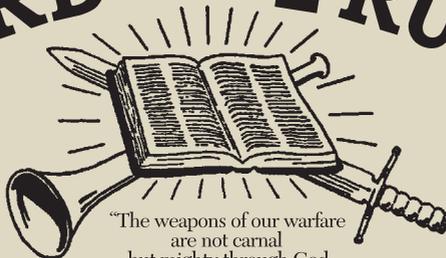


# The SWORD and TRUMPET

"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*



JOHN WILLIAMS

NOVEMBER 2006

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# The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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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:

## John Williams (1796-1839)

Williams was born at Tottenham High Cross in Middlesex and was brought up in a Christian family. As a child, he spent much time composing hymns and prayers for his own use, but by the time he reached his teens he had lost the faith of his childhood. When he was eighteen, however, he was converted at Moorfields Tabernacle. Called to be a missionary in 1816, he was accepted by the London Missionary Society and appointed to the Pacific Islands.

Taking his young wife, Williams sailed in 1817 with several other missionaries to Society Island, near Tahiti, where a missionary station had already been established. Later, at the invitation of the king of Raiatea, he set up a station in the Leeward Islands. While the natives were happy to adopt Christianity as a state religion, it had only a superficial effect upon them; they had low moral standards and were generally idle and difficult to teach.

Williams tried to encourage them to become more industrious; he instructed them in boat-building and introduced the cultivation of sugar cane. He even set up a printing press and published the Gospel of Luke and some elementary books in their own language in order to stimulate their interest in education.

But Williams was anxious to move on and reach the heathens on other islands. When his Mission turned down the idea, he decided to take the matter into his own hands. With money from an inheritance, he purchased a schooner, the *Endeavour*, and set off to explore the islands of the South Sea, financing the expedition by trading with the natives. His first aim was to find the island of Rarotonga (where the people were said to be the most ferocious in Polynesia); then he spent the next eleven years (1821-32) sailing the South Seas and planting mission stations.

Although financial constraints forced him to sell his ship, he was determined to continue his travels; with considerable ingenuity he built his own boat in a space of fifteen weeks and set off once more. He visited Tahiti, the Savage Islands, Friendly Islands and Samoa before returning to Rarotonga to complete his translation of the New Testament.

When he went home on furlough in 1834, he discovered that news of his adventures had made him famous and the LMS was now prepared to support his commercial activities, voting to purchase a new ship for him. They also offered to advance him money with which to build a theological college at Rarotonga and a school at Tahiti.

On his return in 1837, he continued to tour the islands, reinforcing the work where a mission had been established; he even ventured as far as the New Hebrides where he hoped to open up a new station. Some of the islands in the group had already been evangelized by John Paton and John Geddie, both of whom survived to see the fruits of their labor. But when Williams and his colleague James Harris landed at Dillon's Bay, on Eromanga, on the 20th of November 1839, they were killed and eaten by natives. It was

*(continued on page 8)*

# Modesty in Dress: A Vanishing Virtue

by Kenneth Nell

Those who search in the Bible for God's directives on the matter of dress will not find a list of *specific* requirements, but there are *general principles* which determine the standard for attire. The scope of this article is to list only those elements that can be stated with certainty. There are in addition some guiding principles in the Bible that can be applied individually and more specifically as a matter of conviction and common sense.

We will look at facts which are based on God's unalterable principle of modesty, regardless of the activity or the location—whether at church, at Wal-Mart, on the beach, or at the gym. What are some Bible principles on dress?

## 1. *Designed by the Creator*

If we believe God is the Creator of humankind as the Scriptures declare, then it follows that we should submit to the directives of our Maker. It would be preposterous for a lump of clay to say to a potter, "You really didn't know what you were doing when you made me and adorned me as such. Your requirements are much too stiff; therefore I will choose to resist your purpose."

God's answer to those who in effect doubt His authority is found in Romans 9:20, 21a: "*But indeed, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have power over the clay?'*"

Since God made the man and woman differently, the careful Bible student will note that God tailored His dress code to match those differences. Genesis 1:27 says, "*So God created man in His own*

*image; in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them.*"

Men are sexually stimulated (aroused) by sight, and women are stimulated by words of endearment. Therefore God has given certain commands to women regarding their dress and appearance. In 1 Timothy 2:9 we read, "*In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation.*"

The passage does not imply that *men* may dress improperly or immodestly. The command is directed to women since *they* are more commonly given over to enticing dress that affects men in a visual way. The Scriptures speak about "the attire of a harlot," but we never read about "the attire of a whoremonger"—one who frequents the company of a harlot.

On the other hand God has given different commands to men on how they should conduct themselves. For example, 1 Corinthians 7:1 says, "*It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*" The word *touch* in Greek means "to kindle or light a fire." Hugging a family member or relative is not what is implied here. Touching *that lights a fire* refers to any physical contact that stirs emotions and desires. That command is given to *men*. God also gives warning to men about controlling their eyes. In Matthew 5:28 Jesus says, "*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*"

These verses do not imply it is all right for women to lust or to touch inappropriately. The command is directed to men because of their nature—requiring

that they guard their eyes and their actions. So if it appears like women receive most of the admonition about dress in the New Testament—it is for a significant reason that relates to God’s original design. Who are we to argue against the design of the Potter?

## **2. Requires That Nakedness Be Covered**

What was the first thing that Adam and Eve realized after they sinned in eating the forbidden fruit? They saw that they were naked. What was their first response to this realization? They attempted to cover themselves. Eve “took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves coverings” (Genesis 3:6, 7).

The Hebrew word translated as *coverings* means a “girdle” or “belt.” Some translations use the words *loin coverings*. The fig leaf coverings were not adequate and did not remove the sense of nakedness felt by Adam and Eve. Notice Adam’s answer to God’s inquiry about his place of hiding. This was *after* he and Eve were wearing the fig aprons. In answer to God’s question, “[Adam] where are you?” Adam said, “I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:9, 10).

Even the partially clothed bodies caused Adam and Eve to avoid God’s presence, and Adam said he was naked. Other verses in Scripture refer to partial dress as nakedness. Does that say something about the warm weather wardrobes and swimming suit styles of today? I am guessing that the fig leaf aprons worn by Adam and Eve might have covered more of the body than do many of the garments that are worn today.

What was God’s solution to the problem? In Genesis 3:21 we read, “For Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.” The

word translated *clothed* means “to wrap around.” The term implies that the coats or robes supplied by God enveloped the body.

The Hebrew word for *coats* (KJV) means “a tunic” or “long coat.” The same Hebrew word is used to describe Joseph’s coat of many colors, and also to describe the clothing of the priests. Did you ever see a depiction of Joseph in his coat of many colors, or a Jewish priest with his garb? If God were to make clothing, like He did for Adam and Eve—for people who are often dressed insufficiently today, even many professing Christians would have different wardrobes.

God gave special instructions to the priests, who were to enter the presence of God at the tabernacle. In Exodus 20:26 we read, “Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.” Exodus 28:42 gives a clue as to what part of the body, if exposed, is considered by God to be nakedness. God said that for the priests, “You shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs.” The NLT says “to cover their flesh from their belts to their legs.” From this we learn that the “waist” and “the thighs” are to be fully covered; otherwise, God considered them to be naked.

The “thigh” is defined in an English dictionary as the limb extending *from the hip to the knee* and supported by a single large bone. The minimum requirement to avoid nakedness (related to the lower extremities of the body), is that the knee and above should be covered at the very least. Adam Clarke in his commentary on 1 Timothy 2 points out that some immodest Greek women wore their garments open on each side, from the bottom on up above the knees, so as to discover a part of the thigh. These women were called “*show-ers (discover-ers) of the thigh.*” God wants us to cover our nakedness in every aspect.

### 3. *Eliminates Improper Focus on the Body*

What are the basic requirements in the New Testament concerning dress, to avoid undue focus on the body? We consider first of all the instruction in 1 Timothy 2:9. “*In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation [shamefacedness and sobriety, KJV]; not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.*” There are a number of qualifications just in this one verse.

First of all, clothing is to be modest. The Greek word, *kosmios*, translated “modest” carries the essential meaning of “order.” When applied to dress it has the meaning of being well-ordered, proper, and decent. It derives its meaning from the root word *kosmos*, often translated as “world,” as in God’s creation. God’s well-ordered adorning of His creation is a role model for us to follow in outward appearance. Modest apparel for the woman then should reflect God’s design and order, and compliment the grace and beauty of womanhood.

There are two other words used in 1 Timothy 2:9 which further define proper dress—the words *shamefacedness* and *sobriety*. The word *shamefacedness* comes from a Greek word which means literally “downcast eyes,” but it is meant in a good sense and refers to one who is ashamed to overstep the limit of womanly reserve. The other word, *sobriety*, is “self-control,” especially over sexual passions. Women are to exercise self-control so that neither *their* passions nor anyone else’s are aroused.

There is a difference between *dressing attractively* and *dressing to attract attention*. Modesty is *dressing attractively*. Dressing “to attract attention” is a violation of the Bible’s expectation on dress. If a woman dresses in such a way that others can’t help but notice her bodily form (even if done unintentionally), she is likely to arouse carnal desire. Paul

warned against causing others to stumble because of our freedom (Romans 14:13). In 1 Corinthians 8:9 he says, “*Beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.*” Granted, the man is held responsible for his lust, but the woman is not free of guilt or accountability. Both are guilty. Jesus refers to this principle in Matthew 18:7, “*Woe to the world because of offenses! Offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*”

It is imperative that parents train their children, especially daughters, in proper conduct and modesty so as not to cause offense. It will be most effective to have them wear when they are small what we would like them to wear when they start making their own choices. Husbands and fathers have the greater responsibility, in that they know firsthand what causes their eyes to focus wrongly on the body of a woman. That information must be conveyed to our wives and daughters who may not be fully aware of the danger.

Melody Green in her book, *Uncovering the Truth About Modesty*, says, “Many Christians are . . . either oblivious or uncaring about the effect they have on others. They may even appear to have a real excitement and love for the Lord, [yet at the same time their bodies are] sending out a totally different message.”

Beware of clothing that is designed for looks and not for proper covering. Today’s fashion designers come up with attire that is planned to have a calculated effect. Just because the body is “covered” does not mean it is modestly covered. The female form is just as provocative as is a lack of sufficient clothing. Tight or clinging attire (and sheer materials) reveal by suggestion rather than by fact. Beware also of eye traps that direct the eye to slits in skirts, low necklines, and shirts or blouses with buttons open. Words and pictures at inappropriate places on clothing also become eye traps.

The Christian woman's primary desire is not to put her body on exhibit, but to reflect the selflessness of Christ. Her appearance and dress should not say, "Look at me, admire me," but rather, "Christ lives in me and has changed me from the inside out." If that change has occurred, then there is no need to draw improper attention to the outward appearance. We read in 1 Peter 3:3, 4, "*Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.*"

#### **4. Sex-distinction in Pattern of Attire**

What does the Bible say about the need for apparel to differ between the man and the woman? Israel was given the following command in Deuteronomy 22:5. "*A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are abomination unto the LORD your God.*" This Old Testament command is a guiding principle that is reflected in nature, and is consistent with God's intent and order in creation.

Even though (in Bible times) both women and men wore robelike garments, they were different in pattern and use. The *women* wore a long flowing garment, which was an indispensable article of clothing. The *men* on the other hand wore a shorter and tighter outer garment that was more like a long overcoat and was a dispensable article of clothing worn for distinction or position. Whenever a man had to work, run, or go to war, he would pull up his garment and tie it around his loins or waist. In the Bible it was called "girding up your loins."

