

The Sword and Trumpet

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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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“Ice Age” dominated. Job lived soon after the Flood, and his book contains more references to ice and snow than the rest of the Bible put together. Up until perhaps the time of Abraham the world was a dangerous place. Continual catastrophes dominated their lives.

No doubt they needed reassurance that there would never be another Flood like the Great Flood of Noah’s day, for it must

have seemed they were still in it. Thus it was out of God’s grace and mercy that He instituted this beautiful reminder of His protection. And every time they saw a majestic rainbow it would remind them of the security they have in Him. And what a blessed thing it is to rest in that certain knowledge. ■

—Reprinted by request from *Back to Genesis*, Jan. 2006

Benefit Concert Announced

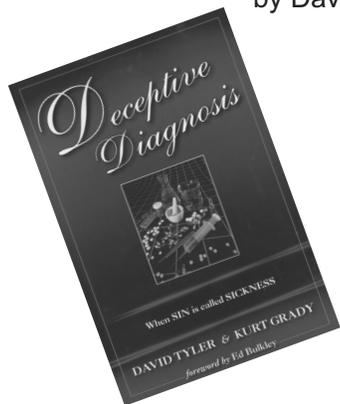
For the Cliff Brenneman Trust Fund for the Conservation of Church Music

As a man of passion, Cliff Brenneman worked energetically to promote quality choral church music both in his local community and across the Anabaptist world. In his memory, a trust fund was established in March 2005 to encourage the conservation of church music through a variety of ways including commissioned works, scholarships for conservative Anabaptist composers, songleading workshops, and choral festivals. In order to increase the resources of the trust fund, a benefit concert will be held in early April, 2007, Waterloo, Ontario, area. A choir led by Lloyd Kauffman will present a program of classic hymns. A commissioned piece by an Anabaptist composer will be premiered. Stay tuned for more details in future issues of the *Sword and Trumpet*.

Deceptive Diagnosis

When Sin Is Called Sickness

by David Tyler & Kurt Grady



From the Foreword by Ed Bulkley:

“I believe that if you will examine the arguments and evidence that Dave and Kurt provide in this book, your faith in God’s Word and His power to transform lives will be strengthened. Your confidence to help others with their problems of living will be enhanced as you realize that our Lord is more than able to heal confused minds and wounded hearts.”

**Great Buy!!
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Person of the Month:

R. G. LeTourneau (1888-1969)



Robert Gilmour LeTourneau, known as “R. G.,” was born to Caleb and Elizabeth (Lorimer) LeTourneau on November 30, 1888, in Richford, Vermont. His parents were a godly Christian couple.

As a boy, he loved taking toys apart rather than playing with them so that he could see how they worked.

School was apparently hard for him as he had a very short attention span. After completing the eighth grade, he learned mechanics and engineering through correspondence courses. He then began work in an iron foundry.

Although raised in a Christian home, he had not made the Gospel personal in his own life. However, in 1905, at the age of 17, he attended a series of revival meetings. It was there that the Lord got hold of his life. He accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour and began growing in his Christian life.

The following year he moved to San Francisco. There he experienced the famous earthquake of 1906. While the city was cleaning up and rebuilding from this disaster, R. G. had the opportunity to use a welding torch. God would use this newly learned skill in the years ahead.

In 1909, at the age of 21, he moved to Stockton, California. He worked as a mechanic and also became successful with his own car dealership.

At some point in time Robert met and married Mary Evelyn Peterson. Tragically, their first child died at the age of 4 months but God went on to bless them with five more children. This was not the first tragedy or hardship that LeTourneau had experienced, but God used these greatly in his life. As a result of such happenings, Robert clung to Christ. He adjusted his priorities from “seeking” his own desires “first” to “seeking first” the things pertaining to God’s kingdom (Matt. 6:33). He became involved with the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church and their evangelistic efforts. Brother LeTourneau totally submitted himself to God. He determined to serve Christ first and his business second. God then began to use and bless him in a mighty way.

Robert’s interests turned to “moving dirt”! At this point God used his skills from the iron foundry and his welding knowledge to build electrically adjustable scrapers. He became a pioneer in using welding instead of rivets in the production of construction equipment.

R. G. also invented the bulldozer blade and was the first to use steel wheels on heavy equipment. Since contractors used Caterpillar tractors to pull R. G.’s scrapers, the two companies were dependent on each other. As a result, in 1935, LeTourneau moved his company to Peoria, Illinois, to be closer to Caterpillar. He started courses in technical

(continued on page 5)

Building a Great Family by God's Standards

by Dennis Rainey

We live in a troubled era. We have seen professional basketball players climbing into the stands to exchange punches with fans. We have watched fathers, mothers, and coaches in children's sports pummel each other while their kids look on in horror and disbelief. National television networks have been guilty of indecent exposure and fabricated news stories. Public figures have been forced to resign amid revelations that they lied on their résumés. And we are witnessing an all-out effort to redefine marriage by the promotion of same-sex "marriage" as an acceptable alternative to one man and one woman.

These public assaults on decency and morality are shocking even to our jaded culture. But they pale in comparison to the daily attacks that marriages and families must endure from forces bent on their destruction. The family is under fire today. Your spouse and children, and mine, are in the crosshairs of the enemy.

The amazing thing is that people know many of the underlying reasons for these problems. The *USA Today* newspaper recently published the results of a poll on this question: What are the causes of moral decline in our culture? Sixty-two percent of the respondents said it was due to a reduced influence of religion; another 62 percent also blamed an increase in pornography on the Internet; 73 percent named adult language and sexually explicit television; 80 percent said society is becoming too tolerant of bad behavior; and 83 percent cited a rise in drug abuse.

All of these factors are significant, but I believe the leading cause of moral decline in America today is even more basic than these. It is the failure of families to teach their children good values.

I recently received a letter from one of our radio listeners that was so startling I asked the writer's permission to share it with you. A woman named Cassie wrote:

"I am a 28-year-old single professional. I grew up in an unstable, non-Christian home. I have had five parents and three sets of siblings. My mother called me this past Sunday to inform me that she was about to bestow on me a sixth parent and

a fourth set of siblings. I understand to the very depths of my being why God hates divorce and why we should too. No good thing comes from it ever. Divorce has not only stolen from me a family, but also the trust that marriage is a good and desirable thing. *Divorce*

answers no questions, solves no problems, resolves no conflict, gives no respite, restores no dignity, and grants no peace."

The italics and underlining in that last sentence are Cassie's, not mine. Letters like this make it clear that we are not playing "patty-cake" in America any more in terms of our families. The family is under siege.

The Family Is Satan's Primary Target for Destruction

According to Genesis 3-4, Satan's first attack was against the family. He knew exactly what he was doing and where to fire his best shots. Because that is the case, why would we expect things to be

"Your spouse and children, and mine, are in the crosshairs of the enemy."

any different today? Our marriages and family lives are not lived out in a fantasy land, but on a spiritual battlefield. If we do not know God's purpose for the family and how to go about building a great family that can withstand attacks and thrive in a hostile culture, we could become spiritual casualties.

A great family is not a perfect family. A wonderful verse for a family to adopt is, "Love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). I could paraphrase that verse to say, "Love covers over a multitude of *kids*."

"Nobody has a perfect family, but all of us can have great families."

If you came to our home, you would find dents in the walls, some made by children and some by adults. You would find a door that still doesn't quite shut right because two teenage boys were wrestling in their bedroom. You would find a burn in the linoleum upstairs where one of our children was smoking one night.

These are some of the external things. But if you were to look at the heart of our home, you would find a family whose goal is to be godly. The real greatness of a home is the size of the hearts for God of the people who live there. Nobody has a perfect family, but all of us can have great families because a great family is a work in progress.

God has great plans for your family. As imperfect as it may be, the family is the supreme conductor of the Christian faith from this generation to the next. God started out with the family, and I don't think He has changed His strategy since the beginning of time. God wants to use families to spread His Word and His glory throughout the earth.

I believe you want your family to become a great family in God's eyes, just as I want this for my family. So let me give you some specifics about what it takes to become a great family.

Your First Priority Must Be to Know God

This is where it all starts. If you have an inaccurate understanding of who God is, that is going to color every choice you make as individuals, as husband and

wife, and as parents. If you know the truth about God, life still may not be easy, but it will be purposeful. A great family must be a family built on the Word of God. And that starts with you and your spouse. Knowing God must be the passion of your lives.

Your Second Priority Must Be to Obey God

Knowing God must result in obedience to God. The obedience that God desires and expects is obedience that comes from the heart. If you have a Bible concordance, a great study would be to look up the word *heart* and follow it right on through the Bible, writing down what God says about our hearts.

When Barbara and I were first married, we were deeply influenced by the example of a great Christian couple, Bill and Vonette Bright. Dr. Bright, of course, is the late founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. He and Vonette had written out the title deeds of their lives and given them to Jesus Christ.

So the first Christmas we were married, Barbara and I went to separate rooms of our sparsely decorated little home in Colorado and wrote out a title deed to our lives. We gave to God everything we had and ever hoped to have, saying to Him, "God, You are the owner of it all. You have the title deed to our lives."

We folded those sheets of paper and put them in an envelope as our gift to God before we gave each other anything. We put that envelope in a safety deposit box on December 19, 1972, and did not

open it again until 1989, 17 years later.

When I read my sheet, I laughed at what I thought was important back then and what I had given to God. I wanted two children, and He gave me six. Skiing was important to me, so I gave to God the hope that I would have a pair of great skis someday. But even though we didn't know all that God had in store for us, those sheets reflected our hearts' desire to obey God.

These two priorities, to know and to obey God, are summed up by Jesus in the two "greats" He gave us: the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. These two summarize all of life and all of the Scriptures. The Great Commandment is to love God with everything we have, and the Great Commission is to obey Him by making disciples of all the nations. This is the place to start.

Building on this foundation, let me give you five things that characterize a truly great family from God's perspective.

A Great Family Knows Its Purpose

The first thing a great family knows is its purpose. A great family knows that God put us here on earth and formed us into families not just to perpetuate the race, but to be receptacles and channels of His love and grace to a needy world.

A Great Family Builds by God's Plan

Second, a great family knows the biblical plan or blueprint for family life and follows God's design. The Bible says, "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1). Who is the architect of your family?

The reason we must build our families according to God's plan is that when two imperfect people try to build a marriage and a family using their own plans, the result will be a pretty strange-looking

structure. Imagine two builders with different sets of plans working on the same house. I wouldn't want to live in that house, and neither would you.

A Great Family Lives Out Its Values

Values are where life and truth collide. This is because life tests your convictions. For instance, you may have strong convictions about modesty in dress, but one day your daughter may come to you crying and saying you're not fair to forbid her to wear what all the other girls are wearing, even at church. That's when the strength of your convictions is tested.

I believe one of the reasons the Christian family has, for the most part, become ineffective in impacting our culture is that we have a lot of Bible knowledge yet few convictions. But I can promise you this: If you as a father and mother don't know what your convictions are and

stand for them, the world will set your standards for you. The sad fact about the Christian community today is that our homes are virtually no different than those of our unsaved neighbors in terms of the values we live out.

One of the most important things Barbara and I ever did in raising our children was to go away for a weekend and decide on the values we wanted our family to live by. We each wrote down 10 things and ranked them in importance, then got together and worked out the list of our top priorities in terms of values.

A Great Family Grows Through Its Trials

A great family also has the endurance to hang in there and grow through the tough times. There will be valleys and pain on the journey of life. Some families are destroyed by the trials and problems they face. But God's desire and will are that your family learn the truth of

"A great family must be a family built on the Word of God."

Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2 that God has a good purpose in our sufferings, which is to grow and mature us in Christ.

There is nothing the world, the flesh, and the devil can send your family's way that you cannot survive and grow from if you keep your eyes on the Lord and make it your purpose to love and obey Him in everything.

***A Great Family
Has Impact for God***

The fifth and final trait of a great family I want to share with you is this: A great family impacts the culture and the people around it.

Dr. James Stewart is a pastor in Edinburgh, Scotland. Read carefully what he says: "If we could show the world that being committed to Christ is not tamed humdrum or sheltered monotony, but the

most thrilling, exciting adventure that the human spirit will ever know, then those who have been standing outside the church and looking askance at Christ will come crowding in to pay allegiance, and we might as well expect the greatest revival since Pentecost."

Your family can be such a great advertisement and endorsement for the Christian faith that people will follow you to church to see where they can get some of what you have! Or as our beloved Prof. Hendricks used to tell us in class, "Get

on fire for God, and other people will at least come to watch you burn." May God help us raise families that honor and serve Him. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Veritas*, Dallas Theological Seminary, Oct. 2005

***"A great family
knows the Biblical
blueprint for
family life."***

== R. G. LeTourneau . . . cont'd. ==

education for his employees so that they would have the skills to do their jobs. In 1937, at the age of 49, he developed his own *self-propelled* scraper. He went on to build huge front-end loaders as well. In the 1930s he was considered at "the head of his class" by his competitors in the field of earth-moving equipment. When he was 58 he moved the company to Longview, Texas, where he built his own steel mill in order to construct his products. When he was 65, he sold the company to Westinghouse Air Brake Corporation. His plants continued to build construction and other related equipment.

In submitting himself to God and His program, R. G. did not forget to submit his *money* to God as well. He started LeTourneau University as a place where students could learn business skills from a Christian perspective so that they might follow his priorities and put the Lord and His kingdom work before business. He also started the LeTourneau Foundation to assist the work of missions in Africa and South America. The foundation also financially supported the university from 1946 to 1961. R. G. was also involved in other endeavors related to education and the Christian Business Men's Committee International. Brother LeTourneau was so solely given to the Lord that by the time of his death he was giving 90% of the profits from his company stock to the Lord and keeping only 10% for his own needs.

Despite his academic challenges and various hardships, God greatly used this layman, Robert Gilmour LeTourneau, to impact American business and to accomplish much good for His kingdom.

Brother LeTourneau went home to be with his Lord on June 1, 1969, in Longview, Texas, at the age of 81.

