

# 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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list” technology; that is, they maintain a list of sites to which users “can’t” go. The trouble with this approach, however, is that objectionable sites are created virtually every day, and an old site can always change its name every so often. Thus, many software companies also provide an updating service, free or for a reasonable fee; they usually allow registered users to download updates at regular intervals. (If you are using a server-based program, as described above, these updates take place constantly on the host computer, so the user need not do anything.) A few packages are available that use a “can-list” approach; that is, the filter maintains a list of approved sites, and everything else is out of bounds. The problem with this approach, obviously, is that much of the appeal of the Internet is its seemingly infinite size and the resulting serendipitous surfing.

A more insidious problem with any filtering approach is that such packages block sites based on the publisher’s standards, which may or may not be the same as yours. Many packages allow you some control over these standards—for example, you may choose to block nudity and profanity but not violence, and you may also add specific sites to the list—but even at that, you are bound to some degree by the publisher’s standards. Many filters, for example, allow access to children’s sites even though rock music pervades the site. To parents who find such music objectionable, the filter has a lower standard than their own and allows their children access to sites the parents deem objectionable. Similarly, if the publisher decides to block sites mentioning the word *abortion*, the user will be prevented from accessing both pro-life and pro-choice sites, a result that the parent or teacher may not have intended at all. As a relatively silly example, a science profes-

sor at Bob Jones University, Dr. Bill *Lovegrove*, has site-blocking software on his home computer. The program he’s using originally wouldn’t allow him to search for his own name or even to access his personal home page; it found the name *Lovegrove* just a little too sensual, apparently.

The problem is compounded by the fact that for competitive reasons, the publishers of filtering software do not disclose the details of their blocking policy. They have justifiable economic reasons for this, of course, but it makes the user’s job more difficult.

Another problem with filtering software is that it’s fairly simple to circumvent. Anyone can sit down at your computer with a boot disk and one of those ubiquitous “Free 30 Days” disks from a national ISP and get around many of the most popular filters, both client- and server-based. It’s foolish for a user to rely on filtering software as his sole means of monitoring usage and preventing abuse. Your school or family should have a comprehensive Internet-safety policy that includes all of the techniques mentioned above. Within that larger picture, filtering software can play a useful role. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Teacher to Teacher*, December 2006

#### ENDNOTES

1. Rand Hummel of The WILDS has authored a helpful book on this subject, entitled *The Dark Side of the Internet*. A condensed audio version is available free at <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=9260110262>; the book is available at [http://www.bjupress.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?parent\\_category\\_rn=279485&storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=1&productId=1464952](http://www.bjupress.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?parent_category_rn=279485&storeId=10001&catalogId=10001&langId=1&productId=1464952).
2. In Windows XP, the history is stored at c:\Documents and Settings\[login-name]\Local Settings\History.

# Person of the Month:

*Ira S. Johns*  
(1879-1956)



Ira S. Johns was born on a farm in Elkhart Township, Elkhart County, Indiana, to Daniel J. and Nancy (Yoder) Johns on July 10, 1879.

Ira attended the public school during the winter months and helped on his father's farm during the summer.

In 1891, at the age of 12, Ira was converted to Christ and subsequently joined the Amish Mennonite Church near his home. He then became busy in the Lord's work by first teaching Sunday school. This became a lifelong opportunity of service for him, stopping only in his later years, when health problems intervened.

In 1893, at the age of 14, Brother Johns had a job of sweeping floors and taking out the trash at Herald of Truth Publishing Company in Elkhart.

After completing grade school Ira took the teacher's exam to pursue his love of teaching. He received his teacher's license and taught one year in Clinton Township.

While still a young man he felt the Lord was calling him to preach but he tried to lay those convictions aside. He had wanted to teach for a second year but circumstances beyond his control hindered him from doing it. He then entered Elkhart Institute.

It was while he was studying at the institute that he met a young woman named Elizabeth Rickert from Columbiana, Ohio. As the Lord would have it, their friendship turned into love and at the age of 22 Ira married Elizabeth on August 17, 1901. Ira then chose to farm in Clinton Township. God eventually blessed their family with the births of eight children—six girls and two boys.

Ira had a real love for his children and a concern for their spiritual well-being. Having eight children in the home meant that their friends would also occasionally congregate there too. Many of these young folks found Ira to be a caring brother who had wise counsel. They would share their struggles with him and listen to his counsel. Not only the young people but also those of all ages benefited from Brother Johns' wisdom.

On July 18, 1909, at the age of 30, Brother Johns was ordained deacon in his home congregation. During these years Ira was busy serving in the Amish Mennonite Conference. In 1912, at the age of 33, he became secretary of the conference, serving in that position until 1917 when the A.M.C. joined with the Indiana-Michigan conference. From 1923-1947 he served as the secretary for the combined conference: this position automatically making him a member of the Executive Committee as well.

On April 27, 1924, at the age of 45, Ira Johns was ordained to the Gospel Ministry to help out in area churches. He later pastored in his home church, which continued until several years before his death. He was always faithful to his vocation as pastor and did not let his farming get in the way of meeting the pastoral needs of his congregation.

*(continued on page 4)*

# Are Absolutes Obsolete?

by Robert E. Wenger

Josh McDowell, in a 1997 article in *Moody*, related how he asked his son, a high school senior, whether public school had taught him any absolute truth. "Sure," he replied. When Josh asked what that truth was, he answered, "Tolerance."

Tolerance traditionally has stressed fairness toward opinions and practices that differ from our own. It concedes to all the right to hold and promote their ideas as freely as we do ours. But the current popular definition goes farther; it asserts that we must consider everyone's values, beliefs, and practices *equally valid*. Expressing convictions that criticize another's ideas or way of life is considered intolerant, and intolerance is the current unpardonable sin.

In 1997 as well, two opinion articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* deplored college students' reluctance to censure even barbaric practices. One teacher was appalled that her students would not condemn human sacrifice, while another observed with alarm that his students refused to denounce the Nazis for the Holocaust. The current atmosphere of multicultural "tolerance" had produced what he called "absolutophobia"—a fear of passing moral judgment on any group or culture lest one be labeled an absolutist or bigot. Ironically, tolerance, which denied moral absolutes, had become the one absolute that must not be violated. A 1999 poster exemplified this inconsistency: "AMERICA CAN NOT BE TOLERANT OF INTOLERANCE."

But surely September 11, 2001, changed all that! Were not Americans outraged at an ideology that justified murdering thousands to attain terrorists' ends? Were there not, after all, some absolutes that

must govern the behavior of civilized peoples? Was there not some moral standard by which to judge right and wrong? One would think so.

Yet, after an initial outburst of righteous indignation, many Americans relapsed into relativism. Two polls taken by the Barna Research Group demonstrate this point. The first, published one day before the terrorist attacks, surveyed adults on how they made moral choices. Only 24% claimed to make choices based on biblical or church teachings. (The figure was 40% among "born-again" Christians.) The majority based their moral choices on whatever brought the most satisfying results or what would make others happy.

The second survey, published in February 2002, asked both adults and teenagers whether there are unchanging moral absolutes or whether moral truth is relative to the circumstances. Among those surveyed, only 22% of the adults and 6% of the teens said there are moral absolutes. Even among "born-again" Christians the results were appalling—only 32% of the adults and 9% of the teens believed in moral absolutes. Nothing had changed!

Many Americans thus believe that moral absolutes no longer exist. But this simply is not true. Even if we ignore the logical contradictions in moral relativism, it is evident that absolutes are essential to every society's survival. If we tolerated everything, we could not establish laws against slavery, murder, child molestation, drug trafficking, spouse abuse, political corruption, or business fraud, and society would degenerate into anarchy.

Unfortunately, the present relativism has already produced signs of such degeneration. With only 43% of parents teaching

that moral absolutes exist (according to a 2005 Barna survey), we need not wonder at school violence or rampant cheating. And with only 25% of college seniors in a National Association of Scholars survey reporting that their professors had taught them there are uniform standards of right and wrong, we could have anticipated the recent rash of corporate scandals.

Charles Colson in 1991 lectured at Harvard Business School on “Why Harvard Can’t Teach Ethics.” He argued before a polite but uncomprehending audience that moral relativism provides no basis for business ethics. In 2002 he saw his argument vindicated when the Enron Corporation, many of whose executives were Harvard graduates, collapsed amid internal fraud.

As convictions based on internalized absolutes decline, government must, for the sake of social stability, impose its own standards. This external coercion corrodes the liberties of citizens but can never provide the glue to unify them.

So absolutes are not obsolete; honest thinkers will concede that they are essential to personal and societal well-being. But the crucial question today is whose absolutes to adopt. For even the most vocal critics of Christian morals have their own agendas of absolutes that must not be tampered with. And increasingly these inconsistent critics are bringing pressure to silence their “intolerant” adversaries instead of engaging them in civilized discussion. They insist that religious and moral discourse be banished from public life and secluded within religious conclaves and private relationships.

How can we uphold moral absolutes in this hostile environment? First, we must establish convictions of our own based on God’s nature and revealed principles. If the Barna surveys are anywhere close to accurate, this is the most urgent need of

all. It is no small task, requiring a discerning study of the Bible. We must examine carefully the context of every scriptural command to see if it was given to isolated individuals, the church, Israel, or all mankind. We must avoid the twin dangers of relativizing what God intended to be absolute and absolutizing what He intended to be relative, being especially careful not to read our own cultural standards back into Scripture.

Second, we must practice the convictions we profess. It does little good to insist that God has given moral absolutes if we ourselves do not obey them. For example, our case for heterosexual marriage against homosexual unions is weakened when evangelical Christians divorce at the same

rate as unbelievers. How can we defend a divine institution that we ourselves take lightly?

Third, we must pass on God’s moral absolutes to the next generation. Our children face unbelievable pressure to conform to the thinking and practices of their peers. Parents must firmly, consistently, but lovingly build morals into the lives of their children. This

task cannot be passed off to youth pastors or the faculty of Christian schools. Parents must be willing to discuss issues openly around the supper table, on a hike, or by a bedside. They must remember that saving faith in Christ must be the foundation for their children’s moral development. And they must constantly beseech the Lord for wisdom, patience, and humility.

Fourth, we must be a constructive influence in our society. This means tempering truth with love, conviction with compassion. Unfortunately, one writer’s description of Christians as the “pit bulls of the culture wars” is often accurate. Christians have become frustrated with the direction of their nation, and frustration erupts in venomous attacks matching those of their

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***“We must avoid the twin dangers of relativizing what God intended to be absolute and absolutizing what He intended to be relative, . . .”***

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enemies. In a desperate attempt to regain Christian influence, many have adopted the un-Christian tactic of “fighting fire with fire,” negating in action the very cause they promote. Their neighbors see them as unloving fanatics, and Jesus weeps.

It will help us if we realize that Jesus never gave us the mission of “taking back America” for Him. He appointed us to be witnesses wherever He has placed us, and if through our witness He does good for America that is merely a by-product of our mission. Although we should never compromise our convictions or be silenced by threats, we should serve Christ as He exemplified and taught—as shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves (Matt. 10:16).

Jesus displayed the perfect balance in responding to the adulterous woman—“Neither do I condemn you” and “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11). If we listen to those who differ from us, ask them questions, and seek to understand them even while speaking our convictions unashamedly, we will glorify our Saviour and remove all legitimate excuses for rejecting our message. Unbelievers may still call us fanatics, but that now becomes their problem, not ours. Paul’s advice to the Romans still applies: avoid repaying evil for evil or taking our own revenge, take the initiative in living at peace with all, do good

for enemies, and overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:17-21). Christ’s example, as Peter taught, should guide Christians under pressure: He committed no sin, did not respond in kind, did not threaten, and committed Himself to Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:21-23). Following these standards we will exercise a more constructive influence than we can imagine.

Tolerance has a widespread appeal today, and rightly understood it is a legitimate concept. But if it means recognizing every belief and behavior as equally valid, it violates the teaching of Jesus, the prophets, and the apostles. They endorsed transcendent truth and sought to raise mankind to its level through an attitude superior to tolerance—love. Love dictated God’s moral absolutes to begin with, as He sought to protect humans from behavior that would injure or ruin them. Love led Jesus to sacrifice Himself for those whose sins He could not tolerate. And love enables us to communicate this message sensitively even to our detractors, knowing that truth, infused with love, sets free.

We need never apologize for biblical moral absolutes. They will never be out of date because the One who gave them is eternal. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *PBU Today*, Fall 2005

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## == IRA S. JOHNS . . . cont’d. ==

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Brother Johns had a concern for the Mennonite Church in the area of education. From 1930-1943 he served on the Mennonite Board of Education. He particularly desired that the Mennonite colleges would not only believe but also practice the distinctives of our faith. He also served on the board of the Christian Day School in Clinton Township and was on the Planning Board of Bethany High School in Goshen. He felt deeply that the Mennonite Church should operate church-controlled elementary and high schools.

With his gift of teaching he also served as instructor in Goshen Winter Bible School and in Winter Bible School in Fairview, Michigan.

He served on the Welfare, Examining, Sunday School, and other conference committees. He was a faithful attendee and supporter of conference. For a time he was also an evangelist and a Bible conference instructor.

Brother Ira S. Johns was a godly man who loved his family as well as being a friend to one and all. He stood for the truth and championed the principles of the Mennonite Church.