In Job 38:3 and 40:7 we read the expression "Gird up your loins like a man" (see marginal reference in NKJV). Nowhere in Scripture do we read of

women wearing breeches or girding up their loins. At times a man laid aside his outer robe garment (such as Jesus did in John 13:4) when He washed the feet of His disciples, or as blind Bartimaeus did in Mark 10:50 when he threw aside his garment and came to Jesus.

Distinction between the sexes is a *biblical principle* supported in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul deals with headship. So, *is it acceptable* (according to the Bible's dress standard for women) to wear pants, slacks, shorts, skorts, or culottes that look like baggy shorts? First Timothy 2:9 speaks of *apparel* marked by sobriety and moderation—that which is in harmony with good taste. And the word translated *apparel* cannot mean anything other than a "long, loose, flowing garment." The Greek word *katastole* is an exact and precise word, used only at this one place in the Bible. There are lots of words for clothing, attire, etc., but God inspired Paul to choose this word to state a dress requirement for *Christian* women. The word is a combination of *kata* meaning "down" in reference to a garment let down, and *stole* meaning a long loose-fitting outer garment often reaching to the feet. In fact, *stole* is an English word which the Webster's dictionary defines as "a long loose garment."

The minimum requirement is for Christian women at the very least—to wear a long, loose, flowing dress. Lest we consider this out of the question or archaic, check the history books and you will find that from the time of Christ until the middle 1900s in civilized societies—women, with the exception of harlots, wore long, flowing dresses or the equivalent. In fact, it is only within the last sixty years that God's design for distinction between the sexes has been generally laid aside.

The universal symbol for designating a men's bathroom is a stick figure wearing a pair of pants. The universal symbol for designating a women's bathroom is a

stick figure wearing a dress. That is hardly coincidence. Even society recognizes that there should be a distinction in clothing even though for the most part the distinction is not practiced.

I read an article that told about a woman who made a decision to restrict her wardrobe to dresses and skirts, as a result of lessons learned in a ladies' Bible class. The speaker said, "Let me demonstrate something to you." She asked the ladies in the audience to close their eyes momentarily. She held up a large picture of a woman in a modest skirt and blouse. She asked the ladies to open their eyes. Then she inquired, "Where did your eyes first fall naturally?" The audience agreed that their eyes were first drawn to *the face* of the woman in the picture.

She once again asked the ladies to close their eyes. When they opened their eyes they were looking at a large poster of a woman in a sport shirt and blue jeans. She asked, "Now, be honest and tell me where your eyes first fell naturally when you looked at this picture?" Many of the ladies in the crowd were surprised that their eyes first focused on *the hip area* before they ever noticed the woman's face. The point was made. If this happened in a crowd of ladies, how much more is it true of men? God does have a purpose for His dress requirements.

### **5. Stresses Inward Adornment Not Outward Display**

The key verses are found in 1 Peter 3:3, 4, which admonish believers not to put the emphasis on the outward adorning "*of arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart . . . even the ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.*"

Allow me to explain these verses with an example: How much time is invested in dressing up, fixing up, making up and

beautifying the body which is corruptible and soon grows old? Compare that to the amount of time spent beautifying the inner person which is incorruptible and will never grow old. How attractive can you make a 90-year-old woman look, according to the world's standards of beauty? How much carnal lust can be generated for a body that is bent and wrinkled with age? During life's final footsteps, outward beauty tends to fade.

I've been in the presence of elderly people whose bodies were anything but attractive, but they caused the room to radiate with the beauty of their character and their godliness. I went away encouraged and challenged. The Christian woman has the greatest potential for true beauty, by developing the inner qualities of a gentle and quiet spirit. It is definitely true that a woman of character (one who loves the Lord), will enhance her outward appearance and beauty. There will be a glow on her countenance and a light in her eyes. Her modest dress will compliment that radiance and beauty. A woman's true adornment is seen in the loving service and character she demonstrates to others. Sisters who follow God's design for beauty are a compliment to womanhood. Colossians 3:12 encourages the people of God to "put on" mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering.

A believer who is truly committed to the Lord will not ask, "How little can I do and still remain a child of God?" Rather, the question will be, "How much can I do to show my faith, love, and commitment to Christ even through my outward appearance?" ■

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—Reprinted with permission from *The BRF Witness*, July/August 2006.

## **From the Editor's Desk**



Paul M. Emerson

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

## **Tuned In!**

by Daniel Stetler

I could hardly believe my eyes! Across the intersection a car sat waiting for the light to change, and the entire car was bouncing as the four young men inside acted out whatever they were hearing on their car stereo. I could not hear any of the music except the boom of the bass, but they were obviously “tuned in” to something that was dramatically affecting their behavior.

No, everyone does not respond to what they hear in the same way those young men did, but all of us are significantly impacted in one way or another by the voices and clamor of the world around us. In fact, I believe I can safely say that our future will be shaped by what we choose to “tune in” to in our lives.

There is an Old Testament story recounted in the Book of Hebrews which powerfully illustrates this principle. It is the story of Moses. You will remember, Moses was rescued from certain death by a daughter of Pharaoh who found him floating in a basket

which had been carefully prepared and placed by his mother. After being initially cared for by his mother, he spent a significant portion of his “growing up” years in Pharaoh’s household.

There can be little doubt that Moses’ life near the epicenter of Egyptian civilization presented him with the clamor of many voices. In the midst of all those voices, however, Moses made the choice to “tune in” to the voice of the God of Israel. What he heard changed his life forever. The effect of Moses’ choices is given by the Hebrew writer in 11:24-27.

To an uninformed onlooker, Moses’ choices would have seemed totally shocking. After all, he was rejecting riches and choosing poverty. He was rejecting freedom and choosing slavery. He was leaving the highest civilization of his day to lead approximately two million people into an uninhabitable wilderness. Nothing about Moses’ choices makes sense unless you are “tuned in” to the God who was giving Moses his instructions.

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**PAGE 7**

You see, the God to whom Moses was listening knew that Egypt would lose its entire army in one day at the bottom of the Red Sea. He knew that Egyptian civilization would fall, never to rise again. He knew His own ability to get Moses and every one of the children of Israel through the wilderness and to the land of promise. He had plans to teach Moses about worship and show him how to build the Tabernacle. He planned to reveal himself to Moses in a more real way than anyone had experienced since Abraham's day.

The Hebrew writer says Moses endured because he saw three things: 1. He saw the temporary nature of the pleasures of sin (v. 25). 2. He saw the difference between true and false riches (v. 26). 3. Most importantly, he "saw him who was invisible" (v. 27). The only reason Moses was able to overcome the enticement of the glitter of Egyptian society was that he was "tuned in" to the right source. He was hearing what God had to say.

Multitudes of people are "tuning in" to the god of this world who is blinding their eyes to eternal realities. They are buying into the value system of this world, and as a result they do not see things properly. They are trading the eternal for the immediate, the perma-

nent for the momentary, and the priceless for junk. The opinions of men are more important than the opinion of God, and the thrill of the moment is more desirable than the peace of a clear conscience.

Where are you "tuned in" today? Are you hearing what God has to say, or are you listening to what the god of this world has to say? If you are basically living like everyone around you it may be that you are "tuned in" to the same information source the world is listening to. Paul told the Ephesians that we all walked according to the course of this world when we were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-3), but when Christ makes us alive, He tunes our hearts to hear His voice and follow Him.

The good news is that God is there and He is still speaking, just as He did in Moses' day! In the midst of our glittering, high-tech society when so many voices are calling you—HE STILL SPEAKS, and if you will "tune in" He will speak to you! He says if you will seek Him, you will find Him. If you knock, the door will be opened! If you will draw near to Him, He will draw near to you! Why not "tune in" to Him today? ■

—Reprinted from the Summer 2006 issue of *The Torch*.

***Multitudes of people are "tuning in" to the god of this world who is blinding their eyes to eternal realities.***

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## JOHN WILLIAMS . . . cont'd.

in retaliation, it is believed, for the cruelties previously perpetrated by the crew of an English ship. The missionaries' remains were collected by Captain Croker of *HMS Favourite* and buried at Apia, on the island of Upolu, Samoa.

Williams is recognized as one of the most successful missionaries of modern times. Despite his lack of education and proper training, he was able to learn the languages of the different races he encountered and to adapt himself to the varying cultures of the South Sea Islands. His single-minded zeal for the well-being of the native peoples earned him a permanent place in the hearts of the South Sea islanders.

—Taken from *70 Great Christians*. Edited by Gail L. Emerson.

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



*A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**NOVEMBER 5, 2006**

## *The Contest on Mount Carmel*

1 Kings 18:20-24, 30-39

The time line of Israel's history continues to move forward. Following Solomon's successful yet profligate 40-year rule, the kingdom divided, with Rehoboam ruling over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and Jeroboam over the remaining 10 tribes. Spiritually things went rapidly downhill. All of Israel's kings followed in the path of Jeroboam who "made Israel to sin."

Today's lesson takes place in the time of Ahab, the seventh, and worst, king of Israel. The players are King Ahab and his nemesis, the Prophet Elijah. The setting is the contest on Mt. Carmel between the prophets of Baal and Elijah, the prophet of God. (Read 16:29-18:39 for the full story.)

King Ahab had accepted the challenge from Elijah for a showdown between the prophets of Baal and himself as the representative of the God of heaven. As they gathered on Mt. Carmel, Elijah called the people to decision: "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people were silent, noncommittal.

Elijah laid out the seeming inequality of the contest, 450 to 1, and gave the majority side the privilege of first proof. Each side was to offer a bullock to their deity and the one who answered by fire would be recognized as The God. The people agreed to the terms and the contest was on. Notice the interesting capitalization in verse 24. Elijah knew who would answer.

After the failure of the Baalites to secure an answer from their god (read the answering verses), Elijah took the stage. His first act was to repair the altar of the Lord, using twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel. He then arranged the fuel, killed the sacrifice, and drenched it all with water to prove there was nothing underhanded about his actions. Elijah wanted the people to understand that what happened was not trickery on his part, but a vivid demonstration of the power of the God of heaven.

At the set time for the evening sacrifice (see Exodus 29:38-43), Elijah prayed a simple prayer of supplication to the Lord, asking Him to vindicate Himself and him as His servant. He sought no glory for himself, but that the people would recognize the God of heaven for who He truly was. Elijah had the heart of a prophet, an unquenchable desire to show God to His people and thus effect change in the heart and attitudes of the people.

So the fire fell. It not only consumed the offering; it also burned the stones, the dust, and "licked up the water that was in the trench." Everything. God's power was displayed in a mighty and miraculous way. "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." All doubt had been erased. They had to acknowledge God's display of power. They recognized and acknowledged His superiority over Baal.

Did this cure Israel's backsliding once and for all? Unfortunately not. There followed a succession of wicked

kings, and some 140 years later God allowed Israel to be conquered by Assyria and disbursed throughout the nations.

God's chosen people paid a terrible price for their failure to follow the God who had done so much for them. Their example serves as a valuable lesson to every succeeding generation. God will not be mocked. The soul, or nation, that continues in sin will come under God's judgment.

