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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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(7) **Wait on God.** Finally, we will need to learn patience on this journey. We cannot rush God or those around us. Our timetable of expectations will often not be God's timetable. It will feel like people are so slow at trusting us again. But we must wait on God and allow people around us the time they need to process their own thoughts on this. We must remember they, too, travel a journey through this that is not easy. Our patience on these things will help people build trust in us again.

If we faithfully walk with God on this journey, He will have great blessings for us. He will keep us in the hour of trial if we look

to Him. We will find restoration with God and His church. One day we will be able to look back on this journey and thank God for the lessons He taught us in spite of our failures.

Finally, when we reach Glory, all our struggles for victory and faithfulness will fade to nothing as we rejoice in the very presence of God! We will be glad we emptied our hearts of sin, bitterness, resentment, or self-pity. The hurts and gossip of others will seem so insignificant. The journey back to God will have been well worth it! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, March 2007.

An Invitation to a Gathering . . .

**Where History in Review . . .
Becomes History in the Making!**

For many years Bro. Walter Beachy of Plain City, OH, has honored the Lord and blessed the Church through his professional yet personable preaching and teaching style. While the Lord is continuing to use him in very meaningful ways across this land (as well as in other countries) there is a concern that the increased limitations of aging may eventually diminish his ability to do so. In a day with so much advanced technology making it possible to capture this message for the good of future generations, it would be regrettable not to thus preserve his teaching on Anabaptist History and Theology.

**A place of retreat . . .
And a place of learning . . .**

- Where**
- Farmstead Inn & Conference Center in Shipshewana, IN
- When**
- April 14-16, 2008
- Who**
- Anyone 12 years and older
 - All varieties of Anabaptist tradition such as Mennonites, Beachy, Amish, along with anyone seeking to learn more of the Anabaptist way.
 - Due to the fact that a diversified attendance

is desired (and that space is limited) we reserve the right to qualify our audience.

- Cost**
- \$140 per person. This will include two nights' lodging, refreshments at a "Meet and Greet" evening, continental breakfasts and meals for both days, plus the classic beverages offered throughout the Conference.
 - Come for a pleasant, relaxing time of learning and fellowship!

**A place to give . . .
And a place to receive . . .**

We are looking for businesses and others who could underwrite the costs for the production of this project. The estimated costs will range between \$5,000-\$10,000. Tax-deductible receipts will be given as well as acknowledging credits in the edited version of the final presentation. Reproductions of this video will be available through the FCM (Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites) for distribution to Bible schools, church libraries, and individuals.

- Call us**
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Person of the Month:

Jonathan B. Hartzler

(1850-1950)



Jonathan B. Hartzler was born to David and Barbara (Yoder) Hartzler in Fairfield County, Ohio, on August 30, 1850. He lived there until he was three, at which time his family moved to Noble County, Indiana.

In 1869, at the age of 19, Jonathan was born again and became a member of Maple Grove Amish Mennonite Church.

In 1874 the family moved near Huntsville, Ohio, where he and his parents became charter members of the North Salem congregation.

At the age of 26 Jonathan Hartzler was married to Esther A. Hooley of Lagrange County, Indiana, on January 16, 1877. Afterwards they lived with his father on the home farm near Huntsville, Ohio, but then moved to the area of Howe, Indiana, where they built their own home. In the course of time God blessed the Hartzlers with ten children.

On May 18, 1879, at the age of 28, Brother Hartzler was ordained to the ministry at Pretty Prairie Church. He served there until 1885 when he returned to Logan County, Ohio, to serve, along with his father, as one of the ministers at North Salem Church. In 1886 he also served the church as Sunday school superintendent.

Moving to the West Liberty area of Ohio in 1904, Hartzler also served as minister in both the Walnut Grove and South Union churches until his retirement from farming in 1910 at the age of 60.

From West Liberty he moved to Smithville, Ohio, in 1923 and joined Crown Hill Church where his son was bishop.

Hartzler's wife, Esther, died January 3, 1946, after having been married to Jonathan for almost 69 years.

Brother Hartzler was a "people person," especially enjoying children. He faithfully and regularly prayed for his children and grandchildren. Visiting ministers always experienced hospitality in the Hartzler home and the children found such visits enjoyable.

Jonathan was a spiritual brother who was faithful to his pastoral duties while caring for his large family. He and his wife loved to sing. The children recall upon waking, hearing their father reading out loud from the Bible.

Hartzler attended church regularly and from their beginning was in support of such things as Sunday school and Bible meetings. He enjoyed attending the ministers' home conference, Amish Mennonite conference and Sunday school conference meetings. Brother Hartzler, along with other ministers, would travel to Ohio and Indiana to hold weeklong meetings together.

This humble servant, Jonathan B. Hartzler, was concerned about the purity of the church and its faithful witness. He died and went home to be with his Lord November 25, 1950, at the age of 100.

—Gail L. Emerson

AN EMERGING THREAT

The Emergent Church

by Richard Jones

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” — 2 Timothy 3:1-5

With ever increasing rapidity new ways of “doing church” are sweeping over our nation.

The promoters of these new forms tell us their methods are the most “relevant,” “practical,” and “authentic.” They describe themselves as “seeker-sensitive,” “purpose-driven,” or “charismatic.” Impressive attendance and giving statistics are cited as proof that they are on the right track.

The newest movement calls itself The Emergent Church. They prefer to call themselves a “conversation,” rather than a church or a movement. Organized in 2001, the Emergent Church has captured the imagination of independent and denominational leaders anxious to adapt the ideas of this new concept to their own settings.

According to D. A. Carson, the Emergent Church emphasizes “affections and feelings over against rational, linear thought; experience over truth; inclusion rather than exclusion; the corporate over the individualistic, etc. Tolerance is the principal virtue.”¹ One group of Emergent Leaders described their mission in these terms:

“We value dialogue very highly, and we are convinced that open and generous dialogue rather than chilling criticism and censorship offers the greatest hope for the church.”

“Deeds not Creeds,” are the first priority of the Emergent Church. Not only is this principle untenable, it is unscriptural! It is untenable because our actions are the consequence of our beliefs. And it is unscriptural for not only is “faith without works dead,” but works without faith are empty. Scriptural Christianity is not only about doing the right thing, but doing the right thing for the right reason.

Here in St. Louis, one Emergent Church is called “The Journey.” Though their statement of faith is derived from the Southern Baptist tradition, they are noted for hosting theological discussions over a beer in a neighborhood bar, making references to x-rated movies in their teachings, and using language that many Christians would find scandalous. All of this, they say, advances the “conversation” and ultimately the cause of Christ.

Brian McLaren, author of *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Zondervan) is one leader of the Emergent Church. He writes, “Christians should present Christianity through loving attitudes rather than logical arguments.” He continues, “The Gospel is made credible not by how we argue and make truth claims. But it’s made credible by the love and the good deeds that flow from our lives and our community.”

“Deeds not Creeds,” are the first priority of the Emergent Church. Not only is this principle untenable, it is unscriptural! It is untenable because our actions are the consequence of our beliefs. We give to God and to others because we love God and others.

And it is unscriptural for not only is “faith without works dead,” but works without faith are empty. Scriptural Christianity is not only about doing the right thing but doing the right thing for the right reason.

Paul urged his young preacher Timothy, “Give attention to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine.” Peter reminds his readers to “be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets.”

Emergent Church leaders belittle the idea of arguing for the truth and the logical consistency of the Christian faith. They want to feel and live their faith. As a result there is little attention given to doctrine and principles.

That such an emphasis would be popular among the young in 2007 is hardly surprising. Young people are not taught to think philosophically or logically. Subjectivism, not Objectivism, is the prevailing view in our public schools. “Right is not always right.” Truth is, after all, “relative.”

Another Emerging Church leader, Dan Kimball, advocates, “. . . contemplation and reverence instead of blaring music and high-tech smoke and show in order to attract young, postmodern Americans to the church.”² Following the lead of Kimball, some Emergent congregations have dim lighting, votive candles, and soft new-age type synthesized music. Creating a mood is central to the Emergent Church worship experience.

The recipe of the Emergent Church: no propositional truth, no absolutes, no defense of, nor interest in historic Christian orthodoxy, no definite standard of holy living, an accent on feelings above facts, is destined to produce a powerless

form of Christianity (if we can call it that) susceptible to every heresy and the deception of the Antichrist.

Can you imagine the Christians facing imminent death in the Colosseum reasoning with their persecutors? “Do you renounce your faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth?”

“Uh, well,” the Emergent Christian replies, “do I have to make an absolute choice here? It felt right at the time but . . .”

Recently George Barna³ discovered that fewer than 10% of young people in their 20s would agree that:

. . . *Knowing, loving, and serving God is their top priority in life.*

. . . *Faith in God is of the highest importance.*

. . . *Absolute moral truth exists; such truth is defined in the Bible; God is the all-knowing and all-powerful creator and ruler of the universe; faith in Jesus Christ is the only means to salvation; Satan is a real being; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and all of the principles taught in the Bible are true and accurate.*

. . . *Their main purpose in life is to love God with all their heart, mind, and strength.*

. . . *And, they are currently active in a vibrant community of faith, as demonstrated by their consistent engagement in worship, prayer, Bible study, and spiritual accountability.*

Should the “Emergent Church” become the predominant church of our day, the result would be not only sad for our times, but tragic for the judgment-bound souls of all who are deceived by these who “*profess to know God, but in works they deny him.*” ■

1. <http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article.asp?id=564> cf. Carson, *Becoming Conversant With the Emerging Church*, p. 29.

2. <http://www.zealforyourhouse.com/writeup.php/134>.

3. See www.Barna.org Revolutionary Parenting.

—Reprinted with permission from *Faith in the Future*, May-June, 2007

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

Radical Christianity

We proclaim that we are heirs of those sixteenth-century radicals called Anabaptists. From our comparative comfortable vantage point it is easy to make such claims. It costs us little.

Dictionary definitions of *radical* pertinent to this discussion include “original” and “thorough-going.” Probably “thorough-going” best fits the meaning here. Our forerunners committed themselves without reservation to live out the Sermon on the Mount. Compromise with respect to these principles was not an option. Death penalties imposed by the state churches did not stop them. The Anabaptist understanding of Scripture required complete life change and unconditional commitment.

What has happened to us? Has the “radical” been removed? Are we no longer “thorough-going”? Is it now merely enough to state our position and practice the convenient? If so, we have become Protestants with a few odd ways (and fewer such ways as time passes, we might add)!