—Gail L. Emerson

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Truth and Facts

by Dan Stetler

Facts are what we know, but truth is what God knows! That statement by Rev. John Manley grabbed my attention during the Sunday morning service of our opening revival of this school year, and my mind began to work.

If something is true, then it certainly is a fact, and if something is a fact, it will obviously be true? So, if fact is truth and truth is fact, then we should be able to assume that the words *fact* and *truth* are essentially different ways of saying the same thing?

I went to the dictionary and interestingly enough, the dictionary uses the word *truth* in its definition of a fact, and the word *fact* in its definition of truth. A fact is defined as "something that can be shown to be true," and truth is said to be "something that corresponds to fact or reality."

So, based on what we know about these words and what the dictionary says about them, it must be safe for us to assume that the words *fact* and *truth* are essentially identical to each other. They are just different ways of expressing the same con-

cept, right? NO, that is NOT a safe assumption.

While facts are always true, truth and facts are not always synonymous. The one important difference is that while a fact may be true, we may not have the only fact relating to a given subject. Truth can only be found in the accumulation of ALL THE FACTS. It is entirely possible to have a great collection of facts and still not know the truth because some important facts are missing. That is why Rev. Manley's distinction "the facts are what we know; but the truth is what God knows," is so important!

God is omniscient. "He knows all," therefore He knows the truth because He has all the facts. Because we are limited human beings, it is often impossible for us to know all the facts, so our conclusions about truth are often mistaken.

Let me illustrate this point from the story of Job which is found in Scripture. The facts in his life were not good:

It was a fact that he had lost ALL of his earthly possessions.

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It was a fact that he had gone from being one of the richest men in his world to a man who had nothing.

It was a fact that he had lost his entire family of ten children in one tragic accident.

It was a fact that his health had broken and painful boils covered his entire body.

It was a fact that his friends were totally convinced that he had some horrible sin in his life which he was covering.

It was a fact that his wife was urging him to curse God and die.

It was a fact that he could not find God no matter how diligently he searched.

These were the facts about Job's situation and if these facts were all we knew about Job, we might assume that God was very angry with him and had totally forsaken him. BUT THESE ARE NOT ALL THE FACTS!

Fortunately, God gave us His perspective in the Book of Job. The truth was that God was not angry with Job at all. In fact, He was proud of him. In describing him to Satan, God said Job was His servant, he was perfect, he was upright, he feared God, he hated evil, and there was not another man like him on the face of the earth (Job 1:8)! God was so confident of Job's unwavering devotion that He was able to use him to debunk Satan's false notion that Job only served God because of blessings He sent his way.

The facts listed above seem to indicate that God was not protecting Job at all, and Satan was having his unhindered way, but the truth was far different. When Satan accused God of surrounding Job and his possessions with a "hedge of protection," God never denied the charge. In fact, God's actions actually prove there was a hedge of protection around Job, because God moved the "hedge" in and gave Satan access to many areas of Job's life, which he had previously been unable to touch.

In Chapter 1, Satan was told that he could touch all Job's possessions, but he could not touch him (1:12). Later he was told he could touch Job's body, but he could not take his life (2:6). Throughout the entire ordeal, God was totally in control. Eventually, of course, God moved the

"hedge" back out to include twice as many material blessings as Job originally possessed (42:10).

I must confess; I sometimes look at the facts, assume I have all the facts, and come to the wrong conclusions. But I must remember, "no, we must remember"

that we know the facts but God knows the truth! If God does not make sense to you right now, the problem is not with Him! He is eternally faithful! You just don't know all the facts yet! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Torch*, Fall 2006.

"While facts are always true, truth and facts are not always synonymous."

More Than FIG LEAVES

by Steve Miller



A message on the Biblical theme of modesty.

**The January 2007
S&T Sermon of the Month
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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

FEBRUARY 4, 2007

Jesus, the Good Shepherd

John 10:1-18

For the month of February we continue our studies in the Gospel of John. We see Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the True Vine. Today we look at Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are replete with the imagery of a shepherd and his sheep. As Jesus spoke this parable His listeners certainly had no trouble understanding the imagery of the story. But their ears were closed to the message (v. 6). (Read Chapter 9 for context and as background for the message of today's text.)

In this passage Jesus was depicting access into the kingdom of God. He had just led the man He had cured of blindness (Chapter 9) into the kingdom after he had been excommunicated from the Jewish system by the religious leaders. The man had dared to question their understanding of Jesus' authority, so they put him out. But Jesus took him in.

In the parable of the shepherd, Jesus was teaching that the true shepherd enters the sheepfold by the door, is recognized by his sheep, and they follow him out to pasturage. The true shepherd, the one who cares for his sheep, has only their best interest at heart. The false shepherd, the thief, is not

really concerned about the sheep, but looks only after his own interests. By contrast to the true shepherd, he has not developed a relationship with the sheep, they do not recognize nor heed his voice, they will not follow him.

Was this parable aimed at the uncomprehending Pharisees mentioned in 9:40? It would certainly seem so.

Jesus then declares that He is the door to the sheepfold. It is by Him that entrance is gained into the safety and security of the fold. In other words, He provides entrance into God's kingdom. Those who restrict that access are not true shepherds. They are fake, self-serving impostors. They take advantage of the sheep for personal benefit. Jesus, the true Shepherd, came to give abundant life to all who come to Him in faith, as the previously blind man of Chapter 9 did.

This abundant life offered to the sheep came by the giving of His own life by the Shepherd. Just as the shepherd of Palestine was ready to risk, and even lay down his life in protecting his sheep, so Jesus gave His life to provide life and security for His followers. He is the Good Shepherd, the One who put the welfare of His sheep above His own self-interests. By contrast, the hired caretaker flees when danger approaches, seeking self-preservation at the expense of the sheep under his care.

Then Jesus speaks of "other" sheep, those beyond the immediate circle of

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His listeners, encompassing those of every nationality who will enter His fold. He foresees many folds, but one flock and one Shepherd. In His statement is seen portrayed the universality of the gospel He came to present to all mankind.

Jesus closes His discourse by reiterating His willingness to lay down His life for His sheep. Life is in His power—He will lay it down, He will take it again. He will not be a victim. He will be the Victor. He also reaffirms His relationship to the Father, which again set off a controversy among His hearers (vv. 19-21).

For thought and discussion

1. Reflect again on Jesus' use of parables in His teaching and the reason for their use. How did it apply in this situation?
2. Study the relationship of the eastern shepherd to his sheep. It will help you understand both Jesus' parable and His teaching.
3. How can we discern between true and false shepherds in the church today?
4. How would you answer those who say there are many ways to God? How could you use this passage to support your argument?
5. Unfortunately there are many people, some unwittingly, who are following false shepherds today. Think of some pertinent questions to ask such people that will help them think through the issues on their own. Perhaps class discussion will help formulate some good ideas.

FEBRUARY 11, 2007

Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:1-7, 17-27

Who controls life and death? Job, the ancient philosopher asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" This lesson provides answers to man's age-long questions concerning death—and man's prospects after death. Eerdman states: "This matchless narrative is of vital importance to the Gospel story as related by John. The miracle it records was the most marvelous and significant of all the 'signs' wrought by our Lord; it awakened and strengthened faith in those by whom it was witnessed, while it aroused fear and deadly hatred in the rulers who now finally determined upon the death of Jesus; but, above all, it was a proof and prophecy of the life, present and eternal, which Christ imparts to all who put their trust in Him." (Read through verse 46 for the full story.)

This passage, as much as any other in the gospels, shows both Jesus' humanity and His deity. In His humanity He had need of friends, and expressed emotions relevant to all mankind. He freely expressed sorrow by weeping over Lazarus' death. That He was divine was unquestionable as He proved His power over death in the raising of His friend, Lazarus.

That Jesus used this situation both as a teaching point and as an aid to faith is beyond question (see verse 42). The hint for that is found in Jesus' comment in verse 4. The purpose in raising Lazarus was for the glory of God and the affirmation that Jesus was indeed who He claimed to be, the Son of God. His delay in responding immediately to the sister's communication regarding Lazarus' sickness was for that very purpose. It did not show a careless, indifferent attitude, but was all part of His plan, a plan that would not be altered by human contingencies.

The home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus was blessed with many friends. Upon hearing of Lazarus' death, many made the two-mile trek

from Jerusalem to Bethany to commiserate with the mourning sisters (v. 19). In times of sorrow and distress, the presence and comfort of understanding friends goes a long way toward mitigating grief. Jesus understood this principle, too, and so made His way toward the grief-stricken household.

Perhaps part of Jesus' unsettled attitude (v. 33) was the knowledge, expressed by both Martha and Mary, that if He had been there Lazarus would not have died. Certainly He had power to heal. But His purpose here was to engender faith by a more dramatic expression of His power. But as of yet the grieving sisters were unaware of His plans. And so, justifiably, they mourned—not only for the loss of their brother but for what the outcome might well have been had Jesus made haste to come when first apprised of Lazarus' illness. However, Martha did express such unreserved faith in Jesus' affinity with the Father that even now, she acknowledged, He would do whatever Jesus asked.

Then Jesus made the definitive statement of His entire ministry: "I am the resurrection and the life." He holds power over death. He alone gives life. And this is not mere physical life of which He spoke and of which they were soon to witness in the raising of Lazarus. It is undying life, a surpassing quality of life now, and unending life hereafter. Martha confirmed her belief that Jesus was indeed the Son of God and that He was indeed the giver of life. "Believest thou this?"

For thought and discussion

1. Perhaps with this lesson would be a good time to simply reflect on the tremendous blessing and value of Christian friendship.
2. What do you suppose was behind the sisters' message to Jesus? More than one purpose, perhaps?
3. How can one best bring comfort to

those going through distressing circumstances? Discuss.

4. Note the deep faith Martha expressed in Jesus even before He raised Lazarus to life. How does such faith develop? What lessons lie there for us?
5. Undoubtedly you have experienced the first resurrection, from the death of sin to life in Christ. Rejoice! Are you also joyously anticipating the second resurrection when you will live with Him eternally? He's coming soon! Be ready.

FEBRUARY 18, 2007

Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:1-14

This lesson follows in logical sequence to last Sunday's. There we learned that belief in Jesus endows us with endless life. In today's lesson we see where we will spend that everlasting life. Again, we are reminded also of the way to that eternal bliss. It is through God's Son who is the way, the truth, and the life. We will examine the meaning of those terms as well as promises made to those who accept them.

Jesus had just created consternation among His disciples by telling them that He was going to leave them and that where He was going they could not now follow (13:33, 36). His immediate response to their concern was to assure them that eventually, in His Father's house, they would be together again. In the meantime there would be a period of separation and preparation.

After three years of instruction the disciples should have fully recognized Jesus as the Son of God, and the route He would take to be reunited with His Father. But they were yet without full

spiritual understanding. They were having difficulty grasping the full implications of Jesus' teachings and His purposes. Where was He going? How was He going? Those were questions in the minds and on the lips of the disciples.

Jesus then made the great proclamation that *He* was the way to the Father's house. In Himself was incorporated all the truth about the Father. In Him was the life which, given to man, would enable man to live in the Father's heavenly home. He proclaims that He is the embodiment of the heavenly Father; that to have seen Him was to have "seen" the Father, in terms of understanding His life and character.

Again, Jesus patiently explained that He could not have taught as He did, nor have done the works He did had not He been one with the Father. Jesus said, "My works testify to My oneness with the Father and My words should be recognized as the Father's words." Just a short time before He had declared, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). They needed to be reminded again of Jesus' claim to deity.

The whole of Jesus' life and teaching was to show mankind the *way* to God, the *truth* about God—who He was, what He demanded of man, and the quality of *life* available by embracing that truth and that way. Then, Jesus said, by accepting that way, that truth, and experiencing that life, man will be empowered to do great works on behalf of the Father, even in Jesus' absence.

But there are qualifying factors to those larger, more extensive works which Jesus said His followers would do. They must be prefaced and empowered by prayer. They must be done for the glory of the Father. And they must be done in the name of Jesus. Man, though the mover, must be the unobtrusive factor in these God-glorifying works. Even in this manner is Jesus the way. He is the key to the further-

ance of spiritual achievement.

In this brief passage Jesus provides comfort to troubled disciples, He proclaims Himself as the only and all-sufficient one to meet man's needs, He declares that through Him man can get a picture of the heavenly Father, and that in union with Him man is enabled to perform expansive spiritual works. What privileges man has through Jesus!

For thought and discussion

1. In what way(s) can our belief in God and His Son relieve our anxieties?
2. How does one get to heaven? What was Jesus' route to heaven? What does that say about ours?
3. Greater works than Jesus did? How is this possible? How do you explain that?
4. Is Jesus' statement in verse 14 a blank check for anything we ask? Explain.
5. Explain how you could use John 14:6 as a witnessing tool.

FEBRUARY 25, 2007

Jesus, the True Vine

John 15:1-17

Here in John 15 Jesus continues His teaching to His disciples, giving encouragement and instruction prior to His departure. They would soon be on their own and He had "yet many things to say to them." The hour of His suffering was near at hand as He continued His discourse there in the upper room where they had just finished their last supper together and where Jesus had taught them the meaning of true humility and servanthood (Chapter 13). Between last Sunday's lesson and today's, He promises to send them another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would teach and guide them in

His absence.

The imagery of the vine would certainly have been familiar to these men of Palestine. Not only was the fruit of the vine a staple agricultural crop of their day, but the Old Testament Scriptures were replete with references to the vine. In Isaiah 5:1-7 God likens His people Israel to a vineyard and laments their failure to produce a beneficial crop.

Here in John 15 Jesus proclaims Himself the true vine, His Father the vine dresser, and His followers the fruit-bearing branches. He also makes it clear that to be a fruit-bearing branch one must be firmly connected to the vine. Only by drawing strength and sustenance from the vine can the branch bear fruit. Also, to be most productive, the branch must at times be subject to a painful pruning process. That process cuts away all extraneous growth and directs all energy toward fruit production.

