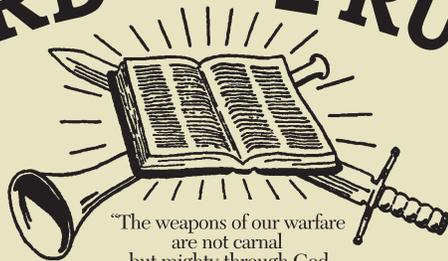


The SWORD and TRUMPET



“Blow ye
the Trumpet
and warn
the People.”

“The weapons of our warfare
are not carnal
but mighty through God
to the pulling down of strongholds.”

“Take the Sword
of the Spirit
which is
The Word of God.”

Guidelines



JUSTIN

OCTOBER 2004

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SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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Person of the Month:

Justin (c. 100-c. 163)

Son of the Latin, Priscus, and grandson of the Greek, Bacchius, Justin was born around the year 100 A.D. at Flavia Neapolis, in Samaria. He was a Gentile and a heathen.

As a young man, Justin received a sizeable inheritance. He also had a great desire to find the truth and to learn if man could really know God. Consequently, he began his pursuit of philosophy, seeking for truth with the Stoics, the Peripatetics, the Pythagoreans and the Platonists. With the philosophy of Plato, he thought he had found truth, but his thirst for God was still not quenched.

He began to notice how the Christians lived a life of wholesome conduct. He also saw how they faced death, willing to be martyred rather than to deny Christ. While in Ephesus he encountered an old man in a field near the Mediterranean Sea. In the course of their conversation the man witnessed to him, and Justin turned to Christ at the age of 30. He was subsequently baptized. After his conversion, Justin sought to share the Gospel with other educated pagans.

He became a nomadic teacher and a familiar figure among Christians as he traveled to Ephesus, Rome, and Alexandria. He was totally committed to this work and, therefore, never married.

Justin was a forceful writer and one of the faith's most capable defenders. He made an intelligent defense of Christianity to Jew and pagan alike. In Ephesus he engaged in his famous "Dialogue with Trypho the Jew" in which he sought to demolish Jewish opposition to Christianity by showing from the Old Testament the proof of Christ as the Messiah.

He openly denounced the persecution of his fellow believers. He faithfully defended their cause before persecutors and slanderers. Christianity was opposed not only by the Jews, but by a host of others—**the state** blamed Christianity because it was making an impact on paganism (Justin's *First Apology* in 150 A.D. defended Christians as good citizens of the state); **the pagans** charged the Christians as atheists because they had no temples, idols, altars, or sacrifices; **the pagan priests** said that natural disasters were the fault of Christians; **the artists and tradesmen** blamed them for lack of income; **the magicians and sorcerers** blamed them for loss of customers; and last but not least, **the philosophers**.

Justin was like an unrelenting bulldog as he challenged the emperors, corrected those who spread slander, and rebuked false philosophers. In 160 he presented his *Second Apology* to the emperor in which he pointed out that Christians were being martyred by wicked men simply because they were followers of Christ.

In Rome he opened a school and began teaching believers and those interested in Christianity in private homes. For this offense against the state he was put on trial in 163. He was found guilty and given the death sentence. He was beheaded along with five men and one woman.

Who was this courageous man? We now commonly refer to him as **Justin Martyr**, the great **apologist** of the faith!

—Gail L. Emerson

The Christian Woman's Head Covering

by Keith M. Bailey

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God” (1 Cor. 11:1-16).

For many in Christendom these verses have been dismissed as a curious refer-

ence to a local custom in Corinth. They do not see the words of the apostle as applicable to Christian women in general or relevant to Christians in modern times. But a careful, in-depth study of this passage of scripture calls in question the above hastily made conclusions. Paul introduces the ordinance of the sister's head covering in the context of basic Christian doctrine. There is no evidence in these verses that Paul was dealing with a local custom or a cultural matter. He speaks of this practice as an ordinance. By an ordinance he meant an authoritative tradition given the church by apostolic mandate. Paul rests the teaching of the covering on the foundational doctrine of the headship of Christ. After His resurrection and ascension into heaven the Father made Christ to be head over all things to the church. In the first chapter of Ephesians it is said that the great purpose of God is to bring all things under the headship of Christ (Eph. 1:9, 10). This teaching is very personal and has to do with both men and women. The issue here is authority. For the spiritual health of the local church both men and women had to be under the headship of Christ.

Male and female had their respective way of outwardly expressing their acceptance of the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. Men were to pray with their heads uncovered while women were to pray with their heads covered. Paul shows how the divine order established at creation supports the wearing of the covering by the sisters. The covering is a symbol among other things of the order of authority in the home and in the church. It should be noted that Paul was not at this time intro-

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

ducing the teaching on the covering. He had instructed them when the church was first established, indicating that Paul considered this truth an essential part of discipling new Christians.

It appears that some of the believers were now questioning the practice so Paul provides more teaching as to the biblical principles on which it rests.

Verses three through five relate the covering to headship and worship. In verse six the woman's covering is a symbol of modesty. If a sister wears no covering it is as though she were shorn or shaven. Either of those conditions was considered to be a shame to the woman. The shorn head was associated with immoral women. The covering is a symbol of the sister's purity and modesty. The long hair and the covering are two parts of a whole. R. C. H. Lenski in his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:6 says, "We may express it this way: It is the intent of nature that women should wear long hair. Back of nature is the Creator. A beautiful head of hair is the natural crown which God has given to a woman" (Lenski, *Interpretation of First Corinthians*, page 440). Lenski also says, ". . . then let the woman do the complete and consistent thing—let her have herself covered" (Lenski, page 440).

Coming from the standpoint of creation Paul introduces in verse ten another purpose for wearing the covering. The angels are assigned by God to minister to His people. The angels see us and watch our lives. When the church gathers in its meetings the angels are there and look with pleasure at the veiled heads of the sisters. The Christian woman's head covering is the symbol of her submission to authority in the home and in the church. It is viewed by God and by the angels and by men as a testimony to her devotion to Christ and His order of things.

In verse fourteen the apostle turns once again to the length of the woman's hair. Nature teaches by the hair length

the difference between the sexes. Paul says in the next verse that her hair is given her for a covering. Because of this statement many have concluded that her hair satisfies the need for a covering. That interpretation is overruled by the fact that the Greek word translated covering in verse fifteen is not the word for covering used elsewhere in the passage. The word *peribolaion* means a wrapper or covering thrown around. In all other references to covering some form of the Greek verb *katakalupto* is used. This word according to *Thayer's Lexicon* means "to cover up, to veil, to cover one's self." A. T. Robertson, Baptist Greek scholar, says of *katakalupto* that the sister should cover herself with the veil (down, *kata*, the Greek says, the veil hanging down from head). Throughout this passage the word used for covering means a cloth covering that covers the sister's hair. The early church Fathers taught that scripture authorized both long hair and a covering. This fact was used by the early Christians to determine the size and shape of the covering. They understood the covering was extended to and covered the hair line.

When should the sister wear her covering? Is she to wear it all the time or only in public worship? Since prayer and prophecy occur outside the public worship of the church the covering is needed at all times. In the home she will most often engage in prayer and prophecy. In the Apostolic Constitutions written late second century it says, "Thou who designest to be faithful to thy husband take care to please him alone. And when thou art in the streets, cover thy head: for by such a covering thou wilt avoid being viewed by idle persons."

Many of the questions regarding this practice are answered by a careful interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:16. In verses one through fifteen a theological and practical background is given for the ordinance of the sister's covering. While the majority of the church was keeping

the ordinance a minority raised question about it. Paul describes the negative group as contentious. They perhaps wanted changes or disliked the whole concept. He answered them by saying that the apostles and the churches had no such custom as they were proposing. What he gave them in the beginning was the only instruction he or any other apostle had on the matter. The apostolic position was strengthened by the fact that the wearing of the covering was universally practiced by all the churches of God. The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says of verse sixteen, "Paul's fifth argument for maintaining the status quo on head-coverings came from the universal church practice. Paul was not trying to foist a new behavioral pattern on the Corinthians but simply to hold the line against self-indulgent individual excess in the name of freedom. Throwing off the head-covering was an act of insubordination which discredited God" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, page 530).

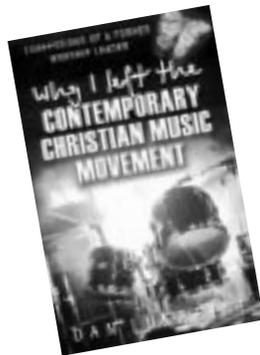
In 1857 a Presbyterian preacher by the name of Charles Hodges wrote an exposition on 1 Corinthians. His comments of 1 Corinthians 11:16 answer all those who

contend with this truth whether ancient or modern. "Authority is the only end of controversy with such disturbers of the peace. The authority here adduced is that of the apostles and the churches. The former were decisive, because the apostles were invested with the authority not only to teach the gospel, but also to organize the church, and to decide everything related to Christian ordinances and worship" (Hodges, *Exposition of First Corinthians*, page 214).

Nowhere in the New Testament has this ordinance been revoked. It stands unchanged from the days of the apostles. Those who believe and practice it find a way of rich blessing. A study of church history and a study of church practice around the world clearly verify the fact that the Christian woman's head covering has always been practiced by a remnant of the church. In recent years there is a spontaneous renewal of the ordinance going on among Christians in many places. May God give us the grace to stand on the side of this ancient truth and boldly testify to its reality in our time. ■

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by Dan Lucarini

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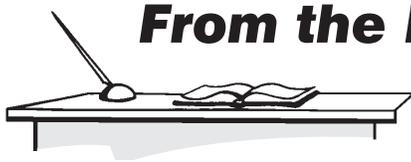
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From the Editor's Desk

Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Israel's Significance Is Insignificant

by Elwood McQuaid

The headline of this editorial is the considered opinion of two men who are deemed "very influential and major [religious] voices throughout America."

Their identities are not particularly relevant. Their statements concerning Israel are being espoused by a host of pop-culture theologians currently afflicted by the pernicious Replacement Theology ideology of the day. The issue is the right of contemporary Israel to a homeland in the Middle East sanctioned by God and whether today's Israel is in any way related to the prophetic promises of the Word. Their message is that Israel's presence in the Middle East is not currently relevant for reasons they feel constrained to explain. Following are sermon excerpts from these men:

Geo-political Israel today is not to be understood as God's promise to Abraham and Joshua. IT IS NOT! . . . It is fair to say, the world owes them a homeland. But, and this is important, there is no biblical right that geo-political Israel has today to that particular piece of geography in the Middle East. For Israel is not a nation state any more; Israel is the church. Israel is the people of God, Jew and Gentile

from every nation and every tribe. Ancient Israel is a preview of what God intends for the new Israel.

Therefore [because Israel broke her covenant by rejecting the Messiah], the secular state of Israel today may not claim a present divine right to the Land, but they and we should seek a peaceful settlement not based on present divine rights.

By faith in Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, Gentiles become heirs of the promise of Abraham, including the promise of the Land. But I think we will make better progress if we do not yield to the claim of either side to be ethnically or nationally sanctioned by God in their present conflict.

Such Replacement Theology is actually ideology in the guise of theology. And it plays to the cultural interests of self-absorbed Christians in the West.

God's program for Israel and the Jewish people has not run off the tracks. The inviolable bedrock of prophetic truth did not somehow draw its last breath when the corrupt Temple hierarchy incited a crowd to reject the Christ in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. While acknowledging the historical veracity of all prophecies related to the

Messiah's First Coming, our friends tend to forget that you cannot accept these promises as literal and then leap into the murky realm of allegory, spiritualizing the text to prop up culturally preferential theory. One reference will suffice:

Hath God cast away his people? God forbid (Rom. 11:1).

Despite whatever manipulative gyrations one employs, Romans 11 clearly enunciates the future promise of Israel's national reconciliation to the Messiah in anticipation of the King's reign in fulfillment of Scripture:

And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Rom. 11:26).