“Be careful!” someone exclaims. “If

we are not cautious we might be thought of as a cult. If we pressure someone to be accountable to the community of faith against their selfish independent will, we might be viewed as extremist. We might not ‘fit into’ the American dream.”

The time has come to decide anew whether we are going for comfort “on flowery beds of ease” or whether we will sacrificially fight “to win the prize and sail through bloody seas.” We are kidding ourselves if we think that there are no such issues today. The intention of the god of this world is still the same. He seeks to dilute the truth into a lie. He tempts with accommodation. He deceives by saying that a little deviation here or there will not hurt. He leads us to think that “radical” is unnecessary and belief without “thorough-going” practice is enough.

Let us surrender completely to the Word of Christ and consecrate ourselves to the radical lifestyle of self-sacrifice. Jesus said that to do less is to be unworthy of Him. ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

FEBRUARY 3, 2008

Sent to the Harvest

Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

For February our study from the Book of Luke continues under the general theme of Responding to God's Call. The first three lessons focus primarily on the response of others while the fourth lesson speaks specifically to our personal, individual response to Christ's call to become a disciple. Keep this focus in mind as you work through these last lessons from the Book of Luke. Today's lesson from Chapter 10 backtracks a bit in the sequence of Jesus' ministry and emphasizes the responsibility to proclaim the message of Christ.

We note here in our text that in the midst of His teaching ministry, Jesus appointed and sent out advance teams to prepare people in other cities for His coming. He also admonished these sent ones to pray for additional laborers because the task was great. The Lord of the harvest saw the big picture. He realized the scope of the work and the sparsity of workers and the need for enlisting many others in the great work before them. And so it is in every era—the task is larger than the workforce and our Master's call is relevant to every age and time: pray for more workers.

Jesus did not promise this early missionary band an easy road. He warned of dangers, opposition, rejection, and possible lack of creature comforts. They would be vulnerable because their message would not be accepted or welcomed in some places. Where they and their message were rejected, they were to wipe off the dust of that city as a testimony against their rejection of the Gospel.

Jesus also set forth here a timeless principle in the work of the kingdom: "The labourer is worthy of his hire." Those who expend them-

selves in the work of the church deserve sustenance and support for their efforts. Yes, the Gospel is free, but it does cost to transport it. And while support should be expected of those who benefit from the Gospel, those ministering should not disparage the provisions given to them. They were to travel light, expecting hospitality in return for their ministry. The ministry of these itinerants included healing the sick (v. 9) and casting out demons (v. 17). They were given supernatural power and protection as agents of the Divine.

Jesus predicted rejection but also promised judgment upon those who rejected His message and His messengers. Their lost opportunity would earn for them a fate far worse than that meted out upon the ancient, wicked city of Sodom. The message of Christ is a life-giving one; the fate of those who reject it is eternal damnation.

The successful mission of the 70 brought joy to them (v. 17), as success always does. They rejoiced in the demonstration of power given to them over evil spirits. It spelled defeat for Satan and his program (v. 18). However, Jesus informed them of a greater source of joy than power over demons: that their names were written in heaven. That is a surpassing joy, and a tremendous contrast to the fate of those who rejected their message.

The task goes on. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest."

For thought and discussion

1. Study the principle of teamwork in proclaiming the gospel message. What are the advantages? Discuss.
2. Suppose in response to your prayer for workers that God says, "I want you." Are you open and ready to accept that call? (You will be miserable if you don't.)

3. How do we decide in today's ministry when the Gospel has been sufficiently rejected that it is legitimate to move on to another individual or location? Maybe you would want to discuss this with your class.
4. Do agents of the Gospel today have the same powers given to these early apostles? If not, why not?
5. Reflect on the doom of those who reject the message of salvation. What motivation should that give us for proclaiming the Gospel?

FEBRUARY 10, 2008

The Need for Repentance

Luke 13:1-9

At first reading the two sections of today's lesson appear to have no common relevance. However, on closer examination we discover one and the same theme throughout: the necessity of repentance. Jesus here played upon two items of current events and added a parable to teach the truth regarding man's need of repentance, the longsuffering of God, and certain judgment upon the unrepentant. He also cleared up the misconception that suffering or tragic death is always immediate judgment for sin.

Nothing more is known historically regarding the two tragedies mentioned in verses 1-4 except what is recorded here by Luke. However, the animosity between Pilate and the Galileans was well established. Perhaps this tragedy was in retaliation for some inappropriate behavior on the part of a group of Galileans who had come to Jerusalem to participate in one of the Jewish feasts. At any rate, Pilate took harsh measures to establish his authority over these subjects of Herod with whom he had an ongoing quarrel (see Luke 23:12).

Perhaps the tragedy at the pool of Siloam was a result of faulty construction. However, eighteen men perished when a tower crumbled on them. Did Jesus' response imply similar destruction upon unrepentant souls? Destruction, yes, but not necessarily in like

manner. His emphasis was on destruction, not the manner in which it would be meted out. And He made it clear that while this was not immediate judgment upon sin, whoever does not repent of his sin will eventually suffer the destructive judgment of God.

The parable of the fig tree is also given to alert men to the fact that delayed repentance will result in eventual judgment. And while this was spoken to a Jewish audience and held special meaning for them as a nation, it does explain a principle of God's dealing with men of every era of time.

Identifying the characters in the parable will help us better understand its message. The "man" is God; the "fig tree" represents the nation of Israel, the "vineyard" is the land of Judah, and the "vinedresser" is Jesus. (See also Isaiah 5:1-7.) It would seem from this parable that God's patience with His people Israel was running out. They were not responding positively to the privileges offered them and He was ready to cut them down, to destroy them, which happened when He allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem some 40 years later.

We also see here the intercessory work of Jesus, pleading for an extension of mercy on the heretofore unrepentant. Peter tells us that the "Lord . . . is longsuffering . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." But Jesus' patience also has its limits. If repentance is not forthcoming after a reasonable period of opportunity, destruction will result.

The primary lesson from today's text is that it is unwise to trifle with God's mercy, to delay a response to His pleading. One day it will be too late to repent.

For thought and discussion

1. If natural disasters or personal tragedy are not judgment upon sin, do they serve a worthwhile spiritual purpose? If so, what? Discuss.
2. What is it that causes man to presume upon God's mercy?
3. Some historical background will help give you a better perspective on the Jewish repugnance over the tragedy depicted in

- verses 1 and 2.
4. Why is it that people of privilege, Israel and others, so often spurn their privileges to their eternal detriment? Discuss.
 5. Review again the importance and effectiveness of using stories as a teaching tool.

FEBRUARY 17, 2008

The Necessity of Humility

Luke 14:1, 7-14

In Mark 2:27, 28, Jesus emphasized that “The sabbath was made for man” and that “the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath.” This emphasis turned the teaching of the Pharisees on its head and created continuing tension between them and Jesus. A number of times He defied their strict interpretation of the day and performed acts of healing. In the 13th chapter, just following last Sunday’s lesson, Jesus had healed “a woman which had a spirit of infirmity.”

In today’s text, verse 1 tells us that Jesus was invited to a prominent Pharisee’s house “to eat bread on the sabbath day.” But this was no congenial friendship gathering. Verse 1 also says that “they watched him,” meaning literally “to observe with sinister intent.” Some think the situation with the diseased man (verses 2-6) was a setup to trap Jesus. They knew He would heal the man, thus defying their interpretation of sabbath observance and earning their displeasure.

That situation aside, however, Jesus, having called their bluff on the matter of doing good on the sabbath (verses 2-6), turned the dinner setting into a teaching opportunity on the subject of humility. He had noted the competition among the guests for seats of honor at the table, and gave them a parable to teach the principle of humble-mindedness. Human nature craves attention and recognition. We like to be seen as individuals worthy of respect and honor, so we tend to put ourselves forward as did the person in Jesus’ parable.

But Jesus says that the route to true honor is through voluntary humility, accept-

ing a lowly position with no thought of personal recognition. Recognition, Jesus says, should come through others, not by promoting ourselves. True humility is an attitude of mind that does not seek recognition, but willingly accepts a position of low degree. Such an attitude displays no disappointment when recognition is not forthcoming. The key is found in verse 11: self-exaltation brings abasement; true humility puts one in a position to be exalted.

Jesus went on then in verses 12-14 to give an example of true charity in the context of examining one’s motives. This examination of motives was addressed to His host. The lesson was one of hospitality and generosity, of meeting the needs of the poor without thought of recompense. Again, human nature being what it is, we have a natural tendency to do good to those who are able to recompense our actions.

Christian nature, to the contrary, will not think of self, but will be eager to meet the needs of the poor, the lame, the handicapped. Christ gives us new direction and motivations. And, yes, to minister to the disenfranchised, the lowly, the outcasts of society, those who cannot recompense our good deeds, does take humility, an outstanding Christian characteristic. But will our good deeds go unnoticed and unrewarded? In this life, perhaps. In the judgment day, no. But only those will be recognized that were done from pure motives without thought of recognition or reward.

For thought and discussion

1. While not directly related to today’s lesson, examine legitimate activities for the Lord’s Day. What are the limiting factors? Discuss.
2. Critics are watching Christians today. Discuss particularly sensitive areas and ways to be alert to leave a consistent Christian testimony.
3. What is it in us that craves attention and recognition from others? What is the antidote?
4. What methods of ministering to the poor and needy are open to us? What is a Christian response to need?

5. Why is it so often hard to give generously to the poor and needy? What are our expectations from them? from God?

FEBRUARY 24, 2008

Conditions for Discipleship

Luke 14:25-33

This last lesson from the Book of Luke speaks to all who would become followers of Jesus. It sets forth conditions and priorities for those contemplating that decision. It cuts through the fog and lays out in clear detail the terms and requirements for those wishing to be a disciple. Jesus was now on His way to Jerusalem and those expectant crowds who followed Him did so in anticipation of the establishment of an empire, overcoming the authority of Rome, and setting up again a Jewish kingdom. Jesus used this situation to speak to a deeper truth—requirements for entrance into His spiritual kingdom.

At first glance Jesus' words in verse 16 seem totally out of keeping with His overall emphasis on love as the hallmark of His followers. Eerdman explains it this way: "When He declared that they must hate their kindred and their own lives, He of course meant that they must love them less than they loved Him, regarding them with aversion only in so far as they were opposed to Him or stood in the way of His service."

What Jesus is saying here is that there must be a complete sellout of self and selfish desires and ambitions in order to become His disciple. The Apostle Paul re-emphasized this principle in Romans 12:1 where he called Christians to become "a living sacrifice" for Christ and His cause. Jesus wants complete and wholehearted commitment from those who choose to follow Him. He told His followers in Matthew 6 that it is impossible to serve two masters because each wants complete commitment.

