church life because we'll be "living with these people for a while." When a transient comes

through, we may hesitate, or even refuse aid, simply based on our likes and dislikes. We need to resist this temptation and go to the other extreme of treating every person *too* fair, rather than treating them unfairly.

## **Principle II: Be Careful Not to Become Calloused**

The more we deal with transients, the more the temptation grows to become coldhearted toward those in need. Not because they are in need, but rather because they often live in ways that we wouldn't condone.

If a transient has taken advantage of you, that adds to the difficulty of keeping an open heart and mind with the next person who comes asking for help. I believe that our guilt as ministers ought to be on the side of being *too* helpful, rather than on the side of not helping enough when we could.

## **Principle III: Don't Feel Responsible**

A pastor I know feels it's his God-given duty to help anyone in need through their crisis. This man not only deals with a tremendous guilt complex when he's ineffective but also is burning himself out as he tries to be everyone's savior. We can't be all things to all people. Our obligation is to do what we can and leave the rest to God. If every Christian did his assignment in Kingdom work, much more would be accomplished even for transient aid.

## **Principle IV: Keep Your Sense of Humor**

Yesterday I told a young lady in the church where I serve as pastor

that she takes life too seriously. She's not the only one. Often in difficult situations, we add to the stress by putting too much emphasis on the crisis. A transient *is* someone in need, but we often act as if it's the first time he has asked for help when he comes to us. In fact, however, many transients make it their life-style to seek help.

If you have any regular dealings with transients, keeping your sense of humor will redeem a portion of the energy that goes into trying to help someone in need.

As you meet individuals and families who live as transients and hear their "stories," you'll most likely have one of two responses with some: to laugh or cry.

## **Principle V: Find a Workable Procedure**

A "workable procedure" is a plan to be implemented using the least amount of available resources, that is, time, money, and energy.

One workable solution is to go through the local police department. Their motto, "To serve and protect," can certainly be applied to the church community as well as to individual citizens. A person needing aid is first referred to the police department. The police run a check

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## Engendering Holiness in the Congregation

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.

Walpole, Mass.



**G**od has called us to a life of holiness. Yet, in an age condoning impurity, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the spiritual leader to guide his flock into the Lord's way of righteousness.

Nevertheless, our call remains the same. We are commissioned by Christ to remain faithful to our divine mandate. In the judgment we will answer as to our sensitivity to the biblical challenge. How, then, can we as pastors see this obligation through successfully?

### **1. We can start by no longer shying away from biblical holiness.**

Because the world's mind-set has become so willing to live with sin, we have become gun-shy. We as preachers have lowered the standard in order to maintain a kind of peaceful coexistence with the opposition.

Yet, we understand that our calling explicitly sets us apart unto God's commandments, regardless of what the world may think. Therefore, we must revive a conscientiousness about holiness—practical purity—in order to truly remain loyal to Christ's expectations of us.

### **2. We must enrich our own souls with the biblical material concerning holiness.**

Devotionally meditating on such passages as the following will enliven our love for righteousness:

See Exod. 39:30. The plate of the sacred diadem was made of pure gold, and inscribed, as on a seal engraving: "Sacred to the Lord."

See Lev. 11:44. We should make and keep ourselves holy, because God is holy.

See Lev. 20:26. God has set Israel apart from the other nations to be His own.

See Deut. 14:2. Israel is a people sacred to the Lord. God has chosen

them from all the nations on the face of the earth to be a people peculiarly His own.

See Ps. 32:2. Happy the man to whom the Lord imputes not guilt, in whose spirit there is no guile.

See Ps. 97:10. The Lord loves the people who hate evil. He guards the lives of His faithful ones.

See Ps. 119:1. Happy are the people whose ways are blameless because they walk in the law of the Lord.

1 Cor. 3:16-17: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."

James 3:17: "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure."

### **3. We will increase our prayer petitions for our own holiness.**

A pastor must be an example of purity for his people. Therefore, we must seek the Lord's holy face more so in order to assure our own right relationship before the Savior.

This may mean cutting out some of our administrative runnings about or sacrificing some of our recreational hours. Yet, whatever the cost, we must see to it that our own houses are in order, our own souls are clean through the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

### **4. We will preach holiness more frequently through our weekly sermons.**

This is particularly difficult in that we have yielded to the temptation to slacken off when it comes to lifting high the standard of daily Christian living for our parishioners. We have subtly let down the bars; it shows in our pulpit messages, for they do not have the biblical cutting edge that they are supposed to have.

In a spirit of repentance before God we will then return to the clear expectations of Scripture, announcing them unashamedly to our congregations. We will use holiness-focused texts for our sermons. We will not blur their impact but simply and honestly dissect their meanings, praying for the Spirit's illumination to be upon our people's hearts.

### **5. We will teach God's call to holiness in basic terms.**

How many times have we ourselves put aside a book on holiness because we felt threatened? We thought we would be under attack with the book exposing our integrity lapses; so we slid the hardback onto a high shelf for a more inspired season.

If we have sensed that unwillingness to grapple with God's high expectations, what must be the shortcomings within the laity? They, too, want to be content with their status quo rather than growing into the stature of Christ.

To offset this, we spiritual teachers must then set forth the holy life in its fundamental, stark simplicity rather than priding ourselves on complications. Jesus spoke so that children could understand Him. The multitudes took in His preaching. Our Lord has set for us the way; let us follow Him in teaching method by being more childlike in our expositions.

### **6. We will return time and again to the biblical definition of holiness.**

God calls us to be more like Jesus. That is scriptural holiness in a nutshell. Then let us make this clear to our listeners. After all, they know the Gospels, the pictures of Jesus, the word images of the Church related to the Savior. Then keep calling back their memories to those aids in instruction.

Lift up Jesus to the congregation.



Show His kindness, patience, obedience, and wisdom. Point to Christ as our illustration for right living. See Him with the elderly, the children, the outcast, the forgotten, and the sick. Hear His words of challenge and commission. Take in His total consecration to the Father's plan. All of this is the day-to-day life of holiness. With this before us, can it be all that difficult to understand?

#### **7. We will use numerous illustrations from real life to support preaching on holiness.**

From our reading concerning the saints we can gather material for bringing to life the practice of holiness life-styles. Furthermore, if we keep our eyes and ears open in dealing with the parishioners, we will come upon plenty of examples of "street holiness" in *their* lives as well. There are many kind deeds, unselfish hearts, and committed peasants at work daily in the doings of the Father. Let us use these to bring home the call to holiness.

#### **8. We will accent holiness more and more in our pastoral prayers.**

What weekly opportunities we have when in worship to focus upon heaven's holiness reflected in our own lives. Let us take advantage of public prayers to remind our congregations of the highway of holiness.

The prayer can frequently be a capsule sermon offered in a few minutes. These petitions emphasize a primary thought before God. See to it that more of those thoughts stress our purity in everyday living. This will, over time, instill more and more the biblical witness upon our hearts.


#### **9. We can refer parish life to God's expectations of holiness.**

When pastors meet with parishioners in planning sessions, there will come to the fore ethical situations that will then be measured

according to the biblical teaching of holiness.

These work sessions will provide the workshops for carving out a holiness doctrine that is related to life. Laity will see the pastor in action, deciphering, thinking through, talking out, and then moving upon decision making that is gauged by the holiness standard. Hopefully, this role modeling will catch on with the people.

#### **10. We will humble ourselves as a congregation—pastor and people—in beseeching heaven's continued blessing in holiness, confessing that we have never "arrived" fully.**

The holiness quest is ongoing. It is a willingness to admit that we are still but mortals in search of more from God. With such a position of the heart, the Lord will lavish upon us His presence to teach us how to become like our Savior. 

## **Comforting a Family When a Child Dies**

*(Continued from page 48)*

say, "I don't know what to do next," or may ask, "What do I do now?" Although funeral arrangements must eventually be made, it is important that families be encouraged to take time with this process.

Many families want to share their grief with ministers. I am often asked to hold the child and see the photographs or other remembrances. This is not morbid. It is a healthy expression of the love that grieving families will always feel for their children. It is also a plea that we show their deceased son or daughter the same dignity and respect we would give to living children. If clergy feel uncomfortable in sharing in these expressions of grief, they should graciously show their appreciation of the family's offer and then gently decline. Finally, ministers should avoid making any ethical or spiritual judgments regarding a family's actions, even if these actions run contrary to their belief system.

When attending the child's wake

or funeral, again remember to listen more than talk. If you are asked to participate or officiate at the funeral, let the family help plan the service. Remember to keep the focus on the family and the child instead of on your personal experience. Do not use this time to proselytize or make the family feel guilty or shameful in any way.


Families greatly appreciate cards, letters, visits, and phone calls from clergy and others after a child's death. I make it a point to write to families within two weeks after the death and, subsequently, on the following occasions: the child's birth date or due date (if a premature infant) and on the anniversary of the child's death, as well as whenever I receive a letter from the family.

Remember to reach out to the family instead of waiting for them to contact you. We can sincerely ask a grieving family to call us at any time. They may never do so, but if we phone them and say, "I was thinking about you and called to see

how you are," they will often express their feelings.

When providing follow-up care by phone or in person, give people the opportunity for distance as well as closeness, and the privilege to decline as well as accept your offer of support. This can be done simply by saying, "I have been thinking of you. I called [or wish to visit] to see how you are. Is this a good time? If not, please tell me and I will call [visit] another time, if this is all right with you." If the family declines your offer, respect their wishes.

Leave yourself enough time when you visit a grieving family. An abrupt ending to a call or visit heightens people's feelings of abandonment and isolation. If time is limited, let them know immediately.

In a society so uncomfortable with death, clergy play a key role in supporting grieving families. Their compassionate, sensitive, and silent presence can help such families face the reality of death. 

# Today's Books for Today's Preachers



## 1 KINGS: NATIONS UNDER GOD *International Theological Commentary*

by Gene Rice

December 1990, Paperback  
PA080-280-4926 \$10.95

To bring the Old Testament alive in the worldwide church today is the goal of the *International Theological Commentary*. The ITC contributors, who come from more than 17 countries and represent a wide range of backgrounds, interpret the Hebrew text of the Old Testament in the twin contexts of ancient Israel and the present day.

Though drawing on a variety of reliable sources and therefore a genuine work of historiography, 1 Kings is not simply a book of detached, descriptive history, says Gene Rice in his introduction to this commentary. Rather, it is history interpreted from a theocentric perspective and written with passion and purpose.

It recounts the past in order to show how Israel's history has been determined by morality, to warn of the danger of a divided heart, to summon to obedience to the commandments, to call for repentance and reform, and to prepare a people to cope with defeat and exile.

It is out of these concerns for ancient Israel, Rice contends, that 1 Kings speaks to the present: it prods us to identify the equivalent of Canaanite religion in our society and to examine ourselves in light of the biblical commandments; it also directs us to look for God's presence in the arena of public life. Indeed, Rice argues, the basic affirmation of 1 Kings is that all nations, not just Israel, are "under God."

GENE RICE is professor of Old Testament literature and language at Howard University School of Divinity in Washington, D.C.

## SIGNS OF THE SPIRIT: HOW GOD RESHAPES THE CHURCH

by Howard A. Snyder

(Zondervan Publication, 1989)

Paperback

PA031-051-5416 \$14.95

Beginning with the basic concepts that led the Early Church in the Book of Acts, Dr. Snyder continues his writings with a study of renewal movements and concludes with a strategy for building the local church. A serious attempt is made in answering relevant questions: "Why does new life spring up in some churches while others are dead?" "What are the signs of the work of the Holy Spirit within churches today?" God's work among the Pietists, Methodists, and Moravians is identified, and certain hallmarks are revealed. Themes most frequently found were a serious desire to become like the New Testament Church; a search for Holy Spirit leadership in prayer, faith, and daily living; and fervor in evangelism, led by ministers and laypersons alike.

Dr. Snyder makes it clear that following the paths of the historical church can lead to renewal today. Chapter 8's "Five Dimensions of Renewal" provides the nuts and bolts for congregational renewal. Faithfulness to biblical concepts and scriptural interpretation gives the author a special authority and credibility essential in spiritual renewal today. Detailed endnotes and a large, select bibliography make *Signs of the Spirit* a special resource for Christians seeking New Testament foundational structures for renewal. Capture the author's heartbeat and spirit by reading this unusual book!

—by Montford L. Neal

## Pastor— on a Pathway

(Continued from page 45)

mystical union that should reflect the love of God.

Every Christian possesses a calling from God, but the pastor/teacher's spiritual gift is given to equip the church to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

As years go by, joys and frustrations of pastoral ministry make their marks on a person. In difficult times, God's call, and God's grace attendant with that call, may be the only factors keeping a pastor in his assignment.

God's Word gives several admonitions for the pastor—to keep him steadfast in his ministry. Paul told Timothy not to be intimidated by his age as he ministered (1 Tim. 4:12). We are told to be examples to the flock (Titus 2:7; 1 Tim. 4:12). Pastors should use every opportunity to present God's Word effectively with great confidence (2 Tim. 4:1-2). We are warned that difficult times will come (2 Tim. 4:3-5; 3:1-13). God takes care of the preachers of His Word (Ps. 105:15).

Few people can understand the life of a pastor. His function, calling, and schedule are like no other. Pastors should seek guidance and support from other wise ministers. The great fraternity of preachers helps us all to continue in the faith as we experience pressures and difficulties of family, church, community, and self.

Yet the greatest key to ministry is the Great Shepherd himself. Only Jesus can truly empathize with us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He gives us strength, compassion, grace, and love for the lost. He forgives us and picks us up when we falter from the faith. We are nothing without His power and direction.