He was diagnosed with leukemia about a year before his death. He died June 27, 1956, at the age of 76. His funeral was at Clinton Frame Church. — Gail L. Emerson

## From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

# Standards of Moral Purity

by John Coblentz

It is not difficult to document the moral slide in the Western World in the last half a century. We may look at marriage statistics, cohabitation statistics, the lifestyles of high school and college students, sex education programs, the entertainment industry, or cultural dress practices. The message is the same everywhere. Men and women today increasingly violate God's standards for moral purity.

Even in many church circles, the expectation is that people "just do these things," as though we must simply accept the inevitable.

Some Christian groups have attempted counter measures, such as challenging teens to take vows of abstinence—no sex until marriage. However, in a recent Barna survey of 12,000 people who had vowed as teenagers not to have sex until marriage, 80% had violated those vows after seven years.

Reliable statistics on the morality of

conservative Anabaptist groups is difficult to find. But we are fooling no one if we believe the problems are all "out there." We have among us such sins as fornication, adultery, incest, sexual abuse, and pornography. And in some very conservative groups of Mennonites and Amish, there is the expectation that youth must simply go through a time of wild living, including sexual looseness.

Is it possible to live a pure life today? Was the Apostle Paul out of touch with reality when he wrote to the Ephesians that "fornication, and all uncleanness" should "not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (5:3)?

We believe God's standards for moral purity are for all cultures for all time. What was wrong from the beginning is still wrong. Moral purity is necessary for strong marriages and healthy families.

Let's look at some necessary lines.

**1. It is wrong to have sexual relations outside of marriage.** Both mar-

riage and divorce have declined in the U.S. in recent years, but only because cohabitation continues to rise. More people are living together in non-binding, non-covenant relationships than ever before in our country's history. Children are born to these shaky unions, and children are continuing to bear the emotional brunt of broken adult relationships. Whether adults consent to sex outside of marriage or a whole culture blesses it, we must say it is wrong.

**2. It is wrong to appear or to act in ways that are provocative.** If it is wrong to have sexual relations outside of marriage, it is wrong to arouse such sexual desires as well. Ours is an age of undress. Clothing is no longer designed to cover, but to reveal. We are not out of touch with reality to reject such clothing; rather, we are out of touch if we try to say such clothing is amoral. Slits, V-lines, low necklines and belt lines, as well as scanty or tight clothing are all designed to catch the eye. They are no different in intent from flirting or suggestive body language. Certainly, one may have decent clothes and a rotten heart, but we believe it is a contradiction of a pure heart to appear or act in ways that stir sexual desire.

**3. It is wrong to harbor desires or thoughts in the mind that would be inappropriate to carry out.** Jesus taught us that to look on a woman lustfully demonstrates an adulterous heart as surely as committing the sin (Matthew 5:28). He was not speaking of thoughts that come to our minds unbidden, but the intentional lustful imagination in the heart. We may fool people for years by keeping such thoughts out of sight, but we are fooling ourselves most. A lustful mind is a dissatisfied mind and a poor mind. God wants us to know the freedom and peace of a pure mind.

**4. It is wrong for a married person to use someone else to satisfy needs not being met in marriage.** This can involve both sexual and non-sexual interaction. There is often a direct correlation

between the decline of love at home and an increase of flirting away from home. But no level of emptiness in a marriage justifies seeking satisfaction outside of marriage. On a less obvious front, a distressed man or woman may confide in another person and eventually share his/her heart in ways that violate the marriage union. And it is not a long step from sharing one's heart to sharing one's body. Now certainly, it is not wrong to talk to a friend when we are distressed. But there is a difference between talking about an unmet need and looking to someone else to meet that need.

This same principle applies to single people, of course, relating to married people. It is wrong for single men to flirt with other men's wives, or for single ladies to flirt with other women's husbands. Marriage is the context to enjoy familiarities and to share the intimacies of the heart, and we must never use hunger or unmet needs as an excuse for violating God's standards.

In a culture that seems bent on sliding toward Sodom, we need to practice God's standards of purity without apology. Our world needs living testimonies that a life of moral purity is both joyful and meaningful. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Deeper Life Ministries* newsletter, August 2005.

## CHORALE CONCERT

to benefit the

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

will be held at the

**Calvary United Church  
St. Jacobs, Ontario, Canada  
April 22, 2007 at 3:00 p.m.**

Call (519) 698-2951 for more information

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



## *A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**MARCH 4, 2007**

### *Walking in the Light of Love*

1 John 2:7-17

In this letter John is writing to his spiritual children to remind them of previous teaching and to warn against false teachers (see 2:18 and following). The highlight of today's passage is to show how true love is properly expressed. Love is the hallmark of the Christian faith, expressed to God in worship, and to one's fellowmen in acts of kindness. True love enlightens and guides the believer in his relationships to God and to man, and serves as a safeguard against evil influences.

The old/new commandment of which John here writes is the commandment to love, expressed first in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18) and finding depth of fulfillment in Christ. It was the centerpiece of Jesus' teaching and the identifying characteristic of His followers (John 13:34, 35). It is old because it was from ancient times. It is new because of its radical expression in Christ.

In brotherhood relations the proof that one is truly walking in the light of Christ is whether or not he loves his brother (see 1 John 3:10). Since light and darkness are mutually exclusive, therefore, he who hates his brother cannot be walking in light. Furthermore, that person will fail in all other areas of life because he has no light to illuminate his way. By contrast, the person walking in light sees clearly in all circumstances and does not have occasion to stumble or fall.

John addresses his readers as "little children." He then has specific words of commendation for various groups of his

spiritual children. He first affirms their relationship to Christ (v. 12) and then mentions specific areas in which they especially exemplify Christian principles.

Fathers, those older, mature individuals, have had long association with the Saviour and have developed a deep, abiding faith in Him. This enables them to face life's experiences with stability. Young men are strong, defeating Satan's attacks with vigor and strength of Christian character. The secret to victory for both is the indwelling Word of God (see also Colossians 3:16a).

After explaining how love works in positive ways, John then gives a negative warning in verse 15. One cannot love the world and at the same time profess love for God. God and the world are diametrically opposed. There is no middle ground. The world and its allures draw men away from spiritual devotion to self-gratifying activities which ultimately result in spiritual death.

The allurements of the world appeal to man's base nature, satisfaction of fleshly appetites, outward ostentation and pride of place, position, and possessions. But these are fleeting, holding, at best, temporal satisfaction. They will pass with the destruction of the world. Then where will the person be who has pursued these things to the neglect of doing the Father's will? The answer is obvious and the end too horrible to contemplate.

By contrast, "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." And the will of God is to show undefiled love to Him, and unreserved love to his brother. To walk in the light of love is to show a disposition flavored and directed by selfless love.

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

1. Explain the concept of love, remember-

- ing that God *is* love. What are its attributes? How does it express itself?
2. What are the demands of love in brotherhood relationships?
  3. What are the secrets to victory in the Christian life?
  4. Why do the “things of the world” hold such allure? How can we overcome their attraction?
  5. What do you make of people who seem to want one foot in the world and one in the kingdom of God? How can you help such people see the error of their way? Is deception stronger than truth?

## MARCH 11, 2007

### *The Test of Love*

1 John 3:11-24

Do you truly love? Are you walking in the light of love? (last Sunday’s lesson) How do you know? Today’s lesson provides means by which to test one’s love, to determine the validity of one’s profession, to certify the genuineness of one’s claim. Last Sunday’s lesson focused on right relationships as a result of true love. Today’s looks at very practical ways to demonstrate that love.

John begins this discourse with a pronouncement and an illustration. Love is the age-old message (v. 11). (See John 13:34, 35.) Love is the opposite of hate, which so vividly found expression in Cain who killed his brother in a fit of envy. Cain’s problem was a failure to respond to God’s call to repent, so he killed the one whose life convicted him of his moral failure. Just as Abel’s life convicted Cain and led to hatred, so the follower of Jesus can expect the hatred of a world whose evil deeds are exposed by a righteous life.

One of the tests of true love is one’s attitude toward his Christian brother. Hatred equals murder (i.e. Cain) and that bars one from God’s heaven. True love, expressed in deeds of kindness and generosity, is a manifestation of the

indwelling love of God.

True love, pure, unfeigned love, is exemplified for the believer by Jesus’ act of selfless sacrifice. While not necessarily called to the same level of sacrifice, nevertheless the attitude which prompted Christ should also be found in His followers. That attitude is one of willingness to sacrifice self-interest for the well-being of our brother. True love is not proven by profession, but by performance.

It is by these acts of sacrificial love that we are assured of our relationship to God and that we are walking in His truth. Does our heart at times condemn us—either for doing too little or from wrong motives? God, who knows all and loves without measure, knows us better than we know ourselves, and He brings peace to our unsettled minds.

For the one living in full confidence of God’s acceptance and blessing, additional privilege is extended: that of His gracious and generous response to one’s requests. This is not a blank check to fulfill one’s selfish desires, but rather an indication of such a close and intimate relationship that the believer’s will and the Father’s will are one. And so the believer wishes nothing that is not within the Father’s will.

This relationship, this intimacy, is founded on the believer’s total commitment of life to the Father God. He is obedient. He is submissive. He is consistent in the expression of love, both to God and to His fellowmen. He follows the teachings of God’s Son. He walks in Christ’s footsteps. He has the inner witness to this relationship through the presence of God’s Spirit.

What a blessed, satisfying life when one is one with God and living in sacrificial obedience toward his fellowmen. These are the tests of true love. Do you pass the test?

### *For thought and discussion*

1. Discuss reasons for tensions between the church and the world. How can believers bridge those tensions to reach the unbeliever with a witness to his needs?

2. What are some practical expressions of true brotherly love? What is their motivation?
3. Why is pure Christian love so hard to achieve? What hinders its growth and expression?
4. Are our prayers always answered? What hinders God's response to our requests?
5. Be sure to examine your life and attitudes in light of this lesson. Do you pass the test of true love? What is God saying to you?

## **MARCH 18, 2007**

### ***The Source of Love***

1 John 4:7-21

In previous lessons we've looked at several aspects of love: how it is an essential guide for our lives, and how we can tell if it truly expresses the attitude of our life. Today we examine its source. Where does love originate? And what, really, is love? How can it be defined? What do we mean when we say that God *is* love? How is this attribute expressed?

In today's passage John declares that love finds its source in God, for God is the very embodiment of love. So, to know God is to know love and to understand, in a measure, its substance. John goes on to say that anyone experiencing the new birth, experientially knows God and in that relationship has come to understand the meaning of love. Then, John says, it is only natural that those individuals who have so experienced God's love should express love toward one another. One who does not love does not know God. It's that simple. Love is important; it is essential to all relationships. It defines God and His children.

To understand God's love one need only look at what He did for mankind. He expressed His unqualified love for man by giving His Son to become the atoning sacrifice for man's sin. The recognition of

that love, John says, should provide the impetus for love between those whom God has so redeemed. The depth of God's love is more fully understood in that it was active on man's behalf before there was any response from man, in fact while man was still in his sins (see Romans 5:8).

It is in the horizontal love relationship that one gets a vision of God, because God dwells in the one who shows love to another and thus reveals the meaning of love. While we cannot actually see God, we can understand God more fully through the brother-to-brother love relationship.

Those who have experienced God's redeeming love will readily bear witness to His provision for salvation, Jesus, the Saviour. The indwelling presence of God's Spirit then gives assurance, boldness, and confidence. And once we have the inner witness of salvation, the fear of judgment vanishes. Judgment produces fear, but love overcomes fear by producing a holy life, a life modeled on that of Jesus. And the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit assures us of our relationship to God and brings the experience of love to completion.

Love originates with God. He alone, because of His holy character and omnipotent power, is able to produce love of Himself. Our love toward Him is a response drawn from the realization and comprehension of love first expressed by Him. "We love him, because he first loved us."

John then reiterates the principle expressed in both our previous lessons, that love for God is proved by love shown to one's brother. How absurd to express love for an unseen God while harboring hatred for the brother right before our eyes. Love begets love. The one who fully understands the love of God expressed to him will without qualification express full, unequivocal love to his brother. In fact, this is God's commandment, that in return for His love we also show love.

God is the source of love. And He alone can be. But we, having experienced His measureless love, can also be regenerators of that love, passing on to others a measure

of what we have received and in response to what we have experienced because that relationship is a reflection of our relationship to God.

***For thought and discussion***

1. Godly love forms a triangle. Note how individuals who have experienced vertical love to God find it easy to express love horizontally to one another.
2. How would you respond to a person who claims they love God yet who is living in obvious disobedience to His Word and will? Discuss.
3. What is the essence of love? How is it identified or explained?
4. How do we understand God's love?
5. Do you love God? Truly? Do you also love all your brothers?
6. Why did God make our love for others a test of our love for Him? Explore.

**MARCH 25, 2007**

***The Proof of Love***

1 John 5:1-13

In this passage faith and love are coupled inseparably together. And this faith-love relationship is verified by our obedience to the commands of God. John again emphasizes (v. 2) that love for God and love for God's children are inseparable principles. It is only natural that if we love God we will also love His children, members of His family. One who is born again, living a life of obedience to God, will also love others who are experiencing and expressing the same characteristics.