Furthermore, Jesus says that those who choose to follow Him must take up their cross and come after Him. The cross was a symbol of suffering and death, indicating that the true follower must die to self. Again, the

Apostle Paul reiterates this theme in Galatians 2:20 where he speaks of being "crucified with Christ," yet alive through Him.

Jesus warns that this commitment to discipleship not be made lightly, but that the individual count the cost in terms of personal hardship or loss. Those beginning a building and not having adequate funds to finish it become an object of ridicule. Only a foolhardy king would go into battle against a far superior foe without reckoning the sacrifices necessary for victory. So, Jesus says, count the cost and make the decision to follow Me based on your willingness to give up self, family, friends, possessions, in order to serve Me effectively and faithfully.

Jesus honors no halfhearted commitment. He wants our all. German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." And ironically, it is only by death to self that we can effectually serve Him. Jesus said, "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple."

So the question confronts each one of us: Am I willing to give up everything I hold dear, even life itself, to become a follower of Jesus Christ? If so, then, and only then, do we begin to truly live. And to fail to live is to die—eternally.

For thought and discussion

1. Why did Jesus set such stringent requirements for becoming His disciple? Discuss.
2. What happens when commitment to any project is only halfhearted? Does this give us insight into Jesus' requirements?
3. Is every Christian failure a result of not counting the cost of discipleship? Or what?
4. Why is it so difficult to give up family and possessions to follow Christ? What are we afraid of losing? Are there replacements for our losses?
5. Do you know those who are totally sold out to Christ? What characterizes their lives? And what about you?
6. As we finish this study of lessons from Luke, reflect on the life of Jesus, His commitment to do His Father's will, what He has done for us personally, and of your personal commitment to Him and His cause. Are you truly His disciple? ■

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

Cyclone Devastates Bangladesh

A powerful cyclone with winds over 136 mph ripped through the vulnerable nation of Bangladesh killing at least 2,500 people. The death toll is still rolling in. Bangladesh is vulnerable because it is so low-lying and was on the receiving end of a 15-foot storm surge.

—Source: *Sify News*

* * * * *

NASA, Google Earth Help Fight Forest Fires

Firefighters in California are being assisted by live imagery from NASA remote-controlled drones. The imagery is being overlaid onto Google Earth software and satellite imagery/maps. This is being used by firefighter commanders to prioritize and dispatch firefighters.

—Source: *Slashdot*

* * * * *

Analysis: Why Muslims Convert to Christ

Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies did a survey between 1991 and 2007 that interviewed 750 converted Muslims to find out why they became Christians. The converts were from 30 countries and 50 ethnic groups, covering every major Muslim region in the world.

Surprisingly, the number one reason for conversion was Christians practicing what they preach and loving each other and non-Christians. To look at the state of "practicing what we preach" in so much of Christendom and to realize that it is the

number one reason that Muslims give for conversion is astounding! Think of what would happen if the church would actually start practicing what they preached on a consistent basis! Indeed, it reminds us of the words of Jesus when He said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35, KJV). The study's authors wrote, "Many Muslims who faced violence at the hands of other Muslims did not see it in the Christians they knew . . . Muslim-on-Muslim violence has led to considerable disillusionment for many Muslims. . ."

The second most important reason is the many miracles, answers to prayers, healing, and demon exorcisms that God has been doing in the Muslim world.

The third most popular reason was dissatisfaction with Islam's emphasis on judgment rather than love and the use of violence to put Sharia law in place.

Twenty-seven percent of respondents said that dreams or visions were part of their conversion (40% occurred at conversion and 45% occurred after conversion). In walking with God and hearing stories of other people, I am becoming convinced that whoever seeks the truth with an honest heart will find Jesus—if not through a Christian, supernaturally directly from Christ.

—Source: *The Christian Post*

* * * * *

Five Types of American Christians

Christianity Today and Zondervan Publishers teamed up to do an attitudinal and

behavioral study of professing U.S. Christians. They found that there were five broad categories of people in the 70-80% of Americans that call themselves Christians.

19/14% (of Christians/of Americans) are “Active Christians” who believe that salvation comes through Jesus Christ, go to church on a regular basis, regularly read their Bibles on their own, accept leadership positions in the church, invest extra time in developing their faith through “extra” church events, and feel obligated to share their faith (79% do).

20/15% are “Professing Christians” who believe salvation is through Jesus, focus on a personal (rather than brotherhood-based) relationship with God, have similar beliefs to Active Christians but different actions, are less involved in church (both attending and serving), and have less commitment to Bible reading or sharing faith.

16/12% are “Liturgical Christians” who are predominantly Lutheran or Catholic, go to church regularly, have a high level of religious activity (mostly expressed by serving in church or community), and recognize the authority of their church.

24/18% are “Private Christians” who are the largest and youngest segment, believe in God and doing good things, own a Bible but don’t read it, and have spiritual interest (but not within the context of church). Only about 1/3 attend church at all, and almost none are church leaders.

21/16% are “Cultural Christians” who have little outward religious behavior or attitudes, are aware of God but have little involvement with Him, do not view Jesus as essential to salvation, and believe there are many ways to God—universality theology.

It is encouraging to see a faithful remnant among the mainstream churches of America, but it is also sad to see that over 80% count their Christianity as something less than the center of their whole life.

—Source: *Christianity Today* (some of the descriptions of the various categories are nearly direct quotes from the article)

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Candidate in Profile: Mike Huckabee

Mike Huckabee, a former Southern Baptist minister, is a freshly resurgent candidate for the GOP nomination after being endorsed by a slew of prominent evangelicals. While he still lags in the polls (with RCP poll averages putting him at 5th nationwide and 2nd in Iowa), Newt Gingrich predicts that he will catch on with primary voters and calls him “the most interesting dark horse candidate.” Huckabee is the former governor of Arkansas and was named by *TIME* as one of the top five governors in the U.S.

He is strongly pro-life and has said that claiming to hate abortion but yet allowing it is like hating slavery but allowing it.

He balanced the budget in AR and supports cutting spending to balance the U.S. budget. He supports the Fair Tax which would eliminate all federal taxes and impose a federal sales tax, thus taxing consumption (thus discouraging the rampant, wasteful consumerism of America) and not taxing production (which will encourage production). It will also eliminate the waste of an entire industry based around tax preparation and tax loopholes. AR welfare rolls have declined by half under his leadership.

He has a very Christian attitude on race issues that balances racial sensitivity (he has rightfully condemned some conservative anti-illegal immigrant campaigning as racially based) and fairness—it shows in that he had an unprecedented (for a Republican candidate) 48% of the black vote.

He has said that there are two worldviews: man-centered and God-centered. He believes in the inerrancy of Scripture and thus believes that homosexuality is sin. He says that he is for legislating morality—to say that anyone (including liberals) does otherwise is logically inconsistent. All legislation is legislating morality. He has said that the Ten Commandments are the basis for appropriate behavior. He believes that God created marriage as between one man and one woman for life. He said that the purpose of marriage is a loving relationship, not happiness. He thinks many of society’s problems would be solved

by further involvement from fathers in their children's lives. He strongly opposes divorce and sees it as a big detriment to society.

He says that people are naturally selfish and only God or punishment can prevent it. He supports allowing prayers in government institutions, school vouchers for Christian schools, and displaying the Ten Commandments in schools. He doesn't believe in evolution. He received an astounding 51% of the onsite votes at the Washington Values Voters Summit.

On the environment, he said that the "earth is the Lord's" and that we are merely its caretakers.

He believes in free trade as a good way to boost jobs. He believes free-market forces will boost innovation and cut prices.

He is a strong conservative on states' rights, second amendment rights, and health care. He rightfully bucks radical conservatives on immigration and believes in enforcement of current laws, but having a permissive immigration policy.

Let me finish with a quote by Mike Huckabee: "Even if we lose elections, we should not lose our honor, and that is more important than [electoral gains for] the Republican Party."

—Sources: *Christian Post*, *OnTheIssues.org*, *Wikipedia*, *RealClearPolitics.com*

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New Study Proves Effectiveness of Abstinence Education

"Just days after Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine announced that he will cut state funding for abstinence education programs, a new study affirmed that such initiatives in the state do work.

"The study, which will be published in the Jan./Feb. 2008 issue of the 'American Journal of Health Behavior,' shows that programs by the state health department's Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative resulted in a 'significant reduction in teen sexual initiation.'

"The Institute for Research and Evaluation evaluated the impact of the programs by examining the behavior of seventh-

graders from five different Virginia schools. The study concluded that those students receiving abstinence education were about one-half (45.7 percent) as likely to initiate sexual activity as students who did not receive abstinence education."

—Excerpt from "New Study Proves Effectiveness of Abstinence Education" by Katherine Phan in *The Christian Post* (<http://tinyurl.com/2olfu9>)

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New Stem Cell Treatment Eliminates Need for Cloning

Christians and other people with moral convictions against creating living people—embryos—only to kill them and harvest their cells for stem cell treatments are delighted that a new method has been shown viable and more practical than nuclear transfer cloning. The pro-cloning-for-therapeutic-stem-cell-treatments crowd has for a long time tried to put Christians, et. al. on a guilt trip for blocking the murderous practice because it blocked developments of new treatments to save humans that were already born. However, a new method—de-differentiation—has been shown to not only be viable, but also easier to implement. The new method can take skin cells and convert them to stem cells, which then can be inserted into virtually any region of the body and regrown as those cells, tissues, or organs. Professor Ian Wilmut, who cloned Dolly the sheep, announced that he is abandoning nuclear transfer in favor of de-differentiation.

—Source: *The UK Telegraph*

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Four Dead in Terrorist Blast at Philippine Congress

Members of Abu Sayyaf, an Islamic terrorist organization in the Philippines, are being prosecuted for setting off a bomb at the Philippine House of Representatives just as Congress was adjourning and the lawmakers were exiting. They killed one congressman and three aides.

—Sources: *International Herald Tribune*, *Xinhua News*

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Controlling Individualism in Our Children

by Amos Rudolph

We should not confuse the evils of individualism with our individuality. We are comparable and yet different. Our children are much alike, but certainly not identical. God made us different. He gave us different gifts. His plans for us vary, from one person to another, and at different times. He expects individual submission and commitment to Christ. Yet none of that is for independence from the Church. Paul has taught in 1 Corinthians 12 that we greatly need one another.