Although we cannot determine how people perceive us, we can be genuine persons. We must be an example to others, seeking for Christlikeness. Above all, we must bring the Word of God to bear on each circumstance.

The pulpit is a place to lift up Jesus to the glory of God. The preacher is not a person on a pedestal but a person on the pathway to eternal life with Jesus Christ!



# Kin I Have the Orange?

(Continued from page 14)

our brothers and sisters have not seen a page of the Bible or a hymn-book, heard a sermon, or had fellowship with fellow believers for years. He solicited help. "Please be willing to give up one Sunday morning service in six." Help arrived. Classes were formed by age groupings, and there was no discipline problem at all.

4. *Teacher training is a must.* We taught more than the *message* and the study of sound doctrine, but also the *methods*. Some dear saints were still *reading* bland little stories to children. Some used the flannelboard but stood in front of it, turning their backs to place each figure on the board. That is disastrous in a roomful of lively little boys! Some taught but never reviewed. Others taught in adult words and concepts. They may as well have spoken Hindustani.

A nodding acquaintance with child psychology can be learned in

six one- or two-hour sessions of teacher training. The teacher deserves to know how a little knowledge of Bible history, geography, and customs can make the lesson fascinating.

Teacher training was so important that we held the class during Sunday School time. Problems of a rural church are much different from problems of a city church. We lived scattered far apart. It was not always possible to get everybody together during the week. But it was imperative that inexperienced volunteers, especially teenagers, received teacher training.

5. The last lesson I learned by sad experience. *The person in charge of children's church should not take a class* but remain free to supervise. He should be available to solve problems, aid teachers, and visit classes. Quick action or decision or advice from a leader greatly encour-

ages teachers and keeps a children's church running smoothly.

Every Monday the pastor phoned to ask me, "How was children's church?"

Every Monday I'd reply, "It's a pleasure to be downstairs. I can't even think of a complaint to give you."

Then he told me: "For months I asked you to help in children's church. I got nowhere. I decided to keep quiet and pray. That was the same week you agreed to teach."

And the same week Arlene asked for my orange. Perhaps the Holy Spirit's voice and the unhappy cry from a needy young girl combined to bring about the miracle that changed a mind-set.

No child in children's church should ever hunger—physically for lack of breakfast, mentally for lack of an interesting lesson, or spiritually from the lack of sound doctrine.



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## Seven Lessons in Transient Aid

(Continued from page 49)

on the individual to make sure he is clean. After the check is run, a voucher is given for a maximum amount of gasoline and/or a meal. The money for travelers aid is funneled through the ministerial association. In this way the pastor of any involved church can tell the transient: "This is where our funds for transient aid go, and this is the procedure. . . ."

### Principle VI: Be Accountable

If we have no means of accountability, we will have the temptation to be irresponsible. Accountability helps us work within a framed structure that adds to our effectiveness.

The treasurer of our ministerial association keeps the transient books balanced, brings reports of transient aid income and expenditures to monthly meetings, and communicates with the police department.

How monies are disbursed or received is a collective decision made by the association. The association in turn gives an account of receipts and expenditures to the churches involved.

### Principle VII: Don't Expect a Return

Due to the kinds of persons with which you're dealing, there is *never* a reason to expect any kind of return. The best thing we can do in transient aid is to simply offer aid as though we're "doing it unto Jesus."

There have been literally dozens of individuals who have promised and even sworn that as soon as they reached their destination, they would return the aid given. Some have promised to return twice as much money as they received for help.

I have never had one transient follow through on his promises. When someone says, "I'll pay this back," let it go in one ear and out the other. I doubt that one in a hundred would follow through on his word. They may have the best intentions, but if someone is down so far as to ask a stranger for help, I don't think their priority will be to reimburse those who have helped them get through the tough times.

When dealing in transient aid, my concluding advice is this: keep a good spirit. This ministry can bring blessing or defeat. May we realize and fulfill the instruction to visit the imprisoned, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and we could add: offer gasoline to those whose tanks are empty and shelter to those who need to get out of the cold.





## You're Getting Better Every Sunday

**Y**ou know you've got problems when several sweet little ladies come up to your instrumental ensemble after church and say: "You're getting better every Sunday."

That's a little unfinished sympathy just for the ensemble. If they said how much they like the music or how good it sounded, you'd appreciate it. But, "You're getting better" is a backhanded compliment if you ever heard one.

Now you know that sinking feeling the great musical genius Handel felt as he conducted his "Water Music" while the orchestra barge sank into the Thames.

Telling a musician, "You're getting better," is like telling the minister you "enjoyed" his sermon about being behind on the budget.

Compliments that transpose as complaints cause choir directors to long for the hidden podiums of Wagner's day. You can sight-read the writing on the wall. It's time to do something upbeat. It's time for a variation from the theme.

So what do you, the church musician, do? It's your responsibility to provide the church with music of the highest caliber with which you are armed.

One optional ending to this problem is to import all the local "free" musicians you can find. However, there may be a problem with this musical theory; head-hunting is not considered kosher for choir directors. (More about this later—there is a possible second ending.)

An obvious advantage of filling the loft with free performers is the improvement in the sound and size of your group. As any musician

worth his Psalter knows, in the minds of many, "A large group is a good group." The larger the group the better unless, of course, more costly space is needed than is available.

Another advantage of importing musicians: the congregation will recognize them as nonmembers and may assume you are doing a super-special this Sunday, thus setting themselves up to be favorably impressed. Or many members may assume you are using your ensemble to recruit new prospects. Either way, you come out ahead—right?

Not necessarily. (Nothing is simple anymore.)

What happens when the first chair E-flat double-clutching alto horn player (a lifetime member of the church and its music programs) comes to rehearsal and finds that he is now the *second* chair E-flat double-clutching alto horn player, since there is an imported musician blowing first chair?

There are several possible scenarios that you, as the determined director, must compose and perform in your mind before you act on impulse and import. Let's look at them tutti. First: the E-flat alto may become a walking bass and split as he spots the imported E-flatter. Second: your member may stop and play but with ruffles and flourishes of feathers—a sure sign of counterpoint to come. Or third: the E-flat member may stay and play, grateful that he no more must be the solo E-flat in the ensemble.

Since it's not always possible to anticipate the reaction of E-flat or "other key" musical volunteers, it might be good policy to discuss

your importation plans individually with those playing the positions affected. Some trumpet players would be offended if Gabriel got first chair in their church. Some problems are above the staff, church, or otherwise.

If you believe that importing people to play will improve the music, then do it. Posthumous recognition is common among musicians. You may occasionally feel a need to take a long rest or to return to a tonic and do about eight bars. But don't despair; the finale is yet to come!

If an alien alto alienates your member musicians, even ones in only "minor key" positions, there may be a final movement of musical forms, namely your musicians, following a lead line to another church. More than likely your last work has been performed.

Don't fret. You can try other arrangements. Maybe easier music would make the member musicians more melodious, not to mention more harmonious. If the music is already off the scale on the easy end, maybe more rehearsals with more repeats would help. So, when do you and they find time for more rehearsals? It was just a thought. Perhaps fewer performances is a major key to this dilemma.

However, your forte is music, not psychology, and a ray of hope does shine. If the sweet little ladies were not on your side, they would not be offering words of encouragement, no matter how discouraging those encouraging words may be.

Take heart. Do you remember Handel, the fellow who wrote the *Messiah*? Not only did his barge sink, but his *Fireworks* Symphony really did blow up!



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# WORSHIP

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# & PREACHING

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# HELPS

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James W. Tharp

## September/October/November 1991

Prepared by James W. Tharp

### INTRODUCTION

Most of us are aware of an unprecedented hunger in the hearts of people today to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But let us who are in the holiness tradition not assume that our people know fully the conditions by which divine fullness can be appropriated.

And this is where we come in. It is our duty, and it should be our delight, to lead our people into a biblical study of the Holy Spirit. They are hearing nearly everything about the Holy Spirit today—some of it so mystical that it is dangerous, some of it cultic, and, hopefully, much that is sound. But they need to hear the truth about the Holy Spirit from their pastor who preaches from the Word, who reads not just from creeds and theologians but from the prophets, from Jesus, and from the apostles.

Any serious study on the Holy Spirit will begin with the teachings of Jesus. He is himself our Model for properly relating to the Holy Spirit. He is also our Example in preaching and teaching on the Holy Spirit.

Such a study will inevitably take us to the Book of Acts to observe early Christians as they prepared for the Spirit and then to note the glorious effects of His Pentecostal effusion.

Some honest questions will be asked by both preacher and people as this material is covered: "Why do we see so little of the power and joy and enthusiasm of early Christians in our churches today?" Such an urgent question will find an urgent answer as we study *who* the Holy Spirit is, *why* He is given to the Church, and *how* we may receive Him with the same effects in our day.

A prayerful study of the Holy Spirit is always good for the preacher. It will cause us to cry out for a new filling of His presence and power. For only Spirit-filled preachers can preach under the complete anointing of the Spirit. Spirit-anointed preaching is the outrush of the soul in such powerful speech as to arrest minds, convict hearts, and transform lives.

May our souls be refreshed and may the lives of our people be renewed as we seek to go back to our source of spiritual power in these weeks of preaching on the Holy Spirit.

# THE SPIRIT PORTRAYED

by James W. Tharp

(*Symbols for the Holy Spirit*)

September 1, 1991

## INTRO.

Inspired writers used familiar objects to tell ancient generations what God is like. The God of revelation accommodated our limited understanding by allowing His prophets to resort to the language of resemblance. Christ illustrated His own nature and mission by comparing himself with a shepherd, a door, or a loaf of bread. The Word also employs types and symbols to unveil the nature and office of the Holy Spirit.

Bible scholars are understandably cautious about typology. The limitations are obvious, and the abusers are many. An emblem must be wisely employed in the exposition of truth. But if it is possible to violate a doctrine with an extreme application of a symbol, it is also possible to neglect a truth by ignoring altogether this device of revelation.

Some well-marked symbols in the sacred text illustrate the person and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself, preparing His followers for the coming of the Holy Spirit, alluded to some of them.

## I. Wind Symbolized the Holy Spirit

Nicodemus sought Jesus out one night to inquire about the mysterious awakening that surrounded the Galilean's ministry. "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher," confessed the Hebrew intellectual, "for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2, NASB). Nicodemus was then told about a spiritual birth. To the astonished man's "How?" Jesus replied by calling attention to a fresh stirring of the night breeze—his answer was blowing in the wind.

### A. *Wind illustrated a supernatural force from eternity.*

"The wind blows," said Jesus, using the same term for the verb "breathes." Jesus knew that the religious leader would understand Him to be speaking of that same life-giving Spirit who was "moving (hovering, brooding)" (Amp.) over chaos, as recorded in Gen. 1:2. The same "Breather" acted upon the form of Adam and infused him with the "spirit of life" (Gen. 2:7, Amp.; see Job 33:4). This very One breathed upon scribes and prophets to give the revelation of truth (2 Pet. 1:21). In Ezekiel's vision, the Spirit of God breathed upon the valley of bones and caused them to live again (37:1-14).

Jesus "breathed on" His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). A few weeks later they were in one accord in the Upper Room when the Spirit came with a sound from heaven "like the rush of a mighty wind" (Acts 2:2, RSV).

The prophet showed Christ with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit returning in the end times to "smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips" (Isa. 11:4, KJV). It will be by the eternal Spirit

that Christ shall destroy the wicked one "with the breath of his mouth" (2 Thess. 2:8, RSV).

### B. *Wind illustrated a sovereign freedom throughout history.*

"The wind blows where it wills," Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:8, RSV).

The eternal Spirit is God in the present tense to work the divine will in history. Due to the will of our sovereign God, man is free to exercise moral choices. Even in choosing evil, man cannot ultimately frustrate the sovereign will of God. The eternal decree did not decide which choice man should make; it simply decided that he should be free to make it. A. W. Tozer once asked, "If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stay His hand . . . ? Man's will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so."<sup>1</sup>

God's foreknowledge of all things and His universal authority over all matters assure the perfect fulfillment of His "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ" (Eph. 3:11, KJV). The mysteries of righteousness and iniquity continue the conflict of the ages with increasing violence. Divine decree declared the law of free choice and its consequences: those who believably commit their hearts to God through Christ are accepted into the new spiritual order; those who reject Him are under the condemnation of eternal death. When the eternal Spirit moves on us in a spiritual awakening, it is time to respond in faith.

### C. *Wind illustrated a sacred factor in our destiny.*

Nicodemus was drawn to Jesus by the Spirit of God. The moving of the Spirit was illustrated as a blowing of the wind. "You hear the sound of it," Jesus reminded him (John 3:8, NASB).

Theologians speak of the doctrine of prevenient grace. Man is unable to comply with the terms of salvation until touched by the Spirit of Grace. "And when he is come," said Jesus, "he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8, KJV margin). And yet the Spirit's drawing may be resisted through unbelief. Our free will must cooperate with divine grace in order to validate our personal redemption through Jesus Christ. We must make the choice to trust God's merciful offer to us through His Son. We must not spurn the Spirit of Grace who draws us to Christ.

## II. Fire Symbolized the Holy Spirit

As a symbol of the supernatural, there are two kinds of fire: the one from heaven that redeems and refines; and the one from hell that depraves and damns. The Bible employs the mysterious element of fire as a symbol of the Godhead in general and of the Holy Spirit in particular.

#### *A. Fire illustrated the flame of revelation.*

The *flame of divine appearance* testified to the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 15:17), arrested Moses and drew him aside from a meaningless life (Exod. 3:2), and convicted Isaiah when the prophet had grown spiritually delinquent (6:1-6).