This does not refer to the proclamation of the gospel to Jewish people and Gentiles during the Church Age. It can only be ascribed to Israel and the future fulfillment of God's plan.

However, there are more pressing and potentially devastating issues to confront here; namely, the incredible naiveté of promoting the fantasy that Israel is the cause of Muslim and Arab belligerence and worldwide terrorism. Said one of the preachers,

The existence of Israel in the Middle East and the extent of her borders and her sovereignty are perhaps the most explosive factors in world terrorism and the most volatile factors in Arab-Western relations.

This statement is not only wildly exaggerated but potentially deadly. To indulge the fantasy that the issue can be addressed from a purely human-rights perspective is beyond the pale. Such thinking exposes the underlying militancy of Replacement Theology, which seems to relish making Israel the heinous perpetrator, and Arabs and Palestinians the helpless victims.

The Muslim world's greatest problem is not with Israel; it is with us! Democracy, freedom, and our insistence on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the real adversaries. Israel is but the token of that light in the dark sea of Islamic hatred.

To take potshots at prophetic biblicists and the Chosen People and their inherent, God-given right to a safe haven in the land of their fathers may be the popular sport of contemporary skeptics; but in the end, it may cost us all dearly. ■

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Ready Bible Answers

by Geo. R. Brunk I



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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

OCTOBER 3, 2004

Establishing Messianic Lineage

2 Samuel 7:18-29

In our last lesson, Moses called the children of Israel to renew their covenant with God as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land. Approximately 400 years have passed till today's lesson. The land has been conquered and settled and the period of the Judges was over. Bowing to the wishes of the people, Samuel had anointed Saul as king. When Saul failed in his obedience to God, Samuel anointed David to be his successor. After Saul's death in battle with the Philistines, David was declared king, first over Judah then over all Israel. Read 2 Samuel 1:1-7:29 for perspective on today's lesson.

The immediate context for today's lesson we find in the first 17 verses of Chapter 7. David, having secured the kingdom and defeated his enemies, now set his sights on doing something more directly for God. His proposal, as he outlined it to Nathan the prophet, was to build a permanent house for the ark of God. At this point the ark still resided in a tent. (See Chapter 6 for the account of bringing the ark to Jerusalem.)

However, God thwarted David's plans because he was a man of war (1 Chronicles 22:8), and gave the task to David's son who would be a man of peace (1 Chronicles 22:9). However, God did make a promise to David, which becomes the focus of today's lesson. God promised to establish David's lineage and kingdom in perpetuity (see Psalm 89:34-37), which found its fulfillment in Jesus, son

of David, Son of God.

Today's text contains David's response to God's pronouncement through Nathan the prophet. David seems awestruck as he asks, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto?" David recognizes his unworthiness to be elevated to such a position in God's sight. But he recognized God's sovereignty and power and that He knew all about his life. He acknowledged that God could do as He chose (vv. 21, 22).

David then turns his focus on God's choice of the children of Israel to be His special people. He marvels that God chose them, delivered them from bondage, and established Himself as their God and Benefactor. There is no nation like them in all the earth—for God has chosen them to be His special people—a people through whom, though David didn't know it, the Messiah would come.

Then David submits himself to God's choice of him to be the present leader of this special people. Let it happen, David says, just as you, God, have ordained. David also praises God for this blessing to him and his posterity—the promise of God's continued care and blessing.

Certainly David did not understand the full implications of God's working through him and his posterity. The lesson we learn from David is his willing submission to God's will and his implied commitment to faithfulness because of God's choice and blessing. God needed to establish a lineage to give legitimacy to the Son to be born as Messiah. David thus became a willing participant in God's plan of redemption.

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For thought and discussion

1. Don't fail to make the connection of this lesson with the theme of the quarter, "The Redemptive Plan of God." It is an integral part of that plan.
2. Note how David's attitude played such a significant role in endearing him to God. What was his basic attitude?
3. Just a few chapters further in 2 Samuel we see King David falling into a heinous sin. God foreknew this would happen. Reflect on God's mercy and patience with sin-prone mankind and His willingness to use even those who fail in their commitment to Him.
4. Why was it so important that lineage be established for the coming Messiah? Look at Matthew 1. Discuss the importance of this issue.
5. David recognized God's sovereignty over the affairs of man and he willingly submitted himself as a participant in God's plan. Don't overlook that lesson for yourself.

OCTOBER 10, 2004

God Preserves His Nation Israel

Isaiah 43:1-7, 10-13, 18, 19

In our lesson today we're skipping over more than 300 years of Israel's history between King David and the prophet Isaiah. The glory days of the kingdom under David and Solomon are over. The kingdom has divided and fallen into apostasy. Isaiah prophesied to Judah during the time of Israel's destruction by Assyria. And Judah itself was later carried into captivity by Babylon. The future of Israel looked bleak. However, Isaiah prophesied of a glorious future to come—not only restoration to their land of promise, but of an even more glorious coming of Messiah as spiritual deliverer.

In today's text we have the promise of the Lord's presence, protection and preservation of His people in spite of the tribulations they may go through. God

had an ongoing purpose for His people and He was keeping hope alive through the prophecy of Isaiah.

The Lord begins His message to Israel with that great comforting phrase, "Fear not." He then goes on to explain why they need not fear: He created them, He formed them into a nation, He redeemed them, they are His own people. For those reasons He will not allow flood nor flame to engulf them. God will destroy other nations to preserve His people, for He loves them above all others.

Then Isaiah interjects a prophetic note: A time will come when God will bring His children home from the far-flung corners of the earth. There was a partial fulfillment of that prophecy seen in the return of the captives from Babylon and, in more recent times, the re-establishment of the nation of Israel and the influx of Jews from around the world. There is a time, still future, when this prophecy will be fulfilled in the spiritual sense, when God gathers "every one that is called by my name" from the four corners of the earth and establishes His eternal kingdom.

The Lord states, verses 10-13, His sovereignty, His uniqueness, His power. There is none like Him. He is eternal. And Israel is witness to His greatness and power. The Lord gives evidence of the fulfilling of future promises by calling attention to past evidences of His power and His care for His children.

Then His people are instructed (verses 18, 19) not to dwell on things of the past, for God was planning a new work on their behalf. Certainly Israel's deliverance from Egypt, referred to in verse 16, was a tremendous act of deliverance on God's part. However, He says not to dwell on that but to look forward to the even greater act of their future deliverance from Babylon. God will make a way through the desert and again provide for their needs.

Remember, God had a purpose for Israel, to provide human lineage for the

coming Messiah, so important for those who experienced His birth in Bethlehem. In spite of their failures, their wanderings, God continued to love and cherish His chosen people. Today's lesson proves His love through the promise of restoration and providential care.

For thought and discussion

1. Once again, be sure to understand how the thrust of today's lesson fits into the overall plan of God's redemption.
2. Recount some of the experiences where God preserved His people, both biblical and historical.
3. God has given promises to His New Testament children also. Are we reflecting the level of faith we should be? How can we increase faith and trust in His promises?
4. What value do past experiences have for us?
5. God has a purpose for the church today, just as He had for ancient Israel. Are we living up to His purposes? What are they? How can we be more respondent to His will?

OCTOBER 17, 2004

The Promise of a New Covenant

Jeremiah 29:10-14; 31:31-34

The nation of Judah was at a low ebb when Jeremiah penned the words of today's text. Spiritually they had failed to live up to previous reforms. Nationally they had been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and taken captive to Babylon. They were on the verge of extinction as a nation. But amid all the gloom, God offers a word of hope. In spite of their faithlessness, their disobedience and waywardness, He still loved them and held out for them a bright future. That is the message in today's lesson. Be sure to read Chapters 29 through 31 for the setting of today's lesson. Also, be sure to

keep in mind the overall theme of "The Redemptive Plan of God," and observe how this lesson fits into that plan.

Today's lesson text is taken from the letter Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, wherein he urges them to settle down, build houses, plant crops, and raise families. He also told them, interestingly, to pray for the peace of the city (v. 7). They were to be there for 70 years and the peace of the city would also secure their peace. (See 2 Chronicles 36:11-23.)

At the completion of 70 years, God would not only return Judah to her homeland, but He would also punish Babylon for their wickedness and mistreatment of other nations. (See Chapter 25:8-14.) In contrast to His punishment of Babylon, His thoughts toward His people are peaceful. And He assures them of His open ear to their prayers and His openness and acceptance as they seek Him. But their seeking must be sincere, unfeigned, with the whole heart. (See Isaiah 55:6, 7.)

God promises to be there when He is sought by those with a repentant heart. And He promises mercy and deliverance. And a restoring of their fortunes. And a gathering from the lands of their dispersion. His people would be home again, ready for a new start, a new relationship.

And that is the next promise God makes (31:31-34). There is a day coming, God promises, when He will make a new covenant with His people, which will result in a different kind of relationship, a heart relationship. Notice in verse 31, the scope of that covenant. The promise is made to all of God's children, Israel and Judah alike.

The Old Covenant was written on tablets of stone. The New Covenant will be written on the heart of God's people. No longer would there be need for an intermediary, or priest to instruct, but each individual would enter personally into a bonding relationship with God the Father. Truly the new is better than the

old because it is a heart relationship.

Judah and Israel looked forward to that New Covenant relationship, a personal, individual one. We, today, have experienced it. We are now living under the dictates of that New Covenant, a covenant of blessed closeness to our Lord. And yet one of responsibility. Those who call upon the Lord for mercy and forgiveness must also be repentant of their sins and willing to live in obedience to the dictates of the covenant.

As we see God's Plan of Redemption unfolding, we now have the promise, from Jeremiah's perspective, of a new and blessed relationship with the Father, God. And we are privileged to be recipients.

For thought and discussion

1. Review Judah's unfaithfulness to God that brought them to the point of God's disfavor. Then reflect on His mercy in promising them restoration—to their land, and to His favor.
2. God is certainly merciful and accepting of those who seek Him. But what must qualify the seeking?
3. Why was there a need for a new covenant between God and His people? What was wrong with the first one?
4. Explore the differences between the two covenants God established with His people. Are there also similarities?
5. Review the demands of the New Covenant. Are there issues you are overlooking in your life? Let's recommit ourselves anew to its demands.

OCTOBER 24, 2004

Future Hope for Israel

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Thus far in our studies we have dealt with real people, places, and events. In today's lesson we move into the realm of allegory. Ezekiel, the prophet during the Babylonian captivity, uses many graphic illustrations, figures of speech and alle-

gories in his preaching. His messages are well documented as coming from God. The phrase, "The word of the Lord came to me" appears frequently throughout the book. The phrase with which Chapter 37 begins, "The hand of the Lord was upon me" also occurs a number of times. Ezekiel made it clear that the message he proclaimed was God's message and that he was only His spokesman.

Today's lesson focuses on a future hope for Israel, partially fulfilled by the exiles' return from Babylonian captivity. There are also Messianic overtones in the text and following chapters. It will help your understanding to read Chapter 36 and all of Chapter 37 for context.

Here in Chapter 37 Ezekiel said the hand of the Lord was upon him and gave him a vision of a valley full of bones. As he walked among them he noticed they were very dry, indicating they had lain exposed for some time. Verse 11 identifies these bones as "the whole house of Israel," despondent and hopeless in captivity.

The Lord then asked Ezekiel an intriguing question: "Can these bones live?" Wisely Ezekiel answered, "Thou knowest." Beyond the scope of human understanding, Ezekiel knew that God could work. His answer was, in effect, an affirmation of God's power and a recognition of His sovereignty. Ezekiel did not know what God was leading up to with His questioning, but he was a willing participant in the drama.

God then commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to these dead, dry bones. And he obeyed, however absurd it may have seemed to him at the time. And as he did, something happened. There was a great rattling as the bones came together, joining bone to bone. Once the skeletons were joined, they fleshed out and were covered with skin. But they were still dead—there was no life in them.