NEWSLINES . . . cont'd.

Quote of the Month

“If God as they say, is homophobic, I wouldn’t worship that God.” —*Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, condemning the Anglican church for taking a stance against consecrating homosexual priests.*

This reminds me of Romans 1:23, 25: “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man” and “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” However, how often am I guilty of doing the same thing: Creating God in my image? Changing God to be what I want God to be? Refusing to worship God unless He does or is like I want Him to be?

* * * * *

Recommended Reading

“Mean streets hold little magic for young African ‘witches’” (<http://tinyurl.com/yp3dah>) and “As Olympic Games approach, Chinese are urged to be ‘civilized’” (<http://tinyurl.com/2bzam6>) both in the *International Herald Tribune*; “Eritrean Christians Describe Anti-Faith Torture Methods” (<http://tinyurl.com/296rxp>) in *The Christian Post*. Please send any tips, stories, opinions, suggestions, or corrections to: hansmast@hansmast.com

This must be well understood before we are prepared to help control individualism. We must understand how to relate to different people and circumstances. Paul understood people and gave individual help. He recognized differences. He knew how to adapt in order to gain the Jews. He said, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” None of that should be confused with individualism.

Individualism usually stems from inner pride with stubbornness and selfishness. This brings undue variance and disharmony. For control we can learn from Paul’s example. He called for unity and harmony based on Scripture. He insisted that the main and proper goal for life should not be some earthly self-interest. He taught that our stubborn and selfish nature must be crucified. Such teaching helps to control the evils of individualism.

We should not equate the right kind of firmness with being individualistic, nor should we ask someone to violate his conscience. Paul never did that. He did instruct to help correct wrong thinking. He refused to change his doctrine to suit the Judaizers. He denounced their perverted ideas. He submitted to others when he rightly could, but sometimes he stood against the preference of popular belief and practice. He never sold tomorrow for cheers today.

So this subject has a positive side, and this should be fairly considered. The individual or the nonconformist may either be right or wrong. Such people are less likely to be carried away with something just because everyone else is doing it. But often they refuse to submit to an idea coming from the top merely because it does not agree with their own thinking. In the world at large we need more nonconformists. In

the Church we need fewer of them, unless things are headed in the wrong direction. Then we need many Elijahs, John the Baptists, and others who, fearing the Lord, speak often one to another, and from their fellowship may emerge a nucleus of faithful people. If this and everything so far considered is well understood, then we may be able to help control the evils of individualism.

But no good can ever be accomplished, when control is necessary, unless we are careful and Scriptural. We must have ourselves under spiritual control. Arrogance is individualism of the worst kind. Sometimes an effort to control individualism is almost like saying, "Don't do as I do, but do as I say." The hypocrisy in that is abhorrent. Any effort to control individualism must be marked by true consistency and humility.

We must not forget that more is caught than is taught. The child's reactions are often like those of his parents and teachers. We may think of dealing with children to control individualism, but perhaps we first need to deal with the real source—ourselves. Otherwise the effort will surely fail, and we are making the problem worse.

Good control is largely a matter of bringing the child's will under control. An effort to that end needs to begin very early.

Prompt obedience should be required. Talking back should be forbidden, and penalized to curb the tendency. A proper strictness in that is necessary to bring the stubborn will under control.

We should also understand that parents and teachers have management responsibility. One should not be too passive. We are to function as leaders. Sometimes we have problems because we have not taken the initiative and given direction. When an unruly child is not corrected, or when directions are lacking, the situation is too open and loose.

Good control is difficult when the child is not well occupied. Idleness breeds problems.

Children are then apt to assert themselves unduly, and then we have individualism by default. We ought to take charge and give clear directions to help prevent and control the problem.

Individualism crops up sometimes in choosing and playing games. Someone may insist on his preference, and unless he can domineer, he may grumble and refuse to play. Or when playing he may begin to act like winning the game depends mostly on him. He wants to emerge as the great hero. But he may succeed only in losing the game, and often then he will blame the others. These are indicators of individualism, and none of them should be continued. The child must learn to yield. He needs to learn that he can be happy in doing so. This may

be realized by sharing in good teamwork. At least he should not be allowed to rule the group by refusing to cooperate and forcing the others to submit to him. He should be well-taught and corrected until he learns to submit and be agreeable.

Individualism may arise in relation to dress standards, and often it begins when the child is young as the parents dress him and feed his pride. But even if they are started right, our children still need clear teaching. Older children and students in school ought to know why people dress as they do. This can be taught. And they should be taught to love modesty and simplicity.

For many people dress is meant to symbolize things like social class and wealth. It can highlight the body, draw attention, and gain acceptance. Modern dress accentuates individual expression, but we are trying to encourage group solidarity. Our dress should help to identify us with God's people. **If good principles are exemplified and well-taught, this helps to keep individualistic dress under control.**

When improper items of dress appear we must express our disapproval, kindly and privately, and explain that our standard

***Individualism
usually stems from
inner pride with
stubbornness and
selfishness.***

does not allow those items. This applies as well to stylish hair. In school the pupil may be told not to dispute about what is required when talking to his teacher or peers. The parents must be reminded of what is required. If compliance is not forthcoming, school privileges must finally be denied. If the same deviations are continued, things can soon go from bad to worse.

In the classroom our children are controlled when assignments are given and while the teacher properly guides and monitors the learning process. A child should not be allowed to major in his favorite subject. Good effort must be required also in the subjects not as well-liked.

Careless work should not be accepted. Individual help is often necessary. Slow pupils must be encouraged. The proud and boastful child must be corrected. Each child may be taught to compete mainly with himself. Some competition is good and unavoidable.

To control the evils of individualism, many factors should be considered. We must remember that our children most of all need good examples to follow. Children learn some of their most important values and attitudes by observing the behavior of the adults close to them. How we respond to the authority over us helps to shape their response to authority. When we communicate and relate well to others, at home and in our churches and schools, good patterns in them are being established.

We should also believe that, although we need to restrain and control the outward expressions of individualism, yet this alone will fail. Pity the children who are controlled only by the crack of the whip or the booming voice of authority. Our children must be loved and taught how to love and be respectful. Unless we are faithful in that, our children will finally not be well-controlled. Of course, help for them may arise from others, and we know that God

will surely do His part.

It should be clear that good community life and practice—the opposite of individualism—must be consensual, that is, it must be voluntarily established. To force a child to submit will control his outward expression, for a while, and even though at times we should do this, because he must be trained, yet this of itself will not bring the desired response. Control must be coupled with genuine love and fairness. The response of love and glad obedience cannot be forcibly extracted. But if exemplified well, our children will learn how to love and cooperate. Meanwhile, good relationships are being established.

We may think of dealing with children to control individualism, but perhaps we first need to deal with the real source . . . ourselves.

The power of a good story is one means to that end. Many a tense situation has been eased and turned in the right way by the influence of good reading. Every good mother and teacher knows how stories can temper emotions and help to check incipient problems. Abrupt commands to “Do this” or “Stop that” are some-

times needed, but good stories help to nip trouble in the bud, and often may ward off the “I won’t” or the “Why do I have to?” We can help children ahead of time by giving the reason for some desired action with a story in which the action is portrayed, along with the results. This should not be resorted to when punishment is needed to correct. But good stories are quite valuable and often effective.

Good rapport is enhanced by a well-told or well-written story that is enjoyed together. The mutual interest and shared insights can produce an association that is precious, and often we are enabled to look beyond the present and see things as they might be. This greatly helps us to cooperate. If good relationships can be developed and well maintained, it will not be too hard to control the evils of individualism. ■

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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; swandtrump@verizon.net.

“Who . . . Me?”

by Dennis W. Costella

The message of God by the prophets of the Old Testament was not only for the saints of old. *All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for our instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Of course, the primary, direct application is always exclusive to the generation addressed. But if we fail to search out the spiritual principles that are to be practically applied to the church age, then great blessings and much of the testimony of Scripture are lost.

The circumstances necessitating God sending the faithful Prophet Malachi to decry the sins of Israel are not exactly the same as ours, but one thing never changes—the heart of man! God’s word of exhortation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem reveals their spirit or attitude that is so often comparable to that of the people of God even today. The remnant has returned from the Babylonian captivity, the temple is rebuilt, the altar is set up, the sacrifices are being offered—all *seems* well in heaven and on earth. But God has a number of complaints, and the priests and people with one voice respond: “Wherein have we . . . ?”;

“Who, me?” Priesthood of believers, take heed!

“Wherein Hast Thou Loved Us?”

Malachi 1:2

Israel (Jacob) was the object of God’s special love and favor (vv. 2, 3). Not only was Israel’s history replete with the goodness of God demonstrated time and again on their behalf, but their future was, and still is, gloriously bright with the promises of their Lord (v. 5). Why God, in His infinite mercy and grace, chose to bestow such blessing on the seed of Jacob cannot be explained. Merit certainly did not require it. Faithfulness to their God and His Law was not a hallmark consideration either. This was an undeserved love which characterized the unexplainable affection God had for His people. The slighting of that love by them was, therefore, multiplied in its effect.

The inhabitants of Judah had lost sight of God’s infinite, undeserved love. This brought about the sad “Wherein hast thou loved us?” reply to the prophet’s tender reminder: “I have loved you, saith the LORD” (v. 2). They were taking His favor for granted and had forgotten that unique, singular bond that a God of love desires to have with His own.

But what does the “love of God” mean to

us today? We can all undoubtedly quote Scripture verses that speak of His abiding presence and the oft-repeated reality of the wonderful love of the Father which motivated the sending of His dear Son to suffer and die in our stead. Yet the important question remains: Do we return that love in word, thought, and deed? When was the last time God's revealed love so touched our innermost being with the contemplation of undeserved mercy and abounding grace that our hearts poured forth praise and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father?

If it can be said of us, as it was of the early assembly at Ephesus: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4), then it would seem that we do, indeed, have something in common with the Israelites of Malachi's day. The child of God who is no longer deeply grieved by sin nor moved to heartfelt emotion at thoughts of what the love of God has wrought through grace is not one who has matured spiritually but rather one who has become spiritually calloused through the "deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

***"Wherein Have We Despised
Thy Name?" Malachi 1:6***

The priests were not only responsible for administering the sacrifices and offerings in the temple, but they were also to instruct the people in the Law of the Lord and to demonstrate an attitude of reverence and dedication to the One before whom they ministered of holy things (2 Chronicles 17:9; 30:22; 34:12, 13; Deuteronomy 10:8). But it was evident in Jerusalem that a son's honor for his father and a servant's reverence for his master were more readily apparent than that of the priests for their Lord. "Where is my fear?" (v. 6) asked the Lord of His servants.