Faith, here expressed by the term *belief*, is the essential first step to the new birth. That new birth then opens the avenue of love—to God for His salvation, and to fellow believers as witness to the salvation experience. This new birth experience also issues in a life of joyful obedience to God's commandments. This new faith-life also gives one the ability to overcome the

allurements and enticements of the world (see 2:15-17).

John then affirms Jesus as the Son of God and the One through whom man receives salvation. The Jews were familiar with the principle of a threefold witness (see Deuteronomy 19:15), so John here gives threefold proof of Jesus as the God-man. This was to refute erroneous teaching that was threatening the church and to establish Jesus as the true Messiah.

The affirmation of Jesus by water happened at His baptism, which was given witness to by both the Father in the voice from heaven and by the Spirit descending in the form of a dove upon Him. The witness by blood was at His crucifixion (see John 19:34). The water and the blood testify to Jesus' humanity. The voice of the Father and the anointing of the Holy Spirit testify to His divinity. Jesus' resurrection also confirms His divinity, a feat impossible for mere man to perform.

Verse 10 speaks to the inner, confirming witness which those have who believe in the Son. Those who refuse all evidence of Jesus' divinity put their lack of belief against the claims of God, denying in effect, that God has told the truth. Such audacity! What hope is there for a person who denies the veracity of God, and thus denies himself the only means of salvation? It puts one in a desperately hopeless situation.

Verses 11 through 13 are some of my favorites. They show that God has graciously provided us with an understandable record of His provision for our salvation through His Son. They state explicitly that those who accept His Son have eternal life, and that those who believe have clear assurance of their relationship to God by faith. God has not left man groping in ignorance. He has outlined a clear path to a restored relationship between fallen man and a holy God.

These verses encompass the proof of God's love for man. The proof of our love to Him is found in the first part of the passage—we keep His commandments, we

love His children, and by faith and personal discipline live victoriously over the temptations of the world.

Love is a powerful force. It binds man to God and it binds man to man as members of the same blood-bought family.

Do you have proof of this love in your life?

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

1. Several proofs of the new birth are mentioned in this passage. What are they? Are there others?
2. What removes the burden from keeping God's commandments?
3. How do we achieve victory over the world's allurements? What role does faith play?
4. It is easy for those of us who have been taught from little up to believe in Jesus as God's Son. Many are not so fortunate. How can we help them to belief? What arguments would you use?
5. Do you lack assurance of salvation? Do you know others who do? Use verses 10-13 to reaffirm your commitment to God and provide the inner witness that assures your relationship to Him. They will also help you to guide others to assurance of faith. ■

## ***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

### **Iraq's "Supreme Court" Upholds Saddam Death Sentence**

Iraq's highest court, the Supreme Court of Appeals, upheld a lower court's verdict of death by hanging for Saddam Hussein and added a stipulation that the hanging must happen within thirty days. Iraqi law stipulates that the President and two vice presidents must sign off on the execution. The President of Iraq is a Kurd and the two VPs are a Sunni and a Shiite. Saddam was a Sunni who persecuted Iraq's Shiite majority while in power. The Sunni VP pledged, as part of a deal that got him into office, that he will sign off on Hussein's execution. The chief judge of the Supreme Court, Aref Shahin, added the potential for a constitutional crisis when he announced that the verdict would be carried out even if the three presidents didn't sign off on it.

The President is opposed to the death penalty in principle, but for past executions he has deputized his signing authority to one of the VPs. The high court also reaffirmed the death sentence for two of Hussein's associates. A third associate of Hussein's had appealed his lifetime prison sentence to the high court, but instead they sent it back to the lower court for reconsideration, demanding the death penalty! Three defense lawyers and a witness have been murdered through the course of the trial.

Saddam was executed by hanging on December 30, 2006, at 6:07 a.m. (Iraqi time) for the mass murder of 148 Shiites. At the time of his execution, he was also standing trial for the genocide of 180,000 Kurds; the trial of his co-defendants will continue. The *Iran Daily* quotes Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini as calling for

calm after the execution. He urged that Muslims not fight each other as a result (Shiites are jubilant about the execution and Sunnis are angry) and lose sight of the common enemy that all Muslims face: Americans and the West. President Bush released a statement that begins, "Today, Saddam Hussein was executed after receiving a fair trial—the kind of justice he denied the victims of his brutal regime."

—Sources: *Associated Press*, *Digg*, *Iran Daily*, *Wikipedia*, *ChristianNewsWire*

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### **Iraqi Unemployment at 50%**

Mohammed Radhi, the Iraqi Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, said that 50% of Iraqis that are able to work aren't. He warned that fighting unemployment is essential to defeating terrorism because, to put his words into American idiom, idle hands are the devil's workshop.

—Source: *Azzaman* (an Iraqi newspaper)

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### **Nigeria Pipeline Fire Kills 260**

A gang of thieves has been tapping a gas pipeline in Nigeria to steal gas by the tanker truckload. A single jerry can of gasoline is worth two weeks wages for most Nigerians. When they failed to reseal the pipeline properly, gas began to gush out. Residents flooded to the pipeline to gather gas in any container they could—buckets, plastic bags, and jerry cans. The leak combusted into a mighty, towering fireball killing at least 260 and severely injuring many more. The same thing happened earlier this year killing 150 and an incident in 1998 killed 1,500.

—Source: *ABC News*

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### **Leaping Dolphin Injures Woman**

A woman sitting in a small boat in New Zealand was injured by a dolphin that apparently miscalculated its leap or didn't see the boat. The dolphin leaped out of the water and hit the woman. She had to be evacuated by helicopter and is in the Auckland Hospital Intensive Care Unit in serious

condition. The dolphin swam off unharmed.

—Source: *The New Zealand Herald*

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### **Holiday Sales a Bit Flat**

VISA downgraded its estimate of sales growth for retailers in the months of November and December based on VISA credit card use from 7.5% to 6.5%. Both figures are below 2005's 8.3% growth in sales. Retailers make nearly half their profits for the year during the holiday season. VISA's data on shopping is quite reliable because \$17 of every \$100 spent in the U.S. is spent on one of 500 million VISA cards. (That's 1.6 cards for every American!) Lower than expected spending is due to a variety of factors: high fuel prices, a soft housing market, and steeper discounts on Black Friday (and at other times earlier in the holiday season).

—Source: *New York Times*

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### **Thieves Steal \$20,000 From NYC Church on Christmas Day**

St. Mel's Roman Catholic Church was robbed of \$20-30,000 on Christmas Day. The funds were in the church safe and were meant for needy children.

—Source: *Associated Press*

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### **Democratic Victory Ushers in First Female Speaker of the House**

The Democratic congressional victory in November means that Nancy Pelosi, the California liberal, will be inaugurated as the first female Speaker of the House. She is throwing a four-day party to celebrate. On January 4th she will attend a non-denominational service at St. Peter's Catholic Church and the next day she will ironically hold an invitation-only "People's House" party in her offices. Republican consultant Mike Murphy describes the party as 500% of what is normal. Republicans are delighted with the ostentatious celebration as it highlights a return to the "high-partying celebrity-fuelled Clinton era."

—Source: *London Times*

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## Gerald Ford Dies

Former President Gerald Ford died at age 93. Columnist Martin Schram says the following of Ford: “Ford became America’s 38th president and, most importantly, America’s first never-elected president and the only person whose name never even appeared on a presidential ballot before taking the presidential oath. While his presidency was just two years and five months long, it was no mere historical blip. He was uniquely suited for the challenge he inherited and calming the nation after the implosion of a presidency, vice presidency, and administration of criminals.

“When Vice President Spiro Agnew was proven to be a crook and resigned, President Richard Nixon appointed Ford as veep. Nixon, already trapped in his Watergate web of lies and deceptions, figured that the lightly regarded Ford would be insurance against his own impeachment. (It was neither Nixon’s first nor worst miscalculation.)

Just eight months later, Nixon resigned, fleeing sure impeachment and conviction; and Ford became president. In his presidency, Ford traveled to China and to a U.S.-Soviet strategic arms summit in Vladivostok. South Vietnam collapsed on his watch. And, of course, he pardoned Nixon. But Ford may have met his greatest challenge and performed his greatest service to the nation on August 9, 1974, the day he took the oath of office.

“In his inaugural address in the East Room, President Ford famously told a shaken nation: ‘My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over. Our Constitution works. . . .’ In his speech, he also spoke a line that I’ve always liked best and because, in its simplicity, it summed up all that was wrong with the Nixon White House and all that would be needed to make things right: ‘I believe that truth is the glue that holds government together. . . .’ It was true that day and it is every bit as true today. It is why we always will appreciate Jerry Ford.” Jimmy Carter in his inaugural address said of Ford, “For

myself and for our nation, I want to thank my predecessor for all he has done to heal our land.”

—Sources: *Associated Press*; Excerpt from “Appreciating Gerald Ford” by Martin Schram (<http://tinyurl.com/y7vybh>); Further Resources: White House Biography of Gerald Ford (<http://tinyurl.com/3m9ak>), Gerald Ford Library and Museum Biography (<http://tinyurl.com/y8ymnd>), Wikipedia: Gerald Ford (<http://tinyurl.com/atj9x>)

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## Christians in America Analyzed

Christian researcher George Barna has done a study on Christians in America. He found the following statistics: 15% of those who regularly attend a Christian church rank God as their top priority. Only 21% believed themselves to be holy and only 33% believed God expects people to be holy. An excerpt from the article: “In contrast, however, to this apparent spiritual decline, the researcher also found that there is a group he calls ‘Christian Revolutionaries’ who are growing in number. He says they are the type who show a great interest in things such as personal Bible study and spiritual mentoring.

In his year-end review, Barna describes what he sees as three general spiritual patterns that are likely to gain prominence in the coming years. [ . . . ] The second prediction from the head of Barna Research has to do with what he calls “bifurcation.” He expects to see a widening gap between the intensely committed and those who are casually involved in faith matters. The difference, Barna says, will become strikingly evident between those who make faith the core of their life and those who simply attach a religious component onto an already mature lifestyle.” Which category do you fall into? Think about it seriously and honestly. Is serving Christ the main aim of my life with all my decisions and actions used to further that goal, or is serving Christ an afterthought?

—Source: *Agape Press*; also excerpted from “Christian Culture Analyst Recaps 2006 Church Trends, Future Directions” by Fred Jackson, *Agape Press* (<http://tinyurl.com/y42q6t>)



# Counseling From the Word

## Counseling From the Psalms

by Bob Burrelli

At a conference, I had the privilege of lecturing on the use of the Psalms in counseling. In a one-hour workshop, I tried to convince my audience of the rich counseling resource that we have in the Psalter; I did this by demonstrating how to use the Psalms to train counselees in five areas of their hearts: championing the faith, fearing God, praising God, resting our confidence in God, and hoping in God. Rather than attempting to squeeze all that I said about each of these areas into this small space and risk losing effectiveness, I might serve you better if I elaborate on one area.

What does it mean to be a champion of the faith? By champion, we mean one who fights on behalf of another, or on behalf of any cause, as in the case of the wife who becomes proactive in snuffing out a particular disease that claimed the life of her husband. She starts a foundation to alert people to the seriousness of the disease, raises money for research to find a cure, campaigns against anything that might be linked to its cause, promotes a kind of lifestyle and diet that might prevent it, and speaks out against ignorance in the matter. She hopes one day to be successful in wiping it out and takes pleasure along the way in giving relief to patients and consolation to their families. In the context of Christianity, then, a champion of the faith is a defender of the faith. He is a proponent, an activist, and an advocate for the faith who battles against anything that opposes it. Now, you needn't have done much counseling to know that counselees in crisis are far from champions of the faith. Far from being bold and fiercely steadfast soldiers, they cower before gods that they have erected in their hearts and to whom they have enslaved themselves.

As they sit across the table from you in despair in the counseling room, would you ever consider giving them hope with these words? ***I want to give you hope today and tell you that if you really mean business for Christ, you will not only overcome this problem in your life, but you will someday find yourself sitting on this side of the counseling table helping others who face the exact same problems.*** Does that sound strange to you? Or maybe it sounds too premature—would you rather wait until this person finishes with counseling and shows an interest in being more involved in the ministry before suggesting that he may be of help to others? Maybe all you're interested in at the moment is that, for a period of several weeks, he consistently demonstrates a healthy devotional life and the ability to evade any of the same idolatrous problems that once held him hostage; then you can dismiss him with your blessing. If that's your goal—and it is for so many of us—then nothing more is needed.

I believe that goal is terribly shortsighted. We may joyfully dismiss our counselees only when we are convinced that they have become champions for righteousness in the sinful areas that once plagued them. Let's not think about ending our time with them until they start campaigning against their old idolatrous way of thinking and desire to see it expunged from the lives of others as well. You see, successful counseling brings counselees to the place where they have become proponents of God's cause in their particular areas of weakness. They are not living on the defensive only, but also on the offensive. They have done more than overcome their particular area of idolatry; they attack it. They hate all that is associated

with it, challenge anyone who may unwittingly promote it, desire to teach what is contrary to it, and help others in the body of Christ who may be steeped in it.