The *flame of divine attendance* reassured the children of Israel "in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night" (Exod. 13:21, RSV). By His "wall of fire round about" them (Zech. 2:5, KJV), God placed himself between Israel and the enemy so that "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" (Isa. 54:17, KJV).

The *flame of divine acceptance* testified to God's pleasure at the offering of a sacrifice and the worship of His people (Judg. 13:20; 2 Chron. 7:1-4).

#### *B. Fire illustrated the flame of redemption.*

The fiery spectacle at Sinai witnessed to the awesome holiness of God (Exod. 19:16-20). Out of that blazing mountaintop the voice of God called Moses to approach Him for His word to the people. Israel's redeeming God was described by the prophet as "a refiner's fire" (Mal. 3:2-3). When Isaiah confessed his iniquity, the seraphim took a live coal from the altar and purged his sin (6:7). John the Baptist promised that Jesus would baptize His followers "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt. 3:11, RSV). The fulfillment came in the Upper Room when Christians were filled with the Spirit and "there appeared to them tongues as of fire" (Acts 2:3, RSV). Peter referred to this experience later as a time when their hearts were "purified . . . by faith" (Acts 15:9). As "a flame of fire" (Rev. 1:14, KJV), Christ by His Spirit inspects the churches. With the Lamp of Revelation in one hand and the Blood of Atonement in the other, Christ walks in the midst of His people to reveal and cleanse that which hinders His work of redemption and His mission to the world.

#### *C. Fire illustrated the flame of revolution.*

"I came to cast fire upon the earth," declared Jesus, "and would that it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49, RSV). "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you," He charged His followers, "and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, RSV). He makes "his ministers a flaming fire," said the Psalmist (104:4, KJV). Early Christians with burning hearts went everywhere turning their world around.

### **III. Water Symbolized the Holy Spirit**

The Lord Jesus and others made use of the precious element of water, a life-preserving thing, to introduce dimensions of the Spirit of life in the believer.

#### *A. Water illustrated His downpouring.*

The rock, smitten by Moses (Num. 20:7-13), is a type

of Christ who was smitten in order to save the perishing. The second time the rock was struck, "water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank" (v. 11, RSV). This water from which the people drank and lived prefigured the Pentecostal downpour that would mean spiritual fullness for all who drank freely of Christ. God promised a day when "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh" (Joel 2:28, RSV).

#### *B. Water illustrated His infilling.*

"Give me a drink," Jesus requested of the woman of Sychar. Then He explained that living water was available for the asking, using the element of water to illustrate spiritual reality (John 4:7, 10, RSV). "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (v. 14, RSV). When the Pentecostal flood broke upon the Upper Room Christians, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4, RSV). From that time on, "fullness" became a characteristic word to be found in the Book of Acts and the remainder of our New Testament.

#### *C. Water illustrated His outflowing.*

The Spirit-filled life is not only subjective in experience but also objective in expression. "If any one thirst," said Jesus, "let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive" (John 7:37-39, RSV). The Christian is not to be a Dead Sea religionist who takes everything in and gives nothing out; he is to be a river at flood stage, flowing out and touching lives and bearing fruit.

1. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1961), 117-18.

#### **SUGGESTED ORDER OF WORSHIP**

Call to Worship	John 7:37-39
Choruses	"Come, Holy Spirit"
	"There Is a River"
Hymn	"Fill Me Now"
Prayer Chorus	"Spirit of the Living God"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"Spirit of the Living God"
Fellowship Intermission	
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	"Ho! Everyone That Is Thirsty"
Message	"THE SPIRIT PORTRAYED: SYMBOLS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT"
Chorus	"Come, Holy Spirit"
Benediction	

# THE SPIRIT PORTRAYED

by James W. Tharp

(*Symbols for the Holy Spirit*)

September 8, 1991

## INTRO.

Important symbols for the Holy Spirit are found in the Scriptures. We do need to be cautious about the use of types and symbols. We better understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit as we study truths contained in such elements as wind, fire, and water.

The symbols of oil, wine, and salt refer to the Holy Spirit. God will help us grasp more clearly our relationship with Him through Christ, as it is made real to us by the abiding Holy Spirit.

## I. Oil Symbolized the Holy Spirit

Olive oil was an essential part of life for God's Old Testament people: it was used in their diet; it was a part of their medical remedies; and it was essential in the preparation of their worship.

### A. *There was the oil of cleansing.*

The Levitical priest was given a specific routine for cleansing a leper. The blood of a lamb was applied to the lobe of the right ear of the victim, the thumb of the right hand, and the toe of the right foot. Then the priest poured oil into the palm of his own hand. With his finger, he sprinkled the oil on the three places where the blood had been applied. The rest of the oil was poured on the head of the leper seeking to be cleansed. Thus, atonement was made.

The Holy Spirit applies the blood of Jesus to the heart of the believer and then witnesses to the atonement for sin (1 John 1:9; Rom. 8:16).

### B. *There was the oil of healing.*

When the Good Samaritan went to the man who had been robbed and left to die, he poured oil and wine into his wounds to disinfect them and bring about healing (Luke 10:30-35). The apostle instructed early Christians to call for the elders of the church to pray over the sick and to anoint them with oil (James 5:14-15). Oil symbolizes the healing Spirit of God who brings wholeness to the one prayed for as those prayers are offered in faith. Oil signifies the power of the Spirit available to those who pray and obey.

Healing is needed in our lives, in our homes, in our churches, and in our world today. This includes more than physical healing—we need to be whole in our emotions, in our relationships, and in our spiritual lives.

The Holy Spirit wants to become the Spirit of healing in the Body of Christ today.

### C. *There was the oil of anointing.*

The Tabernacle and all its furnishings were anointed with oil (Exod. 40:9-11). Oil in the lamps produced light for the priest to make his way into the holy of holies.

The prophet anointed kings for office with oil.

Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit for His great mission (Luke 3:21-22). He insisted that His followers were to pursue their urgent commission to take the gospel to

the world only after they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:8).

Until the present time, Christian leaders were more prone to speak of and pray for "the unction" of the Holy Spirit. They meant by "unction" a divine enablement, an effect of the supernatural on the labors or expressions of God's messenger. E. M. Bounds wrote, "This unction is not an inalienable gift. It is a conditional gift, and its presence is perpetuated and increased by the same process by which it was at first secured: by unceasing prayer to God, by impassioned desires after God, by estimating it, by seeking it with tireless ardor, by deeming all else loss and failure without it."<sup>1</sup>

## II. Salt Symbolized the Holy Spirit

Jesus spoke in parables and used common objects to make clear the power of Christianity in everyday application. When He spoke of salt (Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50), He was indirectly characterizing the work of the Holy Spirit in us or warning against our hindrance in allowing Him to work.

### A. *Salt referred to the quality of inner life.*

As salt is needed to season food and give it taste, according to Jesus the work of the Holy Spirit in us makes Christ real and relates to our Heavenly Father in a meaningful way (John 14:15-18, 26-27; 15:26; 16:12-15).

### B. *Salt referred to the power of Christian influence.*

Jesus declared that Christians were to be "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). His followers were to tarry until they received the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would empower them to witness and win people to Christ.

The idea of salt as a preserver is expressed here. The influence of Christians must be felt in a world of darkness and corruption. Jesus warns against Christians losing their "saltiness." We can lose our effect on the world. When our convicting, arresting power is gone, we have reached a tragic point in our own personal life as well as in our influence on the world.

## III. Wine Symbolizes the Holy Spirit

One should be very careful in today's world in the use of wine as a symbol for the Holy Spirit. Total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages should be practiced in our Western world, given our social problems stemming from alcoholic drink. Nevertheless, one can see the power in the symbol of wine for the Holy Spirit drawn by Jesus and the apostles in more primitive times.

Wine is a striking symbol for the work of the Spirit in the believer's life in at least two areas: (1) Spirit-produced Cleansing; and (2) Spirit-produced Joy.

### A. *There is Spirit-produced cleansing in the believer.*

Again, the Good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the man robbed and beaten and left for dead (Luke 10:30-35). The purpose of the oil and wine was to disinfect and cleanse wounds of the victim. Sin

has done frightful things to our human personalities. We need the cleansing of God's Spirit. Paul prayed for Christians to be purged completely of sin: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

**B. There is Spirit-produced joy in the believer.**

When Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-10), He set forth His power to work as the refreshing, stimulating work of the Holy Spirit. The sparkle of life can run out. Life's banquet can run dry. Then we can turn things over to Jesus and He will give us to drink of true meaning and inspiration.

The multitudes wondered at first if the Spirit-filled disciples were drunk with wine on the Day of Pentecost. "Of course not!" said Peter. He explained that they were filled with the Holy Spirit, as had been prophesied by Joel. Spirit-filled Christians overflow with joy, for this is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). The apostle Paul warned against debauchery produced by wine but called for us to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). We can never drink too much of the Spirit of God.

Christians must exchange their emptiness for divine fullness. Many need to pray with the Psalmist, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (51:12).

**ILLUS.** John Seamands, in his book *On Tiptoe with Joy*, tells of a wealthy man passing a family on the highway. The family of seven were trudging along in the rain with only a sheet over their heads. "Why are you walking in this awful rain?" the man asked, as he stopped his car.

The father replied, "Our house burned down a few hours ago, and we lost everything." The wealthy man's heart was touched, and he reached into his wallet and pulled out a bill and gave it to the man. But as he drove on down the highway, his conscience bothered him. He knew he should do more. He told his wife and daughter and their maid to empty all the money they had into his

hat. Then he reached into his wallet, took all his cash, and put it into the hat. He turned the car around and started back to meet the destitute family.

He called out to them, "Do you have that bill I gave you a little while ago?"

"Yes," the woman said.

"Well, I want you to give it back to me," he said. A look of pain went across the woman's face as she reached inside her rain-soaked blouse and got the money and handed it to him. "Here, put it into this hat," he said. When the woman had done so, the man said, "Now hold out both hands." As she cupped her hands, the man turned the hat over and poured its contents into her hands, returning the bill he had originally given her plus the amount many times over.

The Lord Jesus wants to know if we will give Him the life He originally gave us. If we will, He gives it back to us plus much more. Life in the Spirit is "inexpressible and glorious joy" (1 Pet. 1:8).

1. E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 70.

**SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Call to Worship	Psalm 45:6-7
Choruses	"The Redeemed of the Lord"
	"Let's Just Praise the Lord"
Hymn	"Holiness unto the Lord"
Prayer Chorus	"Come, Holy Spirit"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"Come, Holy Spirit"
Fellowship Intermission	A Time for Greeting
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	"Holy Spirit, Light Divine"
Message	"THE SPIRIT PORTRAYED: SYMBOLS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT"
Invitational	"Cleanse Me"
Benediction	



## Pontius' Puddle





# THE SPIRIT PORTRAYED

by James W. Tharp

(*Symbols for the Holy Spirit*)

September 15, 1991

## INTRO.

Symbols for the Holy Spirit bring better understanding of the work of God in His children.

The symbols of the dove, the seal, the pledge, and the mantle open our understanding for a greater appreciation for the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

## I. The Dove Symbolized the Holy Spirit

The dove is prominent in the Bible. As a clean creature, it was acceptable on some occasions as a sacrifice. It was one of the birds taken aboard the ark. Isaiah spoke of its moving voice (38:14). Solomon referred to its affectionate nature (Song of Sol. 2:14). Hosea saw it as a timid and frightened bird when resisted (11:11). Jesus characterized the dove as harmless (Matt. 10:16, KJV). The beautiful bird has been used by poets and prophets to illustrate truth, a fitting symbol for the Holy Spirit (3:16).

### *A. As a dove, the Holy Spirit is a messenger of peace.*

When the waters were receding and the ark had come to rest upon the mountains of Ararat, Noah released a raven that never returned. "Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided" (Gen. 8:8, RSV). But the dove returned, for there was no place for her to rest. A week later Noah released the dove again. This time she returned with an olive leaf in her beak. The olive leaf was a token of peace. The dove that brought it confirmed Noah's hopes that the waters of divine judgment were subsiding. A new order was about to begin on earth.

The Spirit of God can flutter into our consciousness with assurance that divine justice has been met for sin at Calvary. He confirms the glorious news to the sinner that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The Holy Spirit bears witness that we are at peace with God (v. 16).

### *B. As a dove, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life.*

Noah released two birds from the ark: the raven and the dove. Opposites in nature, the two represent fallen nature and our new nature in Christ. The raven is a type of the carnal mind. The dove is a type of the spiritual man.

The raven never returned to Noah. It could rest on floating carcasses and gorge itself on rotting flesh. As a scavenger, the raven illustrates the carnal mind that feeds upon the things of the flesh. Like the raven, the impure heart is attracted by the scent and scene of death—lust, slander, deception. Our hearts must be purged from all corruption.

The dove returned to the ark when it could not find the washed earth upon which to rest. The clean-natured bird illustrates how the Spirit is grieved by the corruption of the fallen heart. Since our old nature is judged by the Word of God, and since Christ died on the Cross to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness, the Spirit seeks to wash our hearts from all uncleanness.

The dove is presented as a symbol of the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus.

## II. The Seal Symbolized the Holy Spirit

Use of the seal goes back to ancient Egypt and Babylon. The children of Israel were acquainted with the signet set in a ring, for by this token Joseph was deputed second in command to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:41-43). In His story of the prodigal son, Jesus referred to the replacing of the ring on the returning son's hand as evidence of the restored relationship (Luke 15:22).