No less strange is the behavior demonstrated by those numbered among the "priesthood of believers" (1 Peter 2:4-10). Pastor and laypeople alike are often more concerned about pleasing men than God, more concerned about what others will say

than with what God has said! Whenever we allow the responses of others to enter into our decision-making concerning a particular question or course of action, we are despising the holy name of our God. His eternal Word tells us what we are to do and what not to do, and should we deviate from that prescribed path of obedience due to the pressures of men or institutions, then we have ceased to fear our Master as we should.

We are called by His holy name to be a separated, peculiar people, desirous of pleasing Him in all that we say and do. To the extent that we leave off the pursuance of our high and holy calling of God to be conformed to the image of His dear Son, then we are despising the Lord our God. A lack of reverence for God and His Word will always result in compromise which is nothing other than old-fashioned disobedience.

And remember, the high cost of compromise is not always seen in the lives and ministries of believers now. They may very well appear to be even prospering as a result of "cutting corners" spiritually speaking. But disobedience to the Word is still seen by God as just that, and the terrible price paid by the erring saint is the displeasure of Almighty God (1 Corinthians 10:4-12). That might not seem too terribly serious to the careless Christian at the moment, but it certainly will when he stands before his Lord to give an account (1 Corinthians 3:8-16). Disorderly believers will, at their Lord's appearing, finally realize the awful loss resulting from a careless walk, thereby despising His holy name.

***"Wherein Have We Polluted Thee?"
Malachi 1:7***

The priests brought and "sacrificed" inferior and even diseased offerings, yet the people were still slow in understanding why God was not pleased to receive such (vv. 7-10). God despised this worship, which was form without substance, ritual without reality. From God's perspective, all of the religious activity that evidently seemed to meet some baser, carnal need of the worshiper

was nothing other than hollow pretense (vv. 12-14). Priest and people called this worship; God called it a pollution of the Lord's table! Millions attend church regularly and "enjoy the sermon" and busy themselves with "church activities," but if it is not worship in spirit and in truth, then it is but pollution to the One before whom we assemble.

The believer is to offer up spiritual sacrifices as a believer-priest in this dispensation as well. He is not bound by the Law, but he is constrained by grace to give of his best in worship and service. If we are remiss in this area, no doubt God could say the same of us as He did of His people of old—"Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar."

Do we worship the Lord in the "beauty of holiness," or is our time spent in corporate worship viewed as more of a weariness to the flesh than a refreshment to the spirit? Is our presence in the church more for the impression of others or for the praise of our God? Is the Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory and holiness the sole focus of our adoration and praise—every moment of every day? "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15, 16).

The words of praise and thanksgiving, works energized by the Spirit and wrought in conformity to the Word, and the communication of our physical blessings for the furtherance of the work of the Lord are all sacrifices with which "God is well pleased." But again, all is polluted in God's sight unless first of all our all is on the altar (Romans 12:1, 2) and all is done for the praise of His glory!

"Wherein Have We Wearied Him?"

Malachi 2:17

Could there ever be a time when an ever-merciful, longsuffering God grows weary with His people? The message of Malachi makes it plain that there certainly is! God included this sharp word of exhortation, and the people were once again quick

with—"Who, me?"

The message of the prophet was clear as to exactly how the Israelites could be guilty of being wearisome to their God: "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words . . . When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" The priests wearied God with their words; they spoke truth (v. 7) but practiced iniquity (vv. 8, 11). Pious talk and even tears of supposed sincerity are of no avail if the divine order of separation from the vile and disobedient is ignored (v. 13). God is much more concerned about our practical adherence to biblical truth than our mere profession of the same.

It is one thing to *say* our purpose is to enjoy fellowship with our Lord, yet it is quite another thing to actually "walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7). The child of God who walks circumspectly and as a child "of light" will "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather [will] reprove them" (Ephesians 5:8-16). He will not, as did the people of Malachi's day, attempt to justify the evil deeds of the ungodly or condemn the just. How sad it is to see so prevalent in Christendom today the idea that lip service to the Word is enough, completely disregarding the clear will of God for every believer to consistently, without compromise, obey *all* of what is contained therein. Christians, do our actions and heart attitudes coincide with our profession? Do we weary God with our *words*?

"Wherein Shall We Return?"

Malachi 3:7

Self-deception is the greatest deception. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore, we can easily be fooled if we look to ourselves for direction rather than to the light of God's Word. The backslidden saint, beguiled by his own heart into believing his relationship with his heavenly Father is in no need of repair, is no less deceived than the unbeliever who feels

within his heart that all is well even though eternal judgment is but a breath away.

So it was with Israel. They were still zealous in performing their religious ceremonies, but their hearts were far off from their God. Disobedience was the order of the day, but its consequences were not a subject of their contemplation. Before and after the captivity, they were admonished time and again to return to obedience to the commandments of God's Law (v. 7). This is what God wants—not an occasion to bring judgment to bear upon the wayward—but rather, a genuine, Spirit-wrought repentance resulting in the confessing and forsaking of known sin and the return to a place of blessed, uninterrupted fellowship.

When Malachi delivered the loving call of their heavenly Father to return to Him, their reaction was to question their need for restoration! How often this is the case in the church today. Those in greatest need of revival are inevitably the very ones who, in their own hearts, see little if any cause for concern. Like the backslidden Israelites in the days of Hosea: "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not" (Hosea 7:9). Their power with God had been drained away through years of spiritual neglect, and they did not even know it. Because they were not accomplishing anything for God, they did not even miss the power of God!

Renewed fellowship with God is conditioned upon *recognition of one's need*, and then Spirit-wrought revival in the heart will be experienced as the child responds to his Father's call to return (Hosea 14). Can we honestly say before God that we are enjoying fellowship with our Lord and that the power of the Holy Spirit of God works within? Do we continue in known sin that makes our testimony before others nothing more than a sham? Has spiritual fervor and zeal given way to the lethargy of carnal ease? Do we need revival right now? Or do we not even know that we need revival? "Who, me?"

"Wherein Have We Robbed Thee?"

Malachi 3:8

The people of God had left off giving, not only the tithe (for sustaining the ministry of the priesthood) but also the freewill offerings— "tithes *and* offerings." They had settled into an easy life of pleasure and possessions and failed to remember that *everything* they possessed was given to them by the God of all grace (Haggai 1:1-6; Amos 6:1). When there is not a proper, duly ordained dispensing of the stewardship entrusted to each one of us concerning our physical blessings, then a robbery has taken place!

Everything we possess actually belongs to God, and we are to joyfully return to God a portion of what He has entrusted to our care, not just a certain percentage. Please note: the tithe was definitely the Lord's, but it did not stop there. Then, as now, our Lord delights to see the grace of giving extended far beyond simply what was required. The freewill offerings mentioned throughout Leviticus are a beautiful picture of the special blessedness, even to the Old Testament saint under the Law, in giving freely and joyfully *above* that which was required.

This is the type of giving to the Lord's work that should characterize the believer today—not coerced into conformity to a standard under Law, but free to abound in one's giving which can only be realized when the Holy Spirit has complete control of both the heart and the pocketbook (2 Corinthians 8:7, 8). A believer who needs to take out his calculator in order to figure out how much to write his check for is in need of some instruction by the Spirit in the *grace* of giving.

And just as Israel was challenged to prove God as to His faithfulness in blessing those who so honor Him with their tithes and offerings in Malachi's day (vv. 8-10), so the believer is afforded great and precious promises for those who give to the Lord's work out of a full heart. Please notice the blessed and integral connection between the glorious promise, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches

in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19), with what went before. In the preceding text, the Apostle Paul praises God for the faithful Philippian church which "sent once and again unto my necessity," thereby laying up treasure in heaven and offering through their gifts a sacrifice which was "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:14-18). Brethren, this is the type of giving God desires; He wants to have us prove His faithfulness. We would rob God by doing anything less!

"What Have We Spoken . . . Against Thee?" Malachi 3:13

Or, "Wherein have we spoken against thee?"—the same old response to the same straightforward message of God's faithful servant. In this instance, God is reminding Israel of times past when they "tempted" Him by questioning His presence and power, actually wondering whether or not obedience to His will was worth the trouble (v. 14 cf. Exodus 17:2, 7; Numbers 21:4, 5). Israel's wilderness experience was a time of testing to see whether in the face of hardship and danger they would exercise faith or succumb to doubt. "Is the Lord among us, or not?" indicated the latter.

Now this is the point where many seasoned and even stalwart Bible believers stumble and fall. They might not have the problems of carnality and outright disobedience that marked the preceding questions, but here is an even more subtle technique of Satan. When year after year of fidelity to God and His Word produces year after year of unceasing opposition and trial, a time is often reached where doubts arise: "Is God in this or not?"

The notion is introduced into the mind of the dedicated servant of the Lord that perhaps the seeming prosperity of the compromiser in some way or another gives credibility to the "obvious good" he is doing. The uncompromising pastor or layman who takes a strong, scriptural stand is so often the one who seems to suffer the setbacks, the unmerited persecutions and misunder-

standings, the sorest trials and heaviest burdens. Under these circumstances one may be tempted to wonder if the Lord is really with him in this difficult and despised position.

Whenever we envy the evildoer or compromiser, even if only in the heart, or question the need for unyielding allegiance to God and His Word regardless of the resulting pressures placed upon us, then we "speak against God" (vv. 14, 15). God has clearly given us our marching orders, and we must not fall from the ranks of the faithful no matter how hard the way or fierce the adversary. Do we question or obey? Do we complain or remain faithful regardless of the seeming futility of obedience? Do we resist or rest in God's infinitely perfect will for each of His own?

The Israelites of Malachi's day were religious and active in worship, but they were lacking in the proper attitude of heart which is essential if anything one does or says is to be acceptable to God. They had grown complacent in their service and cold in their devotion to the things of eternal value. They were quick to "talk a good fight" and speak of the right ways of the Lord but slow to walk in the path of truth.

Their loving, merciful God would not allow them—could not allow them—to continue without His righteous rebuke. Our heavenly Father in His infinite holiness cannot possibly condone a rebellious and disobedient heart in the believer today either (Hebrews 12:6-11). Israel responded to the prophet's admonition by saying, "Wherein have we . . . ?" How often do we say to the faithful message of the eternal Word: "Who, me?" Oh, dear believer, may we not fall by the same example of unbelief but, rather, hear and heed! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Foundation*, Sept.-Oct. 2005.