Because it is filled with the testimonies of champions of Yahwism, the Psalter's teaching functions as an effective tool in helping our counselees move beyond themselves and their problems to serving others with the same problems. The psalmists supported God's cause by developing polemics against the prevailing thoughts and gods of their day. A polemic is an attack on an opposing view. The term may be strange to you, but you are well familiar with its concept. In fact, Christians are to develop polemics in many aspects of the faith. For example, evangelism is about proclaiming Jesus as the only way, and, at the same time, according to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, attacking all other ways. Paul doesn't mince his words here: "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." Christians have developed a polemic against evolution and the whole notion of chance. NANC is a polemic against the integration of psychology and Scripture.

The psalmists express their verbal attacks within the framework of prayers, which indicates just how much of an advocate each was about his faith. For example, at a time when Israel was humiliated by idolatry, the psalmist of Psalm 115 shows utter contempt for pagan idols. He doesn't hide from pagan practices; he attacks them. He becomes a proponent for purity and loyalty to the Lord and calls his nation to trust the Lord rather than idols. In his prayer he argues that the idolaters of other nations have no valid reason to taunt him and his nation with their question "Where is your God?" and boldly proclaims that God is sovereign, the only One enthroned in heaven, who does whatever He desires (v. 3). He then attacks the prevailing view of idol worship that has confronted and infected his people by turning the tables on his persecutors to reveal the perishable and impotent characteristics of their gods. "They are made of metals, the

work of man's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat" (vv. 4-7). Not satisfied to leave it at that, he warns those who engage in pagan idolatry that "those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them." Then there is the psalmist of Psalm 96, who hails the Lord as being greater than all pagan gods. His polemical statement in verse 5 speaks out against those who make idols for themselves from what God has created: "For all the gods of the peoples are idols; but Yahweh made the heavens." The Hebrew word translated "idols" describes that which is worthless and deficient. He contrasts them to the powerful Creator, Yahweh, the true God. Examples of psalmists who were zealous for righteousness and aggressively attacked wickedness are rife in the Psalter, leaving them worthy models for our counselees.

As counselors, we must help counselees develop polemics against enticing gods. Start by identifying the gods of your counselees. One of the many in today's pantheon is the ever-popular Rights, who promises respect, privacy, acknowledgment, and fair treatment. His worshipers are characterized by conditional service. The idolater-turned-advocate in this area, then, has the attitude of the servant in Luke 17:10, "I am unworthy," and begins to counter every act of idolatry with acts of true worship—he comes to serve rather than to be served and works behind the scenes to promote unity in the body rather than demanding recognition.

Equally popular is Happiness. He thrives in our hedonistic culture where everyone wants happiness and believes he or she has the right to it (Rights and Happiness are consorts). His worshipers go to great lengths to control their environment to accommodate him—pay exorbitant amounts of money, have illicit relationships, and resort to using drugs. You'll find the idolater-turned-advocate in this area rejoicing in Christ. He believes that

*(continued on page 17)*



# 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*

## Like Wandering Sheep



by Byler/Byler

### Lyrics:

You may recall seeing this poem on the front cover of the January issue. Because one of the purposes for this column is to showcase original Mennonite hymns, I jumped on the chance to use a great set of lyrics like this one. And yes, for those of you who are curious, the writer is my aunt. Below are her comments about this piece.

*I was designing my first cover for the **Sword and Trumpet**. I was staring at the computer screen, praying, "God, what do You want this cover to look like? What message do You want to get out to Your people?" It was one of those times in my life when God seemed silent. His presence a remote memory. I was talking to God about that and pleading with Him to show me His face. I was telling Him that the cover design was going to have to be His doing. I was dry and devoid of ideas. I stopped pleading and sat in silence, listening, waiting. I became aware of an incredibly deep longing stirring in my heart and with the longing a deep sadness. I thought of the materialism and complacency that seems to be so prevalent in*

*much of Christianity and the increasing amount of people who are turning away from the Father to lesser loves. I sensed the wandering and restlessness of my own heart and was stirred with a deep longing to be "safe home" with the Father. The Father's presence became very real to me as I picked up pen and paper and hurriedly scribbled the words of this poem.* —Shirley Anne Byler

### Music:

When I think about writing music for any given text, the first thing I think of is how to reflect the words in the music, a concept that is often called "word painting." Obviously, there are not too many things one can do in hymn-style music that could conjure up complex images like "sheep" or "divine sword," but there are a few simple ideas that helped shape the music for this hymn.

The first measure plays on the word *wandering*. All the parts begin on the same note, and the soprano and bass go opposite directions as they lead into the second measure. Again, this is not something you could listen to without the

## Welcome, Happy Morning

I have the keys of hell and of death.—REV. 1: 18

VENANTIVS FORTUNATUS, c. 630-609 FORTUNATUS 11s. 51. ARTHUR S. SULLIVAN, 1872

1. "Wel-come, hap-py morn-ing!" age to age shall say: Hell to - day is  
2. Earth her joy con - fess - es, cloth - ing her for spring, All fresh gifts re -  
3. Mak - er and Re - deem - er, life and health of all, Thou from heav'n be -  
4. Loose the souls long pris - oned, bound with Satan's chain; All that now is

van - quished, heav'n is won to - day! Lo! the Dead is liv - ing,  
turned with her re - turn - ing King; Bloom in ev - 'ry mead - ow,  
hold - ing hu - man na - ture's fall, Of the Fa - ther's God - head  
fall - en raise to life a - gain; Show Thy face in bright - ness,

God for - ev - er - more! Him their true Cre - a - tor, all His  
leaves on ev - 'ry bough, Speak His sor - row end - ed, hail His  
true and on - ly Son, Man - hood to de - liv - er, man - hood  
bid the na - tions see; Bring a - gain our day - light: day re -

works a - dore! "Wel-come, hap-py morn-ing!" age to age shall say.  
tri - umph now. Hell to - day is van - quished, heav'n is won to - day!  
didst put on. "Wel-come, hap-py morn-ing!" age to age shall say.  
turns with Thee! Hell to - day is van - quished, heav'n is won to - day!

words and say, "Wow, that sounds like wandering sheep," but it is an idea that contributed to the hymn's composition.

Another passage that plays with the word *wandering* appears at the second occurrence of this word in the first verse. Again the soprano and bass diverge, but this time there are chromatic tones and unusual chords involved. It almost feels as though the music is "wandering" a little from the course that it has set in the previous two phrases. ■

### COUNSELING FROM THE PSALMS . . . cont'd.

there's "no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey." He sees a sovereign and good God in control of his life (cf. Psalm 16), the boundaries of which God has fixed in pleasant places.

Know the cultural worldviews from which counselees draw to fashion their gods. Help them to create a theological grid from Scripture through which they can sift whatever comes their way. Help them to cultivate a confident trust in Scripture that will allow them to become champions of the particular area of their faith in which they were weak. Let them evidence an allegiance to the Lord and a disdain for anything that is contrary to God or vies against Him for their allegiance. Be satisfied with nothing less than a counselee who argues effectively against what he needs to avoid and desires to help others. May God bless you as you graduate advocates from your counseling room who argue God's case in matters of faith and practice. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Biblical Counselor*, April 2006

# How Should Christians Respond to Those That “Come In”?

by Harris Guidroz

“Hello, my name is—and you are?”

“My name is Harris,” I say, attempting to divert the conversation from what I know comes next, to no avail.

“Is Harris your last name?”

“No, my first. That’s what I like to be called,” I state.

“So, what’s your last name?”

“Guidroz,” I relent.

“Guidroz? Oh, I see,” they say as they realize it’s not a “Mennonite” name.

What’s in a name? If I know who my Father is, that’s all that matters. I believe the first hurdle to realize in relating to newcomers is that all who profess the wonderful name of Jesus are Christians if they are following Him; if you are a Christian, you are a Christian; there’s no midway. There’s no such thing as a part Christian or someone who is more of a Christian. Revelation 7:9, 10 tells us in heaven there will be those from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue.

When the Lord revealed Himself to Abraham, Israel, and others, He did so step-by-step. The Lord does the same in Christians’ lives today. Mennonites have a headstart in many areas. They are thoroughly trained on proper dress, traditions, and expression. When a Mennonite becomes a Christian, his transition is quite smooth. When a person that was raised in the world becomes a Christian, it is a whole new, wonderful world full of NEW conviction and eye-opening truths.

As this worldly-person-turned-Christian walks the narrow way, God slowly reveals Himself in new, wondrous ways. New convictions come as the Word is studied and God’s way sought. Many

hardened, professing Christians try to stamp out the new convictions. Family members do everything they can to change the new Christian’s course. But they keep going, faithfully following the Spirit’s call to look more like Christ.

At varying rates, as the Christian stays on the narrow way, continues reading the Word, and applies new truths as God reveals, he finds he needs to go to a more conservative church. Finding a Biblical church following the whole truth becomes harder. Finally, the Spirit may lead to the Conservative Mennonite Church. At first, it seems a dream come true, and in a way, it is.

Now the temptation comes for the weary traveling Christian to let down his guard and just adopt everything this “perfect” church stands for and does, including the temptation to drop any convictions that the Mennonite church does not have. When he overcomes that temptation, he finds out just how imperfect the Mennonite church is. Be honest with yourself: Is your church perfect? Do you have room to grow? Ever had a day when you could say “I didn’t really need the grace of God today”? Are you willing to go an hour without the grace of God? In short, you are a sinner aside from the grace of God. You need the grace and forgiveness of God just like everyone else and you cannot be, will not be, and could not be if you tried all day, good enough to not need His grace. Simply, you are a sinner saved by grace and being made perfect in Him, by Him, and for Him. Like the newcomer, you face challenges to grow and become more like Christ; but will you? Will you

allow your convictions to go above and beyond church mandate? Or will you wait until the next ministers' meeting to find out what your new convictions for the year are?

I have heard it said that newcomers can't "settle." What that means is they come in and want to be more convicted than we are. What does it look like? They may want their dresses longer, which I heard called a fad. They may grow the beard, because they had to give up the ring of marriage. They may not braid their children's hair because of some verse that bade them give up the ring of gold. They may forgo use of the day school to homeschool. The list can go on and on. But what about unity, you cry? Is God divided? Is God confused? Is the body of Christ one body? Can one brother have a conviction that another doesn't have? Can the two live in unity in the same church? Yes, they can.

What makes the Mennonite church Mennonite? What makes it different from other conservative Biblical churches? The conservative Pilgrim Mennonites are a Biblically-based church with applications to the Bible with respect to a Mennonite heritage. That means the heritage of the Mennonites is important, but not as important as the Bible. If following the heritage was found to be in contrast with the Bible, then the Bible would be followed and not the heritage. Some churches would rather keep their heritage and forget the Bible. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, the religious people thought that this could not be from God, for it went against their Sabbath traditions. Loving God with all our heart is what is most important. Knowing this should help us better deal with understanding newcomers. If they are here because they are following God's leading, then we should give them room to grow in Christ, as God would lead them. We should allow differences, as long as these differences don't go against God's

Word. If the heritage gets a black eye and God is glorified, then blessed be the name of God. Let every man be made small and God be praised. Do we want to lose our heritage? No. Is our heritage more important than God? No. Does following our heritage please God? Yes, as long as it does not contradict God's Word. If it does contradict it, I hope we would love God more than our heritage. In the end, I am glad to be a Mennonite, not because the name means something, but because in the Mennonite church I can safely live out my faith as a child of God. A child of God with any other name still smells as sweet to Him.

When a newcomer comes into the Mennonite church, he sometimes confuses what is heritage with what is Bible application. A man might be discouraged to think that he is expected to grow a garden or farm in some fashion or know how to lead in singing. A woman may be discouraged to think that she is expected to sew, bake bread, can food, sing, and hang her clothes out. At first glance, they may even look romantically at these things, and think that is what they want. As they try to integrate these things into their life and faith, they may discover that the romance quickly disappears and may become discouraged thinking that if they can't do these things, then they cannot be Mennonite. It is important for the born and raised Mennonite to make it clear to the newcomer that these things are not necessary to being a Mennonite. It can be so comforting to hear, "I don't sew my own clothes." Or "I'm not gardening this year." The typical newcomer thinks that all Mennonites do all these wonderful things. This may be because that is what everyone talks about after Sunday's service. The sooner they find out otherwise, the better. Otherwise, they may continue struggling with what they feel are their own shortcomings in these areas and become weary, not realizing that these things have nothing to do

with being a Christian, but rather is just a way of life.

The newcomer must see that your faith is more than this “way of life.” Are you a happy Christian, or are you just going through the motions? SMILE. Show your emotion. Share a struggle. Share a victory. Let them see inside you. Be real. Talk about more than your gardens and sewing. Talk about the One who saved you and what He has saved you from. Speak of the wonderful beauty of heaven and the feast of the Lamb. Did I mention smile? I heard said that Mennonites should wear a sign similar to ones found on rearview mirrors: “Objects are closer than they seem,” but the Mennonite sign should read, “We are happier than we look.” Show the love of Christ. What does the love of Jesus look like? It is like someone who lives to eat, rather than eats to live. Those who live to eat love to eat and look forward to their next meal. They think about their food, dream about their food, and just can’t wait for the next meal while those who eat to live will do with just a rice cake with a little peanut butter. The Christian who lives for Christ loves Him and looks forward to the day, excited with what the Lord will show him next; while the other will get by with going to church and doing his Christian duty. As a newcomer, I often wondered, “So, when do we talk about the Lord?” It seemed if I did not bring up the Lord, then He was put aside for heritage subjects: gardening, canning, etc.