It goes without saying that a severed branch, whether from a vine or from the Christian brotherhood, can produce nothing. Withered, fruitless branches are disposed of by burning. They are useless to the cause of production. While an actual grapevine branch has no personal choice in terms of attachment or disattachment to the vine, in the spiritual application that choice does rest with the branch. That is why Jesus is so emphatic that without that vital connection the branch is useless and subject to destruction. It is also why He pleads so strongly for that necessary, abiding relationship between branch and vine.

Jesus states that the connected, fruitful branch brings glory to God, the vinedresser, and produces such an intimate relationship with the vine that their wills are one. In spite of the privilege to "ask what ye will," there will be no selfish motive expressed. The desire of the branch will be that of the vine

from which it draws life and sustenance. Love is to be the motivating factor that binds the disciple and his Master, as well as branch to branch.

Notice, too, that the result of this connected, fruitful relationship between branch and vine is joy. Jesus desires that our joy may be full, or complete. Our joy is the consequence of our connection to Him and the outflow of His joy into our lives.

Notice the change of relationship Jesus is instituting here with His disciples. They are to be no longer servants, not knowing the Master's plans, but friends, sharing an intimate, knowledgeable relationship to each other. He is passing the torch of responsibility for the work of the kingdom. He is endowing them both with responsibility and the power to carry out His work, which power will be realized a short time later with the coming of the Holy Spirit. He assures them of the Father's aid and closes with a command to cover all their efforts with the crowning principle of unreserved love.

For thought and discussion

1. How and why does God prune us? Discuss.
2. What is the fruit our Father expects of us as branches? Is there more than one kind?
3. Be sure to make all the spiritual connections alluded to in Jesus' teaching about the vine and the branches.
4. What are some factors that cause fruitlessness in a Christian's life? And how can they be overcome? Discuss.
5. Marvel once more at the privileges that are ours as branches of the true vine and the many blessings that come to us through that relationship.
6. Explain Christ's commission to His followers as found in this passage (v. 16). ■



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

Norwegian Church Choirs Boycott Female Pastor

The two choirs of the Øksnes Church in Vesterålen in northern Norway are refusing to sing until their bishop replaces their acting pastor, a woman, with someone who is male. They have signed a petition that asks their bishop to provide them with a male pastor and that threatens to start their own congregation unless she is removed.

—Source: *Aftenposten* (a Norwegian newspaper)

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California Episcopal Diocese Votes to Secede From Episcopal Church

A very conservative Episcopal Diocese, California's San Joaquin diocese, voted to secede from the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) because of their consecration of a gay bishop, V. Gene Robinson. This diocese does not ordain female bishops. It is one of seven that has refused to recognize the authority of the ECUSA, but is the first entire diocese to secede, although many individual parishes have already seceded. Conservative Episcopalians are seeking to form an alternate ECUSA and are seeking recognition from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, as the official church of the Anglican Communion in the U.S. They are supported in this by many of the African and other third world Anglican churches who are more conservative than their Western counterparts. The Bishop of San Joaquin said the separation was necessary "because, in our opinion, they [ECUSA] have decided to walk apart from the Anglican Communion."

The ECUSA Bishop of the largest U.S. diocese sent a threatening letter to parishes considering withdrawing from ECUSA saying he will sue them personally and hold them financially responsible for the nearly \$30 million worth of property the diocese will lose by their secession.

—Sources: *New York Times* and *Washington Times*

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Democrats Win Mid-Term Elections

The Democrats soundly won the mid-term elections gaining 30 House seats and 6 Senate seats. There are myriad reasons stated by pundits for this result: the GOP not being candid about the Iraq war, the GOP departing from being a small government party, the GOP departing from being as culturally conservative, GOP corruption, historical trends of mid-term elections, Democrats finally getting their act together, etc., etc. I would, of course, like to think that it is reason #3, but any such event is far too complex to assign any one reason. It was probably a combination of all of them. In any case, the election has produced a humbled Bush White House that has seen the resignation of the much maligned Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. The incoming Sec. of Def. nominee, Richard Gates (who is the former head of the CIA), has been very straightforward during his nomination hearings that the U.S. is losing the war in Iraq and that the solution has to be political, not military.

—Source: *CNN*

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Donald Rumsfeld and John Bolton Resign

Shortly after the election, President Bush asked his Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, who has loyally served him for six years, to resign. Bush did this after it became clear that the Republicans had lost the election. Rumsfeld was a high-profile punching bag for Democrats dissatisfied with the Iraq war for which they voted.

John Bolton was nominated by Bush over a year ago to be America's ambassador to the U.N. Democrats and liberal Republicans filibustered his nomination and prevented an up or down floor vote. Finally Bush made him a recess appointment which expires shortly. Bolton is resigning so a replacement can be found before that expiration. Bolton was a strong proponent for reform of the corrupt U.N.—not only its bribery and kickback corruptions but also such things as giving seats on the U.N. Commission on Human Rights to Sudan, China, Cuba, Pakistan, Syria, Libya, and Vietnam.

—Sources: *Washington Post*, *Wikipedia*, and *WORLD magazine*

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Brownback Considering Presidential Bid

Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas, who has very consistently pushed the conservative Christian agenda, announced he is considering a Republican presidential candidate nomination attempt and is forming an exploratory committee. —Source: *CNN*

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Gay Rights Activists Hopeful About Democratic Congress

Gay Rights Activists are confident that the new Democratic Congress will pass a gay hate-crimes legislation like those in Canada and Sweden. These hate-crime bills have been used in aforementioned countries to prosecute pastors who preach what the Bible says about homosexual relations, for hate speech. During the last 12 years of

Republican control of Congress, there was no hope of this legislation being passed—the election has changed that. There remains the hope that President Bush will veto the bill.

—Sources: *Los Angeles Times*, *United Press International*, and the *Washington Times*

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Old Sandinista Dictator Elected Nicaraguan President

Daniel Ortega, former Marxist dictator of Nicaragua, has been elected president. Ortega is different on the surface than he was in the '80s battling the U.S.-supported Contras. His Sandinista regime seized property, abused human rights, and supported international terrorism. He now praises foreign investment, free markets, and the democratic process. His win was due in part to the efforts of Venezuela's leftist President Hugo Chavez who has made it his goal to support any leftist and/or anti-U.S. candidates he can. He has been supplying cheap oil to Sandinista mayors throughout Nicaragua, boosting their popularity. Nicaragua has an economy of only \$4 billion (the same size of Lebanon, PA) and if Ortega tampers with the U.S.-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement, Nicaragua would probably lose \$240 million (6% of the economy) in foreign investment. This potential penalty makes Chavez's leftist support all the more attractive. —Source: *WORLD magazine*

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Liberal Socialist Chavez Re-Elected

Despite a challenge by the more conservative Manuel Rosales, leftist Hugo Chavez was re-elected as president of Venezuela with 61% of the vote. His many populist policies have been his main source of support among the impoverished majority of the country. Iran hailed Chavez's victory as a victory against the U.S.

—Sources: *CNN*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, and *TIME magazine*

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Abstinence Programs in Uganda a Success

For years Christians have promoted abstinence as the way to fight AIDS—not promiscuity plus condoms. Western secularists have said that abstinence is not a realistic option and have portrayed those promoting abstinence as backwards, religiously fanatical, head-in-the-sand idealists whose plea would never work in the real world. They hurt other countries by exporting this view. Uganda proved them wrong. A strict abstinence-until-marriage program run by Ugandan Christians has produced a reduction in AIDS from 30% of the population to 7%. Along with this reduction is the following statistic: 60% of Ugandans 15-24 have never had sex—an astounding figure for anywhere in the world. Ugandan abstinence programs were greatly helped by Bush’s decision that 1/3 of AIDS prevention funds from the U.S. government should go to abstinence-until-marriage programs. Millions of U.S. government dollars have been poured into such campaigns as a result.

—Source: *WORLD magazine*

New NBA Policy Limits Whining

NBA Commissioner David Stern instituted a new zero-tolerance policy toward players complaining about referee calls. Such complaints will receive a technical foul. Stern says he hopes it will eliminate the “harangue and complaint session” that follows nearly every call.

—Sources: *Sports Illustrated* and *WORLD magazine*

Failure of Socialized Health Care Systems

Fifty-five-year-old Gordon Cook of the UK finally super-glued a loose crown on a front tooth after waiting for three years for a dentist to repair it. Two million Britons have tried and failed to receive dental care through Britain’s national health care system. The same problem occurs in Canada with critical surgeries being delayed

because of the free socialist health care system.

—Source: *WORLD magazine*

Pope Prays in Mosque Toward Mecca “Like Muslims”

In a visit to Turkey, Pope Benedict prayed with the Istanbul Grand Mufti Mustafa Cagrici. A large Istanbul newspaper, *Hurriyet* wrote, “In Sultan Ahmet Mosque, he turned towards Mecca and prayed like Muslims.” This represents a further descent by the Catholic church into apostasy. Can a tolerant one-world religion be far behind?

—Sources: *ABC News* and *Hurriyet*

Two Pakistani Christians Sentenced to Ten Years

“(Compass Direct News)—In a case that has drawn crowds of religious fanatics, a Pakistani court sentenced two Christian men to ten years in prison on Saturday (November 25) for committing ‘blasphemy’ against the Quran.”—excerpt from “Pakistan: Elderly ‘Blasphemers’ Sentenced to 10 Years,” *Compass Direct News*, <http://tinyurl.com/ybp4mp> via <http://www.persecutionblog.com/>

Recommended Reading

- “Already Too Busy for Civility,” George F. Will, *Washington Post*, <http://tinyurl.com/ydf722>—a piece that talks about Virginia’s senator-elect Jim Webb.
- “‘Not well enough, not fast enough’ Why did we have to wait so long for the president to engage us?” Joel Belz, *WORLD magazine*, <http://tinyurl.com/ug2eq>
- “Throwing the bums out, but with a lot of collateral damage,” Marvin Olasky, *WORLD magazine*, <http://tinyurl.com/yczfhp>
- “U.S. won’t order preemptive Iran strike,” *Jerusalem Post*, <http://tinyurl.com/yekpuu>—Israel’s new military assessment of U.S. Intentions.

Please send any tips, stories, opinions, suggestions, or corrections to: ***hansmast*** @***hansmast.com*** or Hans Mast, 7304 Lincoln Hwy., Harrisonville, PA 17228



Counseling From the Word

His Divine Power Has Given Us Everything We Need for Life and Godliness Through Our Knowledge of Him

by Cathy Wiseman

I burned out as a counselor after only a few years. Granted, I'd been counseling 60-70 hours per week (mostly inpatient) since I'd gotten my Master's Degree and I was physically and emotionally tired. No matter how hard I tried or how much I gave, many of the counselees I saw were still severely depressed, cutting on themselves, attempting suicide, hearing voices, starving themselves, experiencing panic attacks—generally very self-destructive and not getting any better. The psychiatrist with whom I worked required all therapists to be on call 24/7, but even our consistent availability didn't matter. Sometimes it seemed it made things worse, because, apart from God, **all of us** are bottomless pits, demanding to be filled with something or someone. So, when we don't allow Him to be our God, and obediently live life His way, we make other people and other things into idols to fill us. At this point in my life (I didn't know it then), I would say we therapists enable the counselees' idol making (and what were our own idols that we were willing to try and be their saviors?)

What I didn't realize, however, was the fact that I was **spiritually** starved and exhausted. God graciously gave me another job which provided lots of time for me to get back into His Word. In light of all I'd been through, a particular passage I read absolutely astounded me with its brilliance and brought God's light and life back into my starved soul:

His divine power has given us **everything we need for life and godliness** through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promise, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, **they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.**

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:3-11).

I thought about all my secular studies and wondered how my life and the lives of those I counseled would have been different had I spent that time studying and learning to better apply God's Word.

I was astounded and humiliated for having been deceived into believing that God wanted to use what I'd learned in college

and in the field from other (even Christian) counselors and books to help people change. Functionally, I **had** forgotten I'd been cleansed from my past sins and I had become ineffective and unproductive in the knowledge of my Lord. I had forgotten God wrote the Book on how people change. I am so grateful to Him for opening my eyes to the foolishness of man's wisdom which says people can change without Him. Of course, it's true that they can change externally without Him. But the only change that matters to God is heart change, because that is where the motivation of why we do what we do is found. No secular theories or secular theories plus Scripture can change our hearts. Godly heart change comes from God alone.

I am so sad to say that I actually believed that there was "a lack in the content of biblical Christianity itself which requires the addition of psychology" (Matzat, 1990, p. 10). Because at first, I saw counselees get better (short term, as it turned out!) and thought, "It works!" But, "Is the devil willing to trade healing for heresy, deliverance for deception, emotional health for doctrinal confusion? I believe he is," Pastor Matzat states emphatically (1987, p. 140), and I agree. What I also didn't realize was that my problem showed ". . . *evidence of [my] failure to grapple with and seek the Lord for an understanding of His Word . . . [because] it is only fair to point out that it is far easier to borrow from psychology than it is to grapple with the theology of the New Testament, especially with the Apostle Paul*" (1990, p. 10).

With a repentant heart, I eagerly began to grapple with and seek wisdom from God's Word with the same studiousness I had from my worldly sources:

If you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then

you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:1-6).

I realized that no matter how much people hurt, trying to help them find emotional health apart from God so they can then get right with God doesn't make any more sense than a person trying to be good so he can come to God for salvation. With that conviction, I repented and confessed to God in sorrow and grief that I had exchanged His words of life for a lie: the lie that effective heart change in His people (who are His Body!) comes through the wisdom of the world (which He says is foolishness); the lie that life can be found apart from God.

The only prerequisite for godly change is a repentant heart. As I continued to repent and to study, learn, and apply God's wisdom to my own life, I was led to go to my counselees and to ask their forgiveness for teaching them lies. Thankfully, they were very forgiving and most said I'd helped them know God better. While it helped me "feel better" to hear that (since it had been my true motivation), I still knew in my heart that I'd used the wrong methods to do it. I knew I had sinned against them and needed to ask their forgiveness. Only God's method (applying His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit) can effect godly change in our hearts.