Three times in his writings, Paul referred to the Holy Spirit as the seal of the believer (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

### *A. The seal was a property word.*

God's seal of possession rests on us because we have been "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20, RSV). Having believed, we have been "sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13, NASB). The Spirit witnesses to our relationship with the Father (Rom. 8:16). "The Lord knows those who are His" (2 Tim. 2:19, NASB).

We are God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10). John Wesley saw this sealing as a full impression of God's image on the souls of His redeemed ones.

### *B. The seal was a security word.*

By sealing us with His Spirit, God intends to protect His property. The Father set His seal on the Son (John 6:27). The Son assured His followers that they had eternal life, and no one could take them from Him (10:27-30). Of course, the great security passages of the New Testament are not given as license to presumption, but they reassure the outcome of faith. The conditions of God's keeping grace are not our personal good works but our faith. Our security is conditioned upon our faith and repentance. Unbelief and disobedience, unless repented of, will force our Heavenly Father to ultimately defer to our determination to be lost. "Take care, brethren," warned the apostle, "lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12, NASB). But it is God's intention that we persevere by His grace, that we be eternally a part of His family from the moment of our salvation.

### *C. The seal was an authority word.*

The prodigal son was reinstated with his father's name and authority. A ring was placed on his finger, the signet that allowed him to do business in his father's name. Paul wrote to Timothy that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7, RSV). "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the

Spirit of sonship" (Rom. 8:15). Our sonship in Christ brings us to share in His authority.

### III. The Pledge Symbolized the Holy Spirit

Three times Paul referred to the Holy Spirit as our "guarantee" (RSV) or "pledge" (NASB) (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). The Holy Spirit is something like the down payment or first installment toward the full amount yet to be realized. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit is given to the believer to assure him of the coming riches of his inheritance in Christ that is yet to be realized.

#### A. *The Holy Spirit is a pledge of purity.*

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:8). The Holy Spirit reveals to the follower of Jesus the need for inner cleansing from sin. Paul assured believers that "from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13). The Spirit purifies our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9).

#### B. *The Holy Spirit is a pledge of maturity.*

The Christian is a saint in the making, a disciple in process. Obedience to the Holy Spirit assures our perseverance. His purpose is to bring us all "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13, RSV).

Christian maturity involves several Spirit-sponsored practices: (1) Feeding faithfully on the Word of God (1 Pet. 2:3; Col. 3:16). (2) Cultivating "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16; see Phil. 2:5). And (3) Conforming to the "law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1-17).

#### C. *The Holy Spirit is a pledge of glory.*

Jesus and His apostles faithfully assured believers of their glorious destiny. The apostle Paul declared that God would perfect us in glory: "I am prepared for this change by God, who has given me the Spirit as its pledge and instalment" (2 Cor. 5:5, Moffatt; see vv. 1-4).

### IV. The Mantle Symbolized the Holy Spirit

Clothing is an appropriate symbol for the Holy Spirit. The Psalmist prayed for God's priests to be "clothed with righteousness" (132:9). The Messiah rejoiced that the Spirit "has clothed me with garments of salvation" (Isa. 61:10). He instructed His disciples to wait until the Spirit came upon them—they would be "clothed with power" (Luke 24:49).

#### A. *The mantle was the robe of righteousness.*

Christ is the Righteous One. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of righteousness. Through Christ, "our righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30), God takes away "the filthy garments" we wear as sinners and clothes us with a "change of raiment" (Zech. 3:4, KJV). Like the prodigal son re-

turning in rags and repentance, we, too, are received. In a sense the Father says to the Holy Spirit, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him" (Luke 15:22, RSV). But if the Spirit wraps the robe of Christ's righteousness around us in justification, He also plans to clothe and beautify our hearts in sanctification. Both justification and sanctification are anchored in the righteousness of Christ, ours by faith.

#### B. *The mantle was the garment of praise.*

Christ announced to those in bondage that He had come "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:3, KJV). The Holy Spirit is clearly linked with producing inward joy in the Christian (Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22). When the church is filled with the Spirit, the people will "continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God" (Heb. 13:15, RSV).

#### C. *The mantle was the mantle of power.*

The mantle of the prophet Elijah is a striking symbol of the power of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus promised His disciples. In 2 Kings 2:1-15, we get a fresh perspective on the promised Holy Spirit to the followers of Christ as we study the types: Elijah is a type of Christ; Elisha a type of Christ's followers who are to succeed Him in His work on earth; and the mantle is a type of the Holy Spirit. Elijah wanted to know what the greatest passion of Elisha's heart was by telling him to make a request. When Elisha declared that he wanted a double portion of Elijah's spirit, Elijah promised it would be true if he kept his eyes on him to the very end.

There is nothing Christ would rather do for His Church today than to send a new outpouring of His Spirit for cleansing and power. And there is nothing we need more desperately.

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Worship	Luke 24:45-53
Choruses	"Learning to Lean"
	"Spirit of the Living God"
Hymn	"Let Thy Mantle Fall on Me"
Prayer Chorus	"My Desire, to Be like Jesus"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"My Desire, to Be like Jesus"
Fellowship Intermission	Greetings
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT PORTRAYED: SYMBOLS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT"
	"Come, Holy Spirit"
Chorus	
Benediction	

# THE SPIRIT PROMISED

by James W. Tharp  
(*The Spirit of Promise*)  
September 22, 1991

## INTRO.

Although the prophets, including John the Baptist, had spoken of the Holy Spirit, it was left to Jesus to set forth a proper introduction of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The Synoptic Gospels contain accounts of Jesus' teachings on the Holy Spirit, but in the Gospel of John we find what William Barclay called "the high water mark of the New Testament about the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> In the Last Supper discourses (John 14—16), we have what W. T. Purkiser calls "the climax and crown of the New Testament introduction to the Holy Spirit."<sup>2</sup>

We must pay attention to the Holy Spirit as presented by Jesus, lest we get involved with a spirit of another source and nature.

## I. The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Christ

Jesus was leaving His disciples, departing in the flesh, but promising that He would return to them in the presence of the Holy Spirit. He would never leave them in that dimension but would abide with them forever. In order to comfort and prepare their hearts for the coming Spirit, Jesus spoke of the very nature of the Spirit.

### A. *The Holy Spirit reveals the Spirit of Christ.*

"I will ask the Father," promised Jesus, "and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17). Dr. Purkiser comments on this promise of the Holy Spirit, "He is the Spirit of Christ, Christ's *alter ego*, His resurrection Life."<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit is "Another just like Jesus."

E. Stanley Jones said, "If God is a Christlike God, then it follows that the Spirit is a Christlike Spirit. The same content of character will be in both. Then if the Spirit lives within us, He will not make us other than Christlike."<sup>4</sup>

### B. *The Holy Spirit reveals the Spirit of the Father.*

"I will ask the Father," said Jesus, "and he will give you another Counselor." Both Jesus and the Father send the Holy Spirit. We need to understand that the Holy Spirit is eternally related to God the Father and God the Son. We must be careful to hold to a biblical teaching on the Holy Trinity. Confronted by Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other Arian-like heresies, we must be armed with a scriptural understanding of the Trinity.

Jesus did not promise a new Spirit; He promised the Eternal Spirit of the Father and the Son who would glorify God by making known Christ.

## II. The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Conviction

Jesus said, "Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can

see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (John 16:7-11).

### A. *The Holy Spirit convicts of sin.*

The Holy Spirit's mission is not a single duty but includes penetrating the darkness of lost souls and bringing about a sense of lostness, an awakening of a great need. But the Spirit convicts of the sin of not believing in Jesus. Just as Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their legalistic concept of sin, so the Paraclete would take over Jesus' role to show sinners their great sin of not believing in Jesus as God's provided-for Savior from sin.

### B. *The Holy Spirit confirms righteousness.*

The world was wrong in its understanding of righteousness, and this included the Jewish religion in its decision to condemn Jesus as an impostor and crucify Him as a blasphemer. Let the whole world consider what God did with their infamous act: The Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead; moreover, the Holy Spirit is now poured out on believers to give proof of the holiness and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Christ is forever the Righteous One and the Standard of righteousness for all people everywhere.

### C. *The Holy Spirit convinces of judgment.*

"... and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned" (John 16:11).

Reference is made here to the decisive judgment of the Cross against Satan and his kingdom of evil. Speaking of His death, Jesus said, "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out" (John 12:31). In the Spirit's power, lost persons come to realize God's purpose through the Cross to deliver "from the dominion of darkness" and bring us "into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Col. 1:13).

The Holy Spirit reminds us of a time when we shall all stand before the judgment of God.

## III. The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Counsel

*Paraklētos* comes from two Greek words: *para*, meaning "with," and *kaleō*, meaning "I call." Literally, the Holy Spirit is our Counselor because He is the One called to our side to help us. As our Counselor, He is the Spirit of Reality, and He is the Spirit of Reassurance.

### A. *The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Reality.*

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26). Natural man, under the illusion of sin, seldom grasps things as they really are. The world of sense veils the world of the spirit. The visible becomes the enemy of the invisible, the temporal eclipses the eternal. The Holy Spirit is the great disillusioner. He turns on the light, strips away the false coverings, and shows us how it really is.

### B. *The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Reassurance.*

The Holy Spirit is also our Counselor in much the

same way that an attorney reassures his client in a courtroom. Satan accuses and harasses and torments us (Rev. 12:10). When this happens, the believer must plead the blood of Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to reassure him that he truly is a child of God.

#### IV. The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Comfort

Jesus was going away, but He was not going to leave His followers as "orphans in the storm" (John 14:18, TLB). He promised, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever" (v. 16).

##### A. The Holy Spirit brings comfort in life's tribulations.

Christians do not have to be taken out of this world in order to be comforted. The promise of the Comforter presupposes hardships and trials. We are not exempt from hard places. But we have a Comforter alongside, actually within us.

**ILLUS.** Several years ago I made a hospital call on one of our parishioners whose physician had just reported that she had a malignancy. After hearing her sobs and listening to her questions, we prayed. The Holy Spirit was present in a powerful way. After prayer, she wiped her tears and said with a smile, "Now I know that I can handle it!" The Comforter was inside and alongside. He did His work in such a way that her faith was not shattered but made strong to face her uncertain future. Paul was in prison and in chains, but he rejoiced in the Philippians' prayers and the help given him by the Holy Spirit (Phil. 1:18-19).

##### B. The Holy Spirit brings comfort in spiritual opposition.

The apostle urged Christians to "put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,

but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:11-12). Among several weapons we are to choose for spiritual warfare are the Sword of the Spirit (v. 17) and praying in the Holy Spirit (v. 18).

The Holy Spirit always works through the Word. The Spirit of God and the Word of God are separate entities, but they never operate separately. When believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and filled with the Word (as in Jesus' case), Satan can make no headway. On the contrary, he is defeated in all that he attempts.

The Lord will help us rely more and more on His abiding Holy Spirit. We shall come to appreciate Him as our personal Comforter and Counselor.

1. William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), xv-xvi.
2. W. T. Purkiser, *God's Spirit in Today's World* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1974), 26.
3. Ibid., 29
4. Quoted *ibid.*

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Worship	John 14:16-21
Choruses	"Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary"
	"He Is Lord"
Hymn	"Holy Spirit, Be My Guide"
Prayer Chorus	"Spirit of the Living God"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"Spirit of the Living God"
Fellowship Intermission	Greeting
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT PROMISED: THE SPIRIT OF PROMISE"
	"Spirit of God, Descend"
Invitation	
Benediction	



# THE SPIRIT PROMISED

by James W. Tharp

(*The Spirit of Purity*)

September 29, 1991

## INTRO.

The title "Holy Spirit," bestowed on the Third Person of the Godhead, has significance. Both the adjective and the noun form a profound double symbol: "Holy" conveys His absolute purity, and "Spirit" suggests His marvelous grace.

The Holy Spirit is called by His title for two reasons: He is absolutely and eternally free from any moral imperfection and shares equally with the Father and the Son in their essential holy nature; and it is the assigned work of the Holy Spirit, among other duties, to make the hearts of believers holy.

God has more in mind for His children than forgiveness of sins; He would make us holy by purifying our hearts through faith.

Let us approach this truth today by looking at the Holy Spirit as both the Spirit of Holiness and the Spirit of Sanctification.

## I. The Holy Spirit Is the Spirit of Holiness

Holiness is an awesome subject. As we discuss it, we need to think in terms of both divine holiness and Christian holiness. The latter is derived from the former.

### A. *There is divine holiness.*

The Church needs a new vision of the holiness of God at this time. Isaiah heard the heavenly creatures acclaim the Eternal One as being infinitely holy when they cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty" (6:3). The prophet trembled, wept, and cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone" (v. 5, KJV). As Moses approached the burning bush, God called out to him, "Do not come any closer . . . Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exod. 3:5). Christians today have lost their sense of the majesty of such divine holiness. They seldom sense that they are standing on holy ground.

The study of divine holiness requires us to consider God's *transcendence*—His "otherness," His separateness from all of His creation including man. Isaiah referred to "the high and lofty One. . . who lives forever, whose name is holy" (57:15). The prophet did not have in mind any physical distance separating finite man and our infinite God. The burden of his thought is the "far aboveness" of the moral quality of the Divine One. He stands forever apart from us in "unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16), in divine splendor, in absolute holiness.

The holiness of God is the very essence of His "Godness." Holiness is not merely a standard for Him, but holy is the way He is—absolutely holy, possessing infinite purity, incapable of being other than morally and spiritually perfect.

### B. *There is Christian holiness.*

We spoke of God's *transcendence*—His separateness and otherness and moral beyondness from all of His cre-

ation. But we must also speak of His *immanence*—His nearness, His availability, His willingness to receive us to His holy Self without compromising with sin and His purpose in us.