### ***For thought and discussion***

1. What causes people to go astray from God? Who/what is responsible? How can the trend be reversed? Discuss this with your class.
2. What kind of man does it take to be a prophet of Elijah's caliber? What describes their character?
3. What motivates supposedly intelligent people to worship a god of their own making that is incapable of action on their behalf?
4. What was at the heart of Elijah's prayer?
5. Does God still use miraculous proofs of His power to convince men today? What do you think? What might be some factors limiting the expression of God's power today? Discuss.

## **NOVEMBER 12, 2006**

### ***Josiah Brings Reform***

2 Kings 22:8-13; 23:1-3, 21-25

Josiah was the 16th king of Judah, the 8th and last of the good kings. He reigned 31 years and about 220 years after Ahab's rule over Israel (last Sunday's lesson). Josiah was only eight years old when he ascended the throne following the murder of his father, Amon. (For background read 2 Kings 21:25-23:25 and the parallel account in 2 Chronicles 34 and 35.) "Josiah's reign on the Davidic throne for 31 years was

the last surge of political independence and religious revival before the disintegration of the Southern Kingdom which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C." (*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*).

As a 16-year-old teenage king, Josiah "began to seek after the God of David his father" (2 Chronicles 34:1-3), and four years later he began religious reforms in Judah and Jerusalem. In the 18th year of his reign (2 Chronicles 34:8), he instigated a renovation of the temple at which time the long-neglected book of God's Law was rediscovered. That discovery and the resulting religious reforms are the central theme of today's lesson.

Hilkiah the high priest found the long-lost book of the Law during the temple renovation and gave it to Shaphan the scribe to read. Shaphan then took it to the king and read it in his hearing. King Josiah was alarmed as he realized how far the nation had departed from the Law of God. He tore his robes in sorrow and in mourning that departure. He immediately sent a delegation to Huldah the prophetess (verses 14-20) to discern the Lord's voice concerning their backslidden state.

Josiah recognized the great disparity between God's will and the life of the nation. He also recognized, and feared, God's judgmental wrath. He also recognized that this spiritual decline was the fault of previous generations and that they were presently but victims of that neglect. But Josiah was more concerned about correction than he was in placing blame. "Go," he said, "inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people."

Hearing of God's sure judgment, Josiah called a national assembly in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. There he read to the leaders and to the people "all the words of the book of the covenant." These were not his words or opinions, these were the words of



Jehovah God. Josiah then led the people in covenanting to “walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and soul.” And the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

There followed a thorough spiritual housecleaning, of the temple, of false priests, of the places of idol worship, of spiritists and mediums. Then, to seal their commitment to the Lord, Josiah instituted a Passover, the likes of which had never before been seen in the nation’s history—all because a young king took seriously his nation’s responsibility to their God.

Josiah’s epitaph in verse 25 says it all. Neither before nor since was there such a king who “turned to the Lord with all his heart.” What an outstanding and exemplary young man.

***For thought and discussion***

1. God’s chosen people seemed to have every advantage—a God who loved them and prophets who warned them. Why was their obedience and spiritual commitment so spotty? What lessons can we learn from their failures?
2. Do we sometimes overlook the potential contribution of young people to the work of the church today? What can be done to develop more Josiah-like young men? Where does this responsibility lie?
3. What are the roots of spiritual neglect? What factors cause individuals or churches to go into spiritual decline? Discuss this issue with your class.
4. Differentiate between the words of man and the Word of God in convincing men of sin. Wherein lies the difference?
5. Notice from this account the tremendous value of strong, unbending leadership in guiding people to the truth and obedience of God’s Word.

**NOVEMBER 19, 2006**

***The People Go Into Exile***

2 Chronicles 36:15-21; Psalm 137:1-6

Despite the notable reforms under King Josiah, upon his death the nation again plunged into spiritual decline. A brief 22 years later, after a succession of five wicked kings, Jerusalem was destroyed and the people taken captive to Babylon. (Read 36:1-14 to get a picture of the sad and deplorable state of affairs.) It is disheartening to read how these kings “did evil in the sight of the Lord.” It was a dark time in the life of God’s people. They were headed for destruction.

But God did not give them up easily. He is a merciful, loving, and patient God. He continually sent His messengers, the prophets, to warn them and encourage them to repent, “because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place” (see 1 Kings 9:3). He did not wish evil upon His people or the city of His dwelling place. Read the Prophet Jeremiah’s appeal in Jeremiah 25:1-7.

Did the people respond to God’s gracious call? No, “they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets.” By their rejection they showed they were not the least bit interested in reform, in returning to the “Lord God of their fathers.” They rebelled “till there was no remedy” (v. 16). God had no choice but to carry out His threat of punishment.

God used the Chaldeans to destroy the city, loot and burn the temple, kill the inhabitants, and take captive to Babylon those who survived. Their unfaithfulness and refusal to repent angered God and left Him no recourse but to punish His people as He had repeatedly warned them He would do.

But there was a limit to God’s judgment (see v. 21). God was not making final disposition of His people. He was

subjecting them to a period of discipline in order to turn their hearts back to Him. He had further plans for His people. He planned to restore them again to their land and establish a renewed spiritual relationship with them. (The theme of next Sunday's lesson.) For the time being, however, Jeremiah encouraged the people to settle down in Babylon and resume the normal activities of life. They would be there 70 years. (Read Jeremiah 29:1-10.)

Psalm 1:37 is the lament of the people in captivity in Babylon, far from home, dispossessed of their land, their temple, and estranged from their God. Their outlook was bleak. They wept in remembrance of Zion as they gathered by the rivers of Babylon for worship. Their joy was gone. They couldn't bear to play joyous songs on their harps. The reality of their situation had set in and, undoubtedly, was providing a turning point in their attitudes.

To add insult to injury, their captors required of them songs of mirth, songs of Zion, worship songs. The Babylonians, of course, had no concept of the depth of feeling these people had for their land and their temple. Nor did they understand the relationship of a people to a living God.

God's people not only refused to sing the songs of Zion in a strange land, they pledged to never forget Jerusalem, the symbol of God's presence with them. Only a deep longing would carry them through the long and difficult years of their captivity. Were they beginning to feel remorse for their sins, their failure to obey God? One would certainly assume that to be the case.

#### ***For thought and discussion***

1. As we note from our lesson today, it is a dangerous thing to spurn the Word of the Lord. What are the eventual results?
2. I ask again, as I have repeatedly in these lessons from Israel's history,

why does it seem so easy for people of privilege to turn away from God? Discuss this with your class.

3. What methods does God use today to turn His wayward people back to Himself? Discuss.
4. Israel had direct word from God through the prophets, warning and encouraging them, yet they failed to heed. Today we have the living Word and God's Holy Spirit to teach and instruct and encourage us. How is our track record of faithfulness compared to theirs?
5. What carries God's people through difficult and seemingly impossible situations?

## **NOVEMBER 26, 2006**

### ***Return From Exile***

Ezra 1:1-8; 7:27, 28

God's time clock for Judah continued to tick. The 70-year captivity prophesied by Jeremiah was over (Jeremiah 29:10). God was now at work arranging details for the move back to Judah and Jerusalem from Babylon. And just as He had used a heathen king to punish and discipline His people, He again used a heathen king to forward them on their way back home.

Ezra, priest and scribe, descendant of Aaron, was the recorder of this transaction. Later he worked closely with Nehemiah in instituting religious reforms among the returned exiles. Ezra was not part of the first wave of 50,000 returnees to Jerusalem. He arrived 78 years later with the second wave of expatriates, 1,800 in number, including 38 Levites to serve in the newly rebuilt temple. (Read Ezra and Nehemiah for background.)

Cyrus, king of Persia, had recently conquered the Babylonian empire and established himself as head of the vast Persian Empire encompassing many

nations. Though not a follower of the Lord God of heaven, he acknowledged Him as the one who had enabled him to achieve such military and political success. In recognition, Cyrus proclaimed deliverance to the Jews living in his kingdom, encouraging them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the house of their God.

It is thought very likely that Daniel was the one who brought Isaiah's prophecy to Cyrus' attention, and that Cyrus was deeply impressed by the fact that he was mentioned by name 200 years before he was born. (See Isaiah 44:28–45:4.) But regardless of how it all came about, God was the ultimate mover of Cyrus' heart. And Cyrus responded with gratitude by releasing God's people to return home and rebuild their temple and their nation.

Furthermore, he commanded those who chose not to go to help those who did "with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem." Everything was covered for the reestablishment of the returnees and the rebuilding of God's house.

Notice in verse 5 that God was also at work in the hearts of His people to stimulate a desire to return. It was undoubtedly the more pious among the people who had a desire to return, those who lamented the captivity as we saw expressed in Psalm 137 in last Sunday's lesson and those who expressed deep remorse for their departure from God.

Cyrus went a step further and returned the "vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem." These were essential in the reestablishment of their worship of God. (Read Ezra 3:1-6.) Can you imagine the joy of God's people to be sent on their way home with the king's blessing, with resources to rebuild, and with those instruments which enabled their worship of God?

These treasures were delivered by Mithredath, Cyrus' treasurer, to the safekeeping of the prince of Judah, Sheshbazzar (possibly Zerubbabel).

The verses from Chapter 7 contain Ezra's prayer and praise to God for moving King Artaxerxes to allow him to go to Jerusalem (read Chapter 7), and to "beautify the house of the Lord." Note that "chief men" went with Ezra to Jerusalem. The success of God's people in rebuilding their relationship to God rested not only on the king's generosity, it also depended heavily on the strong leadership of men of God.

#### ***For thought and discussion***

1. Does God still use ungodly people to benefit His chosen people today? Can you cite examples?
2. Be sure you understand the historical setting and the long-term ramifications of the situation portrayed in today's lesson.
3. Why was the temple such an important focal point in the life of God's people?
4. Note the role of strong leadership in achieving God's purposes for His people.
5. There is a vital and perhaps often overlooked principle expressed in 7:27 as a response to God's blessing. It is thankfulness. Let's not neglect to praise and thank God for His present work on our behalf. ■

## **A Paradox of Growth**

Dr. Bonar once said that he could tell when a Christian was growing. In proportion to his growth in grace, he would elevate his Master, talk less of what he himself was doing, and become smaller and smaller in his own esteem, until, like the morning star, he faded away before the rising sun. —D. L. Moody  
—from *The Sword of the Lord*

# Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems  
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings  
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

## Pope Prepares to Embrace Intelligent Design

In a move that reverses the disaster of Catholic acquiescence to evolution, Pope Benedict is preparing to endorse the scientific theory of intelligent design. This is important because much of the world equates Catholicism with Christianity.

—Source: *The UK Guardian Unlimited*

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## Study: Psychological Scars for Women Who Abort

A study from Bowling Green State University shows that the psychological problems endured by teen mothers with unexpected pregnancies are much greater if they abort than if they give birth. The study had a sample size of over 1000 women. —Source: *Agape Press*

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## Coal as Alternative Fuel

The U.S. Air Force is the latest in a string of organizations to seriously pursue synthetic gas made from coal as an alternative to oil. The U.S. has 90% of the world's coal reserves, which are estimated to last in excess of 300 years. Reports on coal liquefaction from China indicate production of oil substitutes at an equivalent of \$25-\$35 USD/barrel. Current oil prices are \$72 a barrel.