But then again God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy, this time to the wind and call it to come from the four corners

and infuse breath into these dead men that they might live. He did, and the winds came and breathed life into these dead bodies and they “stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”

All of this was an allegory of God releasing His people from captivity and restoring them to their homeland. It was also to serve as a reminder to God’s people of His power and His love and concern for them.

Historically, spiritually, and emotionally Israel was at a low ebb. But there was a brighter future and God used Ezekiel and his vision of the valley of dry bones to restore hope to His people, and reawaken them to a recognition of His love and care for them. He was their God. He would not forsake them. They still had a place in His plans, His redemptive plan.

For thought and discussion

1. What are the advantages/disadvantages of using allegory in teaching, and what place does it have in our teaching program in the church today? Discuss.
2. Review again the reasons for Israel’s captivity.
3. What does this lesson teach us about God’s faithfulness to His promises? How does this help us when things look bleak as they did for Israel in today’s lesson?
4. Don’t miss the spiritual application of this lesson for our day.
5. As you look at this passage and reflect on world events today, renew your faith in the fulfillment of all God’s promises.

OCTOBER 31, 2004

A Renewed Trust in God

Psalm 73:1-3, 12, 13, 16-18, 21-26, 28

This Psalm of Asaph describes the person who, temporarily, allows his focus

to shift from God to the godless. It shows his painful, yet enlightening struggle to come to the truth of the matter and then to a renewal of his trust in God. This was a personal experience and Asaph was speaking from the depths of his heart.

Asaph was one of the chief musicians of Kings David and Solomon’s court. (See 1 Chronicles 16:1-6; 2 Chronicles 5.) He was a devout man, attested by the recording of his deep feelings about God in his psalms, of which he wrote perhaps a dozen.

The purpose of today’s lesson is to establish, or reestablish, personal trust in God, that He will fulfill His promises to, and regarding, His people. Such trust is basic to our acceptance of His redemptive plan, and key to our entering into the relationship generated by that plan. Asaph’s experience shows us the way. (Read the entire Psalm for complete understanding of his experience.)

Asaph, as have so many others, allowed his gaze to drift from God to his surrounding, ungodly contemporaries. And what he saw caused a crisis of faith. The wicked were prospering. They were living sumptuously and dying untroubled. It shook him. Why bother to live a disciplined, sometimes difficult, life since the godless seem to get along so well? Their life was smooth and carefree. Asaph was envious and perplexed because he experienced chastening (v. 14). Was life unfair? Was God unfair?

As Asaph pondered these deep and perplexing questions he came to God with his concerns. There, in quiet communion, he came to understanding. While the wicked might seem at ease and untroubled now, they are on a slippery path to destruction. There Asaph learned not to judge by appearances but by consequences. The final end of the person is what matters, not present circumstances.

Having come to that conclusion, Asaph expressed regret for his earlier,

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faulty assumptions. He realized his folly and renewed his trust in God and His sovereignty. He acknowledged God's presence and protection and guiding hand in his life. He admitted his dependence on God, that He alone would give direction and satisfaction in life and ultimately usher him into His glorious presence for eternity, something the ungodly certainly would not experience.

Asaph acknowledged (v. 28) his responsibility to draw close to God, to fix his gaze on Him, and firmly put his trust in Him—continually.

A lesson Asaph learned, which is applicable to us today, is that one's primary focus must first be on God, and then on self and self-evaluation, not looking outward critically on others. If we but admit it, we have enough to do with keeping ourselves in proper alignment with God's will and maintaining a trusting relationship with Him. Does your trust in God need to be restored? Today is a good day to do it, recommit-

ting yourself to Him and in cooperation with His will and plan.

For thought and discussion

1. Notice with Asaph the dangers of looking around instead of looking up. See 2 Corinthians 10:12b.
2. Why do the wicked prosper? Do God's people have a franchise on prosperity? What are the major differences between the two? Think. And discuss.
3. Why is it so much easier to look around at others and judge them and consequently become dissatisfied with one's own situation than it is to look first at ourselves?
4. Drawing close to God resolves a multitude of problems. Give some serious thought and perhaps class discussion to practical and effective ways this can be accomplished.
5. Where is your trust? In things? in yourself? in God? Do some self-examination on this issue. And don't forget to weigh consequences. ■

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Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

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Fresh Breath in the Fourth Century

A recipe for toothpaste has been found in a collection of Egyptian papyrus documents, dating from around the 4th century A.D. The recipe for “white and perfect teeth,” includes mint, salt, pepper, and dried iris. Interestingly, science recently has discovered that iris is useful in preventing gum disease. One dentist, who tested the ancient dentrifice in his own mouth, commented that the concoction was not unpleasant and his mouth felt “fresh and clean” afterwards.

A fascinating side note: It is thought that the toothpaste recipe may have been written by a monk as it is written on papyrus which includes monastery correspondence. By the 4th century, Christianity was well established in Egypt, and monks were active in health care. In fact, this was the period of Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea, who encouraged monastic communities in the practice of medicine.

—from *Creation*

* * * * *

Lies Our Culture Tells Us

Our surrounding culture says that children rob us of financial resources and our personal potential. Our culture says women are made irrelevant by motherhood. Our culture says we should fulfill our own desires before having children. The Scripture replies that “Children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward.”

—from *Boundless* as quoted in *The Washington Times*

* * * * *

A Preventable Tragedy

Malaria has made a comeback. Last year, 300 million people were infected by the disease, and 3 million died from it. Most of those who died were under age five. (AIDS killed just over 3 million people last year.) Though there is no cure for AIDS, the tragedy of malaria seems even more heartbreaking because it can be prevented and cured. Malaria is the worst in sub-Saharan Africa where the number of cases of malaria per year has quadrupled since the 80s and the death rate among children has doubled.

Malaria is caused by four closely related parasites. Mosquitoes are the usual carrier. When an infected mosquito bites a human, the parasites enter the bloodstream, where they reproduce in the host’s liver and red blood cells. The red blood cells eventually burst with the new generation of parasites, and the human host suffers fever, shivering, pain, and perhaps, death. A mosquito becomes infected by biting an infected person. People may be reinfected with the disease throughout life, while children are most vulnerable to the disease, sometimes suffering convulsions, permanent brain damage, and a greater likelihood of death.

The malarial parasites have become resistant to drugs used effectively in earlier years. Also DDT, an effective agent against mosquitoes, is now frowned on because of its toxic effect on fish, birds, and beneficial insects.

The good news is that a medication derived from the plant *Artemisia annua*, or sweet wormwood, quickly kills the

parasite in the human bloodstream. The cost is \$1 to \$10 per person, which seems reasonable, but it is 10 times the price of current treatment. Many Africans already spend a third of their incomes on malaria treatment, and cannot afford to multiply that figure by 10. Their governments cannot afford to pay the bill either. Developed countries and aid organizations will have to fill the gap.

As for prevention, many African countries are promoting the practice of sleeping under insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets. These are quite effective at protecting the sleeper as well as killing mosquitoes. Also governments are relooking at using DDT to repel mosquitoes. Other pesticides have been tried and found wanting. Some feel that DDT must be used in limited quantities, such as spraying homes, to keep the mosquitoes away. This would require much less DDT than what was previously used in spraying crops and swamps. —from *TIME*

The Lowest Spot on Earth

The Dead Sea is drying up. Filled by the Jordan River and having no outlet, this unique spot, 417 meters below sea level, is called a terminal lake. Now ninety percent of the Jordan River water is diverted for agricultural, industrial, and urban use, and it cannot keep up with the evaporation rate. The surface level has dropped by more than 25 meters in the past 40 years. Its surface area has diminished by more than a third since 1900.

This is certainly detrimental to tourism. Large and dangerous sinkholes have appeared, making it unwise to build new hotels on the north side. Declining water levels have exposed deep mud on the western side—mud so thick it acts like quicksand—creating a real danger to tourists. The Israeli government dotted the shore with warning signs.

The demise of the Dead Sea puts many species of wildlife at risk. In spite of its

name, the Dead Sea is ringed with springs and oases which are havens for 90 species of birds, 25 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 24 species of mammals, and 400+ species of plants. As the Sea recedes, and sinkholes keep opening up, the wildlife refuges are threatened.

The nation of Israel, with its Palestinian West Bank, which also borders a portion of the Dead Sea, and the nation of Jordan, which borders the Sea on the east, must work together to preserve the Dead Sea Basin. It will be difficult, as the need for fresh water upstream becomes ever more acute in the arid Middle East. Can such cooperation be achieved among these contending groups so that humanity and wildlife will both have the water needed for survival? —from *World*Watch*

The Great White North

In several polls commissioned by Can West News Services, over 40% of Canadian teens between the ages of 14 and 18 described the United States as “evil.” Sixty-four percent of French Canadian youth consider “evil” to be a fitting adjective for their southern neighbor.

—from *www.canadafreepress.com* as quoted in *The Washington Times*

A Call to John Ashcroft

On June 29, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that the Child Online Protection Act (COPA) is likely unconstitutional. COPA has been sent to a U.S. district court for a new trial, where it is thought to have almost no chance for survival. Signed by President Clinton in 1998, COPA required commercial sex sites to ensure that those using their sites were indeed adults. Almost immediately upon its enactment, the ACLU filed a First Amendment suit and won a temporary injunction against enforcement of COPA. Struck down by federal courts twice, the Supreme Court recently reviewed the case, ruling on the merits of the lower court’s injunc-

tion, rather than on COPA's constitutionality. However, the justices mentioned that COPA likely violated the First Amendment right of adults to access obscenity without having to prove that they are indeed adults. Justice Clarence Thomas, usually considered to be family friendly, sided with the liberal majority in this and two other key pornography cases.

Now it appears that the best hope for reigning in pornographers is aggressive enforcement of existing federal anti-obscenity laws. Representative John Sullivan (R-Okla) sent a letter on July 7 to House colleagues urging them, in light of the COPA ruling, to join him in pressing for passage of House Concurrent Resolution 298. That measure puts the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Pro-family groups have already been disappointed by John Ashcroft's laxness in prosecuting obscenity. "John Ashcroft has been a failure at prosecuting obscenity," said Pat Trueman, senior legal advisor for

the Family Research Council. "Today, you can't name a single major internet pornographer who's been prosecuted under Mr. Ashcroft's leadership."

FYI: Estimated number of pornographic websites: 4.2 million.

Number of individual pornographic web pages: 372 million.

Average age at which children are exposed to online obscenity: 11.

Number of 15-17-year-olds with internet access who admit to multiple exposures to hardcore porn: 80%.

Number of porn sites that use children's character names like Pokemon and Barbie to lure children to their sites: Thousands. —from *World*

Another Supreme Ruling

The Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that Washington State did not violate the free exercise of religion by denying public scholarship funds to theology students.

—from *World*

Separated Unto God

by J. C. Wenger



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Heavenly Free-Fall

by Andree Seu

What would happen if we trusted enough in God to plunge into a certain kind of self-forgetfulness?

It's clear that we're all too busy to bother much with each other. I'm too busy for you and you're too busy for me. I have my "excuse note": four kids, two jobs, one mortgage, and severe personal limitations. You have your own excuses.

I just read in my morning devotions about Timothy: "I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 2:20, 21). I find this mildly annoying. I need to seek my own interests. There are only so many thoughts one can allow to crowd one's brain, and the Lord commands us to provide for our own households. Yadda-yadda-yadda.

I see in the papers there was a murder-suicide in North Philadelphia (the prod for this essay): A 34-year-old man came into work and shot the secretary, whom he had been dating. Who knows that story chapter and verse? Who was in on the months of missteps that led off that particular cliff? Who paid any attention? Count on it, your workplace is a clutch of separate souls, each hermetically sealed in his and her own private terror. We all come in google-eyed in the last act, rubbernecking the strewn bodies. I hope there were no Christians in that office.