LEADING THE FAMILY

Choosing Profitable Recreation

by Jacob Neuenschwander

“Deer season starts next week.” “You have just won a vacation for two to Bermuda, all expenses paid.” “Relax in Cancún for luxury recreation that won’t break your budget.” “Experience history firsthand with a visit to colonial Williamsburg.” “Your boating, fishing, camping, hunting, climbing, and recreational needs can all be met at Cabella’s.” “Write out a check to yourself—schedule that vacation today—you owe it to yourself” (and to the Citizens National Bank—with interest).

And this is only Monday. Five more days this week will bring mailbox invitations and repeated contacts with a pleasure-intoxicated society. Obviously, some sorting is required. Just because our neighbors drive to some retreat every other weekend does not justify our doing the same once a year, or even once in a lifetime. And a bit closer, just because a friend has indulged in mountain going or pleasure camping, or has hundreds of music tapes to recreate himself does not release us from responsibility for how we use our God-given time and resources.

Recreation is refreshing the body or mind in some renewing activity after labor is done. My mother found recreation in writing letters. Another may consider writing hard labor but find relaxation in peeling the breakfast potatoes at the close of day. Children often find the daily routines quite taxing and look forward to some play and diversion. Youth are less likely to admit to the fatigue of daily routine, yet can still benefit from a change of pace, even if it includes using unspent energy. Everyone should know that the best recreation after a hard day’s labor is sleep and that the best recreation after a session of

study is vigorous physical labor.

Beware of false labeling on diversion activities. Some recreation reveals man’s lower nature and encourages the expression of beastly passions. This is not true recreation. The world’s entertainment industry promises a mental getaway in music, sports, movies, thrill rides, alcohol, drugs, amusement parks, and more. Participants go from one emotional high to the next adrenaline rush.

And further, how can people truly be refreshed by sitting and watching a few professionals play or perform? Or how does one find renewal on a thrill ride?

True recreation is quite elusive for many people. They know what recreation should do for them but seek it where it can never be found. If you desire recreation, work wisely, stay home with the family, save the expenses, and get to bed on time. If one cannot find recreation at home, where he is most familiar, it will likely elude him away from home also. Going on trips can be profitable, but recreation is not the main result of travel. Despite today’s tremendous efforts and expense in recreational travel and leisure, people are getting gray, bald, and old at much the same rate as they have in the past.

Profitable recreation begins with a right mindset about work. We must determine to enjoy our occupation and to view work as our constant responsibility, while also recognizing our limits. Work may not become our enemy or our master. If your schedule becomes intolerable, make adjustments or marshal some help. If your work is continually stressful, learn to recognize and deal with frazzled nerves. A stress-free life is not a reasonable goal. God told Adam, “In the sweat

of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” Thistles and thorns would counter his best efforts to provide.

Efforts to recreate the body or mind are more effective when the heart and soul have found rest in Christ. David lamented that “for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” Peace with God limits the need for recreation. Additionally, the renewed heart and soul will not seek renewal through indulgence in worldly pleasures and emotional cover-ups for spiritual problems.

The most profitable recreation occurs amidst our labor and right when we need it. Taking time a few times per week to read something that interests us can be profitable. Occasionally joining the children’s play is diversion. Taking time to observe the rising sun or the full moon flooding the landscape with subdued light takes our thoughts beyond ourselves and can be mentally refreshing. A fifteen-minute nap after lunch each day will clear the mind and invigorate the body more than a whole day of lolling at the ocean side or sitting in a cabin somewhere amidst the bears, owls, and skunks of the forest.

It can be profitable to see the ocean, to watch wildlife, to hike in the woods, or to visit some place of interest. But it is mistaken logic to think that a large block of recreation will help us through the next year. Daily recreation is much more profitable than annual recreation.

Do not plan that recreation be the main component of your family trip. Rather, view travel as a way to maintain relationships with others, to help them with their projects, and to strengthen each other’s hand in God. We burden our friends and divert them from their duties if our main interest in travel is recreation. It is best to keep recreation incidental in all of life.

Profitable recreation does not require a garage full of sports equipment and recreational vehicles. We should not

allow our sons to become immersed in the hunting fevers that sweep many communities in the fall. A little hunting may be recreational, but most adults have seen and heard enough of hunting to know that it can soon become a lot of showing off of equipment and worthless storytelling.

Profitable recreation employs the intellect more than the equipment. Use opportunities at hand to refresh your spirit. Singing with the family at home or on a trip is profitable. When possible, communicate with others while you work to help break any doldrums. Disciplining our minds to remember the interesting events of the day and having a story to tell the children in the evening helps to keep the mind fresh continually. It is still true that “a merry heart doeth good like a medicine.” Generally, true recreation results from internal activity rather than from outward entertainment.

Profitable family recreational activities please God and promote the historic values of our godly heritage. Parental influence is decisive in teaching children a healthy balance of work and recreation that promotes the well-being of both body and mind. May God give us wisdom to choose profitable recreation. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Home Horizons*, October 2007.

Christian Schoolteachers Needed

Hartville Christian School of Hartville, OH, has positions available for elementary teachers and also a school secretary for the 2008-2009 school year.

Send your resume to Hartville Christian School, 10515 Market Avenue N., Hartville, OH 44632 or contact the school at 330-877-2529 or 330-877-9450. All applications will be kept confidential.



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.

Come, Thou Almighty King



by Wesley/Giardini

Lyrics: Although there is not complete agreement as to the authorship of this hymn, most sources agree that Charles Wesley was the poet. The words first appeared in a book of hymns published by George Whitefield in 1757, the *Collection of Hymns for Social Worship*.¹

Charles Wesley and his brother John probably need no introduction to most of the readers. As the main founders of the Methodist tradition, they were very careful to make clear doctrinal statements about what they believed, especially where it differed from the accepted ideas of the day. Although this hymn is clearly a song of praise, it is also a very clear affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity. In fact, many of the hymns written by Charles and his brother John were intended to be more like “metrical theology” than merely pleasant pieces of poetry.² This hymn is no exception.

The version of “Come, Thou Almighty King” that is printed here is very clearly structured to bring out the theological ideas that Charles wanted to present. The first three verses treat the individuality of each member of the Godhead, recognizing them as distinct entities, while the fourth emphasizes the fact

that these three Persons represent only one God. It is this God that we will “love and adore” through eternity.

Although this hymn does have a very strong doctrinal emphasis, it consists of more than dry theological statements. Charles weaves the theology into a prayer of invocation, inviting God to fill our lives in all His various forms. The hymn ends with a simple declaration of praise to this wonderful triune God.

Music: The composer of this tune lived about the same time as Mozart, although he was born long before Mozart and lived until a few years after Mozart’s death. Felice Giardini was primarily known in his lifetime as a violinist and a composer of chamber music, and only a couple of his hymns are still sung today. Although he was born in Italy, he spent much of his life in England, where he worked with his friend Johann Christian Bach, son of the well-known Johann Sebastian Bach. It was during his very successful time in England that he composed the tune to the hymn that is the subject of this discussion. Later in his life, he returned to Italy, but financial difficulties forced him to return to

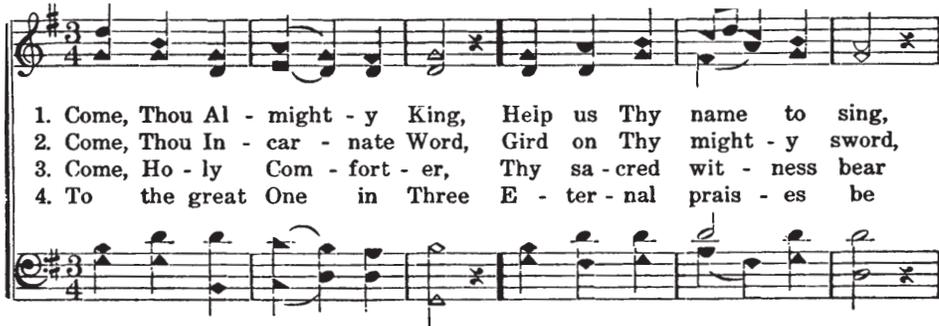
Come, Thou Almighty King

"Now unto the King—be honour and glory." — 1 Timothy 1:17

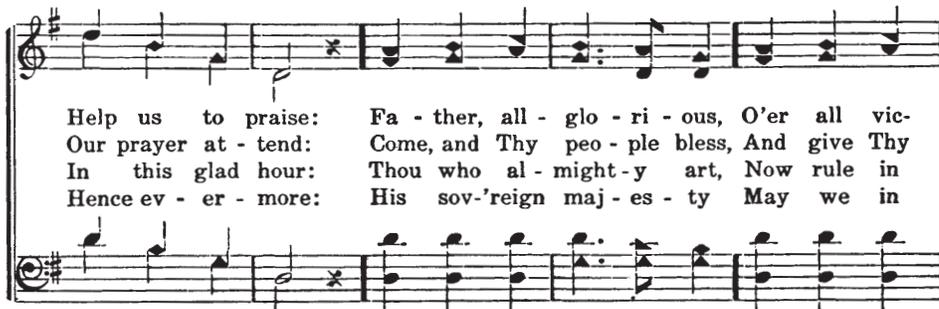
ITALIAN HYMN 6. 6. 4. 6. 6. 6. 4.

CHARLES WESLEY, 1757

FELICE GIARDINI, 1769



1. Come, Thou Al - might - y King, Heip us Thy name to sing,
2. Come, Thou In - car - nate Word, Gird on Thy might - y sword,
3. Come, Ho - ly Com - fort - er, Thy sa - cred wit - ness bear
4. To the great One in Three E - ter - nal prais - es be



Help us to praise: Fa - ther, all - glo - ri - ous, O'er all vic-
Our prayer at - tend: Come, and Thy peo - ple bless, And give Thy
In this glad hour: Thou who al - might - y art, Now rule in
Hence ev - er - more: His sov-'reign maj - es - ty May we in



to - ri - ous, Come, and reign o - ver us, An - cient of Days.
word suc - cess: Spir - it of ho - li - ness, On us de - scend.
ev - 'ry heart, And ne'er from us de - part, Spir - it of pow'r.
glo - ry see, And to e - ter - ni - ty Love and a - dore.

England. When he got there, he could not regain the popularity that had made him so successful before, and he left for Russia. Unfortunately, his music did not seem to impress the Russians either. He

died in Moscow at the age of eighty.³ ■

1. www.cyberhymnal.org
2. <http://wesley.nmu.edu>
3. www.en.wikipedia.org

Surviving Pastoral Burnout

by Brian Wiebe

It happened again, just a few weeks ago. A pastor friend of mine—we'll call him Tom—stood before the congregation and announced his resignation.