—Sources: *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, and *Wikipedia*

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## Oil: Mideast and Midwest

In our Hutchinson, Kansas community, we are surrounded by oil wells creaking and groaning through the day and night. An oil-drilling rig and crew worked around the clock about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from our house drilling an oil well. When they (apparently) came up with a dry hole, they moved a mile or two down the road and tried again. The rising price of oil has also raised the nice monthly stipend that some of our neighbors receive from oil wells on their property. It has also increased the eagerness to develop further domestic oil sources, which is a positive development.

—Source: *Hans Mast Eyewitness News*

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## Christians Used as Shields in Lebanon

A Lebanese told this story (through a representative of Christian Solidarity International) about Hezbollah firing rockets from his house: Hezbollah militants came into his house without permission. They ignored him as they set up their rocket launchers on his roof. He gathered his family and fled to his nearby cousin's house. Fifteen minutes later, after Hezbollah had launched the rockets at Israel, Israeli jets bombed his house.

—Source: *Agape Press*

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## Reuters Fakes Photos

Reuters admitted that they doctored a

photo taken of the aftermath of an Israeli air strike. They added thick plumes of smoke to the photo. In another doctored photo, they also added three bombs dropping out of an Israeli F-16 that was dropping no bombs. The only thing the F-16 was doing was dropping a flare to misdirect a surface-to-air missile fired at the F-16. Reuters clone-stamped (made three copies of) the flare in the picture and then labeled them as missiles that the F-16 was shooting at ground targets.

—Sources: *Reuters, Ynet News, Washington Post, and Little Green Footballs*

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### **Writer/Blogger Mom Highlighted in MWR**

The *Mennonite Weekly Review* did a feature piece on Dorcas Smucker, author of the book *Ordinary Days: Family Life in a Farmhouse* and monthly columnist for the *Eugene Register-Guard*. Robert Rhodes, the editor of *MWR* said, “[O]ur story on [Smucker] is now the top hit-getter for the month so far on our site, even outpacing Floyd and his shenanigans.” Her “Letter from Harrisburg” column and book (which is made up of her columns) are simply stories about her family. Her husband, Paul, is a pastor of a conservative Mennonite church in Oregon. She has a very engaging, colorful, and witty cast of characters in her six children (ages 7-20) and husband. She is nearly as well-known in conservative Mennonite circles as being the author of one of the premier Mennonite blogs, *Life in the Shoe*, in which she shares more wonderful, hilarious, and uplifting stories of daily life. I personally highly recommend the blog, book, and column.

—Source: *Mennonite Weekly Review, Ordinary Days* (<http://tinyurl.com/gsgfx>), and *Life in the Shoe* (<http://dorcassmucker.blogspot.com>)

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### **Pro-Life Group Buys Abortion Clinic; Finds Abuses**

A pro-life group, Operation Rescue,

bought an abortion clinic in Wichita, KS, and then evicted its tenants. They used crime scene techniques on the walls and carpets, which were found to be covered in blood. One of the volunteers said it looked as if a “chain saw massacre” had occurred. They also found an industrial strength garbage disposal in a sink in the back that was used in the disposal of the bodies. Operation Rescue plans to convert the abortion mill to a memorial to pre-birth victims and an office suite for Operation Rescue.

—Sources: *Hutchinson News and Christian News Wire*

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### **U.S. Missile Defense Agency to Help Israel Anti-Rocket Efforts**

The Pentagon’s Missile Defense Agency is helping Israel develop a system that will destroy the short-range Katushya and Qassam rockets in flight. Israel is interested in purchasing the tactical high-energy chemical-laser system that has had very good success in destroying relatively short-ranged non-ballistic missiles.

—Source: *Reuters*

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### **Aborted Baby Born Alive**

The decomposing remains of a baby were found by police in a biohazard bag at an abortion clinic. The mother of the baby delivered the baby because there wasn’t an abortionist immediately available to kill it before birth. After the baby was born, the owner of the clinic rushed in and carried the baby off. The Miami-Dade County medical examiner and police have confirmed that the baby was born alive. Investigation and prosecution are pending.

—Source: *WorldNetDaily*

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### **Australian MPs Decry Secularism**

Over a dozen Australian MPs hosted a forum in which they scolded secularism and urged a return to Christianity. Former Nationals leader John Anderson

said, “Where are we going to draw our values and beliefs from in the future, Big Brother? Millions of Australians watch (the reality television show) rather than go to church.” Senator Barnett said that the forum was “a response to the denigration at a public level of Christian values.”

—Source: *The Australian*

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### **Authorities Foil Islamic Airliner Terror Plot**

Twenty-four men were arrested in Britain shortly before they had planned to blow up 10 airliners over the Atlantic. They planned to use liquids, concealed in shampoo bottles, that were inert when separate, but explosive when mixed. They planned to use iPods and other electronic devices to detonate the devices. Key intelligence help was provided to the British authorities by Pakistani intelligence and informants within British Muslim communities. This plot has brought a plethora of new restrictions to airline travel that are frustrating passengers. The only liquids or gels allowed past security are baby formula/milk and prescription medications.

—Sources: *Newsweek*, *CNN*, *Fox News*, and the *London Telegraph*

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### **Indian Supreme Court Ruling Hurts Christians**

India’s Supreme Court ruled that police no longer need a warrant to arrest Christians accused of evangelism. This will likely open the floodgates of persecution now that almost anyone can initiate an arrest. —Source: *ASSIST News Service*

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### **Christian Orphanage in Sri Lanka Attacked**

“A mob of 200 people, accompanied by three Buddhist monks, attacked a children’s home run by the Dutch Reformed Church in central Sri Lanka on Sunday,

and planted a Buddhist flag on the roof. The mob forced their way into the children’s home in Balana, Kandy District, assaulted staff and threatened to kill the houseparents. They threw stones at the house and broke roof tiles and rainwater gutters. The fence surrounding the property was completely destroyed . . . [T]he staff of the children’s home were warned that if they did not leave the premises, they would be ‘burned alive.’ The ‘houseparents’ fled on Sunday night.”

—Excerpt from “Sri Lankan Buddhist Extremists Attack Church-Run Children’s Home, and Threaten Death.” *Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Worthy News* (<http://tinyurl.com/o5nmy>).

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### **Three Christians on Death Row in Indonesia**

The national Indonesian police chief issued a last minute stay of the firing squad execution of three Christian men accused of inciting violence (oh the irony!) against Muslims. The Vatican and EU have strongly urged Indonesia not to execute the men. It appears that the conviction process was less than impartial, to put it mildly. An opinion piece in the *Jakarta Post* (the largest English language newspaper in Indonesia) has pointed out numerous holes in the official story and has called for an indefinite stay on the execution and the establishment of an “Independent Team for the Collection and Search for Facts” to determine the truth. The three men have appealed to Indonesia’s president for a pardon.

—Sources: *The Jakarta Post*, *The Times of London*, and BBC

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### **Quote of the Month**

“Unbelief is actually perverted faith, for it puts its trust, not in the living God but in dying men. The unbeliever denies the self-sufficiency of God and usurps attributes that are not his. This dual sin dishonors God and ultimately destroys the soul of man.” —A. W. Tozer

# Courage to Be Involved

by John Coblentz

“I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul” (Psalm 142:4).

This verse comes from a psalm expressing deep distress—“trouble,” David calls it in verse 2. The trouble is not described for us in the psalm, although he indicates several times it is relational.

The psalm title says David wrote this “when he was in the cave” (apparently during the time Saul, his father-in-law, was seeking to take his life).

Relationship conflict—barriers, distance, hurtful words, misunderstanding, ill will, accusation, disagreement, anger, bitterness, grudges, rivalry, revenge—there is no painless way to fight, is there?

And the world has not changed since the time of David. There still are people who fear each other, even in family and church relationships. In-laws want to control. Leaders who should be godly can get nasty. Onlookers hear skewed reports and take sides. Rumors spread. Accusations are made. People are pushed to take sides who don’t even know what the conflict is about. Distance. Sorrow. Distress. Abandonment. Hate and hurt.

Somewhere in the conflict is someone, like David, who is not fighting, someone who is caught in a war he did not start and doesn’t want to continue.

And such people often feel alone. They have no one they can talk to, no one who cares for their soul.

What did David want?

What does any person want who feels alone in distress?

## **1. We want someone who cares.**

Trouble stirs a deep cry from the heart for someone who cares. We want someone whose heart is toward us, especially when the trouble is caused by someone who is against us. Isn’t there someone who has

genuine compassion?

## **2. We want someone who will hear us.**

Distress urges us to talk—we want to put into words what we are going through. And we want someone to hear what we are saying, to take the time to listen until they understand what we are going through.

“Oh, that someone would hear me!” Job cried in his distress. His distress was not due simply to the losses he had experienced nor to the physical pain from the sores, but to the inner anguish that his best earthly friends did not understand.

Sorrow, trouble, loss, rejection—these are experiences we all go through at some time in our lives. But the difference between trouble seeming to be bearable or unbearable often hinges on the realization that someone knows and understands or the torturous reality that “no one cares for my soul.”

## **3. We want someone who will stand by us.**

David was chased by Saul from one hiding place to another, and one by one, David’s friends also were cut off from him. It was dangerous for people to identify with David. When Jonathan stood up for David, Saul tried to pin him to the wall with a spear. When Ahimelech innocently fed David and gave him a sword, Saul killed not only Ahimelech, but 85 relatives as well. Various people in the wilderness area tried to curry Saul’s favor by giving information about David’s whereabouts, but who was willing to stand by David?

“Isn’t there someone!” David groans in anguish. In this anguished cry of David, we hear the cry of every lonely man and woman in distress. If there is anything worse than the distress we are going through, it is the awful awareness that we are totally alone in it. No one is with us.

This plaintive cry of David tells us

several things. First, it tells us that it is important to be involved in the lives of those in distress and to be involved at a heart level, not superficially.

It is not only humane, but it is godly to care enough to weep with those who weep. They do not need general, nice-sounding admonition (Biblical though it may be) so much as they need the caring presence of someone who listens with an attentive ear and an understanding heart.

Second, from David, we realize that to be involved at this level of a person's trouble takes courage. To be understanding of human suffering will mean that "Saul" might get ugly.

Jesus is our example here—He touched the untouchables; He cared for the sick and the sinful. It earned Him the derisive title "Friend of sinners," and eventually it cost

Him rejection and a shameful death. And so, while David shows us the distress of not having someone who cares about our trouble, Jesus teaches us that caring about the sorrows of others is right, though it may be mocked or misunderstood.

Finally, from David we learn where to turn when others forsake us. Although David cried for human understanding, he turned to God for comfort when others failed him. "O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living" (v. 5).

God's people are never completely alone! We always do have One who cares and truly understands. In the next issue, we will further explore this glorious truth. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Deeper Life Ministries newsletter*, August 2006.

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## "I'm Ready to Kill Him!"

by David L. Burkholder

Those were words spoken to me by a mother about her son. He had failed to carry through with a financial obligation on her behalf and, as a result, incurred additional expense for her. She was upset. And threatening.

I understood her threat to kill him not as in dead, but as in severe reprimand for his failure. But still, at the least, her threat didn't sound good. As I pondered the incident, I had to wonder if maybe his failure was not at least in part due to previous failure on her part to properly train her son in the matter of responsibility to obligations. Something was lacking somewhere, I was sure of that.

It didn't take long to figure out that the relationship between that mother and her adult son was at the least somewhat strained. I may be wrong (hopefully), but there also seemed to be a disconnect in their ability to communicate, a lack of

responsibility, at least on the son's part, and gross lack of mutual respect on the part of both. I was appalled. If she spoke to me, a nameless face on the phone, in such terms about her son, I wondered what she was going to say to him. I pitied him. I pitied them both.