Every person has a heritage with traditions. When a new church is planted, it would be good to learn the traditions of the area that are not in contrast to Biblical principle. Then we should make sure to honor those traditions when newcomers from the area visit. One of our southern traditions involved walking our guests to the car when they left. We were floored visit after visit, as the hostess’ family would stay sitting as we left for home. We felt that their message to us

was, “Good riddance.” It took some time for us to realize that they were just ignorant of our heritage, and were not trying to offend. As others in the South also visited, we learned that they had felt the same. There were other such examples, but the point is that we need to learn the culture we are trying to reach. “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:20, 22).

On the positive side, many helpful things were done as we searched for a new church home. There was the song leader that always smiled, invitations to participate in an event in someone’s week, and the hostess that always asked if we needed anything for our long trip home. There were those that understood some of the above issues, and told us that there are Mennonites out there that feel the same way. There were the dinner invitations that were not from the weekly hostess, that helped us to realize that they were inviting us from the heart, rather than duty. There were the families that allowed our children to spend a week at their home for summer Bible school, and the family that allowed us to use their home when they were out of town, calling it the Lord’s home. We were amazed at their trust.

Do we want newcomers, or do we want to remain elusive? Do we want to reproduce ourselves, or to reproduce the image of Christ? It is easy for newcomers to admire us from afar. However, the test comes when they get up close and personal. If there are Christians from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, then certainly they don’t all look like the Mennonite heritage, but they do all look like Christ. Let’s concentrate on looking like Christ and not offending “one of these little ones.” —Monticello, MS

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, April, 2005

# ***The Christian Woman's Veiling***

by Harold S. Martin

*A Bible Helps Tract No. 19*

We are often asked the question: "What is that cap you wear on your head? What's the significance of a sort of veiling worn over your hair?" This little tract will be an attempt to answer such questions.

The woman's veiling is something that is taught in the Bible. If you have a copy of the New Testament, you will find God's teaching about the woman's veiling in 1 Corinthians 11. Verse 6 of that chapter says that if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off, or her head shaved, let her cover her head.

But what is the background for this commandment? Why does God say to the woman, "Let her cover her head"? The answer is that the veiling worn by the woman is a symbol. It is a symbol of at least three things: (1) The woman's acceptance of man's leadership. (2) The purity that characterizes Christian living. (3) The prayer-life of one who is serving Christ.

## ***1. The Woman's Acceptance of Man's Leadership***

God has an orderly arrangement for all creatures—kings and subjects, teachers and pupils, husbands and wives, parents and children, and so forth. And wherever two or more parties are interdependent upon each other, one must have authority and the other must be submissive.

In God's order of things (according to the Bible) the basic unit of society is not the individual, but the family. God says that the captain of the family team is the man. In the New Testament Letter to the Christians at Corinth (in Greece),

the Bible says that Christ is the head of the man and that the man is the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3). This New Testament Letter was addressed to all Christians everywhere (1 Cor. 1:2).

The man (according to God's order) is to respect the woman, to show her kindness, to treat her with love, to listen to her counsel (Eph. 5:24, 25, 28, 29)—but final responsibility for decision-making should rest upon the man—and the woman should graciously accept this place of leadership on the part of the man (whether he be the husband in the home, the father in the family, or an elder in the church). The veiling on the woman's head is a symbol of her acceptance of the place of subjection to man's leadership. The veiling acknowledges the authority of the man, and symbolizes the fact that the woman is taking her rightful place in God's divine order. The woman who follows Jesus Christ and seeks to obey Him, rejoices because she is **liberated** from the responsibility of lots of final decision making.

## ***2. The Purity That Characterizes Christian Living***

One who serves God and represents Jesus Christ, is different from the majority of people who live in the present wicked world. This is evident in the way we live, the kind of company we keep, what we eat and drink, our manner of speech, and even in our outward appearance.

The woman's veiling symbolizes purity. In the forest regions of northern Europe there lives a small weasel-like animal called the ermine. Instinctively, the ermine protects his fur against anything that would soil it. Fur hunters

take advantage of this instinct. The ermine lives in the hollow part of an old tree, and in order to catch the ermine, hunters smear the entrance to the animal's home with garbage and filth. And then when the dogs start to chase, the animal flees toward his home—but when he finds the entrance covered with garbage and dirt, he faces the yelping dogs (and even meets death), rather than soil his beautiful fur.

The ermine instinctively preserves his purity—and just so the Lord wants His followers to be a people who keep themselves from the filth of the world. God's people reject immodesty of dress (1 Timothy 2:9), immorality in conduct (Titus 2:5), and frivolous vanity in appearance (1 Peter 3:3). The veiling symbolizes a pure, devoted, submissive Christian life—and the woman who wears the veiling tries to be careful **not** to bring reproach upon its meaning.

### ***3. The Prayer Life of One Who Is Serving Christ***

The Christian woman is one whose life is marked by prayer. Nearly all persons pray at some time or another, but the true follower of Jesus makes prayer one of the sources of his daily strength. Prayer does not necessarily deliver a person from some terrible situation, but it enables the believer to face and master the situation.

For the Christian woman, God has become the Friend of all friends. The Bible says we should pray often and continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The perfect friend is the friend to whom we can go at any time without ever feeling a nuisance. Since God is the Friend in the believer's life, we find ourselves often speaking with Him. God is omnipresent, and does not merely dwell in temples made by human hands (Acts 7:48), and so we can pray in the quiet of our own rooms, while on the street, while riding a public conveyance—any-

where and at all times.

The Christian woman is “a praying woman” (1 Corinthians 11:5). She prays for her family, relatives, neighbors, friends, enemies, and world conditions. The veiling on her head is a symbol of her communion with God through prayer. She believes the God of the Bible is real and that He is infinite in power, and that there are needs in life which cannot be met in one's own strength. The woman who prays, daily puts herself in touch with the God of the universe, and thus is given wisdom and discernment, and is refreshed for the duties of life.

The Bible says that short uncovered hair for men, and long veiled hair for women, are symbols which God expects His children to observe—and in this way show their acceptance of His divine chain of authority—God, Christ, man, woman. In the early days of the history of the church (and in the early days of the Protestant Reformation), nearly all Christian women wore the sign of respect for authority taught in 1 Corinthians 11. The Council of Gangra (in the Fourth Century A.D.) strictly forbade women to cut off their hair. Rembrandt's painting of Preacher Anslo giving a message of comfort to a woman (from God's Word), was completed in 1641—and in that painting, the woman is wearing a veiling.

If the message of John 3:16 is true (and it is), then the message in 1 Corinthians 11:6 is equally true, and calls for our obedience. It is out of simple obedience to the teachings of the Bible, that Christian women wear a veiling on the head. There is a real blessing in recognizing God's order, and in accepting one's proper place in that order. ■

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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 Whole Machinery of Salvation

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Preached at Metropolitan Tabernacle, Sunday, August 18, 1889*

*"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:13-15).*

Please notice, dear friends, that in the thirteenth verse we have the way of salvation set before us in the plainest terms: *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

I remember well when I lived on that verse for many months. I had longed for salvation. I could not see that there was any way of hope for me. I thought that I must be left out, that I was too sinful, or too hard, or too something-or-other, so that others might be saved, but I should not be. But when I read this verse, I did what I ask you to do, I caught at it; it seemed like a lifeline thrown to a sinking man. I clung to it, and it became a life buoy to me: *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

"Ah!" thought I, "I do call on that blessed name, I will call on that glorious name; if I perish, I will never cease to invoke that sacred name." An invocation of the name of God, a trusting in God, and a consequent calling upon God and acknowledgment of God, this it is that saves the soul.

But I must get you to notice these words a little more in detail. There is here, first, a *wide* word, a very wide word: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"*Whosoever.*" I have heard that, when a person is making his will, if he wishes to leave all he has to one person, say to his wife, if he just says so, that is the best thing he can do; but he had better not go into details, and begin making a list of what he is leaving, because he will probably leave something or other out.

So, in order to make this will of God very distinct, He does not go into any detail, but He just says, "*Whosoever.*" That means the black man, and the red man, and the yellow man, and the white man. It means the rich man, and the poor man, and the man who is not a man. It means everybody of every sort, and those

who are of no sort at all, or of all sorts put together.

“Whosoever.” That includes me, I am sure, but I am equally certain that it includes you—you in the aisles who were never here before, you who are quite unknown in London, you who are a stranger and a foreigner, whoever you may be. It is much better to have it put so, without going into detail, because otherwise somebody might be left out.

I have often thought that, if I had read in Scripture, “If Charles Haddon Spurgeon shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved,” I should not have felt half as sure of salvation as I do now, because I should have concluded that there might have been somebody else of that name, and very likely there is, and I should have said, “Surely it did not mean me”; but when the Lord says “Whosoever,” I cannot get out of that circle. It is a big net that seems to entangle all men in its meshes.

“Whosoever.” If I call upon the name of the Lord, if you call upon the name of the Lord, if the man who lies upstairs a-dying calls upon the name of the Lord, we shall be saved. What a wide word that “whosoever” is!

And then, next, what an *easy* word we have here! “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord.” Anybody can call upon the name of the Lord. Everybody understands what it is to call “Hi, there!” Have you not often used such a call as that? And if you have been in distress or danger, have you never called, “Help, *help*, **help**?”

Very well, he who can thus call, let him call upon God, invoke His help, clamor for His mercy, crave His pity. If he does that, in a believing way, trusting that God will hear him, he shall be saved. So there is no difficulty here that needs a doctor of divinity to explain; the truth is put mainly in monosyllabic words: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” It is as plain as a pikestaff [*i.e.*, “a foot traveler’s staff with a metal point or spike on the lower end”]. Oh, that you

might see it, and begin to call upon the name of the Lord by earnest prayer!

But here is another word, a *sure* word: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” There is no “if” here; no “maybe” here; but a glorious “shall.” Our shalls and wills are poor, puny things, but God’s “shall” is firm as the eternal mountains. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” as surely as there is a God.

The Lord has made no mistake; He will not revoke His declaration by changing His mind. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Oh, that many would call upon His name, tonight, and find immediate salvation, which will last them throughout life, and throughout eternity, for “shall be saved” reaches a very long way, even throughout the eternal ages that are yet to come.

Now here you see, friends, we have a wonderful remedy for the disease of sin, very simple and very abundant; the only difficulty is to get it to the people who need it. I am going to talk about that matter in very plain language, because I want to be very practical, and I pray that God’s Spirit may make my whole discourse to be so.

In our text there are four necessities upon which Paul insists. Praying to God, calling upon His name, will save a man; but first, there is no praying aright without believing: “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” Second, there is no believing without hearing: “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” Third, there is no hearing without a preacher: “How shall they hear without a preacher?” And last, there is no effective preaching without being sent: “How shall they preach except they be sent?”

First, then,

### ***I. There Is No Praying Aright Without Believing***

Since we must pray, and only by prayer can find salvation, and there is no praying

without believing, may the Lord help us to believe, for how shall we pray aright unless we do believe?

I think that I have persons here tonight who have commenced to pray, who have begun pleading with God. I hope, dear friends, nay, I feel sure of it, that, if that prayer is sincere, there is a measure of faith in it, for would you ask God to save you if you did not believe that you needed to be saved? There is a measure of faith in that.

Would you ask God to save you if you did not think that there is a way of salvation by which He can save you? There is a measure of faith in believing that. I think that you believe that there is a Saviour. There is a measure of faith in that; and, I hope, a measure of saving faith, too, in your believing that, notwithstanding all your sins and sinfulness, there is a Saviour provided, who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. You may not have much faith; but you must have some faith if you are really praying to God from your heart, and entreating him to save you.

I think, too, that you must have a little faith that the Saviour will save you. You have been praying to Him to do it. Would you have expressed that desire, and have come to Him in prayer about it, unless there was some kind of sediment of faith in your heart? I want to put it very gently to you, yet very plainly. Remember, faith is not measured by the quantity, but by the quality. A man of strong faith is happier, but he is not more truly saved than a man of weak faith, so long as he has any faith at all.

If yours is only feeble faith, the Lord will say to you, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The faith that comes behind Christ, and touches the hem of His garment, is a saving faith, and I think that is what you are doing when you say, "Lord Jesus, save me." If this is a real prayer, and not a sham one, if it comes from your heart, there is, at any rate, a tint, a shade, if not an actual color of

faith, upon your soul already. How could you call on Him in whom you have not believed?

Would we call for help from a person who we did not think would help us or could help us? No; the mere fact of calling upon anyone for help proves that we have some measure of confidence in that person, that he can and will help us. Well, if you believe as much as that concerning Christ, and if you will cast thyself upon the believing that thou shalt be saved, I would that you had more faith, but even that little faith will bear thee into Heaven.

You believe also that Christ *can* and *does* hear you. Ah, you would not have been alone upstairs this afternoon, crying for mercy, if you had thought that there was nobody to hear you! Rational beings do not go and ask of nobody. You believe that Christ is able to hear you, and you have some faith that He does hear you, for which I am very thankful indeed.