But, guess what! As I began counseling from God's Word, many, many counselees got **well** (some of whom had been hospitalized and/or in therapy for years!). Their various diagnoses included multiple personality disorder (MPD; now called DID), major depression, eating disorders, borderline personality disorder, PTSD, schizoaffective disorder, panic disorder, alcohol/drug addictions, etc. As God says in 1 Corinthians 6:11: "And that is what some of you **were**, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the

Spirit of our God.” They found true freedom in Christ—not through denial of their problems, “magic,” or “just say no,” but through learning to apply His truth to their lives (through true spiritual warfare: the “blood, sweat, and tears of dying to oneself and listening to God” [Powlison, 1995, p. 123]) and they gained **true** wisdom.

Of course, not all (even Christian) counselees wanted Biblical counseling and those I referred to other counselors. Over the years (now around 20 since this first started), some Christians with the same diagnoses, after seeing their friends get well, have come to talk about getting well themselves. When they find out getting well has to do with doing things God’s way, they shake their heads sorrowfully or rebelliously and say, “My problem has nothing to do with God” and are not willing to try His way, other than how they have defined His way themselves (rather than how He defines it). For instance, a person who says, “I know God wants me to be happy so He wouldn’t want me to have to [whatever He calls them to do],”

really doesn’t know—or care—what God wants. They too have bought into the cultural, psychological, and spiritual lie that God wants what **they** want. It’s an age of self, not God.

I thank God for His intervention in my life, and I thank Him for using many people who were willing to stand up for His truth through their preaching, teaching, and writing. . . . Praise God that “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us. . . .” ■

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The Peacemaking Pastor

by Alfred Poirier

*An exclusive excerpt from the new book by Alfred Poirier, **The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict** (Grand Rapids: Baker-Books, 2006). Reprinted by permission.*

Hope for a Heretic

I did not plan to be a heretic. It just happened. I woke one day to find in the mirror a pastor with a tired face and a weary soul. I had entered the pastorate eager to walk in the footsteps of the pastorate and practice what the ancient church called the care of souls (*cura animarum*). But I woke that day frightened to find that I did not care anymore. I was

tired of the conflicts, the sin, the gossip, the threats, the divisions, and the dissensions. You know what they look like:

- You receive a call from a man asking if a John Smith attends your church. You answer, “Yes.” He identifies himself as a Christian attending a well-known church in your city and tells of a \$95,000 breach of contract dispute he has with Mr. Smith. And you ask yourself, *What am I to do?*
- A prominent man who is a deacon in your church and well known in the community deserts his wife. She is pregnant with their fourth child. He establishes a new residence and cuts off all financial



support for his wife and children. Your leaders tell you to let him go without causing a stir. And you ask, *What am I to do?*

- After five years in prison, a convicted child molester writes to tell you he has come to Christ and upon his release desires to become a member of your church. Fear spreads like wildfire among the church's families. Some threaten to leave if you let him in. Others threaten to leave if you do not let him in. And again you ask, *What am I to do?*

What am I to do? is a question pastors ask a lot. I do. Do you ever dream of leaving your church for a less contentious one? Do you ever pray that the difficult people will just go away? I do. I know I should not, but I do. Seminary did not prepare me for conflict in the ministry. We are taught well how to exegete Scripture, but we are given little guidance in learning to exegete people. We feel ill-equipped to handle conflicts of this magnitude. At times in the midst of these conflicts, we wonder whether God has really called us to ministry. We ask, *What am I to do?*

My answer came by turning to Christ the Peacemaker. Only then was I willing to confess the heresy in my heart.

The Bible is all about conflict and Christ the great Peacemaker. Yet I would be less than honest to say I "delight" in peacemaking. I have no difficulty ascending the pulpit week after week and preaching Christ and Him crucified. I have great joy in teaching classes on "Seeing Christ Through the Old Testament." When pastoring in those venues, I am at my peak. However, something changes within me when I step down from the clear heights of the pulpit and into the fog and confusion of my people whose lives are at war. I know I am called to be a peacemaking pastor, but I must confess that I hate conflicts. Even hearing about another one makes me cringe. I either go on the attack or take off running. The one thing I do not do naturally is move to make peace.

At best, I am a fainthearted peacemaker, a peacemaker-wannabe. It is easy to be the mediating peacemaker when the conflict is between God and man. It is quite a different thing to put oneself between two angry men. Yet this fear of conflict is not the problem in itself. Faint-heartedness is just a symptom of a greater problem: I am a recovering heretic. I do not say this for shock effect. Heresy is not something "out there," but it is "in here." Heresy is not just a matter of the head; it is a matter of the heart. It is but another way of speaking of idolatry, and the human heart is an idol factory. So it is from the heart that all heresies arise. And since idolatry arises from our hearts, it touches us all—even pastors. It is heresy in the heart that keeps us from hearing, seeing, knowing, believing, trusting, obeying, and imitating the true Jesus whom we pastors say we serve.

Pastor as Mediator

Nevertheless, every book of the Bible is filled with cases of conflict between God's people! On this basis alone some might disparage the Bible or Christian faith as a source of help, reasoning, "Look at how they fight among themselves!" But this very record of pervasive conflict between humans and God and between people and their fellow humans ought not to be a point of embarrassment but of hope, because these cases are *God's* record. He recorded them for us. And through them, he counsels the way of peace to his covenant-breaking people.

When we take the time to read Scripture and carefully examine these cases, we find that God is not sitting far off in the cool shade of the day, away from the heat of our conflicts. Instead, he puts himself dead center in the midst of our fights and quarrels. The story of redemption, then, is a story of conflict and reconciliation. Its chief character is a reconciling God. Its main message heralds that "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.

And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). That message is our fundamental hope. As pastors, we do not enter into the middle of warring parties alone or on our own. Our God has preceded us.

He has equipped us by His Word and Spirit. And all this rests upon the work of his Son. Christ has come. Christ has risen. Christ now rules. Christ now mediates through us, for He commissioned us to be peacemakers.

Therefore, whatever mediation work we do, we do in and through Jesus our Mediator. “In Christ” is where pastors stand to mediate, to help people in conflict. It is to Christ that we lead people, opening the door through His Word and ushering them to this “in Christ” place. This place alone is where peace is found.

Paul explains, “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Romans 5:10, 11).

We cannot glide over these verses. They are spoken with sharp edges, revealing the deeply carved valleys and heaven-spiking mountains of God’s love *in conflict*. A passage like this makes our talk of alternative dispute resolution, of mediation between differing parties, seem bland, pale, and nondescript. For Paul the matter at hand and heart is not a tame dispute. It is about hatred and enmity.

Biblical reconciliation plays out on a field of blackened souls, red faces, screaming voices, raging anger, screaming voices, raging anger, heated passions, vengeance, and blood. Biblical reconciliation alone remedies the hellish power that shapes dull, pink flesh into reckless slashing swords that cut and decapitate. For the Apostle Paul, the matter at heart is not about a mere *difference* but about *being enemies*.

Being enemies implies a history, a heritage of hate that is longstanding and that involves rivals and rival families—the children of God against the children of the devil. *Being enemies* awakens us to what is at stake and what it will take to secure reconciliation. It will take nothing less than death—the death of another—the very death of God’s one and only Son. The story of Christ’s substitutionary, reconciling death is the ultimate drama of biblical peacemaking.

Every other conflict pales in comparison. Can you see now how biblical peacemaking is not just one tool pastors reach for in a crisis? It is a way of being. As people reconciled to God by the death of His Son, as people who are “in Christ” our Mediator, we are sent out as ambassadors of reconciliation and peace (2 Cor. 5:18-21). This calling, this commissioning, has huge implications. Pastoring is peacemaking. Pastoring is mediating. Everything we do is peacemaking because that is who we now are in Christ the Mediator. Preaching is peacemaking. Praying is peacemaking. Administering the ordinances is peacemaking. Leading and discipling are all peacemaking. Pastoring is all peacemaking, not because *peacemaking* illegitimately assumes the jurisdiction of the other roles of a pastor, but because the integrating point of the universe is the one man and mediator, Jesus Christ, and we as pastors are his servant-mediators. We are servants of the gospel—the gospel of mediation. It is the great story we proclaim to others of intimacy, betrayal, and restoration, and whose central character we hold out as the one mediator between God and mankind—the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

It is tiring work. It is battle work. It is Messiah work.

But we are compelled to persevere, because serving this way is at the heart of our calling as pastors, as mediators. ■

—The author is senior pastor of Rocky Mountain Community Church in Billings, Montana.



Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

The primary purpose of this column is to give congregations fresh music to add to their worship, and/or insights into the origin and meaning of old hymns that have been around for centuries. It will (hopefully) focus primarily on original Mennonite hymns, although other hymns will be incorporated from time to time as well. We request your input for this column, particularly in the form of lyrics to be set to music and used for the column; but also if you know of a hymn that you would like to see published here with an explanation of its background. We specifically ask that if you know of composers who are qualified and willing to compose for this column, let us know about them. Please send your submissions to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

by Matheson/Peace

Lyrics:

If you read last month's column, you will remember that the focus was on a hymn by the blind poet George Matheson. The mention of that name no doubt reminded many of the more famous hymn by this writer, and it seemed good to use that hymn as the subject for this month.

As you may recall, George Matheson was almost completely blind by the time he was eighteen. Because of his blindness, his fiancé refused to "go through life with a blind man" and left him brokenhearted. There is a large misconception that this hymn was penned at the time of this incident, and reflects young George's disappointment in romantic love. In reality, the hymn was not written until many years later, on the evening of his sister's wedding, when George was about forty years old.¹ His family had left him home alone and in tremendous emotional turmoil while they went to the wedding. This wedding was particularly difficult for George because his sister had been his main source support since his blindness. She was the one who had

helped him through seminary, and kept house for him while he ministered to his own parish.

According to George Matheson himself, the hymn was composed in about five minutes. He said later about this hymn, "All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high."² He also tells later of "a mental anguish over something that no one else knew" that was the inspiration of the hymn.³ It could have been a recollection of his previous broken engagement, frustration with his blindness, hopelessness about his sister's leaving him, or a combination of all three.

This hymn is very structured throughout all four verses (and I think very effective) in the ways that it lays out its ideas. The first phrase introduces the concept of the verse and defines the type concept ("O love [concept] that will not let me go [type of love]"). The next two phrases detail our response to the love, light, etc. ("I rest my weary soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe,). The last phrase describes the result of our

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.—HEBREWS 13:5

George Matheson (1842-1906)

8. 8. 8. 8. 6.

Albert L. Peace

1. O love that will not let me go,.... I rest my wea - ry
2. O light that fol - l'west all my way,.. I yield my flick - ring
3. O joy that seek - est me thro' pain,.. I can - not close my
4. O cross that lift - est up my head,.. I dare not ask to

soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe,.... That
torch to Thee; My heart re - stores its bor - rowed ray,.... That
heart to Thee; I trace the rain - bow thro' the rain,.... And
hide from Thee; I lay in dust life's glo - ry dead, ... And

in Thine o - cean depths its flow May rich - er, full - er be.
in Thy sun - shine's glow, its day May bright - er, fair - er be.
feel the prom - ise is not vain That morn shall tear - less be.
from the ground there blossoms red Life that shall end - less be.

response (“That in thine ocean depths its flow / May richer fuller be.”)

Music:

The music for this hymn was written by Dr. Albert L. Peace, who spent most of his life (from the time he was nine) as a church organist.⁴ Although he wrote many hymns, his “St. Margaret” tune is by far the most famous.

The melody begins quietly and reverently with the introduction of the concept of the verse and rises hopefully as it

describes the exact nature of the love, light, joy or cross that it is discussing. The melodic high point occurs in the middle of the two phrases detailing our response, but it reaches a secondary high point in the next-to-last measure as it tells about the results of our action. ■

1. www.healthy-elements.com.

2. www.cyberhymnal.org.

3. Johnson, Guye. *Treasury of Great Hymns and Their Stories*. Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1986.

4. www.cyberhymnal.org.

When Parents Must Determine Between—

Childishness or Childlikeness

by Titus Rudolph

Was it childish for the disciples to dispute about who should be the greatest? They revealed this fact by their silence when Jesus questioned their reasoning (Matthew 18:1-6; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48).

Not waiting for an answer, Jesus provided two examples to clinch His instruction that men must “become as little children” to “enter into the kingdom of heaven.” The first example was Jesus himself; the second was the child who came at Jesus’ bidding.

Jesus taught that any person who would be first, great, and Christlike, must presently be last, little, and childlike. Even this boy in Jesus’ arms would need to put away childishness and cultivate childlikeness to someday be a disciple of Christ.

The childlikeness illustrated by Christ and the little child stand in contrast to the childishness displayed by the disciples in this Bible account. Children are learning childlikeness when they are taught to be—

Patient and content. Jesus was patiently forbearing of the disciples’ immaturity. This child was content with his present lot in life. Sometimes teenagers question parents’ plans or complain about the details of a day’s work. But better than begging for what we do not have (or know) is to apply ourselves to the work at hand. Anticipating what superiors have in mind for us is both interesting and satisfying.

It seems that Adonijah had never learned patient contentment under authority. Did David think his son too good-looking to be disciplined? After the father’s neglect resulted in the son’s misdeed, both father and son needed to answer “Why hast thou done so?” (See 1 Kings 1:5-10).

Attentive. Jesus perceived the disciples’ aspirations for greatness. They were walking with Him, but not following His teaching or example. In contrast, the lad came and sat listening. Did he understand their

conversation? Certainly not everything.

Childishness is curbed as children listen to adult conversations, spiritual teaching, and preaching. Requiring children to pay attention in worship develops childlikeness. Entertainment with toys and pencils distracts from worship and hinders attentiveness. If parents are attentive to meeting children’s needs and patiently answer their questions at other times, then instructions to be quiet and listen are more readily heeded.