Now parenting isn't easy. The task of molding young minds and training them in useful, noble patterns takes effort and time. And, as one can easily discern by observation, yelling at children or threatening them does not usually produce intended results, at least for the long run. It seems to be a tactic of last resort. And a tacit admission that previous instruction, if indeed there was such, had failed to achieve its intended goals.

We parents do tend to become frustrated at times due to lack of proper response from our children. They can be exasperatingly difficult at times (just as

we were as children). And it takes patience to deal with their misbehavior. But expressing our displeasure or frustration in threatening or uncomplimentary terms does not work and serves more to highlight our failings than the child's.

The Scriptures give us much direction on the responsibility to teach and train our children and on the proper relationship that should exist between parent and child. The well-known proverb (22:6) tells us that if we "train up a child in the way he should go . . . when he is old, he will not depart from it." That speaks to the early and continual teaching of responsibility and other values which prepare the child for life. Another well-known passage in Deuteronomy 6 gives additional guidelines for the proper instruction of children in the ways of God and uprightness. New Testament Scriptures in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 speak to the attitude with which parents are to give instruction to their children. It is to be a loving, kind, non-threatening matter.

In short, it is the parents' responsibility to take these impressionable minds committed to their care and instill in them guiding principles which will serve them for a lifetime of usefulness and value both to God and mankind. To fail in this responsibility not only robs the child of the preparation needed for a satisfying and useful life, it also reflects negatively on the assumption of our parental responsibility.

Sadly, too many parents today are not equipped for their role, either never having been so trained by their parents, or never having committed themselves to the Lord of life who is able and ready to guide them in this great task. Somehow this cycle must be broken if we are to produce capable, responsible, and useful persons for society, to say nothing of the greater responsibility of preparing them for eternity.

One way Christian parents can help is by simply being living examples to the society around us which seems to be adrift on a sea of neglect and indifference in regard to child training. Too many chil-

dren today are left either to their own devices or with caretakers whose job is simply to monitor their activities. Often their outlook on life is molded either by peer interaction or television or their own inner drives. As a result, society is failing, badly, to produce oncoming generations of capable, adequately equipped and disciplined citizenry.

By modeling God-centered homes where love, discipline, instruction, and training are an integral part of daily life, we can as Christian parents leave an example for our neighbors to follow. Time spent in wholesome family activities provides unpretentious opportunities for guidance in life-principles and the bonding so necessary between parent and child which makes instruction effective. Work habits, moral values, respect for others, and personal discipline—all are learned in the healthy give-and-take of parent-child interaction. This speaks to those who observe.

What else can we do to turn the rising tide of confrontational parent-child relationships? A cautious, appropriate "word in season" may at times be in order. A word of commendation and encouragement when we observe wholesome interaction is also always in order. We should also not overlook the value and efficacy of prayer for those who guide oncoming generations—parents, teachers, pastors, and others.

The last thing we want to do is "kill" our children through neglect, indifference, or wrong approaches to corrective discipline. We should strive, rather, to see that they are brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That sets their feet on the right path and provides the basis for instruction in life-principles. Pagan societies often killed their children due to a value system skewed by evil influences. We need to work toward establishing a value system that respects children and works diligently in the training and equipping of them for a useful, productive, and God-honoring life. ■

# Morality Should Be Part of Education

by Haven Bradford Gow

In his book *Diseconomies of Scale in Public Education* (Xlibris), scholar Dr. Donald Lade raises serious questions about the amount of money spent on public education in America today. He maintains that “one salient fact . . . is that school district budgets live in a world of shadows, at the very least so far as the voting public is concerned. Another fact is that the cost basis for these budgets is even more obscure.”

One significant fact is the United States spends \$536 billion a year on education, which amounts to slightly more than \$10,000 per student per year. Even with the War on Terrorism, we spend more on education than we do on national defense: \$486 billion. We spend more on education than any other nation in the world; yet test scores reveal our students do not do as well as students in other nations that spend considerably less than we do on education.

In the United States, as columnist/social critic David Brooks noted in the February 19, 2006 *New York Times*, “we spend more money on education than any other nation. We have undertaken a million experiments to restructure schools and bureaucracies. But students who lack cultural and social capital because they do not come from intact, organized families continue to fall further and further behind—unless they come in contact with some great mentor who can not only teach, but also change values and behavior.”

As Texas high school teacher Paul Zoch points out in *Doomed to Failure: The Built-in Defects of American Education* (Chicago: Ivan Dee), even though Japan spends much less than we do on education, its students do much better than our students on test scores. Japan’s educational system emphasizes character as well as intellectual development. Its

school system teaches young persons that it is a matter of personal and family honor to behave and do well in school, and that doing well in school requires study, hard work, self-sacrifice, self-discipline, and cooperation in the learning process.

Vernie Schoor, president of Character Choice in Colorado, says American schools also must stress character as well as intellectual development; the purpose of education should be to help young people become good human beings, not just good students.

As Dr. William Kirk Kilpatrick points out in his book *Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong* (Simon & Schuster), the social and moral problems involving young people today emanate from the lack of character education. A professor of education and psychology at Boston College, Dr. Kilpatrick observes: “In addition to the fact that Johnny still can’t read, we are now faced with the more serious problem that he can’t tell right from wrong.”

Being an educator himself, Dr. Kilpatrick primarily is concerned with how schools and fellow educators can point young people in the right direction toward wisdom and virtue. He proposes that educators: Teach students self-discipline, respect for others, self-respect, and such virtues as moral courage, justice and charity; refurbish activities that encourage students to practice good habits and virtuous conduct such as volunteer work at orphanages or nursing homes; restore the order, discipline, and good moral climate that once prevailed in schools; use history and literature to teach morality through the study of historical heroes like Abraham Lincoln and the great works of the moral and intellectual giants of civilization. ■

—Mr. Gow is a radio commentator and writer.

# A Bend in the Road

by Bill Commons

Dr. David Jeremiah, founder of Turning Point Radio and Television Ministries, wrote a book by the title *A Bend in the Road* describing his struggles when a battle with cancer forced him to restructure his life and ministry. Such unscheduled struggles invade all of our lives in unexpected ways and at inconvenient times. Missionaries are not immune to personal tragedies and family traumas, either. What should they do when—

- critical health needs make it impossible to continue on the field?
- their elderly parents back home need care and nobody else can help?
- their young child is diagnosed with severe emotional/behavioral problems that will require years of specialized care unavailable in their region?
- their teenage child gets in trouble on the field and their family is forced to return home for an extended time of counseling and stabilizing?
- local violence causes injury to a family member, sidelining the family from overseas service until recovery and rehabilitation is complete?
- a missionary husband or wife dies suddenly and the spouse with small children is unable to continue alone on the field?
- conflicts in their marriage or on the missionary team bring heartbreak and result in their family returning home?
- breakdown or burnout sidelines them for an extended period of time?

These and other heartaches sometimes invade missionary experience, forcing an unwanted “bend in the road” of life and ministry. When Christ’s international ambassadors are forced to return home, these wounded soldiers of the cross are often written off by their constituents as casualties. After initial shock and concern, their supporters and friends move on with their busy lives, and the sidelined missionaries struggle alone.

Sometimes the problems require the missionary to take a leave of absence or resign from the agency. This is an incredibly difficult decision for everyone involved. Others will take a pastorate in their home country or switch to an evangelistic ministry in the homeland. Sadly, they often assume that the “closing of the door” to their previous cross-cultural mission means that they should revert to a ministry among the majority (Anglo) culture

where they grew up.

Praise God for those who, returning to their homeland, never abandon their adopted language and culture. Numerous Hispanic churches in the U.S. have been planted by missionaries who had to leave the field but never left the precious people whose culture God had given them to cherish and serve in Jesus’ name. Some returning veterans from Asia and Africa have sought ministries to immigrant populations from their region, resulting in many coming to Christ.

But all too often the years and resources invested for a missionary to acquire a new language and culture overseas are lost upon returning home. This deprives the North American church of the rich experiences and cultural insights of those who could be used in multi-ethnic outreaches and daughter church-plants.

Tragically, many of our American

churches continue to be culture-bound and ethnocentric, content to ignore the changing communities around them and to remain mono-cultural in their multicultural environment, which God has given them for Jerusalem-Judea-Samaria ministry.

Just think what could happen if our churches embraced returning missionaries and prized them as resources God gave the local church to expand intercultural outreaches. Pastoral staffs could include these veterans as specialists, helping them to reach out to the mixed community and embrace local minorities and immigrants with Calvary's love as part of the local church's missions strategy.

Cross-cultural evangelism/discipleship in church planting is no longer just "out there." The ends of the earth have come to town, and bends in the road have brought to local churches

gifted servants who could lead in historic local advancement of the gospel.

Imagine the impact if our American churches reached their local ethnic populations, discipling them and sending them as missionaries to reach their communities and home countries for Christ!

Let's not squander the investments we have made in missionaries we sent, but for whatever reason God sent back to us. May our churches learn to use them and their unique linguistic and cultural abilities for strategic evangelism. Their "bend in the road" can lead to fruitful intercultural ministries back home. And the churches who receive them

gladly, love them back to "normal," and put them to work in the community could experience unprecedented gospel advance. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the Summer 2006 issue of *The Message*.

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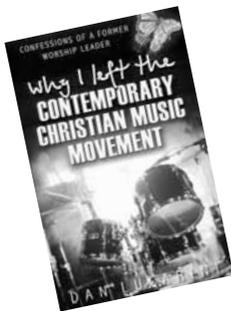
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***"Just think what could happen if our churches embraced returning missionaries and prized them as resources to expand intercultural outreaches."***

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## Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement



by Dan Lucarini

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# Laodicea

by Hugh C. Benner

John W. Gardner of the Carnegie Corporation in New York recently said, "The survival of the idea for which this nation stands is not inevitable, it may survive if enough Americans care enough."

This was not a preacher talking; it was a man who is high in the realms of man.

He knows well, as we are beginning to know, that there are vast and mysterious forces moving across this world of ours which would destroy every fundamental American concept including the Church . . . for which this Nation stands . . . for these forces are godless forces.

They are taking advantage of any situation, any time, anywhere under any circumstance to promote what they want in this world.

And they do it with no semblance of morality. For they are not troubled by any conscience or standard at any point.

And so secular and religious leaders alike, are calling for us to return to the principles and attitudes that made our country progressive and strong.

We must realize, if we have not, and understand it more fully if we have not understood it, that the church is caught in this situation.

The day has long since passed when the Christian Church could take for granted her continuation as an effective force in the world.

Forces of paganism that infiltrate into life and even into our homes a great blatant worldliness that would destroy every spiritual value, a sweeping materialism that has become almost the basis for judging everything!

Our church is not immune to the

influence of these forces or to the character of the day in which we operate.

You all are familiar with Revelation 2 and 3. Those two chapters represent the messages to the seven churches. Here is a most discriminating characterization of the church.

There are those that have thought it represented a prophetic sequence, beginning with the Apostolic times, coming on down through the various eras and periods of history, down to the time of the end.

There are those that have thought it represents kinds of churches. Or they may feel that here are portrayed the fundamental problems faced by the churches of all ages.

I think there is a prophetic significance to the messages to the churches.