I think that I may add that you are measurably trusting to Christ. Certainly, you are not trusting to anybody else. The fact that you often pray to Him for mercy, for the pardon of sin, for the renewal of your nature, proves that you have some degree, at least, some faint measure of faith in Him. Now, let me exhort you, while you keep on praying, to mix more faith with your praying. "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt," and with all thy prayings thou shalt offer faith. When you ask anything of God, believe, and you will receive. When you appeal to His mercy, believe in the mercy. When you are pleading for His help, believe in the help, for there is much power in faith. "According to your faith, be it unto you."

You all know, surely, what believing is. You say, "I shall go home to pray." "No, *no, no*; believe, and pray as much as ever you like, and a believing prayer will save you. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But "how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Faith comes first.

Believe, then, before you do anything else. May God, of His great mercy, enable some poor sinner to have done with *doing* and with *feeling*, and to trust—just to trust Jesus!

There you are, hanging up there in a tree; you are afraid of falling down, so you cling with all your might. Suppose that a strong man comes underneath, and says, "Here, drop into my arms; I will catch you, I am able to bear your weight." If you trust him, you will drop into his arms. That is what you have to do with Christ tonight; trust Him, and let go every other confidence; just drop into His arms, and you shall be saved. Remember, then, this first lesson, that there is no praying aright without believing.

Now we go another step, and come to the second necessity.

## **II. *There Is No Believing Without Hearing***

*"How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"*

The word *heard* is to be understood in a wide sense. Reading is a kind of hearing. It is not merely listening with the ear; but you must, by some means or other, come to a knowledge of the truth, and you cannot know what you do not hear, or read, or learn. The truth must come under your notice, so that you are aware of it, or else there can be no faith in you concerning it.

I hope that none of you ever believe with the faith of the man who, when he was asked what he believed, said that he believed what the church believed.

"Well," said one, "what does the church believe?"

"Oh!" he replied, "the church believes what I believe."

"Well, then, please tell me, what do you and the church believe?"

"We both believe the same thing," answered he; and he could be got no farther.

Now, there is no faith in that at all; it is simple ignorance, and nothing more. "How shall they believe in him of whom

they have not heard?" Why, to believe a thing is to know the ins and outs of it! To get at it by reading it or hearing it, are only different forms of the same thing.

Well, now, if any man here desires faith, what should he do to obtain it? Sit still, and say, "I will try to believe"? Certainly not. Suppose that I were to announce to you tonight that the leader of all Russia is dead, and you said that you wished to believe it. You could not believe it by an effort of your mind; you would inquire for evidence of the truth of my statement, or you would wait till you saw the telegrams tomorrow, and so you would learn whether it was true or not. It is not a distinct act of the will alone that brings faith: "Faith cometh by hearing."

Listen, then. The more often you hear the gospel, the better. I mean you who have not yet believed it. As you are hearing it, you may come to believe it. It may insensibly, as it were, steal over you. Having heard it, and heard it, and heard it, again and again, you may at last find yourself believing that Jesus suffered on the cross for you. I recommend all seekers after Christ to hear the Word often.

Take another piece of advice. Hear better; hear with both your ears at once; hearken as you would listen if the preacher were telling you how you could make a fortune in ten minutes. How everybody would listen, how everyone would want to have a front seat, so as to make no mistake! How the pencils would go to work to take down the instructions! Hear that way, for there is more at stake than a fortune, even your immortal soul. Heaven and hell hang upon the hearing or not hearing of the Word. Hear often, and hear well.

But so hear as to try to understand it, and if you cannot meet with the preacher who seems to proclaim an all-round gospel, do what is better, go to the Bible itself. Read this blessed Book through studiously, with such helps as good men can give you. Yes, try and understand the truth, and prove it by experience. Come to

this Book, and come to the house of prayer with this thought on your mind, "There is a something that I have to believe, and I am going to know what it is; I am going to know the top of it and the bottom of it, the head and the front and the heart of it; and, at any rate, I will, if I can, know what it is, and what are the grounds and reasons for it." Hearing thus, you will believe it.

There let me leave that point, then. Hear the gospel; only mind that what you hear is the gospel. You can hear some very smart sermons, and very clever sermons—and, as a rule, I may say that the cleverer they are, the worse they are—where you see so much of the man, you will see very little of his Master. When everything seems yielded up to the turning of the phrases, putting the thing very grandly, and carrying you away with wonderful eloquence, the gospel itself gets put out of sight.

Let the eloquent men have a shop for themselves on a Monday, but let us have the Lord's day given up to plain dealing with the souls of men. We want none of this word-daubing. Men are going to heaven or to hell, and it is time that we came to close grips with them about this all-important matter. God help us so to do! Hear that which really is aimed at your heart and conscience; hear that which tells of Christ, and Heaven, and the way thither; hearing that, you are on the way to believing it.

### ***III. There Is No Hearing Without a Preacher***

*"And how shall they hear without a preacher?"*

Therefore, let us preach. Someone must make the truth known to men. They will not find out about the Saviour unless they are told of Him. The gospel will not be revealed to men by any supernatural agency; we must go with it. They cannot learn it without being taught it. No man will know the gospel unless somebody shall tell it to him, by word of mouth, or

by the gift of a book or a tract, or by a letter, or by the open preaching of the Word. Somebody must make it known to the man, for how can he believe in Him of whom he has not heard, and how can he hear without a preacher?

Who ought to preach, then? Everyone who can preach should do so. The gift of preaching is the responsibility for preaching. I often wonder at some Christian men who cart fire away so grandly on the hustings, or the platform, but who never speak for Christ; they will have to account for those prostituted tongues.

If a man can speak upon the temperance question, he can speak upon the salvation question; let him take care that he does so. I do not wish him to be silent on the one, but I do earnestly entreat him not to be silent on the other.

There are a great many persons who ought to preach the gospel, but who do not. Every man who knows the gospel ought to make it known. "Let him that heareth say, Come." When you hear the gospel, tell it to somebody else. You Christian people are all bound, in proportion to your gifts and your opportunity, to make the gospel known.

"Why!" says one, "I thought that work was for priests."

Just so, it is only for priests; but, then, all believers are priests. By His mighty grace, our Lord Jesus Christ has made us kings and priests unto God. So it is our duty, as well as our privilege, to exercise this blessed priestly function of telling to the sons of men the way whereby they may be saved. Each man, then, in this place, who knows Christ, and each woman and each young person, too, are bound to tell of Christ in some way or other to all who are round about them.

For this work, a high degree of gifts is not required. It does not say, "How shall they hear without a doctor of divinity?" It does not say, "How shall they hear without a popular preacher?" Oh dear! Some of us would have been lost if we could not have been saved without hearing a man of

great abilities.

I thank God that I owe my conversion to Christ to an unknown person, who certainly was no minister in the ordinary acceptation of the term; but who could say this much, "Look unto Christ, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth." I learned my theology, from which I have never swerved, from an old woman who was cook in the house where I was an usher. She could talk about the deep things of God. And as I sat and heard what she had to say, as an aged Christian, of what the Lord had done for her, I learned more from her instruction than from anybody I have ever met with since.

It does not require a college training to enable you to tell about Christ. Some of the best workers in this church have little enough education, but they bring many to Christ. Go on, my dear brothers and sisters, telling of Christ's love to you, even if you have very few gifts.

Remember that when you have told out the story of the cross to men, you are rid of one responsibility. At any rate, if they perish, it will not be because they did not know. And if they perish through ignorance, it will not be that their ignorance was through your neglect in teaching them.

Now, tonight, I wish that I could stir up everyone here to become a preacher, women and all. Not that I care much for women preaching, but I want them to preach in the sense in which I have laid the matter down; that is, to make known to somebody the wondrous story of the cross.

Speak to an individual, if you can. If you cannot do that, write. If you cannot write, send a sermon, or give a tract. Only do keep on making Christ known. I suppose that there are two or three thousand believers here tonight out of these six thousand people. If every one of you Christians would every day make Christ known to somebody, what a missionary organization we should be!

How can they hear without a preacher?

Now, let every one of you become, in the sense in which the text means it, a preacher—by telling out in some form or other, and making known in some way or other, the wondrous doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

It is pitiable that anybody should live and die without knowing the gospel. You can have no idea, unless you go into the houses in many of our streets, what absolute ignorance there is in this city of London about the simple elements of the gospel of Christ. City missionaries have often told me stories that have amazed and appalled me.

You think, because so many come to some of our houses of prayer, that the people of London go into the house of God. There is at least a million people, and perhaps two million, who never attend any place of worship at all. There would be three million, I suppose, out of our five million, who only occasionally go to any place of worship at all.

Why speak of "heathendom"? We have it at our doors. The more earnest a man is to win souls, the more he is shocked, amazed, and appalled by the necessity there is to keep on making known the gospel of Christ. And now they are starting new theologies, inventing falsehoods.

Up with you, men and Christians, publish Christ again. The only way to put this false fire out is with the old fire of the gospel. Men fear that fire. Put down the new heresy with the old orthodoxy. Bring out Christ crucified. Cry again, with Luther's earnestness, "Believe and live!" Cry again, with Calvin's determination, "Salvation is all of grace, of grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ."

I would to God that we might all preach thus. If we had but all our church members resolved to testify the gospel of the grace of God, then should we see men hearing. Then should we find men believing. And men believing are men saved.

So I come to the fourth necessity, with which I shall close.



#### **IV. There Is No Effective Preaching Without Being Sent**

*“And how shall they preach, except they be sent?”*

“Ah!” says one, “now we have you in a corner. We must not all go and preach, if we are not sent.” If you are not sent, do not go.

But what does it mean, “How shall they preach, except they be sent?” A man who goes to tell others about Christ must feel that he is sent to do it, or he will never do it properly and effectively.

The man who is sent, first of all, has a message given to him. You do not say to your servant, “You go north, south, east, west, and that is all.” No, if you send him, you give him a message: “Go and say to Mr. So-and-so, this and that.” Or you write it down, and you say, “Deliver that letter to such a person.”

You do not leave him to go and say whatever he likes: “John, I want you to call on Mr. So-and-so tomorrow morning, and to say whatever first comes into your head.” You do not act like that, do you? Yet that is the notion some people have, nowadays, of what a preacher is: he is a man who makes his message up as he goes along. He is a “thinker,” he excogitates [*i.e.*, thinks out] the gospel out of his own brains.

I have heard of a German who is said to have constructed a camel out of his own consciousness. Very likely; but I am sure that nobody will construct the gospel that way. He must receive it by the revelation of God.

The other plan is not Paul’s notion, for he asks, “How shall they preach, except they be sent?” First, then, get your message; be determined to know nothing among men but what the Lord Himself has revealed to you in His Word, by the teaching of His Spirit. Get it well into you. Say to yourself, “What I am going to speak is nothing of my own; else it would fall flat and powerless. I am going with, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ This is God’s mes-

sage.”

Then, if you are sent, you will preach, and you will so preach that men will hear. And they will so hear that they will believe—and they will so believe that they will be saved. But you must go as a God-sent man or woman, having received your message from the mouth of your Master.

Next, I think that, even if we get a message from God, we want something more than that, there must be an impulse felt within that compels us to speak of Christ. If you merely go and flippantly talk about Jesus Christ to people, you may as well talk about anything else. But if you pity them, if you love them, if you feel that they must not be lost, that you cannot bear the thought of it, if it is in your mind so that you cannot sleep while you are thinking of such an one because he is going down to perdition—if it gets such a burden that it oppresses you, and weighs you down, so that you must speak to somebody about his soul, ah, then you will speak, for you will feel that you are sent!

Now, my impression is that, if we are in a right state of heart, we shall always feel like that. If a Christian man were in a right condition of heart, whether he found himself in the train, or along a country road, or at the railway station, or in the police court, or waiting in the lobby of a house—or anywhere—he would begin at once to deal with the person with whom he came into contact about his soul. I wish that it were your habit to be always looking out for souls.

Up then, ye Christian men, and seek as God shall help you, by every means in your power, to make known Christ to the dying all around you! But you will not do it unless you are sent, driven, impelled, forced; you will not win souls for Christ till the gospel is like a fire in your bones, and you feel that woe is unto you if you do not preach it.

Well now, before you go to try to do that, there is one thing more. You cannot do it effectively unless you are sent; and to be sent means to have power given you

with which to do the work. Can that power be had? If you feel impelled to cry to God to give you the power to preach, the spiritual power, the power of the Holy Ghost, if you are propelled to teach in the Sunday school—and it is not worth doing unless you feel that you are impelled to it, and sent to it—then pray for the power to win the souls of those dear children for Christ.

If you feel called upon to write a letter to a friend tomorrow about his soul or her soul, do it because you feel called upon to do it, but pray to God to show you how to do it. Pray to Him to put the power into the words that you utter, that you may say the right words, and put even the right tone into those words. There is a good deal even in the tone of the preacher. “How shall they preach, except they be sent?”

They must be clothed with divine power; but the Lord can clothe even a child with that power; He has often done it. He can clothe a humble Christian woman, who never spoke in public, with the power to win souls; He has often done it. And you, brother, who have been quite satisfied to be a church member and to do nothing for Christ—a most unsatisfactory state of things indeed—should begin to be doing something for Him who has done so much for you. First tarry at Jerusalem till you are endued with power from on high, and then go forth as Christ’s witnesses—for how shall you preach, except you be sent? But the power being obtained, you must go forth, and tell out the message that your Lord has given you.