No scandal, no forced exit, no greener pastures in another city. Tom's a good leader and a good preacher. He's well-liked in the congregation, cooperative, and supportive of other pastors and ministries. He loves the Lord, is well-read and easy to talk to.

But Tom's not just taking a break. He's leaving ministry because of personal burnout.

Pastors burn out when there's too much stress for too long, too few rewards, too many unrealistic expectations, too little role definition, too little appreciation, and too much criticism. Tom is exhausted, joyless, and spent. My heart sinks with

***Burnout was like
standing on a dock
while my boat
drifted away.***

this news, because I know that both he and the church are burying many unfulfilled dreams for what could have been.

Burnout. The word kindles an image of a fire that's burned down to embers and ash. Dictionary.com defines *burnout* as "fatigue, frustration, or apathy resulting from prolonged stress, overwork, or intense activity." Noted author Archibald Hart coined the phrase "compassion fatigue" (*Coping With Depression in the Ministry*) because burnout often erases a leader's ability to care.

Of course pastors aren't the only ones who burn out. The proprietor of my favorite lunch and coffee shop said to me recently, "I'm burned out." I've heard tradespeople, salespeople, and students say the same thing.

So why focus special attention on pas-

toral burnout? There are at least three reasons. First, we're losing pastors and they're hard to replace. Second, when pastors burn out—especially if they leave a congregation—it affects a wide swath of people. Third, burnout is painful for individual pastors and their family members.

My own experience with burnout occurred around the beginning of my fourth year as a full-time church-planting pastor.

Until then, almost everything about my pastoral experience was positive. We were never short of bodies or bucks, and

functioned well in rented buildings. We baptized many (one hundred in five years), and disciplined new and established believers through small groups and other ministries. We were blessed with an army of amazing volunteers, both new believers and some who were underachievers in their previous church and needed a place to blossom. It was exciting and rewarding.

And yet, I lost heart. I believed in what we were doing, but found myself yearning for a better way to minister. Many subtle and not-so-subtle reasons for pastoral burnout converged on me like a perfect storm, and I resigned just before our church's fifth anniversary.

Three Surprises

I had three big surprises when I encountered pastoral burnout.

Surprise #1: Burnout happened.

I've described the feeling of burnout as something like standing on a dock

while my boat drifted away. The boat represented what I was called to do—the areas and people on which I should focus. Yet I felt held to the dock by urgent matters of church management.

As I tried to fill gaps left by our church's staffing shortage, I moved away from working in my areas of strength into areas for which I was not primarily suited. My joy dissipated as my energy drained.

Still, I can't blame the ministry, church, or God. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you. . . . My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29, 30). Jesus isn't asking us to burn out and isn't glorified when we do. Burnout can be the result of trying to do something other than what Jesus calls us to, or simply trying to do too much.

Some personalities may be more prone to burnout than others, including big-dreaming entrepreneurial styles, or tender-hearted shepherd types. In particular, pastors with people-pleasing tendencies need to work hard to build fences around their core calling and say "No" more often.

Surprise #2: I was deeply affected.

I remember feeling constantly overwhelmed. Small issues became difficult to handle, and big issues impossible.

Melancholy overtook my normally sanguine personality. Making decisions became a problem. Creativity dissipated. I dreaded the phone's ring and procrastinated doing things I normally enjoyed, such as reading or message preparation. Home life was adversely affected as I became impatient and moody.

Worst of all was the deep sense of failure and futility. In spite of all that had gone well in the church, my leadership confidence was gone. Satan used this opportunity to hurl accusations and words of discouragement, to stir up complaints and personal attacks. This, mixed in with Satan's lies and temptations, resulted in a dark time.

Surprise #3: The recovery process is long and slow.

Before resigning, I visited a colleague who had resigned from his church after burning out. His symptoms matched mine, but when he told me he had taken eight months off work before resuming ministry I thought he was either crazy or lazy!

"Who needs that much time off?" I mused. Surely a three-month sabbatical would suffice.

Yet, as I write this, I'm counting back the eight months since I resigned, and guess what? I'm just getting ready to return to pastoral ministry. My wife and I continued to serve, mostly in a mission assignment, but we're just starting to rebuild disconnected friendships, reading ministry books again, and dreaming about our ministry future.

In Chapter 10 of his Gospel, Luke records the story of the Good Samaritan, concluding with Jesus' instruction to "go and do the same." The whole episode is a terrific motivator to actively serve God by reaching out and caring for others.

But the next paragraph tells the story of Jesus' visit with two sisters. Martha busied herself serving, while Mary sat still and listened to the Lord. Jesus chastised Martha for being so preoccupied (Luke 10:38-42).

Two stories with different messages: Which is right? "Go and do likewise" or "Stop and listen to Jesus"?

Avoiding or recovering from burnout requires both. There are times to get up and do, and there are times to stop and sit. When ministry leaders only "do," they burn out; when they only "sit," they diminish their influence.

Maintaining a Steady Flame

Pastors wear many hats for many different people. They're expected to give a dynamic "performance" that appeals to a diverse group every Sunday. They're always "on"—at the supermarket, soccer game, or parent-teacher interview. Each

venue may lead to an impromptu counseling or pastoral care session. The well-being of the church and community is constantly on a pastor's mind.

Knowing that these demands exist, what can a congregation do to help its pastors maintain a steady flame?

- Offer encouragement and prayer. (I can guarantee that the roles of critic and complainer have already been filled!)
- Write notes of affirmation, offer to babysit the pastor's children for a night, or send the family out for a nice dinner. This type of generous support will be a blessing.
- Be an advocate for the pastor during seasons of both strength and weakness. We won't agree with everything a pastor does, but God will honor us for standing in favor of this person He brought to the church.

Church leadership teams also must take good care of pastors as the first line of support, defense, and encouragement. Pastors should be paid competitively and have the tools needed for the job, such as a current computer, book fund, and hospitality allowance.

It's important for pastors to have paid sabbaticals, preferably every fourth or fifth year. Like schoolteachers (a comparable profession), pastors need extended breaks.

Finally, for every area of responsibility, pastors must have the accompanying decision-making authorization.

Congregations must make sure that their pastors are free to carry out their primary calling. They should ask: What did we call this person to do? Was the calling clear? Have expectations now changed? Do these expectations line up with our church's vision and purpose?

It's helpful for pastors to have a team to help with weaker areas. Pastors working outside their areas of gifting wear out quickly. It's like expecting chip-

munks to fly—they can, briefly, but too soon they'll crash.

If you're a pastor and feel like you're burning out, speak up and insist on getting some rest. There are many resources and simple diagnostic inventories available online. Find a good counselor, focus on your core competencies, and learn to pace yourself for the long haul.

A Team Effort

God never intended a few ministry leaders to handle all the responsibility of making disciples. Ephesians 4:11, 12 reminds us that God gave us pastors and others (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers) as gifts to the church, functioning as coaches to equip God's people to do God's work.

Author David Murrow urges congregations to free up pastors to spend time with God. He writes, "Stop thinking of your pastor as the minister. You are the minister; he is your coach. Allow him to delegate responsibility to godly people in your congregation. . . . Encourage him to dream."

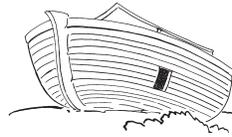
Pastors are a gift to the church, but we're *all* called to be ministers. The priesthood of all believers is more than an idea in our confession of faith. It's a core value of who we are as Christ-followers. We pay certain people to serve as pastors or church staff, but only so they can give their workdays to use their gifts and serve the church. We don't employ them because they're more spiritual or gifted, or because we need hired professionals to do the work of ministry for us.

Let's covenant to work together with Christ as He builds His church. Let's glorify God by supporting pastors and others who can help us make disciples of all. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, November 2006.



Beginning Issues



Races or People Groups? (Part 3)

by John Mullett

In the first article I gave an overview of the issue of racism and shared some biblical support for there being only one race, and in the second article I shared some scientific evidence to support that position. In this article I want to continue to build on that and look at some of the ramifications and dangers of an evolutionary foundation in relation to racism.

How has our culture(s) arrived where it is today, a day in which race is still an extremely sensitive issue? We have only to remember our own childhood days on the playground to understand part of it. Someone new is introduced to the group who is/appears to be “different” and we pick on them, pointing out their shortcomings, often mercilessly. Unfortunately, it is not only children who struggle with that “mob” tendency. It is a trait of the fallen state of humanity and our twisted way of looking for acceptance by singling out that which is not “normal.” However, that is not all that caused racism to become such a major player in the world today.

While racism was an issue previously, it grew in leaps and bounds with the emerging of Darwinian evolution which is inherently a racist philosophy. Evolution under the guise of science provided a “justification” and “scientific basis” for racism, and as a result it has contributed

heavily to the mistreatment of various people groups. Hitler’s regime was probably the most hideous example built on this philosophy as he sought to develop a “superior race” which contributed directly to the holocaust.¹ However, there are many other instances as well. The Australian Aborigines were nearly wiped out and many of their graves plundered²; Ota Benga, a pygmy from Africa, was displayed with an orangutan in a Bronx Zoo exhibit³; and people groups were classified in a hierarchical manner all in the name of evolution and so-called science. With the consistent bombardment of evolutionary thought with statements like, “They appear to be a race totally incapable of civilization . . . these people are from a lower order”⁴ (in reference to the Australian Aborigines), the word *race* took on added meaning. The church was not exempt as racist attitudes crept in and some mission programs lost their fervor to reach the lost.

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus, who was the last Adam, died for the descendants of the first Adam. If our worldview is based on an evolutionary philosophy in which people are of different races which evolved separately, and if we live out that worldview consistently, our mission programs will be rendered ineffective. If we believe not all people descendants of Adam, then why should

we bother spending our time and money taking them a gospel they can have no part of? Without that foundation (Genesis) the gospel message we have to share loses its meaning, and cultural decay is accelerated, leading to increasing racial struggles and even more serious issues such as eugenics.

Based on biblical and scientific evidence we should discard the term *races* completely, especially the meaning the term has come to carry in today's world. The Bible itself never uses the term *race*, but refers to people groups as nations and/or ethnic groups. As we saw in the first two articles, the Bible makes it clear all people groups are of "one blood" (Acts

17:26), and all are descendants of Adam and therefore brothers, sisters, and cousins. That is why we need to take the gospel to all nations and people groups. It is vital that we believe Genesis from the very first verse; it is the only way we can live out our Christianity in good logic.