## ***God's Judgment Is on a Spiritual Basis***

One thing is crystal clear throughout those messages. God's appraisal, and God's judgment is on a spiritual basis. When it comes to the point of God dealing with the church nothing else matters much but the spiritual.

Think about how true that was in the ministry of Jesus. He didn't talk much about things, He talked about spiritual elements and spiritual truths.

And have you thought lately: The early church had little to say about material things. Once in a while a little mention. But the great issues are spiritual issues. These messages close with this message to the church at Laodicea.

### ***I. The Divine Indictment***

First of all: The accusation of a lack of full devotement to God or His work. The Laodiceans were neither hot nor

cold. They held to a kind of middle ground that has no issues particularly in any direction.

Where churches are lukewarm you will find, works without soul passion, religion without any emotion, and activity without zeal—a kind of formalism gripping everyone. It devolves into routine without life.

I tell you, friends, whenever those conditions begin to exist the church will be neither cold nor hot. And they will come under the judgment of God.

God says, I can't stand people like that. I cannot take a church like that. I cannot recognize people who will try to straddle the whole situation and be neither cold nor hot.

Here is represented a kind of sinful religion, not necessarily because they do evil things, but because they are trying to carry on a religion for which they pay no personal price, carry on a religion that has no grip, no heart, no feeling, and no passion in it.

They have felt if they would go through certain forms and certain routines they would make it through. But God says I'll have nothing to do with that sort of thing. If you are going to be lukewarm I'm through with you!

Secondly, it is in Laodicea that we find a profound distortion of values.

The church supposed itself to be rich, increased with goods and have need of nothing. Here's your materialism.

This church adopted worldly standards of value. They were content to live for secondary issues rather than those things by which men live or die.

But the most stinging indictment of the Laodiceans was their loss of first love. They lost their fellowship with God. They lost their communion with God.

The first element that is lost by the

spiritual church, is never works, labor, orthodoxy, promotion, or organization. They can continue to be tops on those lines. It is love they lose first.

The radiance, the romance, the blessing, the joy, the spiritual attractiveness, there is where the spiritual church begins to drift and lose out.

Long after they have lost the radiance, and the power, and the joy, they can carry on the machinery. For that takes no particular devotion, or passion.

The loss of spiritual reality, so that they still go through the forms but they have lost the power thereof—that is the clear indictment of God against the Laodiceans. And it is an indictment that we too could bear unless we care enough!

#### *The Divine Counsel*

Our Lord counsels the Laodiceans, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:18, 19).

I read in Revelation 19:8, concerning the Bride, . . . she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.

It is a matter of inner purity and the outworking of life of righteousness and true holiness.

You need righteousness, and clean clothes, but you also need eyesalve, our Lord instructs. There is illumination in Jesus Christ, there is illumination in the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Too many churches are blind to spiritual truth. The only solution is this

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***The first element that is lost by the spiritual church, is never works, labor, orthodoxy, promotion, or organization. They can continue to be tops on those lines. It is love they lose first.***

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divine eyesalve that takes away the blindness and enables them to see the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

Thank God! We have a mighty God who says I will reveal Myself to My people!

### ***The Divine Promise***

*“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”*

When I began to read this I began to see that this is a part of the message to the church. Written to the church, we now have the picture of Jesus Christ standing at the door of HIS church, trying to get inside . . . so that He can get inside and do something with them, and to them, and through them!

It is on that basis that I find the pattern for the survival of the Church in any age, and our age. Old fashioned but sufficient.

“I’m standing at the door knocking!” Aren’t you glad He’s there!

“I’m there whether you want Me or not . . . whether you do anything with Me or not! I’m there!”

I wish I could get it to you like I think Jesus feels it. He invites, “If any man hear My voice and will open the door, I will come in!”

Here is our responsibility—the element of our initiative. Here is the point if anything happens we must start it. We must issue the invitation! There are no inevitable revivals and awakenings to come.

### ***Revival Will Come Only When We Open the Door!***

Carnal disobedience, quenching of the Spirit, shut out the Lord. He said, If you’ll open that door I will come in!

I see here the answer to the church problems in all times and age. It was not in beautiful churches. It was not in

financial resources. It was not in esteem or prestige. It was not in the highly trained people. It was not in clever methods. BUT CHRIST CAME IN BY THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT! Read the Acts of the Apostles again!

Something happens when Christ is revealed. There is a renewed evangelistic effectiveness.

And I’m glad there is another part! “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

Here is the reminder that we are in a struggle that will not be a pushover! We will have to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In the midst of materialism, worldliness, paganism, materialistic pressures, formalism, and distortion of values—there will be those who have VICTORY IN JESUS.

These are fateful days; we ought to be realists concerning this world.

In the light of world conditions, we must set ourselves with every means at our command to meet the attack of the enemy.

We must in this era, give to God unqualified, unequivocal, unquestioning devotion that says “Let the world think as they please, we are going with God!”

Let others do what they may, we go with God! To paraphrase John Gardner: THE SURVIVAL OF THE IDEA FOR WHICH THIS

CHURCH STANDS, IS NOT INEVITABLE, IT WILL SURVIVE AND PROSPER UNDER GOD, IF WE WILL CARE ENOUGH!

We’re going to overcome! Christ is going to live in our midst! And we’re going to have the victory! ■

—Reprinted by permission from *Faith in the Future*, Summer 2006.

# Helping Others Deal With Their Anger

by Robert D. Jones

Our world is an angry world. How can you minister God's truth in specific ways to the angry people you meet? How can we become wiser, more gracious people-helpers in dealing with this common problem? Let's consider a basic three-pronged ministry agenda and some tools to help our angry friends, family members, and counselees.

**First**, enter the person's world, understand him and his situation, and give Gospel hope.

Your initial aims in helping an angry person are to reflect Christ's care and hope for him and to cultivate a warm, welcoming relationship with him. Jesus, our great high priest, offers mercy and power to all who look to Him, including angry people. From Him we may "receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16). God's Word—the "book about anger"—gives answers to anger problems.

Interviewing the person is vital; you can't help a person you don't know. You will want to start with general information and move progressively toward specifics. This means understanding and responding with Christlike interest to the person's significant past influences, present circumstances, and future concerns. What are his situational pressures? How have people sinned against him? When? In what ways? Where is he being tempted? Compassionate listening is vital.

Why are these matters so important? Because an angry person is frequently defensive and mistrusting, he will not open his life to you unless you show genuine desire to hear his story, including his hardships. Moreover, it is not enough that you understand him; you must

communicate this to him. He needs to *know* you understand and care.

Knowing the person also requires understanding his specific anger incidents. When does he get angry? What triggers his anger? Toward whom is it directed? What does he do and say in anger? What patterns do you observe? Of course, paying attention to the person's nonverbal behavior and the tone, inflection, and volume of his words will also inform you. And, as you get to know him better, you may also begin to feel some of his anger expressed against you. Wise homework assignments, including journaling anger incidents that distinguish the situation, the response, and the heart beliefs and motives, will provide you with further understanding.

As you are getting to know the person, you must continually present the hope of Christ. Help the person from the outset to believe that Christ forgives and changes angry people and that God's Word has answers to his anger problems. Help him to discover this himself through both the private means (reading and meditating on Scripture, prayer, etc.) and public means (worship, Bible teaching, service, "one another" fellowship with mature believers, etc.) of grace. Testimonies of God's transformation of your own and others' angry hearts will also go a long way toward giving him hope and helping him trust you.

As you speak of Christ's grace and power, you invite hope and faith. Stressing the facts of the Gospel—Christ's death and resurrection for sinners like us—and the promises of God must be your priority. Key passages for memorization and meditation that instill help

and point to Christ's provisions for sinners include Hebrews 4:16; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 1:3 (and Eph. 1-2); 2 Peter 1:3; John 6:68, 69; and Colossians 2:3, 9, 10.

Based on this grace, then invite your counselee or friend to passages like 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10; 5:14, 15; and 2 Peter 1:3-11 with a commitment to live for Christ, please God, and apply God's answers to his life. At the same time, make allowance for people who at this stage are not yet convinced that Jesus can truly forgive and change them and that He is worthy of the person's allegiance.

**Second**, help the person to root out his sinful heart beliefs and motives that cause sinful anger and to embrace the God of grace.

As you address specific anger issues, it's vital for you to help your friend or counselee see that his anger arises from his heart. Thorough and lasting godly change happens when our heart beliefs and motives are radically changed by God's grace.

Your task at this stage is to expose the person's ruling beliefs and motives and to teach and persuade him in fresh ways to repent and believe Christ. He might offer a half dozen explanations for his anger that will fall short of the Bible's simple but piercing heart diagnosis. You might find it helpful to ask him to study a passage like James 3:13-4:12 and to teach it to you during your counseling session.

What idol clusters might you find in an angry person? The same you see in your own heart. We clutch for control over circumstances and relationships. Parents explode when their children buck their authority. Wives angle to get their husbands to go to church. Husbands demand wives to submit sexually. Workers build their hopes on a promotion or raise. Pastors demand that members perform well; members expect the same from their pastors.

Comfort and convenience can also rule people. A dad yells at his son for interrupting his evening affair with his newspaper. An employee complains about the boss assigning him extra work. A pastor's wife resents the constant phone calls from a chronic complaining congregant.

Or perhaps the person's fear of man—his craving for approval and reputation—causes anger. An embarrassed husband erupts when his wife fails to clean the house before their friends arrive to visit. A defensive wife resents her husband's critical comments about her in front of his parents. The performance-driven schoolteacher collapses when her students criticize her.

In short, list the person's "unmet emotional needs" and you will usually find his angry roots. During this phase you should encourage the person to continue journaling his anger incidents. But as he begins to understand his heart with biblical insight, the journal will begin to reflect a repentant heart. The person may progressively transform it from a problem journal to a prayer journal, addressing God with second person pronouns.

Of course, it is not enough to help the person uproot idols. You must help him replace his false trust with renewed trust in the living God, a growing confidence in Christ and His Spirit, His Word, and His Church. Three truths seem particularly vital for those with angry hearts.

1. God is the Righteous Judge of Your Offenders. Angry people who have been sinned against need to know that a just God will punish sin and vindicate His people. They need to let God be angry for them and to trust in God's perfect justice—perfect in discernment, in timing, and in degree of punishment. In His own time and His own way, He will condemn the guilty and vindicate the righteous.

Key passages to teach or assign might

include Psalm 94; Romans 12:14-21; 13:1-7; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 4:19; and Revelation 6:9-11. Jay Adams' *How to Overcome Evil: A Practical Exposition of Romans 12:14-21* has helped many Christians fight this battle.

2. God is the Merciful Forgiver and Righteous Judge of Your Sins. Angry people focus on the specks in others' eyes and ignore the planks in their own (Matt. 7:3-5). The place to begin to dislodge this self-centered distortion is to know that God in Christ has forgiven believers their massive, multimillion-dollar sin debt against Him. Key passages for the person to study include Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Isaiah 38:17; Jeremiah 31; Micah 7:18-20; and Psalms 32; 51; 103; and 130. Such a study also prepares your friend for God's call to forgive those who have sinned against him.

In addition, we want to help angry people expand their awareness and reverence for God as their holy judge. While tempted to return evil for evil, they need to know that God's holy eyes gaze upon them. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10); such reverent wisdom is required when facing mistreatment.