Teachable and adaptable. “Except ye be converted and become [childlike].” Jesus did those things which pleased the Father. A little child’s nature is to adore and to be devoted to his parents. To be stubborn, unteachable, and unapproachable is adverse to childlikeness. Such a spirit needs to be quickly brought into subjection.

Children let others make their plans. They are adept at knowing what parents expect of them. They gladly serve as our little helpers and willingly go along with us. We should not agree when someone, seeing a child with us, says, “I see you have the boss along today.”

As Christian parents we hold lofty ideals for children. We expect them to grow up to be like us. Is it not childish for Father to voice distaste for some food on the family table? Parental self-control complements the teaching and discipline of our children.

Sometimes we are accused of limiting the learning of our children by not exposing them to the world’s news media and entertainment. These ideas come from unobjective and unenlightened people. If God calls His children out of the world to conform them to the image of His Son, should not we also carefully guard the exposure of our children? We do open many right influences and opportunities to our children.

Humble. To teach humility, Jesus pointed His disciples to the little child. Here was an unconscious reflection of true manhood. Although pride is native to a child, it is usually unexpressed unless parents cultivate it by putting on clothes or encouraging actions that say, "Look at me." Clothing our children with modesty and simplicity helps them to be childlike. What parents choose to "write" on the outside of children is imprinted on their innocent minds. It is a message from the parents' hearts.

Natural. Jesus and a young child are similar in nature and character. Childlikeness is sincerity without artificiality. Though blighted by sin, children come to us with an aura of perfection at birth. There is an innocence to preserve and a personality to respect.

Children need guidance and restraint. But if parents constantly prod and nag, children may become belligerent or withdrawn. Our children do make a noble contribution, but we can expect too much (or too little) of them. Observe how God has graciously given them to us, not as adults, but as children. Appreciate their admirable qualities, but curb the mischief.

Emphasizing the natural in children can be negative too. Every child comes as an infant, but why call him a baby when he is two or ten years old, even if he is the youngest in the family? Responding to his antics and enthusiasm by calling him a clown or a maniac will not encourage childlikeness.

Responsible. Jesus questioned the disciples about their disputing, then sat down and reached for the child. Jesus did not evade the duty of timely teaching.

Childishness procrastinates, argues, feigns inability or misunderstanding, and shifts the blame. Our child should not turn away when asked a question. To face the job at hand and try to follow directions, then blush when a mistake is made, is not childish.

Role models in diligence and honesty weigh in helpfully here. The parents in that Capernaum home did not offer the excuse, "Oh, he is shy," when Jesus called their child.

Trustful and believing. Jesus placed Himself at His Father's disposal. He warned the disciples not to offend the little ones who

would entrust their spiritual well-being to Him. These facts should sharpen our senses concerning childishness.

Children tend to believe what they see and hear. They must be taught to "salt" the information they receive. They need to embrace and share the truth, rather than to nurse and rehearse hurts. Teach them to be forgiving and forgetting. The child in Jesus' arms was learning to listen, a safer step toward maturity than talking.

Receptive. Jesus appealed to the parents' hearts by calling and using their child. He never turned a child away. Young children are also impartial. Why should another's appearance or age draw such attention from our children? Most of what belongs to one is common to all. We need to explain the vanity of conceit and nurture the fruit of sincerity and kindness.

Childlikeness is Christlikeness for maturing children. It is nurtured by the Spirit of Christ. Paul testified, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things"—(childishness).

Childishness is a carnal expression. It is selfishness personified. When one cannot gain attention by maturity, he may bid for attention by stooping to babyishness, even if it means correction will follow. Parents should neither mock nor ignore this. Remind children that we are growing up to be men and women. Point out the expressions we expect from them at their age of maturity. Tenderhearted admonition and the loving use of the rod are valuable aids in teaching childlikeness.

Jesus concluded His teaching on childlikeness with, "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48). From the least—these little ones—we can learn true greatness. And from the Greatest, the Lord of all, we learn the value of His and their example. May the profound simplicity of these patterns continue to hold our interest while we prepare ourselves and our children for what God has for us in the future. ■

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Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expository sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by “snail mail” or email to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrumpet@verizon.net.

The Duty of Searching the Scriptures

by George Whitefield (1714-1770)

“Search the Scriptures” — John 5:39.

When the Sadducees came to our blessed Lord, and put to Him the question, “Whose wife that woman should be in the next life, who had seven husbands in this,” he told them “they erred, not knowing the scriptures.” And if we would know whence all the errors, that have overspread the church of Christ, first arose, we should find that, in a great measure, they flowed from the same fountain, ignorance of the Word of God.

Our blessed Lord, though He was the eternal God, yet as man, He made the Scriptures His constant rule and guide. And therefore, when He was asked by the lawyer, which was the great commandment of the law, He referred him to his Bible for an answer, “What readest thou?” And thus, when led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil, He repelled all his assaults, with “It is written.”

A sufficient confutation this, of their opinion, who say, “The Spirit only, and not the Spirit by the Word, is to be our rule of action.” If so, our Saviour, who had the Spirit without measure, needed not always have referred to the written Word.

But how few copy after the example of Christ? How many are these who do not regard the Word of God at all, but throw

the sacred oracles aside, as an antiquated book, fit only for illiterate men?

Such do greatly err, not knowing what the Scriptures are. I shall, therefore,

FIRST, Show, that it is everyone’s duty to search them.

And SECONDLY, Lay down some directions for you to search them with advantage.

I am to show, that it is every person’s duty to search the Scriptures.

By the Scriptures, I understand the law and the prophets, and those books which have in all ages been accounted canonical, and which make up that volume commonly called the Bible.

These are emphatically titled the Scriptures, and, in one place, the “Scriptures of Truth,” as though no other books deserved the name of true writings or Scripture in comparison of them.

They are not of any private interpretation, authority, or invention, but holy men of old wrote them, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The fountain of God’s revealing Himself thus to mankind, was our fall in Adam, and the necessity of our new birth in Christ Jesus. And if we search the Scriptures as we ought, we shall find the sum

and substance, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of them, is to lead us to a knowledge of these two great truths.

All the threats, promises and precepts, all the exhortations and doctrines contained therein, all the rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices appointed under the Jewish law; nay, almost all the historical parts of holy Scripture, suppose our being fallen in Adam, and either point out to us a Mediator to come, or speak of Him as already come in the flesh.

Had man continued in a state of innocence, he would not have needed an outward revelation, because the law of God was so deeply written in the tables of his heart. But having eaten the forbidden fruit, he incurred the displeasure of God, and lost the divine image, and, therefore, without an external revelation, could never tell how God would be reconciled unto him, or how he should be saved from the misery and darkness of his fallen nature.

That these truths are so, I need not refer you to any other book, than your own hearts.

For unless we are fallen creatures, whence those abominable corruptions which daily arise in our hearts? We could not come thus corrupt out of the hands of our Maker, because He being goodness itself could make nothing but what is like Himself, holy, just, and good. And that we want to be delivered from these disorders of our nature, is evident, because we find an unwillingness within ourselves to own we are thus depraved, and are always striving to appear to others of a quite different frame and temper of mind than what we are.

I appeal to the experience of the most learned disputer against divine revelation, whether he does not find in himself, that he is naturally proud, angry, revengeful, and full of other passions contrary to the purity, holiness, and longsuffering of God. And is not this a demonstration that some way or other he is fallen from God? And I appeal also, whether at the same time that he finds these hurtful lusts in his heart, he

does not strive to seem amiable, courteous, kind and affable [friendly, good-natured, easy-going]; and is not this a manifest proof, that he is sensible, he is miserable, and wants, he knows not how, to be redeemed or delivered from it?

Here then, God by His Word steps in, and opens to his view such a scene of divine love, and infinite goodness in the Holy Scriptures, that none but men, of such corrupt and reprobate minds as our modern deists, would shut their eyes against it.

What does God in His written Word do more or less, than show thee, O man, how thou art fallen into that blindness, darkness, and misery, of which thou feelest and complainest? And, at the same time, He points out the way to what thou desirest, even how thou mayest be redeemed out of it by believing in, and copying after the Son of His love.

As I told you before, so I tell you again, upon these two truths rest all divine revelation. It being given us for no other end, but to show our misery, and our happiness; our fall and recovery; or, in one word, after what manner we died in Adam, and how in Christ we may again be made alive.

Hence, then arises the necessity of searching the Scriptures: for since they are nothing else but the grand charter of our salvation, the revelation of a covenant made by God with men in Christ, and a light to guide us into the way of peace; it follows, that all are obliged to read and search them, because all are equally fallen from God, all equally stand in need of being informed how they must be restored to, and again united with Him.

How foolishly then do the disputing infidels of this generation act, who are continually either calling for signs from heaven, or seeking for outward evidence to prove the truth of divine revelation? Whereas, what they so earnestly seek for is nigh unto, nay, within them. For let them but consult their own hearts, they cannot but feel what they want. Let them

but consult the lively oracles of God, and they cannot but see a remedy revealed for all their wants, and that the written Word does as exactly answer the wants and desires of their hearts, as face answers to face in the water. Where then is the scribe, where is the wise, where is the solidity of the reasoning of the disputers of this world? Has not God revealed Himself unto them, as plain as their own hearts could wish? And yet they require a sign: but there shall no other sign be given them. For if they believe not a revelation which is every way so suited to their wants, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.

But this discourse is not designed so much for them that believe not, as for them who both know and believe that the Scriptures contain a revelation which came from God, and that it is their duty, as being chief parties concerned, not only to read but search them also.

I pass on, therefore, in the

SECOND place, to lay down some directions, how you may search them with advantage.

FIRST, Have always in view, the end for which the Scriptures were written, even to show us the way of salvation, by Jesus Christ.

“Search the scriptures,” says our blessed Lord, “for they are they that testify of me.” Look, therefore, always for Christ in the Scripture. He is the treasure hid in the field, both of the Old and New Testament. In the Old, you will find Him under prophesies, types, sacrifices, and shadows; in the New, manifested in the flesh, to become a propitiation for our sins as a Priest, and as a Prophet to reveal the whole will of His heavenly Father.

Have Christ, then, always in view when you are reading the Word of God, and this, like the star in the east, will guide you to the Messiah, will serve as a key to every thing that is obscure, and unlock to you the wisdom and riches of all the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

SECONDLY, Search the Scriptures with

an humble childlike disposition.

For whosoever does not read them with this temper, shall in no wise enter into the knowledge of the things contained in them. For God hides the sense of them from those that are wise and prudent in their own eyes, and reveals them only to babes in Christ: who think they know nothing yet as they ought to know; who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and humbly desire to be fed with the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby.

Fancy yourselves, therefore, when you are searching the Scriptures, especially when you are reading the New Testament, to be with Mary sitting at the feet of the holy Jesus; and be as willing to learn what God shall teach you, as Samuel was, when he said, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.”

Oh, that the unbelievers would pull down every high thought and imagination that exalts itself against the revealed will of God! O that they would, like newborn babes, desire to be fed with the pure milk of the Word! Then we should have them no longer scoffing at Divine revelation, nor would they read the Bible any more with the same intent the Philistines brought our Samson, to make sport at it; but they would see the divine image and superscription written upon every line. They would hear God speaking unto their souls by it, and, consequently, be built up in the knowledge and fear of Him, who is the Author thereof.

THIRDLY, Search the Scriptures, with a sincere intention to put in practice what you read.

A desire to do the will of God is the only way to know it; if any man will do my will, says Jesus Christ, “He shall know of my doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” As He also speaks in another place to His disciples, “To you, (who are willing to practice your duty) it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to those that are without (who only want to raise cavils against my

doctrine) all these things are spoken in parables, that seeing they may see and not understand, and hearing they may hear and not perceive.”

For it is but just in God to send those strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, and to conceal the knowledge of Himself from all such as do not seek Him with a single intention.

Jesus Christ is the same now, as formerly, to those who desire to know from His Word, who He is that they may believe on, and live by; and to him He will reveal Himself as clearly as He did to the woman of Samaria, when He said, “I that speak to thee am he,” or as He did to the man that was born blind, whom the Jews had cast out for His name’s sake, “He that talketh with thee, is he.” But to those who consult His Word with a desire neither to know Him, nor keep His commandments, but either merely for their entertainment, or to scoff at the simplicity of the manner in which He is revealed, to those, I say, He never will reveal Himself, though they should search the Scriptures to all eternity. As He never would tell those whether He was the Messiah or not, who put that question to Him either out of curiosity, or that they might have whereof to accuse Him.

FOURTHLY, In order to search the Scriptures still more effectually, make an application of every thing you read to your own hearts.

For whatever was written in the Book of God, was written for our learning. And what Christ said unto those aforetime, we must look upon as spoken to us also: for since the holy Scriptures are nothing but a revelation from God, how fallen man is to be restored by Jesus Christ: all the precepts, threats, and promises, belong to us and to our children, as well as to those to whom they were immediately made known.

Thus the Apostle, when he tells us that he lived by the faith of the Son of God, adds, “who died and gave himself for me.” It is this application of Jesus Christ to our hearts, that makes His redemption effectual to each of us.

And it is this application of all the doctrinal and historical parts of Scripture, when we are reading them over, that must render them profitable to us, as they were designed for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and to make every child of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

I dare appeal to the experience of every spiritual reader of holy writ, whether or not, if he consulted the Word of God in this manner, he was not at all times and at all seasons, as plainly directed how to act, as though he had consulted the Urim and Thummim, which was upon the high priest’s breast. For this is the way God now reveals Himself to man: not by making new revelations, but by applying general things that are revealed already to a very sincere reader’s heart.

And this, by the way, answers an objection made by those who say, “The Word of God is not a perfect rule of action, because it cannot direct us how to act or how to determine in particular cases, or what place to go to, when we are in doubt, and therefore, the Spirit, and not the Word, is to be our rule of action.”