Since God is holy, He has made holiness the condition of moral health for His universe. Adam and Eve were created holy. Their holiness was a gift from God, derived from His own holiness. It was not equal to divine holiness because man is not divine. But Adam's holiness was a part of his being in the *imago Dei*, in the image of God.

God's gift of holiness to man does not exempt him from temptation. Adam's choice to disobey God's Word caused him to forfeit the holiness that had been given him, and he was infected with the fatal disease of sin. A holy God was forced to move in judgment on sin. But even in judgment on sin, God in holiness and mercy designed a plan whereby we could be justified and become partakers of His holiness.

The only path to an absolutely holy God is by way of the Cross on which the Lamb of God was slain. It is God's only way to accept sinners. It is our only approach to God. God receives us in the righteousness of His Son. In Jesus Christ God shares His holiness with us.

## II. The Spirit of Sanctification

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification," said Paul (1 Thess. 4:3, RSV). Again he said, "From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13).

Sanctification is the divine grace by which the Christian is made holy. Initial sanctification takes place in justification, at which time the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer and he is cleared of all guilt before God. But Christ and His apostles never presented any proposition on justification apart from a commitment to sanctification. Nor did they present justification as a matter of divine grace to be completed in a sanctification of human works. The kind of sanctification they called for had its foundation in the grace of justification which is *by grace through faith unto good works*—and in that order (Eph. 2:8, 10, KJV).

In treating the doctrine of sanctification, we shall note first, the problem of sin; and second, the grace of sanctification.

### A. *We need to understand the problem of sin.*

In order to better understand the doctrine of sanctification, it is important that we study its opposite—sin. The study of sin requires that we treat it both as a principle and a practice. A sinful disposition lies behind a sinful deed. Sin involves character as well as conduct. Theologians speak of both *original* and *actual* sin. By original sin they mean that moral estrangement, not because of our humanity, but because of our rebellion



against God. We all have a sinful nature inherited from Adam. Paul taught that "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men" (Rom. 5:12, RSV).

By actual sin we mean that we have all made the choice to sin—"for all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Our individual sins cannot be charged to Adam, for each must take responsibility for his own sin.

All sin has consequences. "The wages of sin is death," said Paul (Rom. 6:23). Adam was warned of this before the Fall (Gen. 2:17). When he sinned, the penalty of death came in stages: it would come immediately in spiritual death; it would come eventually in physical death; and it would come finally in eternal death—unless faith was exercised in the merciful provision set forth by our gracious God.

Natural man is pronounced "dead in your transgressions and sins" (Eph. 2:1). He is alienated from God. As Billy Graham observes, "Sin has infected the totality of man's life, darkening his intellect, enfeebling his will, and corrupting his emotions."<sup>1</sup>

#### **B. We need to understand the grace of sanctification.**

God's urgent call to His children is that they become partakers of His holiness. The Holy Spirit convines us of our need to be reclaimed from the deeper effects of sin.

After believing, the seed of sin remains in the believer. But our sinful hearts are not left unattended by the Holy Spirit. He not only reveals our impurity but also illumines the way into the atoning provisions for our cleansing from all sin (1 Thess. 4:7-8; 1 John 1:5-10).

Holiness and sanctification are intimately related terms in both doctrine and experience. Yet the two are not synonyms. George Allen Turner explains: "The relation of holiness to sanctification is that of noun to verb. Holiness is a state or condition of sanctity; sanctification is the process by which it occurs. Holiness is associated with being; sanctification with becoming. Holiness is the static concept; sanctification, the dynamic."<sup>2</sup>

God's urgent call to His children is that they become partakers of His holiness (Heb. 12:10, 14; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

God's gracious work of sanctification within our hearts is His way of reclaiming us from the deeper effects of sin.

For over 19 centuries the gospel of Jesus Christ has addressed the problem of sin in the heart of the believer. The consensus is clear from all branches of the church that sanctification is a valid factor in the process of salvation. It is usually agreed that justification is what God does *for* the believer in clearing him of the condemnation of sin, and that sanctification is what God does *in* the believer in cleansing from the condition of sin. From this point on, of course, the debate heats up as to the *when* and *how far* of sanctification.

Our message today does not propose to answer all of the controversies, but to offer to God's children His promise to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and to make us like Jesus. There are hungry hearts today who are ready to confess their need of inner cleansing and believe in the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit to perform the work of sanctification.

1. Billy Graham, *World Aflame* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 73.

2. George Allen Turner, *The Vision Which Transforms* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), 32.

#### **SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Call to Worship	1 Thess. 5:23-24
Choruses	"We Have Come into His House"
	"Breathe on Me"
Hymn	"Called unto Holiness"
Prayer Chorus	"We Are Standing on Holy Ground"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"We Are Standing on Holy Ground"
Fellowship Intermission	Greeting to Our Guests
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT PROMISED: THE SPIRIT OF PURITY"
Invitation Hymn	"I Surrender All"
Benediction	

## **BEYOND BELIEF™**



# THE SPIRIT PROMISED

by James W. Tharp

(*The Spirit of Power*)

October 6, 1991

## INTRO.

Jesus said to His followers, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

In our series on the Holy Spirit, we have been emphasizing "The Spirit Promised." We learned about the Spirit's Promise of Purity; today we note the Spirit's Promise of Power.

God pardons our sins in order that He might purify our hearts. He purifies our hearts in order that He might fill us with His Holy Spirit and empower us to live and witness for Christ.

As there is no grounds for Christianity apart from Christ himself, so there is no life and power in the Christian experience apart from the Holy Spirit. Yet many Christians are powerless, empty, depressed, and confused. Some have settled for an intellectual Christianity, a doctrinal Christianity, a denominational Christianity, a legalistic Christianity.

What lacks is life in the Spirit. Spiritual failure can be traced to an improper relationship with the Holy Spirit, whether intentional or in ignorance. The Early Church did not have its system of theology worked out, but it did not fail to relate to the Holy Spirit as Jesus taught. The Church was "clothed with power."

When the Holy Spirit came, He was to "clothe" believers with power. Three shades of meaning are suggested in this term as used in His promise: (1) to dress in such a way that one's nakedness is covered—he is properly attired so that he is presentable and unashamed; (2) to be arrayed in garments of splendor so as to identify with a father who provides freely for his own; (3) to gown up with a garment of authority, such as a magistrate who puts on the robe and rules from the bench.

## I. We Are Clothed with the Robe of Righteousness

When we are born again, we are washed and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. When we are purified in heart, we partake of the righteousness of Christ.

### A. *There is imputed righteousness.*

"For if by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17).

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, they grew conscious of their nakedness and were ashamed. They hid from God. But God called to them and dealt with them about their disobedience. When they confessed their sin and their efforts to create a false covering of fig leaves, God "made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Gen. 3:21).

Today, when we confess our sins, God is gracious to forgive us our sins and clothe us in the righteousness of His Son, Jesus.

### B. *There is imparted righteousness.*

Those counted righteous are to be *made* righteous with the imparted righteousness of Christ by the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8 we see God's plan for moving beyond justification to sanctification: those who live in the Spirit are empowered to live above the flesh and experience the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness leads to power.

## II. We Are Clothed with Garments of Praise

To be "clothed with power" also means to dress or be arrayed in garments that identify with and bring glory to our Heavenly Father, who provides all we need.

### A. *There is the sacrifice of praise.*

The Creator designed the human spirit primarily for praise and worship. Only those who are cleansed and clothed and filled with the Spirit can "through Jesus . . . continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15).

God spoke to His Old Testament people through the prophet and said, "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments" (Isa. 52:1, RSV).

Praising God is not merely something Christians do in a corporate worship service. "I will bless the Lord at all times," the Psalmist said, "his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (34:1, RSV).

When the people of God are truly clothed in the righteousness of Christ, they are dressed up to praise God. The Lord has bestowed on us "a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair" (Isa. 61:3).

### B. *There is the power of praise.*

The experience of inspirational praise is transforming in itself. It is no substitute for the work of the sanctifying Spirit, as He would cleanse the heart from greed or lust or pride. But a clean heart filled with the Spirit must express itself in powerful praise. We discover that God is "enthroned on the praises of Israel" (Ps. 22:3, RSV). This means that God powerfully visits the place where He is being exalted in true praise. He touches the one who understands the true purpose of his being.

Jesus is our Example in praise. We read that "Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth'" (Luke 10:21).

A chorus says, "It's amazing what praising will do."

## III. We Are Clothed with the Mantle of Power

We shall be "clothed with power from on high" when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. This promise is rein-

forced: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

*A. There is power in Jesus' life.*

Before entering His public ministry, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34).

In His humanity, Jesus required the fullness of the Holy Spirit to empower Him for His earthly mission. As the Son of God, He was inherently pure and needed no cleansing. But as the Son of Man, He must know divine fullness throughout His earthly ministry. In this, He is our Example. We need both cleansing and empowerment. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

*B. There is power in the Early Church.*

Following Pentecost, both the Church and the world knew that the Christians had tapped into the same power that Jesus had known. As the school of prophets recognized that "the spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha" (2 Kings 2:15) when they saw God working mightily through him, so the people in Jerusalem and even the Sanhedrin "took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

Jesus had promised power for witnessing to His name, for building God's kingdom, for overcoming evil. Christians following Christ to Pentecost would "do even greater things than these [things Jesus had done in the power of the Spirit], because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12). This is a reference to the coming Holy Spirit, who would give them power to do even greater works than Jesus had done.

*C. There is power for today.*

Christians do not talk a great deal about spiritual power today. What Paul said about the kingdom of God

is still true: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power" (1 Cor. 4:20). It requires power to build God's kingdom, but the kind of power that Jesus demonstrated and promised to His followers, the kind that the Early Church experienced at Pentecost and practiced throughout the first century, the kind that has been tapped periodically across the history of the Church and has produced great and mighty things for the glory of God.

This kind of power comes from the Holy Spirit, who cleanses the people of God and anoints them for prayer and worship. Only praying men and women can put on the whole armor of God and tear down the strongholds of the evil one. Only prevailing prayer warriors can move against the enemies of the Church and break through to the glory of soul winning and revival and church growth.

**SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Call to Worship	Luke 24:45-53
Choruses	"Come, Holy Spirit"
	"Learning to Lean"
Hymn	"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"
Prayer Chorus	"Majesty"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"Majesty"
Fellowship Intermission	Welcome to Guests
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT PROMISED: THE SPIRIT OF POWER"
Invitation	"Cleanse Me"
Benediction	

# THE SPIRIT PROMISED

by James W. Tharp

(*The Spirit of Purpose*)

October 13, 1991

## INTRO.

In Heb. 10:11-18, we gain a deeper understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit as Administrator of the new covenant God has made with His people through Christ. Christ is the Great High Priest and Mediator of the new covenant, since it has been sealed with His own blood. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to apply the redemption to human hearts that was purchased in the death of Christ on Calvary. The Holy Spirit is the active Agent of the Godhead among people during this dispensation of grace.

We will see the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the individual Christian, in the Church, and in the advancement of God's kingdom.

## I. The Holy Spirit Is in the Christian

From the very first ray of hope given Adam in the Garden to the miraculous conception by the virgin mother and right on down to the fiery fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost, we can trace the work of the redeeming Spirit. As the Spirit of Salvation, the Holy Spirit administers all of the gracious benefits of Christ's atoning work.

### A. *The Holy Spirit is the regenerating Spirit.*

In Titus 3:4-7, RSV, reference is made to "washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit." Paul declares, "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). The Holy Spirit is given to the believer at the time of the new birth. He administers the new birth and becomes the sign and seal of the believer's salvation (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).

God promised under the new covenant, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you" (Ezek. 36:26, RSV). Paul described this inner miracle of the believer as "a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself" (2 Cor. 5:17-18, RSV).

In regeneration we receive a new nature. This comes as a result of our new birth "of the Spirit" (John 3:8). In being born again, we "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4, RSV). We are not mere imitators of Christ, but we share His being through the grace of regeneration. We partake of His nature. In Him, we are introduced to the dynamics of His Spirit within us. He works all that is necessary for the will of God for us to escape the corruption of this world even as we live in it.

### B. *The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Sanctification.*

In 2 Thess. 2:13 Paul spoke of the work of "the sanctifying . . . Spirit." Holiness of heart and life for all believers is the will of God (1 Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:14-16). Holiness is provided in the atoning work of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 5:25-27; Heb. 13:12). Holiness is made experiential to the confessing, believing,

obedient child of God by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8-9; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 1:7-10).

John the Baptist saw Jesus as One who would refine His followers "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt. 3:11, RSV).

## II. The Holy Spirit Is in the Church

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:12-13, RSV).

The Church existed in the heart of God before the foundation of the world. It is God's new creation by the Spirit through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. After His death and resurrection, the Church would become the new Body of our Lord. It must be formed by the Spirit.

### A. *The Holy Spirit produces the spirit of community.*

As the Holy Spirit filled the believers on the Day of Pentecost, He also prepared the hearts of a great multitude to receive the gospel, and "there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41, RSV). The newly born Church grew rapidly as the Spirit baptized each believer into the Body of Christ. Each was initiated by the Spirit into the Body. All, the wealthy landowners, poor widows, and those representing all walks of life, were constituted a company of believers. They were joyfully aware that they had been joined together in a special kind of fellowship. This fellowship transcended the ties of natural family and made a special place for brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

Their togetherness carried over into material needs—the Body met the needs of its members. Their love found favor in the city of Jerusalem.