But there were Christians in the case of the teacher in the local Christian school who had a year-long affair with another teacher. He was an elder on top of it, under particular care of the session, one would presume. To make it worse, his wife had two years earlier come to the senior pastor complaining about her husband. But hey, who

doesn't have complaints about her husband? I suppose the pastor, after wifey's visit, inquired of the elder, in passing, how things were going at home; and the elder said fine; and that was the end of that. I would have done the same thing.

Life in our century is too busy for anything but lick-and-promise relationship. So then, logically speaking, either God has commanded, in Philippians 2, something we are unable to do, or we shall have to go back to the drawing board and brainstorm.

As an opening kick of the can, let me admit that I always get this far in my complaint and then it dawns on me: There is something disingenuous about my jabbering. It is not as if I have, in a paraphrase of Philippians 3:16, ever "lived up to the knowledge I have already attained." Had I but done that, being obedient all along in the little choices that lead to other little choices, who knows but that my eye would not be so murky now?

What would a person find (let us indulge in a momentary flight of imagination, a risky and questionable orthodox foray into parallel universes) if he or she lived entirely differently? If rather than preconceiving the Christian life as a program, he were to yield his life, one moment at a time, to the prompting of the Spirit (through the Word)? If he were to overthrow all self-protection and err on the side of love of neighbor, trusting God to take care of him as he plunged into a certain kind of self-forgetfulness? If he embraced the free-fall of a life without a preset program, without a preconception of the ends?

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

The answer, of course, is a matter of historical record: That way of living leads to a crucifixion or the gallows as like as to a bigger house in the 'burbs. It is a way of living I have personally not had the courage to live but which I recognize as a recipient: About 12 years ago I pretty much had the wind knocked out of me, but was not so out of it as not to notice Donna coming up alongside—standing in a parking lot with me till the sun sank, phone counseling for hours on end, postponing who knows what agenda for weeks. I know little of her life before or since, but it

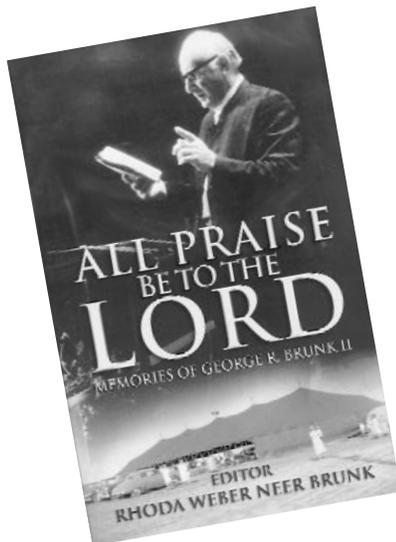
matters not to me: Donna did a very fine thing back then. And it alone may carry more weight in the last day than my 52 years end to end.

It is an extraordinary person who will buck his own culture—who will even see his own culture—and will step off the treadmill for another's rescue, choosing free-fall over safety. May you have such a friend in your life. May you be one. ■

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Parent, Child, Charity, and Change

by Jennifer Roback Morse

I am a Ph.D. in economics who started out with theories about families, and theories about government, and theories about charity. Becoming a mom changed my theories. This is my conversion story.

Like many career women, my inclination was to put my kids in day care. Hire a nanny. Do not allow the presence of children to hinder career advancement. Be as much like a man as possible. In my case, it was not radical feminism that influenced my thinking, but rather conservative economics, with its emphasis on income-maximizing and achievement. But once my children arrived, my views changed.

You see, the particular children I received gave me an opportunity to participate in a continuing personal act of charity. Mind you, I did not intend to do any such thing. I stumbled into my situation with not very good motives. I was a barren yuppie, fast approaching middle age, and desperate for motherhood. My husband and I adopted a 2-and-a-half-year-old boy from a Romanian orphanage. He was described as healthy, but the adoption agency actually knew little more than his name and his birthdate. We plunged in.

If we had known what we were getting into, we would have been afraid to try, for Nico turned out to be developmentally delayed and emotionally disturbed. But there was no turning back for our family. And I can honestly say that in spite of the difficulties he causes, our son has changed us for the better.

As it turned out, we gave birth to a daughter six months after our son's arrival. Anne's development has been smooth and undemanding; if we had placed her in day care, we probably would have gotten away with it. But our son's situation did not allow us to do this. In

day care all day every day, he would not have made it. So we changed the way we live, and our daughter has benefited as well. Now I thank God every day for giving me these particular children, and for all that I have learned from them.

One thing I learned is that no social program could take the place of what we have done for Nico. Children must be raised one by one. There are no shortcuts that can be mass produced by state, "village," or corporation. Going from being a statistic to being our son was what saved Nico.

I also learned that being a mother is the most important thing I will ever do. I had had great fantasies of changing the world with my brilliance, and it was with reluctance that I abandoned my view of myself as the center of the universe. I am, of course, the center of my children's universe, but messy pants and temper tantrums were not the sort of glory I had earlier envisioned.

I learned to put one foot in front of the other, to do what has to be done even when it seems too arduous. Along the way, a message from long ago and far-away became immediate and intimate: "Sell all your possessions and come follow me."

Oh, He means me! I had always thought that message was for someone else. It was caring for particular children, loving particular people, that opened my heart to the grace of God. That grace gave me what I needed to do the seemingly impossible job.

This is why I have come to believe that bureaucratized social programs are no substitute for the giving from one person to another that is the true meaning of charity. The state stands between the recipient and the donor, shielding both from the humanity of the other. The receiver becomes a problem instead of a

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

Uncommon Sense

by Nathan Miller

Director of Development of Rosedale Bible College

If Only I Made More Money . . .

At times I've caught myself thinking "If only I made more money, then I could . . ." followed by things I'd like to do—some of them actually very good. However, both in my own experience, and in that of clients I've worked with, seldom has the first and most obvious answer to financial crises been the level of income.

In the 1960s C. Northcote Parkinson popularized a business management principle: "Work expands to fill the time available." After all, how many employers find that employees readily admit that they are underworked and have discretionary time? And, no matter how much time one saves, the workload expands to fill one's time.

But within the same context, Parkinson made another perhaps more significant observation: "Expenditures always rise to meet income." How many of us have promised ourselves when our income goes up that "we're going to save more," or that "we're going to put the extra money toward our debt." Parkinson expanded his observations to another conclusion: "Individual expenditure not only rises to meet income, but tends to surpass it, and probably always will."

PARENT, CHILD, CHARITY . . . cont'd.

human person in whom we might see the face of God. The giver becomes a cash dispenser, instead of a human person who might be transformed by the experience of giving.

We deceive ourselves if we think we can have the results of charity without the personal reality of charity. ■

—Taken from *The American Enterprise*

Can I Afford It?

As Christians, perhaps one of the least important questions we can ask ourselves about the appropriateness of expenditures is whether we can afford them. More important may be the following: "Is this a good use of God's money, a bit of which I'm managing?"

If I use affordability as my only criterion, I have no value-based or moral anchor by which I make decisions. I merely allow my income level to decide for me. That seems an unthinking, careless way to live.

I remember a conversation I had some time ago with a mother who told me how her second grade son had been asking for an expensive gift. Her comment to me: "I couldn't tell him no because we really can afford to get it for him." What a tragedy! Here was a marvelous opportunity to both practice and teach that discipleship affects economic choices, that God holds us accountable for our management practices, and that we can be free to make decisions—not blindly following the limits our incomes impose upon us.

John Wesley, early in his public ministry, had an annual income of three British pounds, and his expenses were nearly the same. By the end of his ministry, his income had risen to 72 pounds annually, but his personal expenditures had stayed below 5 pounds. He successfully resisted Parkinson's Law.

Am I resisting it? Are you? What steps might you take to do better? ■

—Used with permission of *Brotherhood Beacon*

The Accountability of Leaders

by David L. Burkholder

The scriptures are very clear that men chosen for positions of leadership in the church be men of outstanding ability and impeccable moral character. As important as these qualities are however, they must be valued only within the framework of the spiritual qualification of the individual under consideration. Spirituality, defined as one's close walk with God and adherence and obedience to His complete will, is the primary qualification for one chosen to lead God's people through the avenues of teaching and an exemplary life. It is impossible to teach what one does not possess and profess. It is impossible to lead others where one has not himself been.

Moral character, one's response to the truths of God's Word, will be a result of one's Christian commitment and its expression in all areas of life. Ability is a gift of God which must be developed to full potential by study and practice. It is not simply dropped upon one as a mantle with the call to leadership. Spirituality comes through a living and vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. All of these work together to produce a worthy workman for God.

In regard to spiritual leadership, it is instructive to note the qualification laid down by Peter for choosing an apostle to take the place of Judas. In Acts 1:21 we read that he must be one who has "compared with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us." In other words it had to be one who knew the Lord Jesus, and followed His teachings and had committed his life to propagating those teachings.

In Acts 6, candidates for the serving ministry of the fledgling church were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." In later New Testament writings, the Apostle Paul spells out various qualifications for those being

given the responsibility of leading the church. They were to be men of high moral character, held in reputation by those within and outside the church. In writing to Titus, Paul admonishes him to "show himself a pattern of good works, in doctrine uncorrupt, sincere, sound of speech." The standards are high because these men are representing God to men and men to God.

The methods leaders use in guiding others are: preaching (2 Timothy 4:2), teaching (2 Timothy 2:2), admonition, and exhortation. There are also times when they must rebuke or reprove those straying from the teachings of scripture. Their job is to accurately interpret and apply God's Word to human need. The very title of their position declares them to be those who guide others. It is a position of high responsibility. They give guidance and direction to the lives of others, and here in the spiritual sphere these are matters of eternal significance.

The responsibility of leaders in the church is not just simply to lead men, but to lead them aright, to lead them to God and holiness of life. It is not a position of personal extension, but of sacrifice and service to others. Leadership in the church must be done with the attitude expressed by John the Baptist regarding his relationship to Jesus: "He must increase; I must decrease." The goal of the leader must be to lead others to a satisfying relationship with Jesus Christ and give them the tools to maximize that relationship on their own, the end result being eternal life with the Son of God in heaven. Spiritual leadership is serious business. It must not be done from selfish motives. Eternal destinies are at stake.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing disparity in our day between the verities of the Bible and what some church

leaders are teaching. There has been a rather decided shift away from Biblical theology toward human reasoning. Absolutes are gone. What “feels” right seems to be the deciding factor on moral issues for many people, leaders included. Adherence to a strict standard is passé. There is also deception. The enemy of man’s soul is ever active to lead persons astray, and if he is successful in deceiving leaders he, by extension, has the power to influence those under the leaders’ control in the wrong direction. It is a tragedy of eternal proportions.

In the end, man will not be judged by what he felt was right, or on what he wanted to be right, or on majority opinion, but on what God says is right. The eternal Word of God will be the final judge of each individual’s life and motives. So it is of utmost importance that one knows and understands that Word and strives with earnest diligence to conform his life to its teachings. To that end there is no substitute for personal study of the Word. That is a principle taught both in the Word of God and by the reformers of the 16th century, and held as a tenet of the free churches since the Reformation. Applying oneself diligently to an understanding and personal application of God’s standard of holiness is each individual’s responsibility.

Many people, however, are like the Ethiopian eunuch who, in response to Philip’s question regarding his understanding of what he was reading, responded, “How can I except some man guide me?” And so God structured the church to provide clarity and understanding of the Word and give guidance in effective and valid applications of its principles to life. That’s what leaders are for, men who are responsible to guide others. And that is also why it is so important that these be men of sterling moral and spiritual character. The life-direction and eternal destiny of others depends on their personal integrity and the accuracy with which they interpret and present the Word.