3. God is your Good, Loving, and Sovereign Father. Angry Christians often feel out of control—lost, abandoned, and orphaned in a world out of control. Our agenda is simple: help them know God as their Father. They are sons, not slaves; heirs, not orphans (Galatians 3-4). Direct your friend to list and meditate on God's attributes in passages like Romans 8:28-39; Genesis 37-50 (especially 50:19, 20); Luke 12:22-32; and Matthew 6:19-34. Jerry Bridges' *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts* or his booklet abridgement "You Can Trust God" can aid us. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; Hebrews 4:16; Luke 12:32; 18:9-14).

**Third**, help the person put off his sinful anger expressions and replace them

with godly words and actions.

Having led your friend or counselee to embrace the God of grace, you need to help him apply the Gospel to change his angry behavior. The direction you take depends on the type of anger he expresses. You must tailor the biblical call to replace sinful words and actions to fit the particular person.

If he tends to be an anger-revealer then you will want to lead him to take active, concrete steps to develop self-control, godly speech, and biblical peacemaking and problem-solving. A host of Proverbs will help you, including 12:18; 16:32; 25:28; and 29:11, along with passages like Matthew 5:21-26 and Ephesians 4:25-32.

On the other hand, the person may tend to be an anger-concealer who internalizes his anger. Passages like Leviticus 19:16-18; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; and Luke 15:25-30 can address this. Help your friend see the evil of such behavior. Particular godly behavioral changes to cultivate for the anger-concealer include attitudinal/heart forgiveness, proactive God-pleasing speech, and biblical peacemaking and problem solving.

Helping an angry person can be costly—it will cost you time to cultivate a relationship. It will cost you the energy of reading your Bible and praying. And it may even subject you to his anger. But the riches of serving our Lord in this ministry far outweigh our investment. To see friends, family members, and fellow church members humbling themselves before the God of grace brings us a rich reward, as James 5:19, 20 reminds us: My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Biblical Counselor*, August 2006.

# Saying Something— or Just Singing?

by Randall McElwain

A restless listener interrupted my long-winded story with, “Are you saying something, or just talking?” The question came back to me recently; sitting in a song service, I asked myself, “Am I saying anything when I sing?” Are the words I sing true in my life, or am I mouthing platitudes that have little to do with my Christian experience? If the songs we sing do not match our experience, the songs are no more than sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals: we are not saying anything when we sing.

## *Hymns*

Our favorite hymns are often the old hymns of the Wesleys, Watts, and Luther. These hymns provide a wonderful source for teaching doctrine. They remind us of what holy people have long believed about justification, sanctification, assurance, and the other great doctrines of our faith.

But, are the hymns true? Yes, of course, they are true *objectively*: they are based on Scripture. But, are they true *subjectively*: have we experienced the doctrine of which we sing? “And Can It Be” cannot be fully appreciated by a singer whose chains have not fallen off, whose soul is not free, and who has never experienced the joy of sins forgiven. The hymn was born out of Charles Wesley’s experience; it must be reenacted in our experience if the hymn is to retain its life. If the doctrines we sing are not part of our experience, we are not saying anything when we sing; our hymns are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

## *Gospel Songs*

Many of the great gospel songs of our heritage testify to the personal experience of saints who experienced the joy of full salvation. Born in the fervor of the camp meeting movement, these songs testify to a vibrant experience with God.

When we sing those great holiness songs today, are they *our* testimony? Is “Holiness Forevermore” truly our “watchword and song,” or do we sing it simply because we like the exciting bass part? Do we sing “Blessed Assurance” as a testimony to the witness of the Spirit, or do we choose it only because it has a lilting tune that catches our ear? If the experience we sing about is foreign to our own experience, we are not saying anything when we sing; our gospel songs are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

## *Praise Music*

Gospel choruses and today’s praise songs encourage spontaneous praise. Because of its accessibility, this style offers great possibilities for worship—but it also brings unique dangers. Because of their simple texts, praise songs can be mindlessly repeated with little attention to the meaning of the words. Because the words sound good, the songs can suggest a patina of worship even if true worship is nowhere to be found. As a friend said, “By the third repetition, I get a ‘religious feeling’—even if I haven’t thought even once about what we are singing.”

Isaiah 6:1-8 illustrates true worship: worship involved emotion, but it went

deeper than emotion. Isaiah's worship inspired confession, it compelled a changed life, and it incited a commitment to service. Should our worship do less? When we truly worship, we will leave as different people. Unfortunately, it is possible to attend church without worshiping; it is even possible to sing "worship" songs without worshiping!

We can sing "I'm tired of being stirred without being changed" without making the necessary sacrifices for a truly changed life. We can sing "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go" while ignoring God's call to service. If we sing about surrender while refusing to accept God's authority over our lives, we are not saying anything when we sing; our choruses are sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

#### ***What Do We Do About It?***

How do we ensure that we are "saying something" when we sing? Some suggest that we do away with the old songs of experience so that people won't be made uncomfortable. Please, no! Instead, let us seek a revival of the experience of which we sing.

*Pastors*, hold us responsible for what we sing. John Wesley encouraged his leaders to ask the congregation, "Are the words you just sang true *in your life*?" Confront us with the message of what we sing. Use the songs to challenge us to a deeper spiritual life. Ask us, "Did you sing the truth or did you simply mouth words? Are you saying anything when you sing?"

*Songleaders*, prayerfully search for songs that will convict and challenge us as we sing. Lead us in hymns that teach the great doctrines of the church; lead us in gospel songs that remind us of the vital revival experience out of which our churches were born; lead us in choruses and praise songs that challenge us with the reality of God's presence today.

*Worshippers*, ask God to make the hymns real to you personally. A song can be as convicting as a sermon; let God speak to you through the songs we sing. If "Blessed Assurance" is not a personal reality, hold on in prayer until you can sing it from the heart. If you know the theory of sanctification but not the experience, seek a pure heart until you can sing with the saints:

A heart in every thought renewed,  
And full of love divine,  
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,  
*A copy, Lord, of Thine!*

Let it never be said of our generation that we now sing the songs of the holiness tradition without the experience of holiness. Instead, let us sing hymns that testify to our experience with God and that challenge us to an even deeper walk with God. ■

*Randall McElwain teaches Bible and Music at Hobe Sound Bible College. In addition, he has taught short term courses on Bible and Worship in Taiwan, Dominica, and Vietnam.*

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# PROFANITY

## *in Sunday Clothes*



by Fred Beck

More than seventy-five percent of the Christians I know use one or more of the following expressions: “Goodness,” “Goodness gracious,” “golly,” “gee,” “heavens,” “for heaven’s sake,” “what the deuce,” or “what the dickens.” There are many more that could be mentioned, but these should be sufficient.

When you say, “What the deuce,” you are really saying, “What the devil.” (See *Webster’s New International Dictionary*.)

“Dickens” is another euphemism for devil. A euphemism as described by Webster is “a way of describing an offensive thing by an inoffensive expression.”

“Darn,” according to the dictionary, means to “damn.” Webster defines “Gosh” as a substitute for “God” used in oaths. Therefore, if we use this word we transgress the second commandment, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

“Golly” is another euphemism for the profane use of God and is recognized by language authorities as meaning God.

Many who throw up their hands in horror when they hear the word “hell” in an oath repeatedly say, “Oh, heavens,” or “For heaven’s sake,” which is much worse, for it gets closer to God and His throne. “And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth

thereon” (Matthew 23:22).

Webster says that the phrases, “For goodness sake,” and “Goodness gracious,” refer originally to the goodness of God. “Gee,” commonly thought of as mere slang, is listed in the dictionary with a capital letter and said to be “a form of Jesus in minced oaths.” Men who are authorities on the history of words have traced these expressions to their origin.

But some people will excuse themselves and say, “I don’t mean it that way when I use those words.” I will gladly grant that this is true, but it is just as true that many worldly people who use the name of God in vain do not mean it, either, but do it from force of habit.

The Bible says the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain. We take it in vain whether we dress it in Sunday clothes or speak coarse oaths.

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26).

You ask me, “What can I say then, if I can’t use any of these words?” There are 400,000 words in the English language, and I dare say that ninety-five percent of them would be safe to have on your lips when you are dying. ■

—From *Young Companion*, August, 1978.

Reprinted from *Family Life*, Feb. 2006.

# Where Are the Prophets?

by Del Fehsenfeld, Jr.

It was God who first said, “I sought for a man . . .” (Ezekiel 22:30).

Throughout the history of His dealing with this planet, God has been seeking for men that He could trust—men through whom He could accomplish His purposes.

God chooses different kinds of people to accomplish His purposes. He uses teachers, counselors, helpers, servants, and administrators to edify and build His church. But one of God’s keys to dealing with His people has always been His prophets. Historically, prophets are those preachers of righteousness who stand uncompromisingly for the truth of God’s Word. They quickly call us to accountability and personal holiness. These servants of God are unashamed to stand against the tide of unbelief, and they are unafraid to point the finger of conviction and say, “Thou art the man!”

Unfortunately, the modern evangelical church in America lacks such people. Few and far between are the genuine prophets of God in the church today. Whether they serve as pastors, evangelists, or missionaries, their motivational spiritual gift is to declare the absolute and certain truth of God’s Word both to the Christian community and to the lost world. For the prophet, the Word of God is like a fire raging within his soul. A prophet cannot merely sit back and watch the world go to Hell. He must speak up and warn the wicked of their ways and call the prodigal back to God.

In the Old and New Testaments alike, the prophet had a unique place in the ministry of God’s Word to His people. Because of the nature of his calling, the prophet often found himself at odds with sinful society. Prophets were often unpopular, and even our Lord Jesus said of Himself that a prophet is without honor in his own country (see Matthew 13:57).

One spiritual gift seems lacking in

today’s evangelical churches—that of the prophet. We have an abundance of teachers, exhorters, rulers, givers, mercy-showers, and servants, but we do not have revival! Perhaps that is, in part, because of the absence of prophets who fearlessly and uncompromisingly proclaim our need and call the church to repentance. Seminars on revival will not produce revival. Lectures on the history of revival will not produce revival. Lessons on how to have revival will not produce revival. Genuine revival will come only when men and women are convicted of their sins, repent, and turn to God. There can be no real revival without repentance in response to an awakened conscience about personal sin.

Our churches today have bigger buildings, bigger budgets, better methods, and better staff. Our buildings are full to the brim with activity and excitement, but we do not have revival! I believe God is looking for men who will sound the trumpet, show His people their sin, and unflinchingly cry out for a return to the God of our fathers.

Before we can hope to see any significant change in American Christianity, we must have more true prophets of God willing to call us back to holiness—the only acceptable standard for serving God. We need men and women who are willing to let God have absolute authority in their lives. Only then will we be able to witness the powerful influence of lives totally dedicated to the kingdom of God and to the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## ***BECOMING USABLE***

The prophet was often called the “man of God.” His life was characterized by total devotion to God. While the prophets were not perfect by any means, they were more Godlike in their character than any of the kings, rulers, or priests because they had

no institutional interest to serve. They were solely God's men, and they knew it.

### ***Perfect Heart***

God is looking for men and women with a "perfect" heart. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chronicles 16:9a). These are people who have the rare quality of wholeheartedness, singlemindedness, and genuine sincerity. The prophets of old were ablaze with God's glory. They did not come representing themselves. They came representing God alone. They feared only Him and, therefore, were fearless in their preaching.