But you have not done it all till you have given a report to your Master. If you have been sent, you will go back to your Lord after you have delivered His message, and you will tell Him what they have to say about it. Every man who is sent on an errand gives an answer as to the reply of the person to whom he was sent. I am afraid that some teachers and preachers forget this.

We ought to go, like Isaiah, back to the

Master, and say, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” You have tried hard with Mary to bring her to Christ; did you ever tell the Master about Mary? Mother, you have tried hard with your boy to bring him to the Saviour; have you ever told Jesus about your boy?

Last Tuesday night there were a father and mother who had a son about whom they had once been very hopeful, but he had left home and gone away for weeks, though he promised to return. He had gone off, and they had not heard a word about him. They came to a company of Christian people, last Tuesday night, brokenhearted. They had done their best to find their son, but they could not find him.

It was to Haddon Hall that they came, and the people of God there prayed for his father and mother. The father himself prayed, and broke down with emotion about his lost son. He went home, and there was a letter from his son to say that the Saviour had found him. He had given up the drink, and he hoped to be a comfort to his father and mother all the rest of their days. He was many miles away, and knew nothing of his father’s prayer.

Often, when you do not get on with people, go and tell the Lord Jesus Christ about it. Say, “Lord, I have preached to them, I have prayed for them, I have talked to them, I have wept over them, I bear them on my heart as a burden. Their very name seems to burn itself with letters of fire into my soul. Lord, save them! Lord, save them, and they will be saved!” That is the way to win souls. If God works, He first of all makes us travail in birth for the souls of others, and then are they born into the kingdom.

The rest of the text is a kind of vision. The prophet sees persons coming down the mountainside; he looks at them, and perceives that they are not men of war, else the greaves upon their legs would be terrible to the peaceful inhabitants of the plain. Yet here they come, a great com-

pany from the mountaintops, descending into the valleys. Who are they? As he looks, he says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" They are coming bearing the white flag, servants of the great King with whom you have been at war. They bear the banner that speaks of peace with God.

We, to whom the text alludes, who are the preachers of this gospel of peace, say to you tonight: "Sinner, throw down your weapons of rebellion. Guilty one, fight no longer against God; come, and be at peace with Him." His peace is proclaimed to you through Jesus Christ. He will freely forgive you every transgression and iniquity. He is ready to forget and blot it all out. God invites you to be reconciled to Him, to have done with warring against Him.

We preach peace to you and, if you hear us, we then tell you glad tidings of good things, full pardon for all the past, a change of heart to be given to you, to make you a new creature in Christ

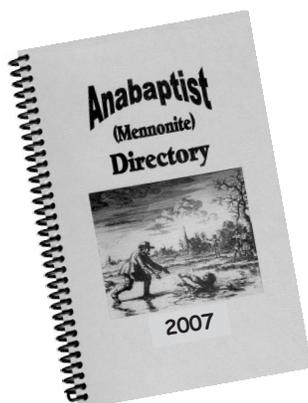
Jesus—yes, to be given you tonight, before you leave the Tabernacle. You may have help for the future to strive against sin, strength to conquer and tread the dragon beneath your feet, power to become a child of God, to become an heir of Heaven, to be taken under the guardian wing of providence, to be directed by the infinite wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

These glad tidings of good things are published to all of you, even you that are farthest off from Christ and hope, and peace. Believe in Jesus; trust Him. Trust God in human flesh, trust Him who bled to death upon the cross, and paid down the ransom for your soul, and trust Him now. He will do all for you that you need to have done for you, and He will save you, and bring you to his right hand in glory.

Now I have talked all in vain unless the Lord shall apply the truth to you, and you believe it. Do not wait for somebody to believe for you: trust Christ for yourself. Believe in Jesus even now. *Amen.* ■

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# SPORTS-A-NOMA

## The Malignancy of the Sports Craze

by Paul M. Emerson

A sinister disease has crept into the church over the last few generations. It has life-destroying tentacles that variously and randomly attack the vital organs of a local body of Christ. It eventually redirects the attention of the body from primary function and duty to secondary activities. Like cancer, it destroys the individual not from without as being wounded by a bullet but as the result of an internal battle wherein the cells become renegade. Then the body goes to war with itself. The priorities of the spiritual life are altered and the malignancy of idolatry spreads and kills the healthy cells. By the time major symptoms appear, the situation is usually terminal. Early detection, radical surgery and irradiation are the best defenses against this disease.

Sports-a-noma masquerades in the guise of healthy exercise, necessary diversion, and good entertainment. Intemperance is the first indication of a problem. When what started out to be just a friendly game to exercise becomes highly competitive, when a simple hobby becomes pervasive, or when checking sports scores and wins becomes habitual, the malignancy has set in. Denial usually accompanies those early signs of disease. Statements like, "It's not that important to me," "It won't interfere with my devotional life," "It will not impact my faithfulness to the church," "I don't spend money on it like some people," or "I can quit any time I decide to do so," demonstrate the blinding power of the disease. Little by little the malignancy intensifies and eventually every item of the earlier denials is compromised. Temperance in the use of these "pastimes" is discarded and

the disease moves into the "craze" phase.

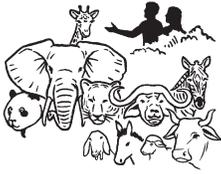
Idolatry plays a major role in the damage caused by sports-a-noma. Our understanding of the sin of idolatry is predicated upon the foundational principle laid down in the Old Testament. Strictly speaking, idolatry is not replacing the true God with another. It is adding the worship of another god alongside Jehovah. The commandment literally means, "Thou shalt have no other gods beside (or in addition

to Me." Anything or anyone that occupies our thoughts, time or resources in a consecrated or devoted sense is an idol. Sports easily becomes such an idol. Sports-a-noma plays to the appetites of the fallen mind and body. Winners and heroes become the little gods in the satanic scheme to rob God of His glory in our lives. Christ teaches that the healthy person has a single eye. Loyalties must not be divided. We either serve Jesus with our whole heart or we turn from Him. There is no middle ground where we mostly serve Christ but also serve another passing fancy. Christ speaks of the cancer of sports-a-noma when He says, "No man can serve two masters." When cancer attacks our bodies it uses a system of divided loyalties. The healthy cells are following the "head" in normal functions of growth and preservation while the renegade cells are extremely busy reproducing themselves and following their own agenda. The end result is the destruction of the body. So it is with sports-a-noma except the stakes are eternal—not merely physical. ■

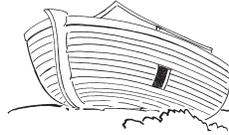
to Me." Anything or anyone that occupies our thoughts, time or resources in a consecrated or devoted sense is an idol. Sports easily becomes such an idol. Sports-a-noma plays to the appetites of the fallen mind and body. Winners and heroes become the little gods in the satanic scheme to rob God of His glory in our lives. Christ teaches that the healthy person has a single eye. Loyalties must not be divided. We either serve Jesus with our whole heart or we turn from Him. There is no middle ground where we mostly serve Christ but also serve

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## *Beginning Issues*



# **In the Beginning God . . .**

by John Mullett

In the last article we discussed how we all have presuppositions which can be described as beginning beliefs, a worldview, or even as our faith. These represent the assumptions we start with as we interpret the facts we encounter. One of the assumptions I asserted Christianity must make is that God exists. Is there any basis for this assumption? Or is the concept of “god” really just a concoction of man as a way of coping with his emotional needs as many would have us believe?

Apparent design has long been an argument favored by creationists as evidence for a designer and rightly so. It would be an insult to the designer if we looked at an architectural masterpiece and declared it the result of an explosion in a brick factory or some other process of chance, but is this argument sufficient to give us our answer for the “. . . hope that is in you . . .” as prescribed in 1 Peter 3:15? Evolutionists attribute evidence for design to the processes of natural selection and genetic mutations. Professor Richard Dawkins states, “We have seen that living things are too improbable and too beautifully ‘designed’ to have come into existence by chance.”<sup>1</sup> But he credits any appearance of design to the blind forces of physics, specifically natural selection.<sup>2</sup>

So how do we counter this argument? There are very clear reasons why natural selection and genetic mutations do not

provide the answers evolutionists are looking for, but I’m going to leave that discussion for a later article.

There are however some further steps we can take in the design argument. Dr. Werner Gitt, a German scientist, has written a book called *In the Beginning Was Information* in which he addresses the possibility of information arising by chance. He says, “There is no known natural law through which matter can give rise to information, neither is any physical process or material phenomenon known that can do this.”<sup>3</sup>

Information always comes from a greater source of information. The only logical conclusion is an infinite intelligence. Even if information were to arise by some mindless process it would be useless unless the proper machinery were in place to read it. In our DNA are thousands of biochemical machines of amazing complexity and the code for those is found in the information contained in the DNA. Not only would the information have had to arise by chance against everything we observe in science, but also these biochemical machines would have had to arise simultaneously. It takes the machines to “process” the code which is in turn required to be able to produce the machines. Scientists are spending millions of dollars monitoring outer space hoping to hear one sequence of code that would indicate intelligence exists out there some-

where, but when they look at our bodies and find within the cell thousands of complex biochemical machines and the necessary information which no known natural process can account for they call that chance!

God tells us in the Bible He is not only infinitely intelligent, but also a relational being who desires a relationship with us so much that He was willing to become fully

human and die for us in order to restore us into relationship with Him. For that to happen we must believe Him! ■

#### ENDNOTES

1. R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, W. W. Norton & Co. N.Y., p. 43, 1987.
2. Ref. 1, p. 5.
3. W. Gitt, *In the Beginning Was Information*, CLV, Bielenfeld, Germany, p. 79.



# Wrapped Wireless

## The Illusion of the Age of Communication

by Jennifer Frentz

*“Wrapping him a cocoon—like selfness.”* —Edward Shane

The statement that we live in a communication age is almost an oxymoron.

Technological advancements such as Internet, e-mail, TXT messaging, cell phones, digital television, and DVD have changed how people gain information and have increased the demand on knowing or getting the newest and latest. While overall these advancements give us the feeling that people are communicating well, observation and research tells us otherwise. Upon closer look, values that Anabaptist churches claim—such as the brotherhood, sensitivity to needs, family, Christian service, and accountability—are threatened.

The biggest factor in communication that is missing is the personal interaction. Communication between people is becoming more written or audio (phones, etc.) instead of face-to-face interaction, creating a distancing between people. To counteract, college-level business classes focus on interpersonal communication and how to relate to a client, what to say, how to say it, what to wear, and how to develop a positive atmosphere for buying or promotion. In

order to get co-workers to relate better to each other on the job, companies have picnics with ice-breaker games or camp experiences, such as the ROPES course to expose who the person is who works beside you. Many programs are developed to try to bring people together, but there are a variety of outside factors that still keep them apart.

The second biggest factor missing in technological communication is sincerity. Because of the lack of recognizing a person for who he is, it is easy to speak generally and not in love because of the lack of personal interaction and relation to others. Many may argue that frequent e-mailing to friends builds relationships; but those relationships remain distanced. Lasting relationships take personal interactions that require face-to-face contact; distanced relationships limit the amount of service and impact that another person has.

#### *Technological Gossip*

Communication not only involves the messages people relay to each other, but it

also involves the information that we take in. The fastest information that most people receive is via Internet or television. Internet has become one of the most used sources for educational study. Information on the Internet must be used with great caution. It lacks certain guidelines and regulations that printed books have. Books will give some indication about how credible they are based largely on their publisher, editors, and the style of writing that is being used. The Internet does not provide many of these clues and is open to anyone for publication. Web sites can provide a list of what seems to be professional, factual information, but is biased, or nonresearched information. Web site credibility is sometimes difficult to establish without doing some extra research on the site creators themselves.

Communication via Internet has also changed how people meet others. On-line dating has become the new trend in dating according to a September 29, 2003, article in *U. S. News and World Report*. Approximately forty million Americans visited one dating service site for one month. This 302 million dollar industry in 2002, serves not only those looking for a long-term commitment, but also those who want others to socialize with. A lie on Internet dating is common, and it is estimated that thirty percent are married already. Personal safety also becomes an issue on the first meeting, by phone or in person. Although the risks of on-line dating are high, the practice is growing because of its convenience. The main reason given why people choose on-line dating: people are too busy to date.

### ***Physical Symptoms***

The communication age may have its convenience, but it also has its costs. Special education teachers and supports, such as occupational and physical therapists, are working with a wide variety of children who are physically unable to keep up with the communication age. Some of the disorders that are becoming more common are

due to the simple change of lifestyle. Computer games and television have replaced active play with stationary play. Play allows children to exercise muscles and develop coordination. Cases for attention deficit disorder where children cannot keep awake and seem unable to sit up have been simply cases of lack of active play. Evaluations revealed that the torso muscles in these children were not being exercised, causing a weakness—not being able to hold themselves up and breathe enough oxygen. Occupational and physical therapists develop exercises, often in the form of play, in order to build those muscles.

Some schools have eliminated elementary handwriting and have gone to typing. The problem is that children's hands and wrists are not developed enough and it is actually causing damage. Young children who are exposed to computer and television screens can receive eye damage because the eye is not developed enough to handle the frequent change of images.