But many so-called leaders today are turning from the truth of God’s Word to “another doctrine,” one of accommodation and compromise. In many cases they are simply yielding to the fleshly whims and desires of those they are supposedly leading and tickling their ears and minds with an easy Christianity that makes few demands and, consequently, yields few results. In other cases leaders present a diluted or altered gospel in order to gain a personal following. The fact that the scripture foretells such situations (1 Timothy 4:1-3, for example) makes them no less tragic.

People are being led astray by these teachers. Jesus called them false prophets in sheep’s clothing in Matthew 7:15. And God will hold them accountable for their misrepresentation of His Holy Word, the standard of truth by which He intends man to live and by which man will ultimately be judged. And while it is true that each individual must give account of himself personally before God, the accountability of those called to lead is multiplied by their responsibility over others. Those who preach less than the full, pure gospel of Jesus Christ will fall under God’s condemnation and curse (Galatians 1:8, 9). And that is a horrible condemnation, one to be avoided at all costs.

Leadership in the church is a high privilege, but it also carries grave responsibility. Leaders not only carry spiritual responsibility for themselves, but are commissioned to lead others in the way of truth and godliness. To fail in this responsibility endangers their own soul and the eternal destiny of many others. And that is a compounded tragedy.

Leaders, you are accountable to God and will be held answerable for the direction you have given those under your leadership. There must be no other standard for life and practice than the simple, unadulterated Word of God. So, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” ■

Report on June 26, 2004, Conference of the Reformed Church and Anabaptists in Zurich, Switzerland

by William McGrath, Dunmore East, Ireland

Four of us attended from our Amish Mennonite mission church in Ireland. Having spent fifty years studying Church History, this was one conference I did not want to miss, the chance of a lifetime to see history being made. The purpose of the conference was not an ecumenical union between the Reformed Church and the Anabaptists, but a Reconciliation meeting. They wanted to ask forgiveness for their having killed our forefathers, confessing it was wrong to do.

From 1523 to 1525, there were many meetings between the Reformed Church of Zurich and Anabaptists, to see if they could work together. Both groups wanted to go the Bible way. Anabaptists took Christ's New Testament as their rule, but the Reformed more the Old Testament, taking infant baptism for circumcision, and a State Church that could kill.

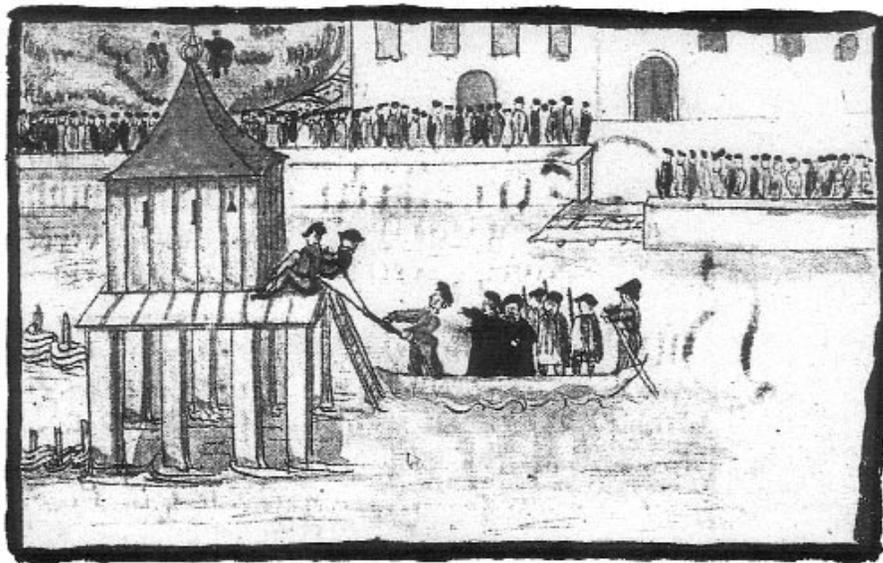
We flew from Dublin to Zurich, Switzerland. We rented a car and Dan Yoder drove. A minister of the Reformed Church met us, to guide us to our lodgings. On the

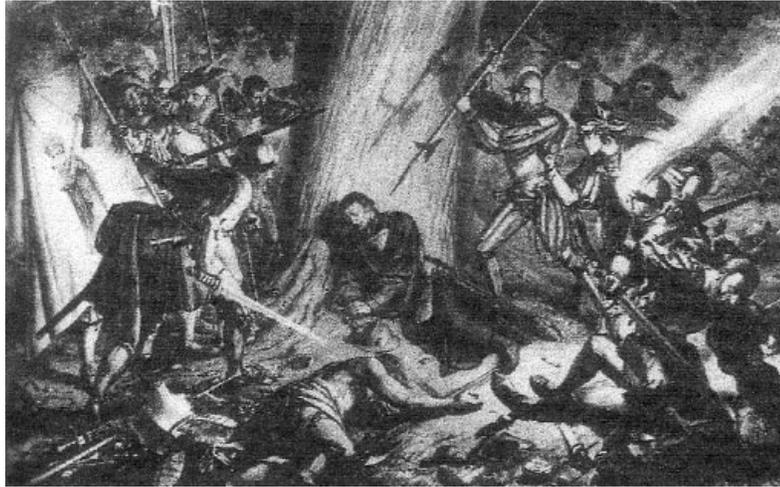
way he took us to the very spot in the Limmat River, where Felix Manz was drowned in 1527. Our guide showed us the memorial carved from basalt with the letters inlaid (I translate it into English):

HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LIMMAT, FROM A FISHING PLATFORM, FELIX MANZ AND FIVE OTHER ANABAPTISTS WERE DROWNED IN THE REFORMATION TIME, BETWEEN 1527 AND 1532. THE LAST ANABAPTIST EXECUTED IN ZURICH WAS HANS LANDIS IN 1614.

This old drawing below shows how the Swiss executed the Anabaptists—tying them up so they could not swim, and then dragging them backwards off the fishing platform to drown. Felix Manz was 27 years old when he was executed by drowning. He forgave his persecutors.

Our friendly guide showed us all these things two days before the Conference, because we had arrived earlier to do some research. I had been to Zurich many times with Tour Groups that I guided years ago. But I had missed ever seeing the Swiss





Zwingli's death on the battlefield of Kappel, October 11, 1531.

National Museum, and so we went there to do some more history research.

Then we went to the town of St. Gallen, to do some research there. It has one of the largest and best libraries in Europe, with many hand-written manuscripts from Medieval times. The place was founded in 612 by an Irish missionary named Gall. He helped to convert the German tribes there. The original people of Switzerland were like the Irish—Celts—and they were invaded by the Romans and later the Germans. DNA studies show that 60% of the Swiss have more Celtic blood patterns than German. In fact, the correct name of the country is not “Switzerland” but the Helvetic Confederation. The Helvetic tribes were a Celtic confederation.

When Conrad Grebel had to flee Zurich, one of the places he went and baptized many people into the Anabaptist churches, was in the St. Gallen area. His brother-in-law, named Vadian, was the Reformed Church leader of St. Gallen. Unfortunately, Vadian was against the Anabaptists too. Imprisoned by Zwingli, Grebel escaped, sickened and died in 1526 in Maienfeld. His children were raised in the Swiss Reformed Church, and his own father, Jacob Grebel, was beheaded by the Zurich reformer, named Ulrich Zwingli. Zwingli had once said he would never persecute anyone, because faith comes best

through freely accepting Christ. Alas, he became a leader of his own Zurich army, attacking Anabaptists and Catholics too.

The picture shown above is a realistic painting showing the death of Ulrich Zwingli on the field of Kappel battle in 1531. He was killed fighting against a Catholic army, and with his own Protestant Reformed army, 24 other Reformed preachers also were killed. Ironically, three of the Anabaptist elders of the village of Zollikon, not far from Zurich, who had given up their Anabaptist faith under Reformed pressure, were also killed in that battle. **Those who take the sword will perish by the sword.**

To best prepare for a Conference, we should do some homework. We read a book before we left Ireland, entitled **“Heal Our Land,”** by Paul Veraguth (Schleife Publishing, 2003), 112 pages. It gave us the background of recent moves for revival and reconciliation.

It became a fitting goal for the Swiss Reformed Church to, this year, on the 500th anniversary of the birth of their reformer Heinrich Bullinger, to here have a day of special outreach to Anabaptists. This was Saturday, June 26. Delegates from Anabaptist churches in Switzerland, Germany, France, Ireland, Netherlands, America, Africa, etc., were invited to come! They did!

Free copies were provided on the Con-

ference day of the stimulating book by Fritz Blanke: **“Brothers in Christ,” published first by the author in 1955, then in the U.S. in 1961, and in later editions as well (78 pages).** I had read this book before, and reread it. It describes the heroism of Felix Manz and Conrad Grebel in founding the first Anabaptist church in Zurich on January 21, 1525. But Zwingli crushed them in Zurich!

Zwingli was furious, and he and the city council scattered them everywhere. The next outbreak was at the village of Zollikon, near Zurich. The brethren at Zollikon were mostly farmers and carpenters and vineyard growers. Their revival spread like wildfire in the village, many were baptized, but in the end they too were suppressed by the dictator in Zurich.

Grebel died in 1526, Manz was martyred in 1527, and it looked like the movement was over, especially since fanaticism rose up at Zollikon with “prophets” and mob demonstrations, traitors, and backsliders. All over Europe, thousands of people were disillusioned with the betrayal of the Protestant reformers like Luther, Zwingli, and the rest. The time was ripe for the Swiss Brethren to beget a movement all over Central Europe. But what they needed was a common Standard or Church Constitution. So God raised up Michael Sattler to give them the **7 Points of the Schleithem Confession:**

- 1—Believer’s baptism, instead of infant baptism.**
- 2—The Bann, to keep church discipline against false “prophets” and backsliders.**
- 3—Communion for true believers only, not for unconverted people.**
- 4—Separation from worldliness, drunkenness, and compromise.**
- 5—Spiritual ministers in each congregation to preach the Gospel.**
- 6—Nonresistance that rejects the sword or involving the church in politics.**
- 7—No swearing of oaths, no lawsuits, no demands for retribution.**

Yes, if you want to do your homework before coming to a Conference like this, read the Schleithem Confession of 1527, which turned the tide all over Europe.

There were no Mennonites yet, because Menno Simons was not converted until 1536, but at Schleithem they found a formula to draw Anabaptist fellowships together all over Europe!

If you needed another piece of homework to prepare for this Conference, you could have read the new 40-page booklet entitled **The Anabaptists, Neither Protestants Nor Catholics.** First written in 1955-56, it is now available again from Lamp and Light Publishers (Farmington, NM). **Do your homework before you come to a Conference like this!**

The Conference Program, June 26, 2004, at Grossmuenster, Zurich

The city of Zurich, Switzerland (population 400,000) is the capital of Canton Zurich, which totals about 1,500,000. In the past, we guided many tour groups here. This is where most of our Amish Mennonite families originated—one of the most scenic places in the world.

The Grossmuenster Cathedral is the main church of the Swiss Reformed Church. The program began at 10 a.m., with witnesses of the past in words and music. A song by Ulrich Zwingli was sung, and then the song by Felix Manz was sung, which appears in the *Ausbund* as *Mit Lust So Will Ich Singen* (“With Pleasure Will I Sing”). These set the mood—testimonies from both sides. A Swiss Mennonite chorus sang the Manz song in German, and later an American tour group of 30 sang it in English, some of us helping. We had sung it in our church in Ireland.

I thought since the martyr Felix Manz was being remembered today, it was only right that he have the privilege to speak by the song he had composed while in prison shortly before he died. **“Though he is dead, he still speaks.”** The world can kill martyrs, but they testify on. Various speakers gave short messages describing the Reformation in Zurich. Some of the speakers were Reformed, some Mennonite, one Plymouth Brethren; most were historians. A song by Zinzendorf was sung (a Pietist, like Wesley and others, whose songs are in our hymnals and we sing them too)—“Heart With Loving Heart United” (#836 in *The Mennonite*

Hymnal). Who can dare to say that only Mennonite songs are sung in heaven?