But this I deny, and affirm on the contrary, that God at all times, circumstances, and places, though never so minute, never so particular, will, if we diligently seek the assistance of His Holy Spirit, apply general things to our hearts, and thereby, to use the words of the holy Jesus, will lead us into all truth, and give us the particular assistance we want. But this leads me to a

FIFTH direction how to search the Scriptures with profit: Labor to attain that Spirit by which they were written.

For the natural man discerneth not the words of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned; the words that Christ hath spoken, they are spirit, and they are life, and can be no more understood as to the true sense and meaning of them, by the mere natural man, than a person who never had learned a language can understand another speaking in it. The Scriptures, therefore, have not unfitly

been compared, by some, to the cloud which went before the Israelites, they are dark and hard to be understood by the natural man, as the cloud appeared dark to the Egyptians; but they are light, they are life to Christians indeed, as that same cloud which seemed dark to Pharaoh and his house, appeared bright and altogether glorious to the Israel of God.

It was the want of the assistance of this Spirit, that made Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, and a ruler of the Jews, so utterly ignorant in the doctrine of regeneration: for being only a natural man, he could not tell how that thing could be; it was the want of this Spirit that made our Saviour's disciples, though He so frequently conversed with them, daily mistake the nature of the doctrines He delivered; and it is because the natural veil is not taken off from their hearts, that so many who now pretend to search the Scriptures, yet see no farther than into the bare letter of them, and continue entire strangers to the spiritual meaning couched under every parable, and contained in almost all the precepts of the Book of God.

Indeed, how should it be otherwise, for God being a spirit, He cannot communicate Himself any otherwise than in a spiritual manner to the hearts of men; and consequently if we are strangers to His Spirit, we must continue strangers to His Word, because it is altogether like Himself, spiritual. Labor, therefore, earnestly to attain this blessed Spirit; otherwise, your understandings will never be opened to understand the Scriptures aright: and remember, prayer is one of the most immediate means to get this Holy Spirit. Therefore,

SIXTHLY, Let me advise you, before you read the Scriptures, to pray, that Christ, according to His promise, would send His Spirit to guide you into all truth; intersperse short ejaculations whilst you are engaged in reading; pray over every word and verse, if possible; and when you close up the book, most earnestly beseech God, that the words which you have read, may be inwardly engrafted into your

hearts, and bring forth in you the fruits of a good life.

Do this, and you will, with a holy violence, draw down God's Holy Spirit into your hearts; you will experience His gracious influence, and feel Him enlightening, quickening, and inflaming your souls by the Word of God; you will then not only read, but mark, learn, and inwardly digest what you read: and the Word of God will be meat indeed, and drink indeed unto your souls; you then will be as Apollos was, powerful in the Scriptures; be scribes ready instructed to the kingdom of God, and bring out of the good treasures of your heart, things both from the Old and New Testament, to entertain all you converse with.

One direction more, which shall be the last. SEVENTHLY, Read the Scripture constantly, or, to use our Saviour's expression in the text, "Search the Scriptures"; dig in them as for hid treasure; for here is a manifest allusion to those who dig in mines; and our Saviour would thereby teach us, that we must take as much pains in constantly reading His Word, if we would grow wise thereby, as those who dig for gold and silver. The Scriptures contain the deep things of God, and therefore, can never be sufficiently searched into by a careless, superficial, cursory way of reading them, but by an industrious, close, and humble application.

The Psalmist makes it the characteristic of a good man, that he "meditates on God's law day and night." And "this book of the law, (says God to Joshua) shall not go out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night," for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and thou shalt have good success. Search, therefore, the Scriptures, not only devoutly but daily, for in them are the words of eternal life; wait constantly at wisdom's gate, and she will then, and not till then, display and lay open to you her heavenly treasures. You that are rich, are without excuse if you do not; and you that are poor, ought to take heed and improve that little time you have: for by the Scriptures you are to be

acquitted, and by the Scriptures you are to be condemned at the last day.

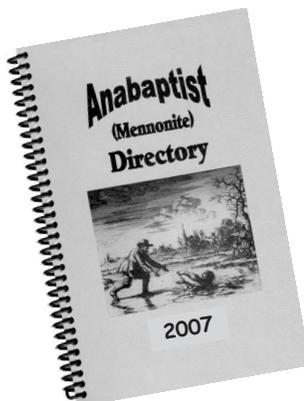
But perhaps you have no taste for this despised book; perhaps plays, romances, and books of polite entertainment, suit your taste better: if this be your case, give me leave to tell you, your taste is vitiated [corrupted, depraved], and unless corrected by the Spirit and Word of God, you shall never enter into His heavenly kingdom: for unless you delight in God here, how will you be made meet to dwell with Him hereafter? Is it a sin then, you will say, to read useless impertinent books? I answer, Yes. And that for the same reason, as it is a sin to indulge useless conversation, because both immediately tend to grieve and quench that Spirit, by which alone we can be sealed to the day of redemption. You may reply, How shall we know this? Why, put in practice the precept in the text; search the Scripture in the manner that has been recommended, and then you will be convinced of the danger, sinfulness, and unsatisfactoriness of reading any others than the book of God, or such as are written in the same spirit. You will then say, when I was a child, and ignorant of the excellency of the Word of God, I read what the world calls harmless

books, as other children in knowledge, though old in years, have done, and still do; but now I have tasted the good Word of life, and am come to a more perfect knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, I put away these childish, trifling things, and am determined to read no other books but what lead me to a knowledge of myself and of Christ Jesus.

Search, therefore, the Scriptures, my dear brethren; taste and see how good the Word of God is, and then you will never leave that heavenly manna, that angels' food, to feed on dry husks, that light bread, those trifling, sinful compositions, in which men of false taste delight themselves: no, you will then disdain such poor entertainment, and blush that yourselves once were fond of it. The Word of God will then be sweeter to you than honey, and the honeycomb, and dearer than gold and silver; your souls by reading it, will be filled as it were, with marrow and fatness, and your hearts insensibly molded into the spirit of its blessed Author. In short, you will be guided by God's wisdom here, and conducted by the light of His divine Word into glory hereafter. ■

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Teaching Your Daughter Modesty and Responsible Consumerism

by Shannon Ethridge

“I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (1 Timothy 2:9, 10).

The “guards” were heavily armed and ready to protect the bank from any “bad guys” that might wander in. Matthew (four years old at the time) stood on one side of the entrance to the bank lobby with a toy bow and arrow in ready position. On the other side of the door stood his friend Cameron, also four, with an impressive plastic sword drawn from its sheath. As I stood in line at the teller window, I noticed that all the bank patrons, relieved that they were in such capable hands, were looking on appreciatively at these self-appointed guards.

Then *she* walked in, a long-legged woman in high heels, a form-fitting miniskirt, and spaghetti-strap top. The young guards glanced at each other with eyes wide. The rest of the onlookers turned their heads back and forth between the little boys and the young woman as if watching a tennis match, eyeballing the woman, then the boys, then the woman again. As this scantily-clad bombshell strutted across the bank lobby, made an ATM transaction, and then strutted back out through the armed doors, I sensed that everyone in the lobby was holding their breath and wondering, *What could those boys be thinking right now?*

As soon as the door closed and the

woman was out of earshot, Cameron satisfied everyone’s curiosity as he leaned over to Matthew and loudly exclaimed, “The Bible *warns* about women like *that!*”

Of course, the entire bank erupted in laughter! The incident happened years ago, but it’s no laughing matter that today we often see young women dressed more like stereotypical hookers than modest young women.

Here are two of the most valuable principles we can teach our daughters when it comes to how they dress:

***You teach people how to treat you,
and
Whatever bait you use determines
the type of fish you’ll catch.***

If a young woman dresses seductively, guys are likely going to treat her as if she wants to be seduced. She’s going to get attention from lustful guys, not goodly ones who want to guard themselves against sexual compromise. If we want our girls to be treated with the dignity and respect they deserve, we’ll teach them to dress modestly. If we want to protect them from boys who are more interested in their bodies than in their minds, hearts, or spirits, we’ll teach them to shop for clothes that present a passion for purity rather than a plea for attention.

I want to challenge you, the parent, to consider what you can do to help your daughter become a smart shopper who values modesty and responsible stewardship.

Who's in Charge?

On occasion when I speak to parents about encouraging our daughters to dress modestly, some will retort with statements like these:

- *Wearing the latest fashions doesn't make my daughter less sexually pure.* If we look at sexual purity in strictly a physical sense, then granted, a girl is no less a virgin if she wears immodest clothes. But as followers of Christ we are to pursue not just physical purity, but mental, emotional, and spiritual purity as well.

Do you want your daughter dressing in such a way that boys flirt with her and try desperately to get her attention? Do you want older guys noticing her? I believe that when parents let their twelve-year-old dress like she's twenty, they are not protecting her from vulnerability to unhealthy, premature relationships.

- *I don't want to spend my hard-earned money on clothes that are going to just hang in the closet.* If this is our mindset as parents, we need to reconsider what we value most. Will we sell out our daughter's sense of modesty and her reputation so that she'll get more mileage out of what's hanging in her closet? While inappropriate clothes may get worn more often by an attention-seeking preteen, eventually a parent's hard-earned money may have to go toward professional counseling to get her out of the relational messes she'll find herself in if she continues to dress provocatively.
- *I can't control what clothes she wears.* Funny how some parents say this about their preteen daughters, yet in truth, these same parents facilitate their daughters' bad choices by driving them to certain stores, whipping out the credit card to buy the clothes, and standing at the door when their daughters leave for school in the morning, wearing those clothes. Regardless of how powerless

we may feel, we do have control over our daughters' wardrobes as long as they're living under our roofs. We simply have to be secure enough in our role as parents to exercise that control.

If you feel that your preteen daughter is calling the shots when it comes to what she wears, you may need to seek counsel for how to regain the parental control you've abdicated to her. Remember, the battles will only get more significant, and if she's accustomed to getting her way, you will certainly travel some bumpy roads ahead.

- *But my daughter wants to wear what all of her friends are wearing.* One of the most significant ways we can help our daughters is to teach them to *lead* rather than follow, especially when it comes to fashions. Think about it, if your daughter looks to others to determine what she should wear, she will be more likely to look to others to tell her what to do in other areas of her life. She will be more likely to follow the crowd into sexual compromise. Teach her to blaze her own trail through life—one that will steer clear of the many pitfalls to sexual compromise.
- *She doesn't even have breasts and hips yet, so I don't think she's turning any guys' heads by what she wears.* News flash: Your daughter may not have a rounded figure just yet, but guess what? That's only temporary. Better to prepare her for modesty in the near future by expecting it today, during her tween years. In addition to teaching a sense of modesty we can also teach our daughters to value practicality and quality, as well as how to be responsible stewards of resources.

Taking Charge of Your Investments

It alarmed me when my daughter developed a hearty appetite for shopping

when she was only eight years old. Anytime we went into a store, Erin felt she had to pick something out for herself, regardless of whether she needed anything or not. If I told her I didn't have the money for the purchase, she'd sometimes say, "But, Mom, you can charge it on your credit card!" She had no concept that at the end of the month her father and I would have to pay the entire bill or we would start accruing interest on those purchases. Greg and I knew we were heading for trouble and that we needed to teach our daughter how to spend money wisely.

So when Erin turned nine, we started an annual tradition for back-to-school-clothes shopping trips. We buy the basic updates she needs (new socks, underwear, and bigger shoes if necessary), but she has to make nonessential new clothes purchases from the cash we give her for those shopping excursions. We determine the amount of money she gets each year by multiplying her age times ten dollars, so when Erin was nine, she received ninety dollars. She could spend that money however she wanted, as long as her choices were modest. Fortunately Erin proved to be no dummy when it came to math. She figured out quickly that she could get lots more bang for her buck by steering clear of brand-names and posh department stores.

A pastor and his wife recently told me how they teach their children to appreciate the limited value of a dollar. As soon as their children are old enough to have a checking account, the parents begin depositing a set dollar amount each month. The children are expected to tithe 10 percent off the top, and anytime they need something, it comes out of their own account. When they walk into Wal-Mart, they each grab a cart and go their separate ways. Mom purchases the family groceries and household items, but personal items such as toothpaste, hair-styling products,

clothes, and school supplies come out of the child's own checking account. While Greg and I have not implemented this plan with our children yet, we do plan on asking the bank about the minimum age requirement on a checking account! What a great way to teach children valuable skills, such as comparison shopping, budgeting, and accounting.

Make sure your daughter understands that money doesn't grow on trees. Teach her to discern her *wants* from her *needs*. As parents, we always want to provide for our children's genuine needs, but when it comes to their wants, we must teach them moderation.

The Power of Responsible Consumerism

We also need to teach our girls responsible stewardship and consumerism. The money we have to spend doesn't really belong to us, but to God. He owns everything. Therefore tithing isn't a matter of how much of our money we are going to give to God, but how much of God's money we are going to keep for ourselves. I believe God blesses us financially so we can be a blessing to others. Tithing and charitable giving should not be options but regular acts of worship. The more money we spend on ourselves and our selfish desires (things we don't really need), the less we have to help those who truly are in need.

Because all of our money belongs to God and He entrusts it to us, I feel we have a responsibility to channel our resources in directions that honor Him.

Unfortunately, many people don't make the connection between how we spend our money and the explosion of irresponsible sexual messages in retail stores. For example, many children (and parents) know how offensive Abercrombie & Fitch catalogs and graphic window displays are, yet they are still regular patrons of the store. They say it's okay because they don't buy the really

seductive clothing. However, they are fueling a business that is contributing to the moral decay in our country. If Christian consumers don't send the message loud and clear that they want clothes and companies that support their values, no one else will.

For years Calvin Klein has targeted young adults and teens with sexually provocative black-and-white advertisements. The company manufactures clothes, yet their models rarely have any on. They blatantly use sex to sell their products. I coach consumers of all ages, "I don't care how great their clothes look on you or how good their cologne smells, don't pour your dollars into Calvin Klein's pocket so he and his company can continue putting borderline-pornographic advertisements in children's faces."