The church today is spiritually anemic. We have a high view of ourselves but a low view of Jesus Christ. We set our spiritual standards low, then struggle to meet them, and congratulate ourselves thinking we have done a good job. We tend to magnify the good while tolerating the evil within our own churches. We brag on the choir, the bus ministry, the fellowship dinners, and all our overcrowded schedules, but have little to say about the spiritual depth of our people.

God is not looking for better programs. He is looking for better men and women whose hearts are wholly His.

The awakening in Wales was born out of the ministry of men and women whose hearts were perfect with God. Men like F. B. Meyer and Evan Roberts were the prophets God used in that day to revive His church in one of the few great revivals of the twentieth century.

The Bible urges us to be singleminded in our devotion to God. It also warns that a double-minded man will be "unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Unstable men are driven by impulse, circumstance, or the fear of others. But those with perfect hearts have set their minds, wills, affections on the one supreme objective—to know, love, honor, and serve, and obey God with all their hearts. Such wholehearted devotion will not flirt with love of

money, self, pleasure, or the praise of men. Charles Wesley said it this way:

Oh, for a heart to praise my God,  
A heart from sin set free,  
A heart that's sprinkled with the blood  
So freely shed for me.  
A heart resigned, submissive, meek,  
My great Redeemer's throne;  
Where only Christ is heard to speak,  
Where Jesus reigns alone.  
A heart in every thought renewed,  
And full of love divine;  
Perfect, and right, and pure and good,  
A copy, Lord, of Thine!

### ***Purpose and Commitment***

God is looking for men and women of purpose and commitment who know whose they are and where they are headed. Such individuals have a sense of direction and are able to provide sound leadership to others. They are driven, not by dreams of grandeur, public acclaim, having their name in print, or being materially secure. Rather, their values and decisions are determined by the ultimate purpose to which they have committed their lives—to be like Jesus and to be pleasing to Him.

Those who understand God's purpose for their lives do not drift through life, waiting for things to happen to them. They do not spend their lives in an easy chair with their feet propped up, one eye on the sports page and the other on the latest prime-time rage.

Their lives are under the control of the Spirit, who makes their days purposeful, their minds disciplined and clear, and their spirits alert, sensitive, and energized by God Himself.

Such people are more concerned about building God's reputation than their own. They are committed to building His kingdom rather than seeking a personal following of their own. Their focus is not on security in this life, but on one day hearing their Master say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." That is what gets them out of bed in the morning and keeps them headed in the right direction. ■

—Reprinted from *The Biblical Evangelist*, Volume 37, Number 3, May-June, 2006.

# Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

by Joshua S. Ebersole

Sometime ago at a midweek prayer service, we were sharing needs and requests when a brother spoke up with the request, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." I knew the request was a biblical phrase yet somehow it all seemed rather abstract. Knowing that effectual prayer is not vain repetition, I wondered what the motive should be behind such a request. In this article, we will attempt, through answering several questions, to have a simple Bible study on the subject. Obviously, it will be neither exhaustive nor bulletproof, but hopefully may be helpful and inspirational.

*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee"* (Psalm 122:6).

## **What did it mean to David?**

*"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King"* (Psalm 48:2). Doubtless, Jerusalem for various reasons held a very special place in David's heart. Notice how the verses following our text give insight to his intent and motive. *"For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good"* (Psalm 122:8, 9). The interest of the king was the welfare of his people. The interest of the man after God's own heart was the welfare of God's house. For those two reasons he was concerned about the peace of the city. He made a matter of prayer the welfare, prosperity, and safety of that which was dear to his heart.

**Was Jerusalem really a special city?** God in His instruction to the Israelites concerning their worship told them: *"But unto the place which the*

*LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come"* (Deut. 12:5). In 2 Kings 21:7 as Manasseh's desecration of Jerusalem is recounted, Jerusalem is referred to as, *"of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever."* And in speaking to Solomon after the temple dedication, God said, *"For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually"* (2 Chron. 7:16). We see then how that God chose a special city by design, and promised to put His name there forever. Yes, Jerusalem was special. It was the center of God's kingdom of the old covenant, the apple of his eye (Zech. 2:8).

## **Is Jerusalem still a special city and is Israel still God's chosen nation?**

We see that when God made a covenant with men, He included a very big risk factor. God's covenants may be forever, but what if finite man fails to meet the conditions necessary to continue in the covenant? God made it very plain in His revelation to Solomon that His covenants come with conditions. If His conditions, which He set forth, were not followed, He would pluck them out of the land and cast down the house (2 Chron. 7:19-22). But what about the covenant? Does it also pass away?

Let us consider two more relevant passages, one old and one new, that give us some insights on the validity of Israel still being God's specially chosen people. *"Thus saith the LORD, which*



*giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 31:35-37). “As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom. 11:28, 29).*

In these Scriptures, we have two facts presented. First, the nation of Israel can be considered cast off and no more a nation when the sun, moon, and stars no longer shine, when the heavens can be measured and when the foundations of the earth can be searched out. Secondly, God has chosen to work with the physical nation of Israel on the basis of His love for and His promises to their forefathers, a calling which is irrevocable, even though they are the enemies of God on the basis of the gospel.

Now in saying this, we are not implying that they will find acceptance with God outside of repentance and the blood of Christ, but only that they have been called and chosen in a special way. We know that when a person calls on the Name of the Lord, God makes no distinction of race or promises to forefathers. “*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him*” (Romans 10:12).

However, we with Paul can look forward to a time when Israel as a nation will be converted. This was a mystery that Paul was interested that the early Gentile believers should not be ignorant of (Romans 11:25). This is not to imply

a salvation without a personal acceptance of the work of Christ, but this is rather a prophecy that the seed of Jacob as a whole will accept Christ as their Messiah. This has never yet been fulfilled. Many more promises and prophecies should be included to give this question a more complete answer.

It is apparent that the restoration that God has predicted through the Old Testament prophets has never been realized. It is also obvious that the amazing birth and growth of the nation of Israel today has generated much speculation and many false predictions. We see once again that man cannot rely upon his own understanding, but certainly there is a special joy that thrills us when we see our living God at work in the hearts and lives of a chosen people. And we find ourselves encouraged to know that this same God will continue to be true to the promises that He has made to us who are His chosen through Christ Jesus.

**Should this command be taken figuratively?** In contrasting the old covenant with the new, Paul writes, “*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels*” (Heb. 12:22). Our Jerusalem is not of this world. It is not subject to attack by the prince of the power of the air for it is heavenly. However, our brethren are. Christ’s kingdom, made up of the collective body of believers that are still on earth, is in great need of the intercession of prayer.

Consider the importance that Paul continually placed on prayer as he again and again requested prayer for himself and the church and the many times he assured them of intercession “*night and day praying exceedingly*” (1 Thess. 3:10). Daily on our tongues should be prayers of intercession concerning the physical and spiritual welfare of our brethren. This was the true burden of David’s prayer, intercession for his

brethren. This should be an important part of our prayer life also.

**Should we still pray for the peace of Jerusalem?** I believe it is important to devote ourselves to the things that are important to our God. If part of His revealed purpose and promise is to work with a certain nation and people, it is only reasonable for us to be concerned and interested in that work and plan. However, we no longer pray simply for the peace, protection, and welfare of the physical seed of

Jacob. We have a purpose of greater importance. We pray for their reconciliation with the Prince of Peace. We anticipate the day when the Lord pours upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son. ■

—Reprinted by request from *The Pilgrim Witness*, December 2004.

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## Don't Marry Him!

When a Christian girl told C. H. Spurgeon that she was about to marry a man who neither loved the Lord Jesus nor attended church, he placed before her the apostle's warning in 2 Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

Then when she tried to assure Mr. Spurgeon that her influence, when they were married, would lift him up, the preacher asked her to stand on a chair. "Now," he said, "you try to pull me up to your level."

She tugged hard, but her efforts were in vain.

"Right." He went on. "Now I am going to pull you down, but do all you can to remain on the chair."

She tried hard, but all the trying in the world didn't keep her there after the first tug.

"That," commented the wise pastor, "is what will happen if you marry that man. You won't lift him up, but he will pull you down."

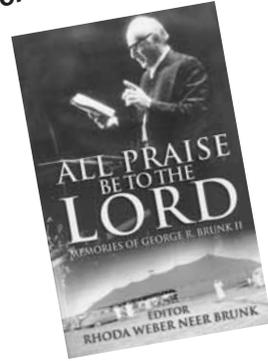
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SOUND ADVICE TO THE LADY THINKING OF MARRYING AN UNGODLY OR UNSCRIPTURAL MAN: "THEY WON'T CHANGE AFTER THE CERTIFICATE IS SIGNED." —from *The Sword of the Lord*

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# When Is a Day Not a Day?

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Those Christians who hold to an extremely old Earth acknowledge that both Scripture and history teach Abraham lived just a few thousand years ago. Furthermore, chronologies in Scripture identify the time between Abraham and Noah, and the time between Noah and Adam as a total only of a few thousand years. Even using the maximum time spans given in various manuscripts yields a total of only a few thousand years between Adam and the present. But maybe the creation took billions of years, they say.

It seems obvious. The Bible specifies that God's work of creation took "six days," at the end of which He created Adam. He provides a record of His activities on Day One, Day Two, etc. He even brackets each day by the terms "evening and morning." Adding six days to the time since Adam still equals only a few thousand years, or so it seems. Those who advocate an Earth of billions of years in age do so by asserting that the days of creation were really of vast duration. Is there any Biblical and linguistic evidence that a "day" can be of great length?

As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word *yom*, here translated "day," can have a variety of meanings, just like in English.

In both languages, the term most often refers to a solar day, defined by one revolution of the earth on its axis. If I say "today" you know what I mean. Or when I say "the day of your birth" it's clear. Perhaps I could modify the word by a numerical adjective, like "first day" or "three days," and you would know what I meant. But I could say "in the day of George Washington" and you would know I was referring to a period of time around the Revolutionary War. It all depends on context.

How the word is used specifies its meaning in any particular usage.

In Genesis 1, God apparently went out of His way to make sure we didn't misunderstand, for He defined *yom* the first time He used it. On Day One, after creating the heavens and the earth, God created light (v. 3), and "God divided the light from the darkness" (v. 4). This light/dark cycle was further identified when "God called the light Day [*yom*], and the darkness he called Night" (v. 5). Throughout the rest of the passage He uses the term for the First Day through the Seventh Day.

The door to misinterpretation is closed in Exodus 20:11, where God wrote in stone some things He really didn't want us to misinterpret. The fourth of the Ten Commandments concerns our work week, where we are commanded to work six days and rest on the seventh. "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." Same word, *yom*, same context, same modifiers, same tablet of stone, same Author, same finger which wrote it. If words have meaning, then God created in six days just like our days. His work of creation becomes the pattern for our work week.

"Day" can mean a period of time when the context demands, but in the creation account "day" means a real "day." Christians need to allow the unchangeable Scripture to define its own terms and not rely on the temporal musings of men. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the Institute for Creation Research.



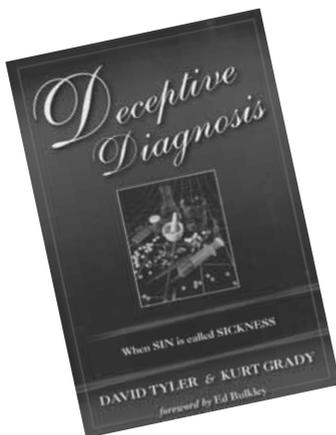
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