After this service, we dismissed for lunch at 12 p.m., across the River Limmat at a place called Lindenhof, where the Romans had made a fort long ago. Under tents there, we ate a lovely lunch and chatted with people from many different churches. Elisabeth Lutz, a famous tour guide and historian, arranged the catering with her family. We enjoyed the fellowship.

At 2 p.m. we divided up into six different workshops, where you could choose to discuss *Reformed and Anabaptists Today*, *Tracing Anabaptist Sites*, *The Peace Question*, *Anabaptist Roots in Switzerland*, *Reformed and Mennonites*, or *Reconciliation*. There were no attempts to force communion with different churches, no “charismatic” practices, as some feared. After all, our original Anabaptist forefathers **asked for meetings with others to discuss issues**. I was glad to see many Conservative Mennonite friends there, and even some Amish.

At 4 p.m. there was another service in the Grossmuenster, to discuss reconciliation. Swiss Reformed churchmen made it clear that they asked forgiveness for the persecutions done by their forefathers—**“We confess that the persecution was, according to our present conviction, a betrayal of the Gospel and that our Reformed forefathers were in error on this issue. . . . We acknowledge the faithful of the Anabaptist tradition as our sisters and brothers, and their churches as part of the body of Christ. . . . We honor the radical approach of the Anabaptist movement to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world as a free community of committed believers putting into practice the message of the Sermon on the Mount.”** Swiss Mennonites replied: “We have been used to being cut off from the world. . . . We confess that our communities can (also) find conformism, atrophy, withdrawal, and pride. . . . We no longer feel as victims. . . . We do not ask for material retribution for the past; that would seem to us contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel. . . . We receive your confession with a forgiving attitude.”

At 6 p.m. we went back to the Linden-

hof Hill across the river, for dinner under the tents, on chairs at tables, with delicious food that was like that of any Mennonite gathering. We were not among enemies, but hospitably treated by friends. We talked together of heavenly things.

At 8 p.m. we gathered by the Limmat riverside, beside the Felix Manz memorial stone, lying flat and mortared into the riverbank, for all to read the story of his martyrdom. A head of the Zurich City Council spoke to us—there were about 300 people present. He told how he had personally searched the Zurich Council records for 1527, and that Felix Manz had been unjustly tried, and **murdered. He asked us to forgive them**. I don’t think there was a dry eye among Christians there! The Swiss Mennonites replied. Then a boat came slowly rowing across the river, and two boatmen in it hooked off the scarlet cover over the Manz Memorial and dragged the cover into the river and rowed away. Just so Felix Manz had been treated, and now they were repenting and telling the whole world they were wrong.

After the comments that took place beforehand, and the unveiling of the Manz Memorial, James Landis from Virginia came forward and read a Poem Tribute to one of his forefathers, Hans Landis, executed in 1614, and also mentioned on this memorial stone. Even though this was hundreds of years ago, and none of us hate the persecutors, we could all feel the solemnity of this moment. May we never be persecutors; if persecuted, may we always forgive.

At 9 p.m. the Conference concluded with a Cultural Evening Program in the Grossmuenster. John Sharp, Mennonite historian, shared stories from his Amish and Mennonite childhood and relatives. There were samples of Swiss Folk Singers, and Chief Dalton, a Cree Indian who is also a Mennonite minister, who shared from his tribe’s history about the massacre of American Indians by American army soldiers. May God heal our land, that the innocent blood shed on the ground may not ever be shed again, and that we might live as peacemakers, never more shedding the blood of others—whether in America, Ireland, Switzerland, or Iraq. ■

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The Husband Loving His Wife as Himself

by Daniel B. Kauffman

Why does the Bible command the husband to love his wife as himself (Ephesians 5:33)? Would not every man who chooses a wife love her more dearly than himself?

Surely many men do love their chosen brides. But in a lifelong union there are many tests which will strengthen or destroy this love. God gives this command to help us understand the importance of love in marriage and to show us the outworking of His plan for the home.

The Pattern of Love

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church.” No better pattern exists than that of Christ and His church.

This love is more than a spontaneous expression of personal attachment, tender feeling, and friendly affection generated by the object of love, the wife; for she may not always draw such feelings out of her husband. Jesus’ love does include affectionate feelings, but the love that moved Him to give His life went much deeper. It was a deliberate act of His will and a choice to love even the unlovely.

Someone has noted that the Bible does not say, “Husbands, love your lovely wives,” but rather, “Husbands, love your wives.”

Ideally this love should not be a duty, but the subjection of our flesh and the surrender of our will does include a sense of duty in marital love. Just as Jesus consciously chose to surrender as He moved toward the cross, so husbands need to deliberately choose to love even when natural affection may

be tested.

Another phase of Christ’s love is seen in what He did for the church in giving Himself, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” This process was not pleasing to the flesh but was for our spiritual and eternal good.

The husband who loves his wife as himself does not always satisfy her wishes. Through sacrifice, self-denial, and surrender of his own desires, he helps her to understand what is for her spiritual good. His stability will mean that the wife will always know where he stands.

Should the husband expect to receive anything from this love? “Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it, . . . that he might present it to himself a glorious church.”

When love is divine, a husband will draw the best from his wife, not just for his personal satisfaction but for her highest calling in Christ. His love will be known more by the actions it prompts, than by the feelings it generates.

There may be times when a wife’s response is not according to the love shown (just as some have not responded to Jesus’ love). The husband will still love her as himself. We must remember that a love that loves only when receiving will continue deceiving, but a love that loves when giving will continue living.

The Practice of Love

Many practical areas in marital relationships test the husband’s choice and commitment to love. “So ought men to

love their wives as their own bodies.” Facing these tests requires a commitment to follow Christ and exercise the Golden Rule. The husband must be willing to give up himself and his personal interests for the welfare of his wife.

One area that tests a husband’s love is the call to leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. The wife may enjoy trying some of his mother’s cooking methods, but basically she will follow her mother’s. The husband best proves his love by assuring her that though some dishes are not the same, he enjoys her cooking. He does not make light of his wife’s cooking, complain about it, or constantly compare his wife to his mother.

The husband will continue to need the counsel of his father and some contact with home. But he should be careful that his stops at home are not too frequent when unaccompanied by his wife. No counsel should be sought while purposely excluding her. She should sense that her husband first confides in her, rather than in his father and mother.

The wife should be able to feel that the husband considers communication with her parents just as valuable as with his. Equal appreciation of her home assures that there is no special bias toward his home in the eyes or ears of the children. The husband can hardly prove that he loves his wife as himself if he does not love her home as much as his home.

Increasing responsibilities bring added tests of love. Though the husband does need to provide the family livelihood, he will not simply go his way and neglect his wife. He will sacrifice time to help ease her load and strive to be on schedule for meals as much as possible. When he cannot meet a schedule, he will let her know. Though weary at the end of the day or in the middle of a night, he will recognize his wife’s physical needs. He will seek to make it

possible that both can receive rest by helping with late evening canning or taking his turn with sick children.

The husband will meet the wife’s emotional and spiritual needs by understanding her emotional makeup and honoring her as the weaker vessel. He will treat her with kindness and courtesy in his speech and actions. When he loves her as himself, he will not belittle her before the children or others, but rather be discreet and not exploit her weakness. What husbands sometimes say in so-called fun is unbecoming to sanctifying love.

The Prospect of Love

What can be expected when the husband loves his wife as himself?

1. God will be honored. When the pattern of Christ and the church is followed, His Name will be honored and glorified.

2. The wife will be encouraged and strengthened to fill her role in the home. When the husband “nourisheth and cherisheth” his wife, it will aid her spiritual growth and maturity of faith and virtue. Emotional stability and healthy Christian attitudes will protect her from the onslaught of the enemy and preserve her noble calling in Christ.

3. The husband will be made stronger. “He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” The discipline of loving his wife helps a husband to be godly, strengthens his faith in Christ, and aids his leadership role in the home.

4. The marriage will be strengthened. “This is a great mystery” concerning the beauty and strength of Christ and the church resulting from Jesus’ love. “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife.” Every marriage can experience a similar beauty and strength when the husband is willing to “love his wife even as himself.” ■

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The Way to Your Husband's Heart

Author Unknown

The old adage, “The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” should be replaced by this: “The way to a man’s heart is by showing love and reverence.” We need to have this agape love—a selfless love, the kind Jesus demonstrated on the cross. The love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, can be a great help. It tells us how selfless love acts. It is slow to lose patience.

If your husband is late for a meal, discipline yourself to use those moments in a useful way. Instead of losing patience, breathe a prayer, read to the children, or spend extra time with the baby. When he does finally come, be friendly and understanding. Perhaps he’s been having a hard day too, and being impatient can spoil our whole evening, whereas a cheerful “How was your day? Are you tired?” can do wonders for us both and the children.

Cling to the words in verse 8: “Charity never faileth.” These words go a long way in all situations.

Being reverent can win a husband without a word (1 Peter 3:1), simply by letting Christ live in our hearts.

I came across a story of years ago of a Chinese woman who was led to Christ by a missionary. She was happy in the peace which Jesus brought into her heart, but she was afraid her cruel husband would kill the missionary if he found out about it. So the missionary told her to go home and not say one word to him about her newfound joy. She was to just live it, be a good wife, and please her husband in every way.

A week later she reported, “When I got home, I cleaned the house and made everything as pleasant for him as possi-

ble. I prepared his favorite food and when he came home, I greeted him warmly. He was surprised at my actions and asked me, ‘Who told you to do all this?’, but I never said a word. All week I was kind and did extra favors I knew he liked me to do, but wouldn’t tell him why. We quit quarreling.

“After five days he insisted I tell him why I was treating him with so much kindness. I told him that I’m afraid he would kill me and the one who told me what to do.

“He assured me he wouldn’t and added, ‘How could I treat you badly after you have been so good to me?’” So she told him. Soon he, too, became a Christian.

In another instance, a woman lived many years with her bitter, unkind husband and spent much time in prayer. She gives these sound rules: Don’t nag or preach at him. Ten words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, mean more than a thousand of your own nagging pleas. Don’t tell his faults to others. Don’t make his bad habits the big issue. Your greatest concern should be that he become a Christian, then Christ will take care of the wrong habits. Love him to Christ—this woman did.

Overlook your husband’s faults and appreciate his good qualities. Love can work miracles. Soft, kind words of encouragement are a wonderful way of reverencing our husbands. Loving wives have even won drunkards to forsake their sinful lives and change to loving Christian husbands.

Many times in wedding sermons, these words are quoted: “The man is to be the head of the home and not a

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harsh master.” Surely we wives agree that it is easy to submit if we are told in a kind way. If we cannot submit willingly and with love, are we really submitting? We can be a great help to our husbands in making it easier for us to be in reverence to them.

Realize that sometimes when your husband has a struggle being kind and patient, you may be to blame. We have a motto worded: “The trouble with thee is often me.” One trouble with me may be to perhaps try too hard to have the last word. It works out so much better to always remember that I am the weaker vessel and to respect his way of thinking.

Another trouble with me may have been that I have been too prone to somewhat belittle him in front of others. To me it may be mostly in fun, but to him and others it sounds otherwise. So by belittling our companions, we belittle ourselves.

Some things we should never say to our partners are, “I told you so!,” “I knew I was right!,” “You always do this!,” “You never do that!”

Perhaps we, including myself, have failed miserably in many areas in showing reverence and respect to our dear companions as we should have. If so, today would be the right time to confess to him and with God’s help, try harder than ever to “reverence our husbands” (Ephesians 5:33). It brings happiness and contentment. I know this from experience.

We should feel blessed to be under double protection—under our husband, and if he is a Christian, under Christ. If we reverence him, we also reverence Christ (1 Cor. 11:3).

Above all else, in our marriage, let’s strive to do good to our husband and not evil all the days of our lives. What a blessing, when he can safely trust in me, as his companion (Proverbs 31:11, 12).