Again, we teach people how to treat us, and retailers are no different. If we reward them with our business, they are going to assume we like being bombarded with sexually inappropriate advertisements. We can turn the tide by channeling our dollars away from rather than into companies that use sex to sell their products.

Lessons That Last a Lifetime

As a parent, you may feel it's not worth the fight to try to control where your daughter shops, what clothes she buys, and what she leaves the house wearing. It seems so much easier just to give her the freedom to make her own choices and hope for the best.

The same could be said for many other parts of her life. It would be easier just to leave her alone and let her do her own thing rather than getting her out of bed, taking her back and forth to school every day, helping her with her homework, and attending teacher conferences. Why do you make education a priority? Not just because it's the law, but also because you want the very best

for her and you know a good education will take her where she dreams of going in life. It may seem easier to let your daughter do whatever she wants on Sunday rather than dragging her to Sunday school and church every weekend. Why do you make church activities a priority? Because you want her to develop a strong spiritual life and enjoy an intimate walk with the Lord.

Are values of modesty and responsible stewardship any less desirable? Of course not. Since you are reading this book, I know you want to develop the strongest character possible in your daughter. You want her to have a sense of pride in how she presents herself to others, to enjoy the respect of peers and adults, and to attract like-minded friends and a healthy, future romantic relationship.

Every struggle you may experience along the way toward instilling these values is worth the fight. Every ounce of energy you pour into encouraging these concepts is a worthy investment. These lessons on modesty and responsible stewardship will guide your daughter not just through puberty and her upcoming teenage years but also throughout her lifetime. ■

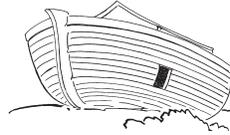
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Shannon Ethridge is the best-selling author of Every Woman's Battle and co-author of Every Young Woman's Battle, as well as a wife, mother, speaker, and lay counselor. Previously a youth pastor and abstinence educator, Shannon has a master's degree in counseling/human relations from Liberty University, and she speaks regularly on the Teen Mania Ministries campus and in a variety of other church and college settings. Shannon lives in east Texas with her husband, Greg, and their two children, Erin and Matthew.

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Beginning Issues



Axioms, Presuppositions, and the Evidence

by John Mullett

This is to be the beginning of a series of articles investigating evidence for a “young” universe specially created by God in 6-24 hour days approximately 6,000 years ago, but before we begin I would like to address a key issue that is foundational to interpreting the evidence (any evidence).

It is important for us to understand we do not live life based on facts directly. Rather we live life based on our interpretation of the facts.¹ Each one of us begins with a set of axioms² or *beginning beliefs* around which our worldview (you have one whether or not you planned to have one) is built. “It’s not really a question of who is biased, but which bias is the correct bias with which to be biased!”³ Every choice, decision, or interpretation we make is made through this grid of thought. Christianity and a literal biblical understanding is based on several presuppositions or axioms, here are a few: we must assume there is a God, we must assume the Bible is His revealed Word, and we must assume we can trust God; that He is being honest and what He says is true. As Christians our thinking in every area should be built on the Bible (God’s Word). We must take the evidence to the Bible and see **how** it (the evidence) fits instead of taking the Bible to the evidence to see **if** it (the Bible) fits. If we don’t hold the Bible (from cover to cover)

as our final authority and allow ideas from outside of Scripture to determine how we interpret Scripture we ultimately become our own authority (god).

As we begin to investigate the arguments of creation vs. evolution and youth earth vs. old earth we must remember it is not the evidence held by the two sides that is different (we live in the same world and have the same fossils, rocks, etc. . . .), but rather our axioms are different and therefore we have different interpretations while looking at the *same* evidence. Let’s put on our biblical glasses and take another look at our world. ■

ENDNOTES

1. “It is a fallacy to believe that facts speak for themselves—they are always *interpreted* according to a framework.” <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/re1/chapter1.asp> Evolution & creation, science & religion, facts & bias by Jonathan Sarfati, Ph.D., F.M.
2. See complete definition in *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*.

Ax’i•om, n.

1. (*Logic & Math.*) A self-evident and necessary truth, or a proposition whose truth is so evident at first sight that no reasoning or demonstration can make it plainer; a proposition which it is necessary to take for granted; as, “The whole is greater than a part;” “A thing cannot, at the same time, be and not be.”

2. An established principle in some art or science, which, though not a necessary

truth, is universally received; as, the axioms of political economy.
Webster's Review Unabridged Dictionary. Version published in 1913 by the C. & G. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., under the direction of Noah Porter, D.D., LL.D. Public Domain. This electronic version was prepared by MICRA, Inc. of Plainfield, NJ.

MICRA, Inc. makes no proprietary claims on this version of the 1913 Webster dictionary. Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software, Inc.

3. <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/re1/chapter1.asp>. Evolution & creation, science & religion, facts & bias by Jonathan Sarfati, Ph.D., F.M.

Our Duty of Contention!

by Robert L. Moyer

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" —Jude 3, 4

"Earnestly contending for the faith!" This is a call to arms, a summons to battle; it is a text to stir the blood; it is God's urge to us to war against error.

The Book of Jude is a book about apostasy. It is not the only New Testament Scripture which speaks of a denial of and departure from the faith, but the apostasy in Jude is more advanced than in any other New Testament Scripture. Jude should be studied in the light of such Scriptures as 2 Thessalonians 2, where we are told that the day of the Lord shall not come except there come first a falling away from the truth; that is, a moving away from our firm foundation. Second Timothy 4 declares that the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, but shall turn away from the truth and be turned unto fables.

Second Peter 2:1 declares that as there were false prophets in Israel, so there shall be false teachers in the body of believers who shall bring in their damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them. Second Peter 3:3 says that in the last days scoffers shall come and say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Many other Scriptures speak of the same truth.

The key to the Book of Jude is found in the last part of verse 3, where we are exhorted to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. We have here an illustration of inspiration. Jude was giving all diligence to the writing of a letter explanatory of our "common salvation." *Giving all diligence* implies that he was setting himself with all earnestness and with his whole mind on this effort.

When he began to write, he explains that "it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you," etc. "It was needful"; that is, "I had need," or "I was constrained." The *Pulpit Commentary* suggests: "Necessity arose for me to write." Jude was impelled to write, by an imperative demand. The One who impelled him was the Holy Spirit. We have here a picture of a man who sat down to write one message and who was constrained by the Holy Spirit to write another. We have in this epistle, not the words of Jude, but the words given by the inspiration of God. This is true of every book in the Bible.

Instead of explaining our "common salvation," Jude was impelled by the Holy Spirit to throw what he had to say into special form—an exhortation.

We ought to pause to say that by “common salvation” Jude did not mean that which was cheap and of little value, but rather a salvation which was shared by reader and writer, a salvation which is open by grace to all, a salvation which presents one way for all and a salvation which is of the same kind to all. Salvation is every man’s great need and God’s great supply for every man.

The exhortation is unto contention.

This word *contend* in Jude is peculiar to the book; that is, it occurs nowhere else in Scripture. It is a compound word made up of the word from which our English *agonize* is compiled, and the preposition *for*. *Bagster’s Lexicon* defines it: “contend strenuously in defense of”; another lexicon: “to contend as combatant for, or about, a thing.”

Reason for Contention

The cause for which we are to contend is the faith delivered unto the saints. Notice that this faith is **delivered**, not **discovered**. No natural man can discover the faith. It must be delivered by the Spirit.

This faith is delivered to the saints, not to the church as an organization, nor to any particular denomination, not to any certain sect, not to any special office-bearers, but to the saints in general. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a saint. (Sad that every believer is not saintly.) This faith is delivered to the saints as a sacred deposit. It is in their keeping and for it they are to contend.

What is meant by this faith for which we are to contend? It does not have reference to some special creed such as the Apostle’s, or the Nicene, or to some special confession of faith, such as the Westminster or New Hampshire confessions. It has reference to the body of revealed truth, or the sum of what the Christian believes. One has stated it correctly when he says it means “the entire scheme of Christianity.” There was very little of the New Testament assembled in the days when Jude wrote, but Jude contains a remarkable

statement of faith. This little book sets forth God as Father, (v. 1); the Deity of Jesus Christ (vv. 1, 4, 21); the personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit (vv. 19, 20); grace as the source of man’s salvation (v. 4); the necessity of faith for eternal life; the existence of angels (v. 6); the historicity of the Old Testament (vv. 7, 11); the personality of Satan (v. 9); the personal, premillennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 14); the everlasting punishment of the wicked (vv. 7, 13); the verbal inspiration of Scripture (v. 17); the communion of the saints (v. 19); the reality of prayer in the Holy Ghost (v. 20); the keeping power of the Saviour (v. 24).

Furthermore, the Book of Jude indicates the utter ruin of man by sin, and his absolute dependence upon grace for salvation. It was to carry out His purpose in providing salvation for men that God sent His Son into the world, gave Him up to the hands of justice that He might die under the penalty of sin on the Cross, and then raised Him from the dead, received Him into heaven, and placed Him there at His own right hand. There was no necessity for Christ’s death apart from sin, and His death on the Cross has settled that sin question. The faith about which Jude talks centers in Him. There is no possible way to benefit by God’s redeeming love save by faith. This is the faith for which we contend.

This faith was not “once delivered,” but as the Revised Version puts it, “delivered once for all.” *Once delivered* might mean once upon a time, but Jude goes beyond that. It was delivered once for *all* time, once for *all* climes, once for *all* countries, once for *all* circumstances, once for *all* people, once for *all* ages. It was a fully revealed faith. It needed no additions, no changes, no alterations, no amendments, no revisions, no corrections, no improvements. It was delivered once and forever. As Bengal says, “No further faith will be given. No new doctrines are to be added. There will never be another Gospel.” [Mormons, 7th-Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Armstrongites, etc., etc., take notice! —*Editor*]

It was this citadel of the faith which was being attacked in the days of Jude, and which is in no less danger of being betrayed today. Satanic agencies seek now to plunder and rob us of our unsearchable riches in Christ. Not only Jude, but Paul also calls upon us to be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” Some men are military. God wants believers to be militant. We are to fight for the thing assailed. There is to be no surrender, no truce, no compromise in this conflict of faith.

Jude says we are to contend earnestly. He does not mean we are to contend in anger, but in a spirit of love. We must remember, however, that love is not a soft, good-natured yieldedness to wrong. Love is strong and firm and knows no yieldedness. The popular phrases of the present time are, “Let us not mention our differences for a period of six months”; “Let us agree to differ”; “Brethren, let us have peace.”

We believe that Dr. Candlish of Edinburgh, a gentle and loving man, has well said, “It is idle to run down controversy, as long as there is error abroad among men. It is mere prudery to be always groaning over the symptoms of irritability which controversialists have exhibited, and bemoaning evermore their lack of a smooth and oily tongue. All honor to the champions of God’s holy Word and blessed Gospel, who have waxed valiant in fight against the adversaries of both! All sympathy with them in their indignant sense of what touches the glory and insults the majesty of Him whose battles they fight; with large allowance for the heats into which, being but men, they may suffer their zeal to hurry them.”

One old writer says, “He who cannot ‘be angry and sin not’ has a maimed soul.” Certainly it is not pleasing to the Holy Spirit of God to have believers stand by with locked lips when the faith is attacked. The Modernist is very blatant in his attack upon the Word, and very bold in his attack upon saints. Why should we as believers sit in silence in the face of all this? The Modernist is very loud in his crying for

peace, and shows how desirous he is for it in his attack upon certain Fundamentalist leaders in certain denominations in the present day.

We do not mean by this that we do not love peace, but we are like the Englishman who said, “I am for peace at any price—even at the price of war.” Our war is in the interest of peace. There are many things about which we will not fight, but we earnestly pray that God may make all saints to be earnest contenders for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Means of Contention

And how shall we contend? A number of things may be involved here. We contend by maintaining our faith in the living Christ in the face of all the brutal assaults made upon Him. We contend by faithful living in accordance to the precepts involved. We contend by refuting error and declaring truth.

The one instrument which God has put into our hand for contention is His Word, which is the sword of the Spirit. Study it! Love it! Preach it! Teach it! Use it! Suffer for it!

Necessity of Contention

The necessity for our contention is seen in Jude’s statement that “certain men crept in unawares.” They are *in*, but they have no right to be there. *Crept in* means “came in sideways,” “privily,” “by stealth.” They came in “by the side door.” They crept in. They did not walk upright. They crept in like a thief after plunder, like a tiger after prey. They crept in like the serpent in Eden. Creeping is neither a dignified nor an honorable way of entering a house—or the church. They *crept* in. That implies stealthy trespassing. That implies moral meanness.

Deniers of the faith are not something new. They have existed ever since the faith has been. Years ago the church lifted her hands in holy horror at the attacks of Tom Paine and Bob Ingersoll upon the faith. North, east, south and west—the church

was ready to defend the faith against these men.

How times have changed! These men were outside the church. Huxley, Darwin, and Spencer were outside the church. The deniers of the faith are today on the inside, and in their denials they go to extremes such as Tom Paine never dreamed of.

Paul described these teachers in Galatians 2:4 as “false brethren unawares brought in.” If a man acts his own character, you know how to take him, but here you have a wolf in sheep’s clothing; a Judas with a kiss or betrayal on his lips; a devil come as an angel of light. These men are dangerous to our spiritual and eternal welfare.

We think there is an indication here of a lack of watchfulness on the part of the church. False teachers are frequently received into outward fellowship. Some time ago a committee asked the writer this question, “How shall we get rid of our pastor? He is a modernist.”

We replied, “Why did you call him in the first place?”

“We didn’t know of his modernistic beliefs.” This is what we mean by a lack of watchfulness. *Why didn’t they know?* Why didn’t they find out before they called him? These men are described as ungodly men. That means they are profane, impious, irreverent, godless. They rob God of His honor.

When Jude says these men are “before of old ordained to this condemnation,” He does not imply any Calvinistic foreordination unto this sin. There is no doctrine of necessity here. The idea is more that of “fore-written” in other prophecies such as the ones quoted at the beginning of this article.