### B. *The Holy Spirit produces the spirit of worship.*

The primitive Church was beautiful in its worship (Acts 2:41-47; 4:23-31). Early Christians gathered, not so much for social purposes as to praise and worship God. Early Christians saw Jesus as the Fulfillment of their worship. They celebrated the faithfulness of God in bringing salvation to an accomplished fact. Their Creator was also their Redeemer. Much of their praise had to do with the Christ events—the birth, life, ministry, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The Word of God was central in their worship, as was Communion, or the Lord's Supper.

### C. *The Holy Spirit produces the spirit of ministry.*

The new Body of Christ must do more than care for one another's needs and worship; it must do the work of Christ on earth. As Jesus said of himself, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28),

so His Church must go into the world to serve the needs of mankind.

Spiritual gifts have been given for the purpose of edifying the Body of Christ and reaching a lost world (Eph. 4:7-16; Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 1 Pet. 4:8-11).

The Holy Spirit must do more than give gifts; He must be allowed to fill the gifted to do the work of Christ. As the Spirit anointed Christ in His earthly body to serve (Luke 4:18), so He will also anoint the Church with great power for witness and service (Acts 1:8).

The Lord will give the increase. He is concerned that we bear much fruit in order that the Father be glorified in the Son, and that we give evidence of our discipleship (John 15:8).

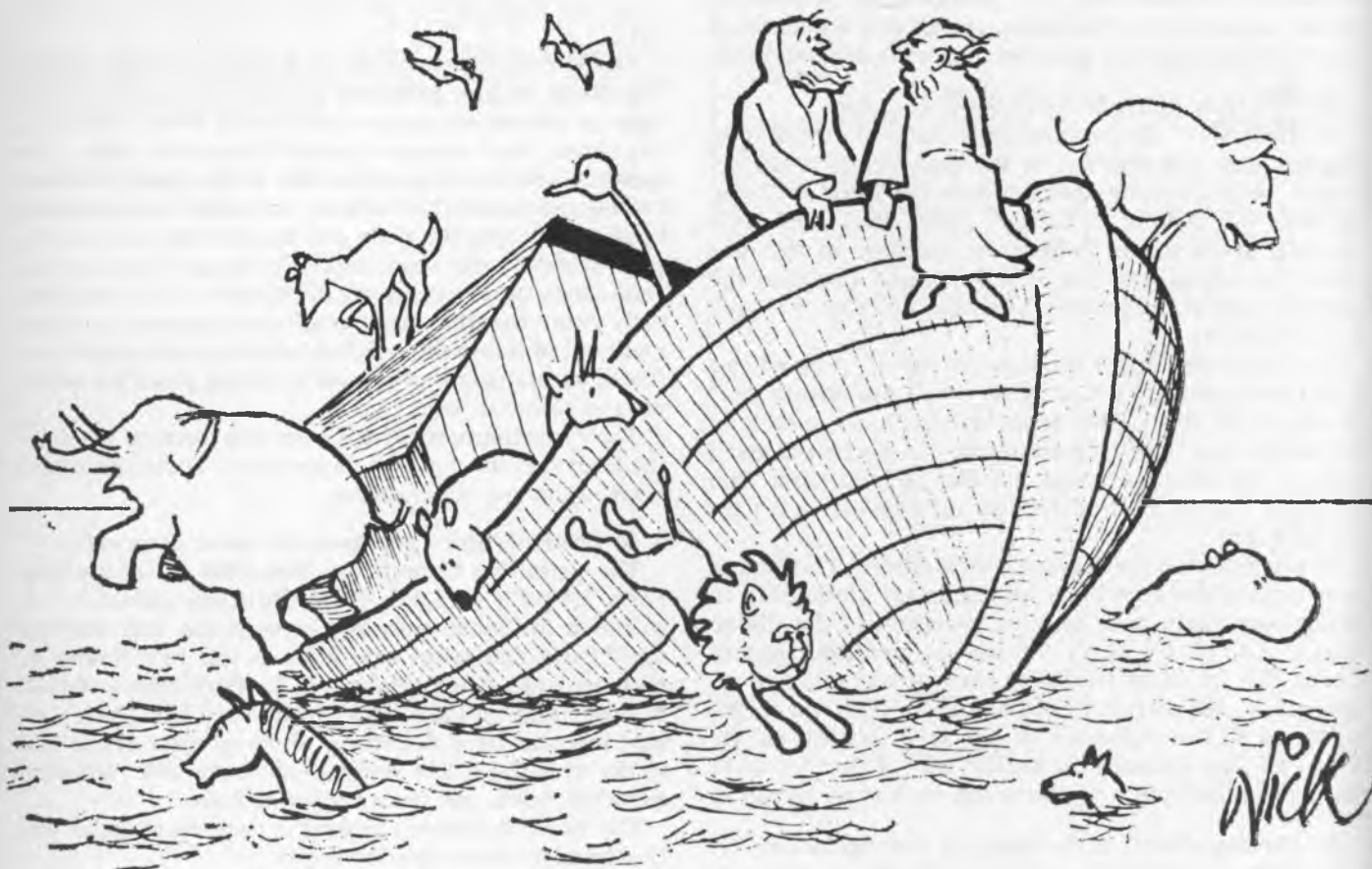
God expects His Church to grow in quality and in quantity. The Great Commission implies growth, an increase of disciples.

Christian leaders in all local churches must come to terms with biblical church growth, grapple with the obstacles, declare an offensive in outreach, and plan for an increase in the harvest.

Our stewardship will be the main issue at the judgment seat of Christ, and people will be given priority.

#### **SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Call to Worship	Eph. 4:1-7
Choruses	"O Come, Let Us Adore Him"
	"All Hail King Jesus"
	"And Can It Be?"
	"I Love You, Lord"
Hymn	
Prayer Chorus	
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"I Love You, Lord"
Fellowship Intermission	Welcome to Guests
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT PROMISED: THE SPIRIT OF PURPOSE"
Chorus	"A Charge to Keep I Have"
Benediction	



**"You and your two woodpeckers!"**



# THE SPIRIT PROMISED

by James W. Tharp

(*The Spirit of Pentecost*)

October 20, 1991

## INTRO.

Jesus continued after His resurrection to instruct His apostles concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:49; John 20:22-23; Acts 1:1-8). Right up to His ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit was His main topic.

The Master was preparing His men for His continued work. There was only one secret to their success—they had to be filled with the Spirit just as He himself had been. He relied on the Spirit constantly for His power to minister.

The Pentecostal Preparation actually began with Jesus' postresurrection appearances.

## I. Preparation Included 40 Days of Proof

Luke records, "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

Over a period of nearly six weeks Jesus of Nazareth appeared in such convincing manner as to leave no doubt in the minds of His witnesses that He was literally and physically back from the dead. The most comprehensive listing of these appearances is made by Paul (1 Cor. 15:4-8).

During these appearances the Lord impressed upon His men that His authority was universal. Since all power had been given Him by the Father, they were under His orders to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19, RSV). His gospel must be "preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end [would] come" (24:14, RSV). History would move ultimately toward the purposes of God. Christ would return at the end of the age. Whatever else might develop in history, its greatest cause for delay would be the spreading of the gospel to all peoples.

What incredible authority was conferred upon the apostles by their Lord! They were to serve as custodians of a message that had power to forgive sins, and by this message the nations of the earth would be judged. Whoever delivered such a message must stand in awe of its power. The realization of such authority, balanced by an equal sense of accountability, prompted Paul to ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16, RSV). The answer is: only those upon whom Christ has breathed His Spirit.

May the Spirit prepare us for our great responsibility of reaching our community in our generation for Christ.

## II. Preparation Included 10 Days of Preparation

"On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have

heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 1:4-5).

Eyewitnesses of Jesus' death beheld Him in His bodily ascension until He passed out of sight. As they watched their Master ascend into the region of the unseen, they realized that His appearances had ended. They were not to look for Him again until He returned in the manner in which He had departed (Acts 1:11).

Beyond natural vision and above the material world, Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father on behalf of sinful man (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24; 10:12-13).

Jesus' disciples "returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:52-53, KJV).

Peter's prominence among the apostles and disciples is not surprising. On one or two occasions, the Master had singled him out for leadership. So Peter took the initiative in the Upper Room and explained the qualifications of an apostle. In a kind of democratic approach, he appealed to the body as to their responsibility in electing a successor to Judas. With marvelous insight into the Word, he quoted from two psalms touching on the tragedy of the fallen apostle. After two nominations the people went to prayer for divine direction. When the lots were cast, Matthias "was enrolled with the eleven" (Acts 1:26, RSV).

Whatever duties and activities claimed the disciples' attention in the Upper Room, praying for the coming Holy Spirit was their major commitment. Jesus had promised, "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13).

## III. Preparation Included the Day of Pentecost

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1).

While thousands of Jews filled Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Pentecost, 120 Christians gathered in an Upper Room to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. The real significance of that day did not center on the priests and people at the Temple, but on the men and women prayerfully awaiting the promise of the Father and the Son. The house of Israel was now desolate. Israel had rejected their Messiah. To those who had received Him, great authority is about to be given to carry out the Master's Great Commission. The torch is ready to be passed to a new order. A spiritual revolution is about to begin that will sweep the whole world.

The Upper Room setting was probably the spacious quarters of Mary, the mother of John Mark—no doubt the same large room where Jesus had eaten the Passover with His Twelve and where they had gathered often for instructions from the Master. Its location—an upper

room—illustrates the fact that great spiritual movements of history are born in the hearts and lives of those who are willing to climb above the common level of devotion. In this elevated place, they all “with one accord devoted themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:14, RSV).

In our time, God seems to be gathering a prayer force over the earth, a remnant of people who long to see a mighty spiritual awakening in these last days. The great passion of these “Upper Room Christians” is for another mighty rending of the heavens to change the course of history and empower the Church to finish the task of world evangelism.

Of course, Pentecost will never be repeated. We would not pray for another Pentecost just as we would not pray for another Calvary. But the promise of the Holy Spirit was not just to the apostolic band and company of believers who joined them; He is promised to all “who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39). Therefore, we can pray, in a sense, for Pentecost to be repeated, just as it was in Samaria, in Caesarea, and in Ephesus.

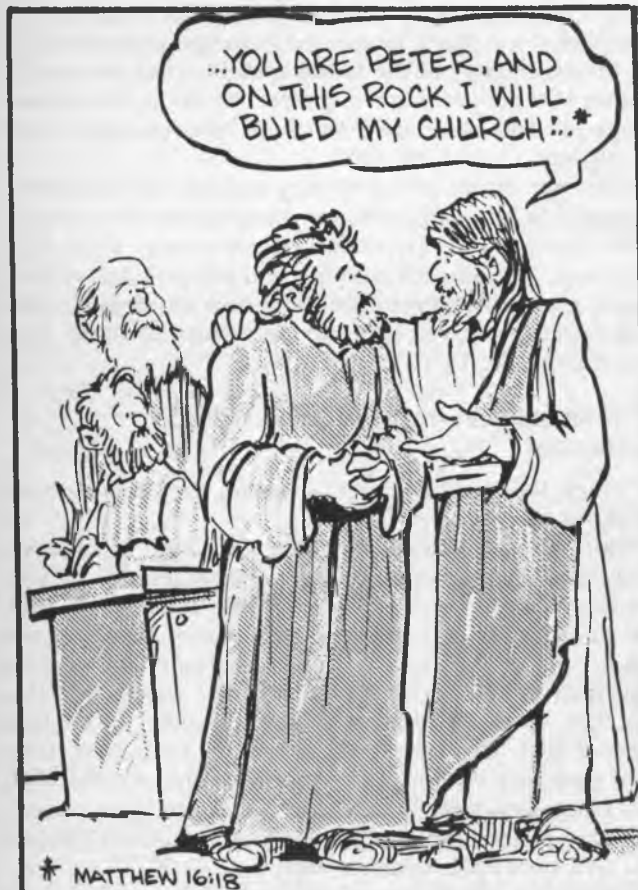
W. E. Sangster, British Methodist, emphasized our

hope that the God who came in power to 11 defeated men at the Day of Pentecost, and through them turned their world upside down, may come again in our generation and do again His mighty works.

*“Yes, Lord, do it again!”*

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Worship	Acts 1:1-5
Choruses	“We Have Come into His House”
	“Come, Holy Spirit”
Hymn	“Pentecostal Power”
Prayer Chorus	“Spirit of the Living God”
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	“Spirit of the Living God”
Fellowship Intermission	Welcome to Guests
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	“THE SPIRIT PROMISED: THE SPIRIT OF PENTECOST”
Invitation	“Breathe on Me, Breath of God”
Benediction	



# THE SPIRIT POURED OUT

by James W. Tharp

(*The Pentecostal Expectation*)

October 27, 1991

## INTRO.

The same Holy Spirit who filled the hearts of those early Christians longs to fill us today. Many passages in our New Testament deal with the subject of the Spirit-filled life. "Be filled with the Spirit," Paul said (Eph. 5:18). The same apostle longed for Christians to "be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (3:19).

The 120 believers who waited in the Upper Room to be filled with the Spirit of God can well serve as our models if we truly want to be filled with God's Spirit. These followers of Jesus really expected the Holy Spirit to come upon them. They had not been told in what manner He would come; they had only been promised that He would come, and they were commanded to wait for Him.

We hear so much talk about life in the Spirit, and some of it is quite confusing. But we can trace our pathway to the fullness of the Spirit by following five steps to the Spirit-filled life.