It has been said that wives who lack

warmth and reverence are like a shining, empty kettle sitting on the stove. When the husband hungrily enters the kitchen, he lifts the lid and finds nothing to satisfy his hunger. We may have spotlessly clean homes and efficient households, but if the needed virtues of love and respect are missing, our hard work seems vain to our husbands. We all know there are many ways in which to please our husbands. When my husband returns from a trip to town or a day’s work, I’m always so glad to see him, and I tell him so. Many times he brings home surprises that were not included on the store list. Sometimes it’s chicken and potatoes from the deli at our local store. When he has had a hard day and needs encouragement, I try to forget my own woes. It will go a long way in having a pleasant, relaxing evening. When he falls asleep on his favorite chair, instead of nagging I like to remove his shoes and socks in spite of my own weariness.

Husbands detest nagging to have certain things done around the house. They are more obliged to do favors if they are reverently asked, “Could you please do this for me sometime?”

As a minister’s wife, let’s reverence him by being quiet on the way to church. He needs to meditate. Remind him you’ll be praying for him. If he needs your help in his study, be prepared, concordance in hand. It is a challenge to me to help by doing whatever he asks of me. Surprise him with his favorite drink or perhaps a backrub when his mind is tired and he needs a break.

And now, after all the encouragement to be reverent to our husbands, let us be grateful and blessed that the Bible also encourages the husbands to love their wives with the same love with which Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it! (Ephesians 5:25, 28; Colossians 3:19). ■

—Taken from *The Seed of Truth*

Do Divorced and Remarried Persons Need to Separate?

Adultery: An Act or a State?

by Allen Roth

A basic but often unidentified issue involved in discussions about what a person who has committed adultery should do in order to repent is this: Was his sin of adultery only an act, or is it considered to be an ongoing state of sin? If it was an *act of sin* only, then the person may acknowledge his sin, be forgiven, and be careful not to repeat it again. This allows one to continue in the remarriage relationship. If, however, adultery is a continuous *state of sin* until the present partner is put away, complete repentance and full assurance of God's forgiveness do not exist until the adulterous union is discontinued.

Both positions have very serious implications. If adultery is an act only, then to require separation is to needlessly break up homes and to lay a heavy and unnecessary burden on persons who desire to repent. It could also result in placing a stumbling block in the path of earnest seekers. If adultery is a state, however, then to assure persons of forgiveness while living with their partner (with the first spouse still living) is to give them a false hope of salvation and to sanction their going to hell since no adulterer will enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9). It also undermines the foundations of marriage and weakens the will to work through marriage difficulties.

How does God view adultery . . . as an act or a state? We believe the Bible clearly presents adultery as an ongoing state of sin until the adulterous union is discontinued. Read and meditate on the following passages:

Genesis 20: As long as Abimelech had another man's wife under his roof, he was

a "dead man" until he released her to go back to her rightful husband, even though he had not yet touched her. This was true for even a pagan king.

Ezra 9 and 10: Though a somewhat different situation; i.e., marrying foreign women, their unions were illicit and their sin was considered to be removed only when they separated themselves from their wives (10:2-4, 10, 11).

Jeremiah 7:8-11: (Note preceding context.) The Israelites were committing adultery and then going to the Temple and saying, "We are safe"—safe to do all these detestable things. . . ." God said they were trusting in deceptive, worthless words.

Malachi 2:13-17: God hates divorce, the breaking faith with the wife of one's youth. Can He accept in our time that which He once hated? Is it only the act of breaking faith that He hates, or does He hate both the act and the ongoing state of breaking faith?

Matthew 14:3, 4 (NAS): John the Baptist rebuked Herod for taking his brother Philip's wife. He did not say: "It is not lawful for you to have taken her" but rather "It is not lawful for you *to have* her." Some say the sin was that of incest. Actually, Herod had committed two sins: adultery and incest. The only way to repent of both was to release the woman. John was rebuking a sinner, which shows that immorality is sin, not only for the saint, but also for the sinner. If adultery were merely an act, John died in vain. He should have been more discreet and sensitive, calling only for Herod to say he was sorry and giving permission to continue on with Herodias. Instead, Jesus com-

mended John as being the greatest man born of women. Note also in Mark 6:18 John's warning to Herod was repeated, continuous action: "For John *had been saying* . . ." This is why Herodias nursed a grudge against John. If he had said, "Just recognize you sinned, but stay with her and don't commit adultery again with another woman," Herodias wouldn't have had reason to be so upset with John.

Luke 16:18 (NKJV): If adultery and divorce effectively terminate the marriage relationship so that the divorcee may then be remarried, how could Jesus' words be true: "Whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery"? Notice also that He says "whoever," not merely the Christian who does it.

Mark 10:10-12: Jesus clearly states that remarriage after being divorced is adultery.

Romans 7:2, 3: Only death breaks the marriage bond. If the woman marries another man "while her husband is still alive" (not: "before her husband divorces her"), she is an adulteress. It does not say "she commits an act of adultery" but rather "she shall be called an adulteress." Some say that this is only an example used to illustrate our relationship with the Law. Granted, it is an example. However, the teaching about our relationship with the Law can only be true if the example also is true. It is hard to think of how one could improve on this passage in terms of its simplicity, clarity, and conciseness.

1 Corinthians 7:10, 11: The Lord's command through Paul: no divorce, no separation. But if separation does occur, then no remarriage. Either the individuals must remain unmarried or else be reconciled.

1 Corinthians 7:39: Marriage is for life, not until divorce separates.

Following are other related passages and perspectives that point to adultery as being an ongoing state of sin

until the adulterous union is discontinued.

1. The marriage vow states "till death do us part," not "till divorce do us part." God takes vows very seriously as seen in Ecclesiastes 5:4-6. God honors the first vow, the first union. Sinful vows should be repented of and sinful actions put away, not continued. The second vow was not a legitimate vow.
2. What is the meaning of repentance? With all other kinds of sins, we tell a person that true repentance means putting away sin; only then can he be sure of God's forgiveness. The following passages demonstrate this truth: Prov. 28:13; Matt. 3:8 and context; Luke 3:8-14; Acts 26:20—we prove our repentance by our deeds, not by our words. See also 2 Cor. 7:11.
3. 1 Corinthians 5:1 says the man "*has* his father's wife," not *took* his father's wife. As long as he was calling himself a brother, they were not to associate with him but rather to expel him from the church. This indicates that his immoral relationship was an ongoing state. Other gross sins are listed as reason for the same action by the church.
4. Consistency calls for discontinuing the adulterous marriage. If two people live in fornication, in order for them to repent we tell them they must stop living together as unmarried people. If a person lives in incest, we tell him to discontinue that relationship. If two persons of the same sex are married, they must get out of that union, whether or not the State says it is legal. With other sins it is the same: someone who has stolen goods must return them, not merely say he is sorry for having taken them. A person who has kidnapped someone must release the person before we would be sure he had truly repented. Why, then, would this not apply also to divorced and remarried persons living in adultery?
5. The fruit of both approaches. Viewing

adultery merely as an act fills churches with adulterous unions, undermines existing marriages, justifies having leaders that are divorced and remarried, and shuts the mouths of Christians and church leaders from speaking out against adultery in a society that is becoming more immoral and perverse. Today, many churches are very little different from the surrounding society in their morals.

Viewing adultery as an ongoing state, however, promotes a life of holiness and purity in churches which take this Scriptural position, and provides solid foundations for marriages, a basis for facing difficulties in marriage, and courage and authority to confront sin both in the church and in the society. This approach best harmonizes Scripture passages on the topic and follows the practice of the Early Church in the first centuries.

Responses to questions:

1. What about the “exception clause”? (Matt. 5:32). Jesus here clarifies in which situation a man is causing his wife to become an adulteress. He does not give permission for remarriage; in fact, He forbids remarriage even to the adulterous woman. In Matthew 19:9, a very good case can be made for the position that divorce in certain limited cases is permitted but not remarriage; i.e., that the exception clause modifies only the first part of the verse, not the last part. This position allows for separation in certain limited cases, such as homosexuality and prostitution, without giving permission for remarriage. This position best harmonizes with other Bible passages on the topic and is the position of the Early Church for the first five centuries (See: *Jesus and Divorce*, by Heth and Wenham, p. 22). This position also makes the best sense of the disciples’ expression of surprise (Matt. 19:10) about the strictness of Jesus’ teaching against divorce and remarriage in contrast to the liberal

position the Jewish Rabbi Hillel for “any and every cause” and the conservative position of Rabbi Shammai permitting remarriage in the case of infidelity.

- 2. What about 1 Corinthians 7:15? “A believing man or woman is not bound . . .”** Bound to what? In observing the context, it seems the best understanding is to say: “He/she is not bound to fulfill his/her marital rights if the unbelieving spouse voluntarily leaves. He/she is not bound to force the unbeliever to stay.” To say that this “not bound” passage means that one may divorce and remarry causes Paul to contradict himself in what he says in vv. 10, 11 (by God’s direct command) and v. 39.
- 3. Didn’t Paul say that “each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God called him” and “to remain in the situation which he was in when God called him”?** (1 Cor. 7:17, 20, 24). Yes, but God does not call people into a state of adultery. They should remain only in situations that are not sinful, as per the examples given: circumcision, being a slave. To apply this to a remarriage situation requires one to also say that a person who is single or a widow(er) when he accepts Christ must always remain that way.
- 4. Didn’t Paul say that if you are loosed from a wife you may marry without sinning?** Actually, what he said is, “Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned . . .” (1 Cor. 7:27, 28 NKJV). He did *not* say, “If you remarry, you have not sinned.” To marry if one’s spouse has died is not sin, but to use this passage to justify remarriage while the first partner is living causes Paul to contradict himself in this same chapter (vv. 10, 11, 39)

and in his teaching in Romans 7:2, 3, to contradict the teaching of Jesus (Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18) and also the understanding and practice of the Early Church. One must ask the question: How may a person properly be “loosed from a wife” in order to marry again? The Scriptural answer is: the death of the partner (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2, 3). Furthermore, in the context of “loosing,” Paul is not speaking about divorcees, but about virgins and widows (7:25-40).

5. *Doesn't God forgive? Doesn't His mercy cover our sins?* God's mercy becomes ours when we confess and *abandon* our sins (Prov. 28:13). Otherwise we are sinning deliberately, and as long as one remains in that state there is no forgiveness (Heb. 10:26-31). Note also Titus 2:11-14: the grace of God teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions—not continue on in them. See also 1 John 3:7-10. If adultery was sin in the beginning when first committed, common sense indicates it continues to be sin when it continues to be committed. That is the way we view all other sins. Why would it be different with adultery?

6. *What if I divorced my spouse before I was a (committed) believer in Christ? Doesn't that allow me to remarry (or to stay with my present spouse)?* We need to remember that marriage was not first of all a Christian institution and is valid whether one marries as a Christian or not. Adultery is not a sin that only Christians can commit. If marriages were valid only for Christians, then we would have to tell all unbelievers that their marriages are worthless and that in God's sight they are not married. This approach would also conflict with the passages in Genesis 20 and Matthew 14 where Abimelech and Herod, as unbelievers, were clearly condemned by God in what they had done.

Conclusion

We believe that the teaching that adultery is merely an act of sin which the grace of God covers while allowing the adulterous couple to continue together is an example of what Jude warns: “For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, *who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality . . .*” (v. 4 NIV; italics added).

Therefore, in view of the Scriptures cited, we conclude that adultery is an ongoing state of sin that can only be truly forgiven when divorced and remarried persons separate. “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (NKJV). ■

The above has been adopted as the official policy by the Biblical Mennonite Alliance.

For additional reading on this position:

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, John Coblenz, ©1992, Christian Light Publications, 98 pp.

Till Death Do Us Part?, Joseph A. Webb, ©1996, Webb Ministries, PO Box 520729, Longwood, FL 32742-0729, 274 pp.