In Acts 20:29 Paul said, “After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” In Jude the wolves are at work. They crept in, escaping the detection of men, but they did not escape detection. Of old they were known and noted by God. Why “tolerance” when wolves are at work?

These men turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. This is not a mere denial of the grace of God in salvation. Men deny

grace when they talk about salvation by works or salvation by character, but this suggests that they turned the grace of God to purposes of the vilest kind. They pervert the very highest things for base purposes. This perversion of grace is seen in men “using their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness” (1 Peter 2:16), or “for an occasion to the flesh” (Galatians 5:13).

The true design of grace is seen in Titus 2:12, where we are told that it teaches us to deny ungodliness and to live soberly, righteously, godly in the present age. These ungodly men represent the doctrines of grace as a permission to follow the promptings of sensual appetites.

They also deny the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the climax of all their denials. They not only deny His Lordship as far as their own lies are concerned, but they deny every truth that concerns Him: deity, calling, birth, sacrificial work, resurrection, ascension, and second coming.

Their attitude toward the Book of Truth is seen in this quotation: “The destructive critics destroy the Bible because they love it so! They say it is much more precious to them, and they understand it so much better when they deny its authorship and authority.”

Space does not permit us to enlarge upon these denials, but in connection with this Jude says, “Earnestly contend for the faith.”

We close with another quotation of exhortation. “Turn from the voice of the false shepherd, and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd; stop gazing at the clouds without water, and watch for the cloud of glory. Refrain from feeding on the autumnal trees, and feast upon the Word that will make you a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit. Renounce the pursuit of the wandering stars, and patiently wait for the Morning Star. Forsake the men who speak great swelling words, and sit at His feet, for His words are Spirit and Life.” ■

—from *The Biblical Evangelist*

Peter, Paul, Apollos, and Christ

by David L. Burkholder

The Corinthian believers had a problem. Their loyalties were divided. They were attaching themselves and their loyalties to persons based on personality traits, abilities, or simply on personal preferences. Paul remonstrated with them, telling them that they were acting as children, that their actions were fed by fleshly motivations, not spiritual. He forcefully told them they were not yet grown up in terms of their spiritual understandings. They yet had some lessons to learn about cooperation, the working together and sharing of individual talents for the common good. Paul set out to instruct them in this principle in 1 Corinthians 1–3.

Peter was indeed a powerful preacher; Apollos an eloquent speaker; Paul an able explainer of the faith. So some individuals gravitated to one personality, some to another. And it was causing strife and division in their midst. Man was being elevated and honored, not Christ—except for those of His party. And that likely not purely, due to the factionalism involved.

This focus on individuals was not healthy and Paul sought to correct the situation by putting things in perspective. He asked, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?” “We are only servants.” He explains that they have simply cooperated in declaring and explaining the message. He planted the seed; Apollos watered it. Both were necessary, but one was not to be held in more prominence or importance than the other.

Furthermore, he says, it was God who should receive the glory for He was the One who really caused the seed to grow and produce spiritual fruit in their lives. In Chapter 1, speaking to their unwholesome party spirit, Paul pointedly asks, “Is Christ divided?” The certain answer is, of course not! In Chapter 3 he goes on to say

that all of them—Peter, Paul, Apollos—were simply “labourers together with God.” He emphasized that the formation and growth of the church, the body of Christ, is a cooperative effort. Men work with God to accomplish His purposes. The foundation stone upon which they build is Christ. Their collaboration builds the church upon that sure foundation.

In Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4, Paul goes into more detail regarding the various spiritual gifts and their purposes and functioning in the body of Christ. Administration was necessary, preaching was necessary, teaching was needed, evangelism, giving, etc. Various endowments were given to various individuals so all necessary functions of the brotherhood would be adequately covered and the church built up.

The bottom line was that it wasn’t about Peter, Paul, or Apollos. They were only facilitators, moving the work of God forward. Their work was for the benefit of the church, the body of Christ, and the glory was to be His—not man’s. Paul made it clear (3:7) that man’s role was only a subordinate one. It was God’s work, not man’s.

Did the Corinthians learn? Hopefully. Have we? Is it not true that we often flock to hear a person of some renown—an eloquent speaker, a powerful preacher, or an outstanding exegete? Now it’s not wrong to hear what accomplished or learned persons have to say, but it is wrong to develop a cultish following of such men. Then we would be no better than the Corinthians for whom Paul had strong words of reproof.

We must learn, as Paul wished the Corinthian church to learn, that church-building is about more than mortal men and their honor. It is about building one another up in the faith. It is about encouraging personal spiritual growth

and envelopment. It is about selflessly giving ourselves with our talents and abilities to a cause larger than ourselves. It is the attitude which Paul expressed in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians (verses 1-5), where he spoke depreciatingly of himself so that their "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." His desire was to hide himself so that Christ would be magnified. That's why he rebuked the church for aligning themselves behind personalities. It was sidetracking the honor that should rightfully go to God, and was causing unwarranted division in the brotherhood.

The church in every age needs to be careful to keep a proper focus. Not only does it destroy the honor rightfully belonging to the Head of the church when we elevate and follow men, but since men are subject to failure, causing potential spiritual damage to those who follow them, it is dangerous to place undue confidence in man. Yes, we should, and must, respect

our God-ordained leaders, and we should follow them, but only as they follow Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

So let's be sure that when we hear "Peter," "Paul," "Apollos," or others, we are really listening for the voice of God. And let's be sure when we talk of church-building we focus on Christ, not the work of men. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 4 that only as each member exercises himself in the building of the body does it grow, and Christ, the Head, is honored. There is room for individuality and differing personalities and gifts, but in church-building these must give place to the work of Christ. Then all benefit together from the contribution of each.

Let's be sure our focus is on Christ, not man. And let's commit ourselves to do His work with no thought of attracting attention, or a following, to ourselves. Then the church will be built up and strengthened. Others will be brought to faith. And Christ will be glorified. ■



How Do We Manage Stress?

by Matthew Martin

The last pan of bread came out of the oven looking picture perfect. You glance into the living room and to your horror, you see that little Johnny has spilled the bottle of glitter all over the living room. He proudly announces his creativity and says, "Mommy, doesn't it look nice?" As you sweep up the spilled glitter, you send him into the kitchen. There you find that he has tried to help himself to a glass of milk and spilled most of it onto the kitchen table. As the day's events flash across your mind, the enthusiasm which you started out with turns to despair and you say, "How can I handle this?"

You're the job foreman and have a deadline to meet by the end of the day. Co-workers are in good spirits, the weather is

nice and sunny, and you know that if everything holds, the job will be completed ahead of schedule, which means a bonus on the next paycheck. By mid-afternoon the clouds roll in and the new lawn that's ready to be seeded might not get done. As your mind reflects on what could happen, it starts to pour down rain. The schedule goes to pieces along with the bonus that you were expecting. Frustrations are triggered. As you drive back to the shop, the traffic is stalled on the interstate due to a minor fender bender. As you mull over how the wrecked schedule will affect your next three days, the frustration mounts. You silently vent your anger to yourself and say, "Why is the world against me?"

Are the everyday tasks and occurrences

stressing you out? Are they robbing you of the peace and comfort that God has intended for you? If you think that you're all alone in this world trying to manage stress, you are wrong! Uninformed decisions cause stress as well as legitimate things that are beyond our control, just as Satan brought Job his trials. The point is, we need to face our problems head on, acknowledge them, and make the corrective steps.

Stress comes through financially overextending ourselves, a heavy management load from our business, or the never-ending house chores and family care. Teaching Sunday school, participating in devotions, presenting a topic, and unexpected hospitality are good things that can generate stress.

On a more serious tone, you may never have accepted Christ as your personal Saviour and you are under the stress of conviction. The death of a loved one also brings serious stress. First Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you."

One of the first things we need to do is admit that we are stressed out. When we admit that we have a problem, we can face it and say, "What does God want in this?" One can relax as God says, "I created all things; I would never allow or bring you more than you can bear. I am in control of all things. Come unto Me and I will give you rest."

Is physical rest good for the soul? Our earthly bodies need to be rejuvenated with adequate sleep. Medical studies have proven that we cannot maintain peak performance if we are physically drained. God created the world in six days and on the seventh day He relaxed. Genesis 2:2 tells us, "And on the seventh day, God ended his work which he had made and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

When we push ourselves to the max for

extended periods of time, we are stressing ourselves. Do we know our limits? Do we know when to say "No" even in the Lord's work?

Did you know that a close relationship with God is a stress reliever? And it is free! The key of overcoming and reducing stress is to wait on the Lord. We can always ask God for direction. Keep the phone line busy between us and God. Communication and fellowship with Him is vital to maintaining our relationship with God. If He is living within us, He will give us lasting peace. We never, never want to underestimate the power of prayer in that close fellowship with God.

There are Bible examples of people that could have been stressed out. Surely

Daniel had stress in his life, because of the positions he was filling. In Daniel 6 we read, "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king

should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." Daniel was given the opportunity to serve in the upper management of the Babylonian government. Even if everything was run smoothly, there were a lot of heavy decisions that rested on Daniel. He had the responsibility of the whole kingdom. It was by God's grace that Daniel was promoted, so Daniel had one step ahead of the rest, because he had God on his side. "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, 'We shall not find any occasion

"We never, never want to underestimate the power of prayer in that close fellowship with God."

against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.' Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, 'King Darius, live forever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O King, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.' Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree." If the daily task of operating the kingdom wasn't enough pressure, consider all the people that started challenging him. The opposition grew to the point that there was a death sentence written against Daniel. Jealousy, in this government, made them rivals, not team members. In verse 10 Daniel knew where to go as he did previously with other stress. He did not vent his anger in a court appearance against his accusers. He laid it out before God. I can almost hear him say, "Lord, I'm committed to you. You carry me through." Never underestimate the power of prayer!

Jesus is the Son of God. He came to mankind in an earthly body. Angels came to minister to Him after He spent forty days in the wilderness. Did Jesus get stressed out? Was Jesus maxed out sometimes? I believe He was!

John the Baptist was preaching and was thrown into prison and beheaded. The disciples took the body, buried it, and then came to Jesus emotionally drained from the loss of their loved one.

In Mark 6:30-46 we read, "And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things both what they had done, and what they had taught." Jesus says that they should, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were

many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and out went them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." Jesus sent the disciples into the desert to rest, but the people flocked to them, disturbing their rest. Jesus responded with compassion, even though He might have needed more rest. Jesus performs the miracle of feeding them with five loaves and two fish, but it was up to the disciples to seat the people. Imagine coordinating a group of five thousand people when you are stressed out! Once they were fed, Jesus says to the disciples, ". . . to get into the ship, and go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people." Jesus had a little bit of time with the people, and then asked them to go home, because He knew He also needed to sustain His body, and be renewed by fellowship with His Father.

Jesus spent time in a garden resting and communing with God. Do you have a garden where you can go to find peace and strength? Maybe you might need to go out in the quietness of the woods . . . called deer hunting! Some of us find calmness cruising the interstate in the middle of the night. Others may find their garden on their knees beside their bed. Talking to God not only relieves stress but it builds that communication in which we will find God's direction.

God is interested in those very things that make up the core of our life. We don't talk about those things to strangers. But if we don't have an ongoing relationship with God, He will be a stranger. How can we get to know Him? Daniel prayed three times a day. We need to keep talking about Him in our homes, in our devotional time,

and to other people. As you get familiar with your surroundings and communion with God, you can take your stress to Him. God seeks a communion with His people. He loves the fellowship. He put Adam and Eve in a garden and did not forget about them. Genesis 2:8 says God came into the cool of the garden to talk to Adam and Eve.

God has a special interest in each one. He wants a fellowship with you! He wants to take your stress from you. Building that relationship of prayer and communion with God helps us give our stress to Him.

As we build that communion, we can have lasting peace and strength to carry us through stress. God will give us directions and show us how to take the proper steps in reducing our stress levels.

As we do that, wait on the Lord, and seek His fellowship and allow God to direct our lives, that we may have that lasting peace and have a life of fulfillment. **Never underestimate the power of prayer as an avenue to relieve stress!** ■

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Why Did God Give the Rainbow Sign?

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Noah and his family had just come through an unimaginably frightening experience. Perhaps they had never even seen a storm, and certainly no one had ever seen one like this. It would have been indelibly impressed on their memories. During the Flood, the winds incessantly howled, the thunder continually pealed as the Ark pitched and rolled in the waves. Earthquakes shook the planet without stop, sending pulsating tsunamis in every direction. Underwater volcanoes and the spreading “fountains of the great deep” (Genesis 7:11) heated the water surrounding the Ark, making life on board almost unbearable. And the never-ceasing rainfall so pelted the Ark’s roof, it was like being under Niagara Falls.

This was not merely a Category 5 hurricane of today. Creationists have begun to speculate on the nature of “hypercanes,” storms dozens of times greater than present hurricanes as the primary Flood character. Surely, the world before the Flood fully “perished” (2 Peter 3:6) under the Flood’s onslaught.

As Noah and his family stepped off the Ark they entered a world totally unfamiliar to them. The geography had all

changed. Plant and animal life had been devastated. Weather patterns were chaotic. Gone was the pre-Flood stability they were accustomed to.

Consider that the world was “broken.” To the extent that we enjoy relative stability now, they had none then. It would perhaps have taken several centuries for Earth to settle down to the pseudo-equilibrium in which we now live. Remember that the jet streams must be stabilized. The ocean currents must find their “paths of the seas” (Psalm 8:8). The continents must halt their rapid horizontal movements and cease their vertical rebounding. In particular, the oceans must give up their excess heat, which drove such violent storm patterns.

It was into this unstable world Noah and his family were placed. No doubt earthquakes were common. Of necessity they lived in tents, for buildings could not be made stable. Wood was in short supply and rock structures were the least safe.

Rainfall continued its intensity, with swollen streams and violent storms. Calculations show that the ocean’s heat would take at least 600 years or so to dissipate, and that during this period the