## I. Be Assured of Eternal Life

The first step toward the Spirit-filled life is to gain the assurance of eternal life. The apostle wrote, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). We are to know in our hearts and not doubt that we have been born of the Spirit and that the Spirit of Christ lives within.

Our assurance of salvation is supported by a twofold witness: (1) the witness of the Word of God; and (2) the witness of the Spirit of God. Human emotions fluctuate. Therefore, we must base our salvation on the Word of God and the witness of the Spirit. In Rom. 10:8-13, we have a salvation proposition that sets forth "the word of faith" as the foundation. If we believe in our heart that Jesus is Lord (that He is raised from the dead), and if we confess with our mouth, then we will be saved. We have God's Word on it.

We are told in Rom. 8:16 that "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." We need not wonder if we have salvation or not. The Spirit-filled life is only for those who know they are saved.

## II. Hunger for Divine Fullness

No one ever staggered accidentally into the Spirit-filled life. There are barriers for Christians to overcome in order to reach this promised grace. There will be tests and trials to determine whether or not we are determined to live as Jesus commanded.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6). God gives His Spirit to those who seek Him, not to those who talk about seeking Him. Our priorities must reflect a passion for His fullness.

**ILLUS.** Elijah wanted Elisha to have a double portion of the Spirit of God in his life, but he first had to test him to see if he wanted something more (2 Kings 2:1-15). The old prophet even suggested several points at which the younger man might leave him, thus precluding the experience of receiving the double portion. As Elisha was determined to have the fullness of God's Spirit regardless of the cost, we will receive the fullness of the Spirit when we seek Him with all of our hearts.

God gives His overflowing presence to the spiritually hungry and thirsty.

## III. Surrender for Cleansing

The indwelling Spirit reveals areas of sin and selfishness to be cleansed. He not only uncovers sin but also points to Calvary and its provision for our purity. No one ever got far on the road to divine fullness without being shown their need for heart purity. God will not fill an unclean vessel. The sanctifying Spirit will make way for His fullness in us.

Whatever is in one's heart that God cannot bless remains a barrier to the fullness of the Spirit. Moreover, it becomes a beachhead for Satan to launch his attacks and defeat us. We must give God everything in order for Him to give us His fullness. Paul admonished, "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom. 12:1).

If we will not hold anything back from the Lord, He will not hold anything back from us.

## IV. Obey God

God gives the Holy Spirit to "those who obey him" (Acts 5:32). He does not entrust the fullness of His Spirit to the disobedient.

**ILLUS.** I've dealt with a man who claims he wants all that God has for him. He has asked me to pray with him several times to be filled with the Spirit. But he is honest enough to admit that he is not in total obedience to God's will. He will never experience the outpouring of God's Spirit until he settles it in his heart to obey.

Obedience opens the heavens, and God delights in filling us with His Spirit.

## V. Have Faith to Receive

The 120 believers in the Upper Room demonstrated faith when it came to receiving the Holy Spirit. They obeyed the Lord in returning to the city. They took care of all matters pertaining to their faith. They prayed and tarried for the Holy Spirit. They believed He would come. And He certainly came!

Later listen to Peter explaining the Spirit's coming upon the people in the Upper Room and those in the household of Cornelius at Caesarea: "He made no dis-

inction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9).

Christians must have faith for their initial filling of the Spirit. They must have faith for succeeding renewings of the Holy Spirit. The 120 were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). Some of them were filled with the Holy Spirit again (4:31). Paul says, "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). The more proper rendering is, "Keep on being filled with the Spirit."

We need faith to receive the Holy Spirit. We need faith to keep on receiving the Holy Spirit. It is no disgrace to discover that we need to be renewed in the fullness of the Spirit.

Do you need a new filling of the Holy Spirit today? Let God fill you now.

#### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Worship  
Choruses

Eph. 5:15-20

"There Is a River"

"I Will Praise Him"

Hymn

"Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove"

Prayer Chorus

"Fill Me Now"

Prayer

Prayer Chorus Repeated

"Fill Me Now"

Fellowship Intermission

Welcome to Guests

Tithes and Offerings

Special Song

Message

"THE SPIRIT POURED OUT:  
THE PENTECOSTAL EXPECTATION"

Invitation

"Cleanse Me"

Benediction



YOU KNOW, WE COULD SAVE OURSELVES A LOT OF MONEY  
IF WE DIDN'T HAVE THE "GREAT COMMISSION".

# THE SPIRIT POURED OUT

by James W. Tharp

(The Pentecostal Effusion)

Acts 2:1-4

November 3, 1991

## INTRO.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the 120 believers in the Upper Room of Jerusalem was far more than another spiritual blessing that God gives to His obedient children. The Pentecostal effusion was an eloquent announcement that Jesus Christ, crucified and raised from the dead, was now exalted to the Father's right hand. He was now released into the world in the person of the omnipresent Holy Spirit to indwell His Church and convict the world.

This important historical moment of redemption marked the beginning of the age of the Spirit. They would know His power. Many would be made righteous. His gospel would be preached throughout all nations until the climax of history.

In that initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit, upon whom was the Holy Spirit outpoured?

In a glorious invasion, the breath of God filled the room where 120 believers were waiting on that morning of Pentecost. Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of divine-human relations. The Holy Spirit filled "each" (v. 3) and "all" (v. 4), so that Christian Pentecost was both an individual and corporate experience.

## I. The Holy Spirit Came upon Apostles and Disciples

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (v. 4, RSV). The total number of believers filled with the Spirit was 10 times the number of apostles.

Lay Christians like Stephen and Philip are proof that the life of the Spirit is as freely offered to laypeople as to apostles. At Pentecost, the Spirit was looking for believers. The Holy Spirit is not looking for clergy to fill today; He is looking for believers.

Though ordained to specific assignments—the apostles must have the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish them—the essential effects of Pentecost are the same for all who are filled with the Spirit.

In the New Testament *every* believer is given the gift of the Holy Spirit in the new birth (Acts 2:38; Eph. 1:13-14), is called to take up his cross and follow Jesus as a disciple (Mark 8:34), is given spiritual gifts for ministry (Eph. 4:1-13), and is called to purity of heart and fullness of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 12:14; Eph. 5:18).

## II. The Holy Spirit Came upon Male and Female

"The women and Mary the mother of Jesus" were also present in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14, RSV). Joel's prophecy of the Spirit included "your sons and your daughters" (Joel 2:28, RSV). Pentecost and its divine inclusiveness is difficult for biased churchmen who would keep their women locked in "discreet silence."

The Holy Spirit is no sexist when it comes to filling the hearts and empowering those who are ready to make Jesus Lord. Jesus liberates all who follow Him—including women. He elevates them to a new respect and dignity. Both the Savior and the apostles acknowledged their debt to women and acknowledged them as having important ministries in God's kingdom.

This does not deny God's assigned order of authority and responsibility for husband and wife. But the Lord called for mutual respect. All need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, married or single.

## III. The Holy Spirit Came upon Young and Old

Joel wrote, "Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" as a result of the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28, RSV). From the beginning, young people, along with the mature, have played a vital role in God's purpose for spiritual revolution. In nearly every great movement God brings together the generations, even in leadership. Any true movement of God in the local church or region will include the youth culture. The Holy Spirit delights in closing the generation gap as He advances Christ's kingdom.

## IV. The Holy Spirit Came upon Bond and Free

Joel declared that the Spirit of God would come upon "menservants and maidservants" (Joel 2:29, RSV). Our social status will not likely be determined by our spiritual condition, but we may be sure that our social standing cannot possibly prevent us from being filled with the Spirit and empowered to penetrate our sphere of influence for Jesus. Some have risen above their station in life to penetrate even higher social realms.

Regardless of background, our greatest fulfillment comes in yielding to the Spirit of God for His purity and power and purpose.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Worship	Acts 2:1-4
Choruses	"Come, Holy Spirit"
	"Holy Spirit, You Are Welcome in This Place"
Hymn	"Holiness unto the Lord"
Prayer Chorus	"I Love You, Lord"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"I Love You, Lord"
Fellowship Intermission	Welcome to Guests
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT POURED OUT: THE PENTECOSTAL EFFUSION"
Song	"Breathe on Me, Breath of God"
Benediction	



# THE SPIRIT POURED OUT

by James W. Tharp

(The Pentecostal Effusion)

Acts 2:1-4

November 10, 1991

## INTRO.

We don't want to get carried away with the drama of Pentecost, but neither would we escape the lessons portrayed in the signs of Pentecost. By what signs did the Holy Spirit come?

Three startling signs accompanied the Pentecostal outpouring to dramatize God's purpose in this new age of redemption. These outward manifestations of the Spirit would subside, but the reality and power of the Holy Spirit's presence would abide. These signs of Pentecost are worthy of the Spirit who comes to reside in human temples:

The *audible* sign, wind, symbolized divine mystery and sovereignty.

The *visible* sign, fire, dramatized divine glory and purity.

The *intelligible* sign, tongues, prophesied human responsibility and adequacy.

## I. The Audible Sign Was Wind

"And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:2, RSV). In the Upper Room some people had probably heard Jesus illustrate the work of the Spirit to Nicodemus by referring to the wind (John 3:8). They were familiar with Ezekiel's vision in which he was told to prophesy to the four winds to "breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (37:9, RSV). The Spirit of God caused that valley of dry bones to live again and stand upon their feet as a marching army. Before those bones were touched by the breath of God, they were a striking symbol of a lifeless church. The Pentecostal wind that blew into the Upper Room brought forth a new movement that would sweep the world in a revolution of redemption.

We need a new breath of the Spirit in the church to experience the power and life of our sovereign God to accomplish His purposes in our day.

We need to yield to the leadings of the Holy Spirit: "Lord, not our will, but Yours, be done."

## II. The Visible Sign Was Fire

"And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them" (Acts 2:3, RSV). Believers in the Upper Room probably saw at first a solid sheet of flame appearing in their midst or above their heads. Then the fire divided into 120 parts and rested upon the head of each believer. They must have bowed in awe before the God who had sent the fire. Perhaps they were reminded of the historic appearances of Jehovah to their fathers by fire. Now He was in their midst.

The prophecy of John the Baptist was fulfilled: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt. 3:11, RSV). Upper Room hearts were purified by faith and energized by the Spirit for the work ahead.

The Lord had come by His Spirit into the hearts of His servants to make His messengers a flaming fire.

Oh, that God might send Pentecostal fires upon us!

## III. The Intelligible Sign Was Tongues

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4, RSV). The other signs had been objective, completely independent of the believers themselves. But having been filled with the Spirit, a miracle occurred that involved them: they spoke "in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"—languages not their own, dialects they had never been taught. But the languages in which they uttered the praises of God were intelligible to those representing the many nations gathered in Jerusalem for the feast.

The Pentecostal tongues were Babel in reverse. International guests in the Holy City heard Christians telling in their own mother tongues "the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:11, RSV). They listened with amazement and increasing conviction as the Galileans spoke powerfully of God's mighty works of grace through Christ.

This intelligible sign is an unforgettable reminder that the gospel is to be preached in every nation and in every tongue throughout the world, and that our speaking must be by the divine anointing of the Spirit of God in order for people to hear.

May the Lord breathe upon us!

May the Lord set our hearts on fire!

May the Holy Spirit touch us in order to speak the Good News to those around us! We must not be silent.

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Call to Worship	Acts 2:1-4
Choruses	"Let's Just Praise the Lord"
	"To God Be the Glory"
Hymn	"A Glorious Church"
Prayer Chorus	"Come, Holy Spirit"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"Come, Holy Spirit"
Fellowship Intermission	Welcome to Guests
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT POURED OUT: THE PENTECOSTAL EFFUSION"
Hymn	"Take My Life, and Let It Be"
Benediction	

# THE SPIRIT POURED OUT

by James W. Tharp

(*The Pentecostal Effusion*)

Acts 2:1-4

November 17, 1991

## INTRO.

We have been seeking to ask and answer some important questions about the outpoured Spirit: Upon whom did He come? By what signs? And now we want to ask, "With what meaning did He come?"

The Lord will help us see the difference the coming of the Holy Spirit made in those people who had been following Jesus for nearly three years.

The coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts will also make a difference. The Holy Spirit's outpouring came with what meaning?

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4, RSV). This fact shifts our attention from the signs of Pentecost to its substance, from its rhetoric to its reality, from initiation to revolution. What happened to those Upper Room Christians made a radical difference in their lives, and it was to have a telling effect on their world.

Nothing more revolutionary ever happened in history than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Divine Incendiary had said, "I came to cast fire upon the earth" (Luke 12:49, RSV), and He let it fall on that morning of Pentecost. Jesus began His world revolution by setting His witnesses on fire.

Let us notice the difference Pentecost made.

## I. The Holy Spirit Destroyed the Enmity Within Them

The contrast in the pre-Pentecostal and the post-Pentecostal behavior of the apostles is nothing short of amazing. The Gospel writers were not hesitant to show us the selfish ambitions and heartless attitudes manifested among them at times. Their power seeking revealed that they were living "after the flesh" (Rom. 8:13, KJV) and needed the purging power of the Holy Spirit. Peter knew that in their experience in the Upper Room the Spirit "purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9).

The Holy Spirit will not allow the impurities of our hearts to go unchallenged today. All the enmity, hostility, and rebellion within our unclean hearts must be met by the fiery purging of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist foretold the effects of such an experience: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12, RSV).

## II. The Holy Spirit Delivered the Energy to Them

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you," said Jesus (Acts 1:8). The disciples certainly did!

Their *intimidation* by opposition was turned into a boldness to declare their faith in Christ. No disciple ever overestimated the flesh more than Simon Peter when he boasted, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33).