Jesus and Divorce, The Problem With the Evangelical Consensus, William Heth and Gordon Wenham, ©1984, Nelson Publishers, 287 pp. (no longer in print).



FASTING . . . cont'd.

I believe fasting is part of a concentrated, intense effort at prayer. Praying and fasting is coming to the Lord seeking His will and His way for our lives. Jesus said, “When thou fastest . . . unto thy Father which is in secret: thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:17, 18).

Brothers and sisters, I challenge you to consider fasting. If you sincerely desire that God would do great and mighty things, I challenge all of us to try it. ■

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How to Benefit From Fasting

by W. David Kent

Fasting is a spiritual discipline involving voluntary abstinence from certain foods, and is generally associated with prayer.

Fasting has been around for a long time. The ancient pagans believed demons entered into their bodies through the eating of food. If they were worried about demon possession, then they would stop eating for several days until all the excess food passed through their bodies, so that no demons could enter. We know that Eastern mystics (the yoga practitioners) often fast for long periods of time—looking for a mystical experience, for new insight into the meaning of life, or to have some dream that will lead them to new truths. Medically speaking, if you fast for a long enough period of time, you can hallucinate or have unusual dreams. Nearly all people (mostly young women) who have the personality disorder called anorexia nervosa, and who don't eat for long periods of time, or purge themselves after eating, have strange dreams.

In Western society, fasting is rather popular. Fasting is used sometimes for physical and certainly for cosmetic purposes. In our day, many people will go on a fast for the purpose of keeping slim and trim. Sometimes fasting is used as a form of protest. Those who study history know that Mohandas Gandhi, the noted leader in India, fasted for several days at a time. Jack Kevorkian (known as the death doctor) fasted while in jail, and said he was going to fast himself to death. But in the Bible there is no teaching on fasting for practical reasons such as losing weight or protesting a cause.

Some who read this message may never have tried the discipline of fasting. Fasting is not a clear biblical command. The Bible does not directly command fasting, but it gives many examples of fasting. The only "fast" that Jesus Himself observed (that is recorded

in the Gospels) was in the wilderness, at the time of His temptation, when He fasted forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:2).

Jesus said that when we fast, we are to fast in secret, and not let others know about it. Fasting is given such favorable treatment in Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments that we can assume that it is expected in the Christian life. We learn in Matthew 6:16-18 that Jesus assumed those to whom He spoke were fasting. He said, "**When** you fast"—not "**If** you fast." Fasting is one of the disciplines which can be incorporated into the spiritual life, and will make our lives much richer. Yet, it is important to know that fasting by itself has no value. There is no prestige which fasting supports, and unless fasting is combined with prayer, fasting for its own sake can be hypocritical.

1. The True Nature of Fasting

Biblical fasting always is to have a spiritual purpose. If you make a careful study of fasting, you will be surprised to learn how many Bible characters fasted. In Old Testament times, Moses, Samson, Samuel, Hannah, David, Elijah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel all are said to have fasted. In the New Testament, Anna, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostle Paul fasted. Many early church leaders fasted—Luther, Calvin, John Wesley, and George Whitefield. Yet in all the Scriptures there is only one commandment which calls for fasting—and that is the command in Leviticus for fasting in connection with the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29). Fasting is not one of the New Testament ordinances.

Jesus said, "If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). We take that as a biblical command. In 1 Corinthians 11:24-26, we are commanded to observe the communion of the bread and

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cup. Jesus says, "This do in remembrance of me." The communion of the bread and cup is a command, and an ordinance of the church. We believe that baptism is commanded for believers, but at no place in the New Testament will you find a verse that says, "And you shall fast," or "Blessed are those who fast, for they shall lose weight or become more spiritual." Nevertheless, fasting is given such favorable treatment in the Bible that I believe it is a Christlike, biblical act which we should follow. Fasting is always voluntary, always noncompulsory, and always has to be done at an individual's discretion in response to God's leading. Fasting is not to be done on a regular basis.

We are going to use the three verses in Matthew 6:16-18 as a basis for the message in this article. "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

In this passage, Jesus talks about improper attitudes and motives when fasting. Fasting means "to not eat." There can be a total fast or a partial fast. There can be a fast in which only water or fluids are taken. By Jesus' time, fasting had become so ritualistic that the Pharisees did it for the attention of men, and with the hope that they would gain favor with God. The Pharisees fasted two times a week (Luke 18:12), and they usually chose to fast on the market days in the city. The marketplace was filled with people—and the Pharisees, to get the attention of people, would put on sackcloth and ashes, and sometimes put powder on their faces and look sickly, so they could show others how religious and pious they really were. When we fast, we must be careful to have the proper attitude. Jesus said that we should not do it for a show, but that it should be a quiet act between the individual and God.

Fasting is mentioned more than thirty times in the New Testament. There is no direct command and there are no specific instructions related to the time and place for fasting. If Jesus assumed that His followers are fasting, why is it that His own disciples didn't fast? Jesus was asked that question in Matthew 9:14. The disciples of John the Baptist came asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" Jesus responded by saying that fasting was not necessary at the time that He was with the disciples, but when He was taken away, then they would fast. One of the reasons for fasting is for mourning, and His disciples would participate then. Jesus Christ is not physically present now, and so fasting will be appropriate for this age. But fasting should be observed as a response to special times of testing, trial, and struggle.

2. Some Reasons for Fasting

What are some biblical examples of fasting? They are numerous. We point first to David, king of Israel, who fasted on many occasions. Second Samuel 12:16 says that when the son of Bathsheba and David was sick, David fasted for the child "and lay all night upon the earth." The Bible tells us in 2 Samuel 3:35 that when David's friend and general (a man named Abner) died, that "all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day," but David refused to eat bread until the sun went down. David fasted all day.

David even fasted at times for his enemies. Psalm 35:13 says that David was praying, condemning his enemies, but he remembered former times, and said, "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting." Why is it that when people are mourning, we want to take food for them? They really don't feel like eating. I know that taking food is part of hospitality, but fasting is just a natural response to the emotional turmoil within them, and so we should not be offended if they refuse to eat.

Fasting is used in the Old Testament

especially during times of danger. King Jehoshaphat fasted when he was faced with the Ammonites on one side and the Moabites on the other side in 2 Chronicles 20:3. One of our favorite stories in the Old Testament is the story of Esther. Esther had the task of coming before the king when she wasn't invited, and so she said to her Uncle Mordecai, "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink [for] three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise" (Esther 4:16). She was asking for God's protection and requested her friends to fast and pray on her behalf.

When Ezra was getting ready to lead some of the exiles away from Babylon, he knew their journey would be treacherous, and that they would go through enemy territory; the Bible says that Ezra gathered the people together at the River Ahava (Ezra 8:21) to "afflict ourselves" (which is another term for fasting). And the reason Ezra was seeking and asking for God's protection through prayer and fasting was "I was ashamed" (Ezra 8:22). In other words, he wanted to show the king of Babylon that it was only because of God's protection that they were going to be set free, and he didn't need an army to lead them through enemy territory. "So we fasted and besought God" (Ezra 8:23).

Ezra also fasted for penitence. After the Jews had come back from Babylon into the land of Palestine and had set up their homes, Ezra looked around and saw that many of the Jews had brought foreign wives with them, and he was sad. So he prayed and fasted. "Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God and went into the chamber of Johanan . . . and when he came thither he did eat no bread nor drink water; for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away" (Ezra 10:6).

Daniel fasted for penitence. In Daniel chapter nine, after he had reckoned the years by the books from the Prophet Jeremiah, he said, "I set my face unto the Lord

God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting . . . and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession" (Daniel 9:3, 4). And we know that after that experience, Daniel's prayer was answered in a miraculous way. When he had confessed the sins of the people, and mourned, the angel Gabriel came to him and reckoned with him the outcome of what was to happen. Daniel had another vision after fasting. This time he observed a partial fast, for we read in Daniel 10:3 that he did not eat a certain kind of bread, and he did not eat meat, and he did not drink any wine. And again God gave him a vision and showed him that there was deliverance for His people.

Fasting is found throughout the Old and New Testaments. Fasting is never done by itself, but is always accompanied by prayer. In Acts 13:2, 3, the church at Antioch fasted when Paul and Barnabas were sent out preaching and establishing churches. When they wanted to ordain elders in the church, the Bible says that in every church they fasted, and with much praying, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed (Acts 14:23). Fasting and praying go hand in hand.

3. Some Practical Applications

What are the practical applications for our lives? The New Testament does not give us specific instructions, but it speaks many times of fasting. So I would suggest that you try it for perhaps just one meal. Just take the time you would use to prepare, eat, and clean up after a meal, and spend that time in prayer, and see what God will do. I know there are people who have medical conditions, and they need to take their medication with food. Don't be embarrassed if you find it difficult to try fasting. In such cases, as soon as lunch is over, you could say, "I'm going to dedicate this time to the Lord, and then not take any food or any drink until the supper hour." Certainly God will honor that commitment.

Some may want to try fasting for a whole day, from sun up one day to sun up

the next day. Take no food, just water. Every time your stomach begins to growl, remember what it is that you are praying about. It is not that you have to interrupt everything and go pray for five or ten minutes or half an hour, but when your stomach starts to rumble and you remember the particular need or burden that is on your mind, go to God and name the concern. Maybe some of you would be able to fast for more than a day. Every time you get hungry again, you think of God, and when you wake up at night and you feel your stomach growling—isn't that a wonderful time to pray—when it is quiet?

What things should you be fasting for? I would suggest that we pray for revival in the church and for those who need salvation. Practice prayer and fasting when there is a difficult decision to make about a marriage partner, and when wondering about whether or not to go to college, or when trying to determine what kind of job you should take. When you are confused, and you don't really know what God has in store for you, try fasting and prayer. Somehow it heightens your awareness of the presence of God. It helps you to concentrate. Fasting eliminates many distractions.

Those who may be sensing a call to special work for God, whether it be in the ministry, or to go into mission work: why don't you commit your concern to God while fasting and praying? When you come to elect a minister or make a difficult decision in the church, the whole congregation should be fasting and praying. When you have a concern about someone—a particular individual who is lost and is caught up in sinful living—wouldn't it be wonderful if a number of brothers or sisters would covenant together to fast and pray?

A few years ago we had a young man in our congregation who was unmarried, single, and dating a woman who had already been divorced three times. Our congregation tried to counsel him against marriage to this woman. We set a whole day aside for fasting and prayer. He married her anyway. We figured God didn't answer our

prayers, but after she got tired of him and divorced him, he humbly came back into the church and remained single, and was in our fellowship for many years. I believe this happened because God's people were fasting and praying.

4. A Personal Testimony

I want to share a personal testimony related to fasting—only to bring glory to God and to encourage others to try fasting. At one point, my wife had been seriously ill and almost lost her life, except for the grace of God.

One morning when she was in the hospital, God awoke me very early, and clearly gave me a verse from Mark, telling about one of the miraculous healings that Jesus performed. Jesus concluded by saying, "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:29). I began to meditate on the verse, and decided to pray and fast for a time. Later, I went to our local congregation and asked them to covenant with us in prayer and fasting, seeking God's direction, and what we should do in relation to my wife's serious illness.

Another day of prayer and fasting was designated. People from many additional congregations were invited to participate. Our own children prayed and fasted. One winter evening a group of us was praying and confessing and seeking the Lord's will for a period of five hours. All in that small group will affirm that praying that night was the closest, most intimate experience that any of us ever had with God. As far as we could tell, God had granted our request. We have not publicized this very much because we didn't know exactly in what areas God had healed. My wife had experienced healing. There were spiritual and emotional healings in the rest of our family, and in our congregation. There was an impact on the wider community. We took out a full-page advertisement in our hometown newspaper, just thanking God for all the people that prayed, and to praise God that He did answer prayer in a miraculous way. *(continued on page 33)*

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