### ***Broadening Horizons?***

Children as well as adults have a lot of options as to what a person fills his mind with. A study done in 1994 calculated that people from the ages of six to eighteen spend approximately 20,000 hours of isolated time with some form of media. Four thousand of those hours are with CDs, radio, and movies. The total amount of time is more than in the classroom and with parents (Sanders 140-1). With all of the media that is available there would seem to be a rise in creativity and imagination, but there is a decline. Computers, television, DVD, and other visual media require less thinking and interpretation of a message because the integration of text, sound, and graphics does the work of imagination. A picture or a picture with sound takes less effort to interpret than decoding letters into words, to understand the message. Although visuals are a simpler way of communicating, less is understood because less is communicated. The printed page allows imagination to work

and uses previous knowledge to provide fuller understanding.

Computer and video games appear to be interactive, but the child submits to the limitations of the machine, thus children do not conjure up their own ideas and they lose the give and take of playing with others. Innovation and imagination cannot be used with computer and video games. In the video world, the machine supplies the images in repetition (144). Without imagination, children more often turn to imitation. What children watch or do with their media often is reflected in their behavior and speech. Video and computer games do teach limited hand-eye coordination, but they also teach responses to be reactive and impulsive.

In 1984 a comparative study between the popularity of parents and computerized games showed that children would rather spend time with video. Children between the ages of 10 to 14 declared that video is more entertaining and that video characters can be manipulated and don't talk back. There is a threat of losing children to technology; parents and teachers are competing with technology in order to guide children through social, moral, and emotional times (145). The pressure is there to keep their children up-to-date but some question the cost.

### ***Feeling Disconnected***

Television has been said to have taught people to sit still and to accept what they hear and see through passive listening and watching. Sanders describes the reality that television and DVD media create: "In that [virtual] reality, emotions are not carried by characters who breathe and bleed, but are representations of live human beings." Television is for entertainment, as Neil Postman states, whether it is a comedy show or a state funeral; it's viewed the same. The distancing of people through media has robbed people of the recognition of who people really are and the value of human life.

The Internet for business has brought

the Internet into many homes. People who use the Internet more than five hours a week state that they feel that it is robbing them of time with family or friends or other outside events. One-fourth of Internet users express that the amount of time working at home for their employer has increased without a cutback of their time at the office. Internet's influence in divorce has caused it to be a key factor in custody rights. Investigation on the impact of the Internet has stated that the Internet is a greater threat to people becoming isolated because it requires more engagement and more attention. Research has also listed depression and bipolar disorder connected to Internet use (Shane 18-9).

Toy makers have developed toys so that children can learn how to respond to human-voice. Certain words trigger sensors that make the toy respond to the speaker. While children may speak to it, there is no real response in return; the doll may say that it loves you, but they are just empty words. The voice and bonding of the child's parents are being or can be replaced by technology. While the novelty of the toy is there, the impact that it could leave can be dangerous—a child taken out of the parent's arms.

Children play together on a video game; but they don't learn to play with each other. Cell phones, laptops, and Internet have brought work into the home. Virtual reality has replaced playing on the ball field with friends, with a hand-held game. Talks with Mom over dishes are replaced with friends on e-mail. A computerized voice tells you it's happy to hear from you. The computer game can have you go on a date or get married without commitment. "I'm sorry" is TXT Messaged to the friend who lives next door. E-mail sends a Snoopy hug to a friend who lost a loved one instead of a hug of your own. Living in the age of communication, people have become disconnected—perhaps not fully by choice, but by a failure to see the subtle effects. The illusion is that people are connected,

but the reality is technology is the only link. The strongest bond that can be created in a brotherhood is personal interaction. Cell phones allow family members to remain in contact with each other; while one is on the go, there is the illusion that they are still connected. Working at home provides a sense of being with the family, but in reality he's still in the office. Pressure in competition is there. The enemy attempts to destroy homes, families, and the brotherhood by subtle means. Trust in God or trust in technology is put to the test. The responsibility rests on each person to uphold the value of human life, watch his accountability to witness, and show his loyalty to the brotherhood in guarding how a person uses or chooses not to use these technologies. The fruit of technology-isolation throws an illusion on interacting with people, building the brotherhood; and it reveals our priorities

and witness to our families and others. Taking into consideration the technology of the time, Jesus' ministry was more of a one-on-one interaction. He taught the multitudes, but He took the time to work with people individually.

A quotation from Edward Shane summarizes technology-isolation to one picture: "[talking on her cell phone], walking her way on the street. She makes no eye contact and indicates no awareness of the passerby. Look at her and the distance of her gaze tells you she looks through you, and not at you." ■

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## The Ordinance of Feet Washing

by Dwayne Heatwole

The practice of washing the saints' feet is an ordinance: an outward ceremony or practice that conveys a spiritual truth. Considering this ordinance includes examining the practice and analyzing the deeper spiritual meaning. Apart from its spiritual significance the practice becomes merely an empty form.

The Scriptural basis for Feet Washing is found in John 13:1-17. Its setting is the evening before Christ's crucifixion. Christ, knowing that His time with His disciples was short and that He would soon depart unto the Father (13:1), instituted the ordinance.

*Christ's example* of washing feet was given after He introduced the disciples to Communion: "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth

water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (13:4, 5).

When Christ came to Peter, Peter asked the question that very likely was troubling all the disciples, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" This emphatic question depicts the profound astonishment at Jesus' so great a condescension. Peter's second comment, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," indicates his feeling of unworthiness.

Christ's statement, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," brought the realization to Peter that this was not an ordinary washing but one that involved spiritual symbolism. He then readily consented, desiring all the blessings possible at Christ's hand.

*The symbolism* of Jesus' act is beautiful. By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus once

again demonstrated His love, humility, and service mentality. Although He was their Master, by His act He was saying, "I am your Servant." His whole ministry manifested that servanthood, the ultimate service being the sacrifice of His life so we, His servants, could live. As we practice this ordinance, we should remember that the true meaning is realized only as we have these same qualities present in our lives.

This ordinance also symbolizes equality among the brethren. Daniel Kauffman stated in *Doctrines of the Bible*, "It is God's will that rich and poor, old and young, educated and uneducated, weak and strong, all should consider themselves on a common level, brethren and sisters in the fullest sense of the word, members of the happy family of God, at peace with one another, serving one another in love."

*The command* Jesus gave is to be practiced. "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (13:14). It is possible to go through the motions without attaining the spirit of the practice. Christ demonstrated this spirit in that He was willing to humble Himself and serve those of lesser degree, even to the extent of giving His lifeblood. We manifest this same spirit as we follow His example and give our lives in humble service, not only to God, but also to our fellow men. Our observance of Feet Washing must be a demonstration of this spirit within us.

*The practice* of washing feet requires form. It is appropriate to link our Feet Washing service with our Communion service. Christ gave us this example at the same time He instituted Communion. Also, in Communion, we recognize the common union of the believers in Christ, bringing us all to one level at the foot of the cross. As such, we all have the same goal: to serve our Lord and make heaven our home.

When we humbly wash each other's feet, we are testifying to the brethren, "Your interests are my interests. I am willing to help you in any way I can, and I

accept your help and counsel as we mutually strive to meet our eternal goal."

For practical reasons we do not personally wash the feet of every saint at each observance of this ordinance. Rather, we remember the symbolism in the act taught by Christ, applying it to the whole brotherhood as each brother washes the feet of another brother and each sister those of another sister.

Although there may be a tendency to feel closer to a particular brother or sister in the congregation, we must avoid choosing partners when observing the ordinance. When choosing partners becomes the norm, the practice will quickly lose the significance of equality among the brethren and will fragment, rather than unify, the brotherhood.

If we desire the blessings God has in store for those who practice this ordinance, we must avoid two common errors. First is the false view of the modern teachers who say it is not for our day or that it is not to be observed literally. They argue that had it been practiced literally down through the centuries, history would not be so silent on the subject. However, they are often ignorant of instances where it is mentioned, including 1 Timothy 5:10, where the Apostle Paul mentions it as an ongoing practice among the believers. Also, the fact that it was not discussed at length is proof that the clear teaching of Christ was accepted without debate by the early church.

The second snare is that of practicing the ordinance of Feet Washing on a regular basis but not grasping the true meaning and therefore not allowing the graces of love, humility, service, and equality to permeate our lives.

May we be faithful in maintaining the practice, as well as in keeping alive the spiritual truths which it represents.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." ■

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# Internet Safety

## Part Two

by Dan Olinger

*In the previous issue, we discussed a number of ways to avoid Internet practices that could harm either your computer system or you personally. We conclude that discussion in this issue by addressing the problem of objectionable material on the Internet.*

### **Objectionable Material**

There's a lot of really bad stuff out there—pornography, bomb recipes, instructions on committing suicide, occult material, and more. Parents and teachers want to limit the access their charges—and they themselves—have to such things.<sup>1</sup>

First you have to decide what's acceptable and what isn't. For a discussion of the Christian's approach to objectionable materials in general, see the BJU Press white papers "A Biblical Approach to Objectionable Elements" ([http://www.bju.press.com/resources/articles/objectionable\\_elements.html](http://www.bju.press.com/resources/articles/objectionable_elements.html)) and "The Christian Philosophy of Education" ([http://www.bjupress.com/resources/articles/philosophy\\_of\\_ed.html](http://www.bjupress.com/resources/articles/philosophy_of_ed.html)). Then, you have to create a system that generally decreases your risk of being exposed to something spiritually unhealthy. That's not a one-step process; the best systems are just that—systems.

### **Supervision**

By far the simplest and least expensive solution to these problems is proper supervision. If Mama is sitting next to Junior, helping him surf, Junior is not likely to get into mischief. If the adults control the login passwords, they

can lower the likelihood that unsupervised access will occur (though, of course, a child can use someone else's login, if he knows it, to access the net from a machine you are responsible for). Some couples split the access password, with the husband knowing one half, and the wife knowing the other half. Thus neither can log in alone. This provides simple accountability under normal circumstances.

Some users have extended the concept of accountability in a creative way by using software that regularly e-mails their Internet use to an "accountability partner." For two such

packages, see <http://www.covenanteyes.com/> and <http://www.safeeyes.com/>.

You can make your job of supervising easier by making sure the computer screen is in a public place—in the school library, for example, and facing the traffic flow rather than in a corner of the room. In a home, it's better to have the computer set up in the living room rather than in a child's bedroom and with the monitor facing the doorway so that it can be seen by anyone passing by.

Most Internet browsers maintain a site history file or folder on their hard drive where they store a list of all of the Internet sites visited.<sup>2</sup> Teachers and parents can easily look through this material and ask about questionable accesses. And if your students are smart enough to erase the history after using the browser, that act in itself is cause for suspicion and investigation.

For more detailed tracking, you can

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***Good supervision starts with good teaching.***

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install software that tracks every user's keystrokes and monitors all Internet activity. For more information on such programs, see <http://familyinternet.about.com/cs/toppicks/tp/monitoring-soft.htm>.

Good supervision starts with good teaching, of course. Students using the Internet should be told what sort of behavior is not acceptable and what the penalties will be for infractions. Many schools today are spelling these expectations out in an official Acceptable Use Policy. Searching for "Acceptable Use Policy" at any search engine, such as Yahoo or Google, will provide you with a good many examples from which you can work.

Much of the temptation to misbehave on the Internet, which both young people and adults may find difficult to resist, draws its strength from the misperception that activity on the Internet is private. In a bookstore, for example, someone who has trouble resisting pornography may restrain himself because he is in public and his actions might be seen, with future negative consequences. Many Internet users believe that similar actions on the Net are not as public, and because they are in "the privacy of their own home," they fall to the temptation. They are simply wrong, however, not only in giving in to temptation but also in their understanding of the Internet. The Internet is a public place, and the user is naive to believe that his actions are private. They can be monitored at the computer, of course. But they can also be monitored literally anywhere else in the world. Any site the user visits, whether pornographic or not, can track his activity and can even place a record of that activity on his computer (as a cookie) without his knowledge. Should the personnel at the target site choose to, they could make his activity public in a broader sense. In the United States, certain laws protect a con-

sumer's privacy, but the Internet is an international medium, and sites offshore are not bound by U.S. laws.

There are "solutions" that prevent target sites from knowing the identity of those who visit them. But they provide a false sense of security; in order to access them, the user must send his request—say, to go to a pornographic site—to his Internet service provider and from there through (usually) several other host machines between the service provider and the anonymizer. (On a Windows machine, try using the DOS command "tracert" to see just how many machines you traverse to get from your Internet service provider to another site.) On every one of these machines, there is then a record of the user's request to access, in this case, pornography. If the administrators of those machines choose to log activity, there is a permanent record of that transaction, which might become public through any number of circumstances.

We've gone into this detail here simply to make the case that privacy on the Internet is a myth. The user's actions are observable and traceable. This knowledge should serve as a powerful deterrent to those who have difficulty overcoming the temptations that the Internet places before them. And to the extent that the knowledge does that, it's a Good Thing.

### ***Site Blocking***

Several software packages are available to help parents and teachers block student access to specific Internet areas, much as a channel blocker does on television. The software may be "client-based," or installed on the user's computer (where it may be more easily compromised or circumvented); or it may be "server-based," installed on a host machine, to which the user logs in as his Internet service provider (ISP).

Further, most packages use "can't-