Knowing the cowardice of the carnal heart, Jesus replied, "Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me" (v. 34, RSV).

In a matter of hours the man who had bristled before a soldier wilted before a sneering maid, denying, "Woman, I do not know him" (v. 57, RSV).

Peter went out to weep over this despicable denial of his Lord. However, he went on to Pentecost to discover the power to stand up and speak for his Lord.

Their *impotence* against evil was replaced by an authority over Satan. Although Jesus gave His men "authority over the unclean spirits" (Mark 6:7, RSV), three chapters later we read of them standing helpless and humiliated against the convulsions of a demon-possessed lad. The commentary on the powerless disciples, as sobbed out by the brokenhearted father, is something for us to hear today: "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able" (9:17-18, RSV).

After Jesus delivered the lad from spiritual bondage, He was ready to answer the heart-searching question, "Why could we not cast it out?" He told them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer" (vv. 28-29, RSV).

Pentecost endued Jesus' men with the power for prayer. They engaged in many mighty works, including healing and casting out evil spirits (Acts 5:16).

## III. The Holy Spirit Developed the Unity Among Them

The prayer that changed history included a plea for the unity of believers (John 17:11). This most moving of all prayers petitioned the Father for three things: that the Son might be glorified (vv. 1-8); that the disciples might be sanctified (vv. 9-19); and that the Church might be unified (vv. 20-26).

The prayer embodies our Lord's complete range of vision for the unity of His Church. He knew that it would come to pass in stages: the first request would be answered immediately with the advent of the Spirit; the second would be fulfilled with the progressive work of the Spirit through the centuries; and the final stage would come when the Church would be presented "without spot or wrinkle" to its glorified Lord (Eph. 5:27, RSV).

Every Christian has an obligation to pray for the unity of the Body of Christ and to guard that unity diligently.

#### **IV. The Holy Spirit Demanded the Urgency of Them**

From the hour that the Spirit of Burning touched their lips, the apostles became flaming messengers for Christ. Their indifference passed into history. They were possessed with a boldness and power that shone in their faces and sounded in their voices. This urgency was not a wild thing; it was a conviction borne of the Spirit and nurtured by obedience. When threatened, they could only reply, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, RSV). They counted not their lives dear unto themselves, but freely offered themselves as living sacrifices unto God.

#### **SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Call to Worship	Acts 2:1-4
Invocation	
Hymn	"The Cleansing Wave"
Prayer Chorus	"We Are One in the Bond of Love"
Prayer	
Prayer Chorus Repeated	"We Are One in the Bond of Love"
Fellowship Intermission	Welcome to Guests
Tithes and Offerings	
Special Song	
Message	"THE SPIRIT POURED OUT: THE PENTECOSTAL EFFUSION"
Song	"O to Be like Thee"
Benediction	

# THE SPIRIT POURED OUT

by James W. Tharp

(*The Pentecostal Explanation*)

Acts 2:12-18

November 24, 1991

## INTRO.

The phenomena of Pentecost commanded the wonder of the unbelieving world. A perplexed multitude stood dumb before the secrets of God. In amazement, they asked, "What does this mean?"

At this time Jerusalem was swollen several times its normal size with pilgrims from many countries attending the feast. Thousands were attracted to the sounds of Christians speaking the praises of God in all the languages represented by these guests. They soon concluded that they could not account for what was going on; but they had to know, so they cried out for an explanation.

God has His own means for giving light to seeking hearts. In most cases He guides His spokesman to share the Word, encourage the hungry, and lead them along to the promise of eternal life. Peter became God's messenger to explain from the Scriptures exactly what had happened. He first told them what Pentecost was not; then He told them what Pentecost was.

## I. What Pentecost Is Not

Some people had mockingly accused the Spirit-filled Christians of being drunk with new wine. "But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day'" (Acts 2:14-15, RSV).

It was not uncommon for the Jews to become intoxicated at the Feast of Pentecost. But Peter required only a few seconds to point out that it was only nine o'clock in the morning, the hour of prayer and sacrifice. There was a stimulation among them but not of wine.

Paul would later make a contrast between the Spirit-filled man and the wine-intoxicated person (Eph. 5:18). Drinking wine "leads to debauchery," he said, but to be filled with the Spirit is to be "controlled by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25, Amp.). Drunkenness leads to foolishness, but the fullness of the Holy Spirit leads to holiness.

However, a Spirit-filled Christian, or a Spirit-filled church, is always beyond the comprehension of the world. We are often called upon to explain ourselves. God is always pleased when we do it from His Word in a manner that is humble but forthright.

But it was not enough for the apostle to set aside the charge of drunkenness; he was delighted to tell his upset audience the true meaning of Pentecost.

## II. What Pentecost Is

"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," said Peter (Acts 2:16, KJV).

The condition of Pentecostal believers was due neither to human indulgence nor emotional extremism; their condition was the result of an epochal fulfillment of the Word of God. Several Hebrew prophets had spo-

ken of the Spirit, but Peter chose the prophecy of Joel to explain the Pentecostal phenomena. There are probably two reasons for this choice: Joel spoke more precisely of the advent of the Spirit; and among the Jews of the first century Joel was a favorite prophet.

Joel had looked beyond the plague of locusts and its interpretation for the people of his day. When he was through with his message to a backslidden people, he looked beyond and saw a day when God would pour out His Spirit. What the people had heard and seen that morning in Jerusalem had been foretold by their own favorite prophet.

"In the last days" (v. 17) is not a phrase found in Joel's prophecy, but it is Peter's interpretation of Joel's term "afterward" (Joel 2:28, RSV). "The last days" or "the latter days" is found in several Old Testament books, as well as in the teachings of Jesus and the writings of His apostles. The terms refer to that period of time from the coming of the Messiah to the time of His rule over the nations.

The advent of the Spirit, according to Peter, confirmed the times in which they lived—"the last days."

"I will pour out my Spirit," God had said. He had given His Spirit many times and in many ways, but the pouring forth of His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was a new thing in history. Paul joined with Isaiah, Joel, and Peter in using the metaphor of the abundantly poured-forth Spirit: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5, RSV). "The Holy Spirit . . . he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5-6, RSV). The objects of divine outpouring had not been material tabernacles and majestic temples but the waiting hearts of believing men and women. As His Shekinah had filled the former abodes, so now the Spirit filled Christians with the glory of God.

"Upon all flesh" (v. 17, RSV). The phrase has a universal ring. Perhaps the prophet first used the term with all classes of Israel in mind. But on the Day of Pentecost the idea of a wider application is introduced by Peter. The dispensation of the poured-out Spirit was to be a day of salvation. For Peter was still quoting Joel when he said, "And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (v. 21, RSV).

The Spirit of God was ready to come into relationship with all who would call upon the name of the Lord.

When Peter equated the Pentecostal phenomena of "this" to Joel's prophecy of "that," he was ready to shift to a proclamation of the gospel. He declared that an age of fulfillment had arrived in which Jesus Christ had died for the sins of the world. Though He had been crucified by wicked men, it was all programmed from eternity by a sovereign God who loved and cared for sinners.

Peter preached with such power that the hearts of thousands cried out for direction in being saved.

The poured-out Spirit upon the people of God should always result in others coming to know Christ.

**SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER**

Call to Worship

Acts 2:12-18

Invocation

Hymns

"Amazing Grace"

"Arise, My Soul, Arise"

Prayer

Fellowship Intermission

Welcome to Guests

Tithes and Offerings

Special Song

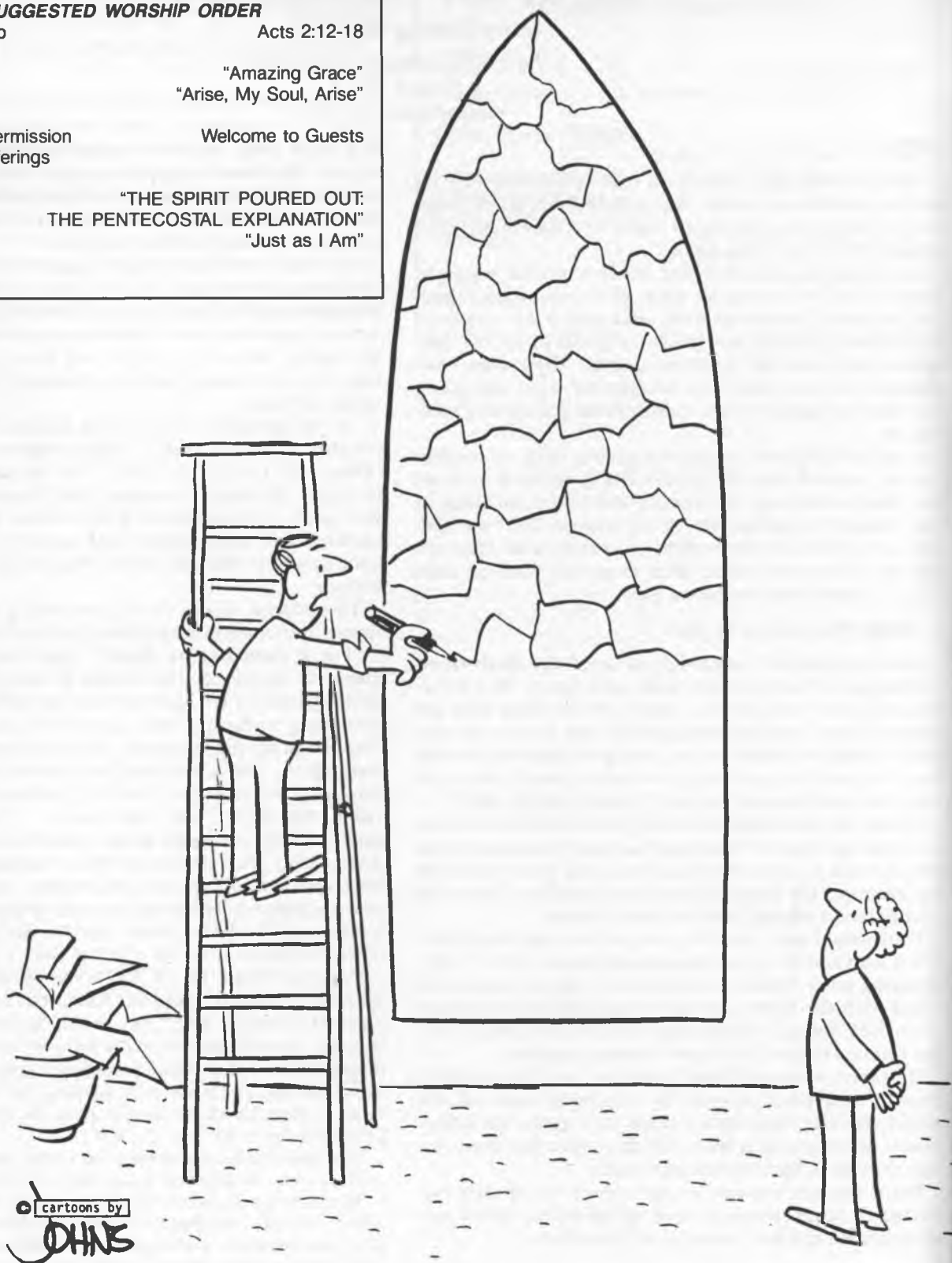
Message

"THE SPIRIT POURED OUT:  
THE PENTECOSTAL EXPLANATION"

Song

"Just as I Am"

Benediction



"WELL, I'M AFRAID THIS WILL HAVE TO DO  
UNTIL WE CAN AFFORD A REAL STAINED  
GLASS WINDOW "



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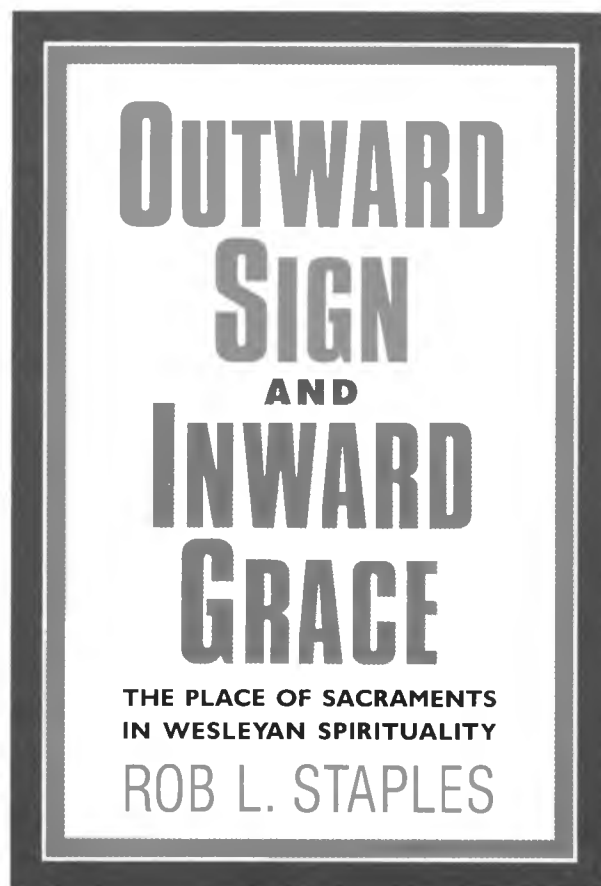
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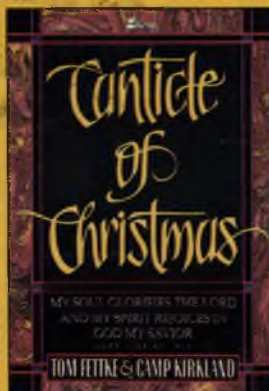
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