1. Bergman, Jerry; *Darwinism and the Nazi Race Holocaust*, <http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/v13/i2/nazi.asp>
2. Ham, Wieland, & Batten; *One Blood*, Chapter 9; Master Books, 1999
3. Ham, Wieland, & Batten; *One Blood*, Chapter 10; Master Books, 1999
4. Ham, Wieland, & Batten; *One Blood*, pg. 80; Master Books, 1999

Keeping Our Relief Efforts Evangelical

by Dana Ressler

The question is sometimes asked, "As related to the mission of the church, which should appeal to our hearts more: hungry, dying bodies, or needy, dying souls?" Although this question may produce stimulating discussion, separating these needs is difficult. Christ commissioned the disciples to teach and preach to all nations. Also, when Christ returns, He will reward those on the right hand for their faithfulness in ministering to others.

The Scriptures clearly command compassion for the poor. Jesus met the needs of hungry people by feeding the five thousand and, also, the four thousand men. Paul commands giving and instructs how it should be done in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Gifts were sent to the poor at

Jerusalem, and Sister Dorcas made many clothes for the needy. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD" (Proverbs 19:17). "Blessed is he that considereth the poor" (Psalm 41:1). Those with riches in this world are commanded to be rich in good works and ready to distribute (1 Timothy 6:17, 18).

Generally, our tendency is to notice physical needs and overlook the spiritual ones. Our emotions are understandably stirred by pictures of starving and malnourished children. Our feelings are justifiably moved by reports of famine and starvation. The loss brought by natural catastrophes does cause the Christian to be concerned. God's people have been active in various relief efforts such as storm cleanup, rebuilding, and food and

clothing distribution. Medical help has been a part of some mission endeavors. But relief efforts should not become an end in themselves.

Relief work brings many opportunities. It keeps people alive and may prepare them to receive the Gospel. The ultimate commission is to preach the Gospel and save souls. Having people receive the Gospel is more difficult than having them respond to material hand-outs. But when relief is properly given, it often softens hearts to listen to the Bible.

Since both relief efforts and sharing the Gospel are Scriptural requirements, how can we balance them and fulfill the Great Commission?

Relief needs to be accompanied with a consistent testimony. Our workers should conduct themselves in a Spirit-filled manner. They should be examples of Biblical living, displaying humility, modesty, and reserve. The humbleness of Christ as He ministered to men's needs shows the attitude we also need. Properly reflecting these attitudes of heart will help the recipient to see that more is involved than simply meeting material needs.

Church direction in relief work is important as gifts in the church are utilized. Some are especially good at meeting physical needs; others are better at preaching. Utilizing all the gifts will help to balance the work and give a spiritual base. We involve more than just those with experience. Using our young people and older ones together is a good testimony.

Amidst natural destruction, extra effort should be put forth to reach out to spiritual needs. Although our relief workers are exposed to many material needs, the opportunity for testifying and sharing the Word in teaching, practice, and interpretation is of prime importance. This is one reason that we are careful with whom we work when we are involved in relief efforts. Holding services, conducting street meetings, and distributing literature will help remind people of their

spiritual need.

Spiritual emphasis is maintained when relief efforts are systematic and reserved. It is impossible to meet all the needs, but since our primary goal is to help souls, we limit the amount of help given to one individual and try to assist many. In foreign relief, this has proven to be quite a challenge in the face of extreme poverty. As commanded in Galatians 6:10, special attention is to be given to those of the household of faith.

Maintaining a trust in God's providential care will enable us to have a right balance. When church members begin to trust in insurances and social programs, they can no longer present a clear Gospel witness. Practicing complete trust in God, maintaining a brotherhood assistance mentality, and receiving direction from our deacons will help us to maintain this balance.

Freewill giving helps to maintain a balanced approach. We do not use activities such as car washes, bake sales, and auctions to raise money. Such efforts emphasize human sympathy more than spiritual compassion and also take the sacrifice out of giving.

A personal relationship with the Word is essential for spiritual service. Many relief efforts are made throughout the world, and often this service is equated with godliness. Only those dedicated to God and His Word are able to provide a balance in relief and evangelical efforts. Being in tune with God makes it possible to bring others to Him.

Relief efforts must continue. But for spiritual safety they must be accompanied with the Gospel message. The overall example of our workers meeting church standards and having a love for the lost will go a long way toward touching souls. The Spirit will use the testimony of the meek and honest relief worker. Above all, it is God's work. Without His blessing, our labors will perish. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, August 2007.

Abortion: A Clash of Worldviews

by Haven Bradford Gow

As University of San Diego sociologist Dr. Anne Hendershott informs us in her book *The Politics of Abortion* (Encounter), the abortion controversy reflects sharply divergent worldviews and philosophies of life, man, society, rights, and duties. She says, “For the pro-choice side, abortion laws express fundamental beliefs about life and liberty for women. For the pro-life side, . . . these same laws tell a tragic story of the failure of our democratic institutions to protect the lives of the unborn.”

Dr. Hendershott points out, in the abortion controversy, we see two Americas at war with one another: “While one America thinks that the lives of the unborn must be protected, another America thinks that all women should have access to abortion on demand, no matter how late in the pregnancy. While one America believes that a decision for abortion should never be made by a child without parental involvement, another America believes that minor children should be allowed to make their own decisions about an abortion without parental interference. While one America believes it is wrong to distribute condoms to middle-school children, another America dismisses abstinence programs as hopelessly naive and wants not only ‘comprehensive sex education’ in the schools but also access to birth control and abortion for minor children through school-based programs. While one side is appalled by third-term abortion, the other side insists that even partial-birth abortion falls within a woman’s right to choose.”

According to Dr. Monte Liebman, a pro-life psychiatrist in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, “If the adult world is genuinely concerned that children learn and live with respect for human values, it will

take the first step toward that goal by putting forth ideas consistent with sustaining human life. It will not invoke laws and behaviors that are destructive of any human life from inception to the grave; it will adjust its own attitudes and behaviors so that it becomes an authentic, living model for its progeny.”

As Presbyterians Pro Life (3942 Middle Rd., Allison Park, PA) points out, “Scripture commonly refers to fertilization rather than birth, as the moment of our beginning. God speaks of us as known, cared for, protected, and loved by Him before birth. . . . The teaching of medical science regarding the unborn is consistent with Scripture. Scripture and science both show us that life begins at the moment of fertilization. . . . Scripture forbids the destruction of innocent human life including unborn babies.”

Frank Carlton, an attorney/legal scholar in Greenville, Mississippi, and the former District Attorney for Washington County, Mississippi, observes: “When there are competing rights, the more fundamental right (for example, the right to religious freedom) should take precedence over other rights (for example, the right to privacy).” In my view, this argument also should apply to abortion: the right to life of the unborn child should take precedence over the right to privacy of the woman contemplating abortion.

But is this fetus residing within his or her mother’s womb a human being from the time of conception or fertilization? In her contribution to *The Silent Subject* (Praeger), Brigham University philosophy teacher Camille Williams observes: “Both science and experience confirm the view of the unborn as individuals fundamentally like us. Many women have some personal knowledge of their unborn

children. Unsurprisingly, many women who abort . . . carry the image of their unborn children with them. Most grieve for their loss, even as they defend their reproductive freedom.”

Please consider:

Dr. Landrum Shettles, pioneer in sperm biology, fertility, and sterility, observes: “I oppose abortion. I do so . . . because I accept what is biologically manifest—that human life commences at the time of conception—and . . . because I believe it is wrong to take innocent human life under any circumstances.” Dr. Watson Bowes, University of Colorado Medical School, states: “The beginning of a single human life is, from a biological point of view, a simple and straightforward answer: The beginning is conception.”

Dr. Hymie Gordon, the late Mayo Clinic scholar/teacher/physician, declared: “By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of

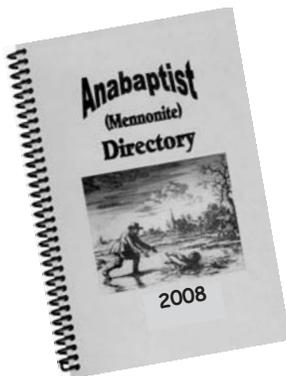
conception.” Professor Micheline Matthews-Roth, Harvard Medical School, observes: “It is scientifically correct to say that an individual human life begins at conception.”

The late European geneticist Dr. Jerome Lejuene stated: “The fetus is a human being. Genetically, he is complete.” Dr. Eugene Diamond, past chairman of the pediatrics department, Loyola University Medical School, Maywood, Illinois, says, “We no longer need to belabor the question of when human life begins; it begins incontrovertibly at the union of sperm and ovum. Surely the recent in vitro fertilization experiments have proved this beyond a doubt.”

Certainly, then, abortion is the killing of innocent human beings. In word and deed, then, we must help restore a culture of life that affirms the sacredness of sex, marriage, family, and human life. ■

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Counseling From the Word

Loving Self and Hating God

by Jeremy Lelek

Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other . . .” (Matthew 6:24). James echoes these sentiments when he warns, “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4, 5).

As counselors working with the hearts and lives of others, whether through formal counseling (as in an office setting), or what someone has referred to as “coffee house counseling” (i.e., friend to friend, brother to brother, sister to sister, etc.), it is always a good idea to pose the question to self and others: “What or who is mastering this individual’s heart?” Is it success, beauty, popularity, power, security, love, acceptance, approval, or happiness? Is it revenge, anger, hate, or jealousy? Whatever the case may be, anything that takes precedence over a desire to serve and honor God essentially becomes a competing master. As a result, these intruders of the heart begin to drive behavior, thinking, desires, and perception away from God and towards self and sin. Paul described it this way, “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to

righteousness?” Paul’s words must be heeded, therefore good counseling should always seek to get at the heart of this question: “Who is master?”

Additionally, when love for another master (i.e., security, acceptance, significance, etc.) is present, it immediately exposes the heart’s attitude before God. While modern Christians tend to water down issues by using politically correct or psychotherapeutic phrases when ministering to others, Jesus spoke directly. He clearly states, if you “love” one master (security, approval, acceptance, etc.) you simultaneously “hate” the other master (God). Both cannot serve as master. Both cannot drive the heart. Two opposing desires cannot be followed simultaneously. Only one is friend and master: either God or self. James follows this line of thought as well by saying that befriending worldly passions (i.e., security, approval, acceptance, etc.) is to position one’s self as enemy before God. The line is very clear, and it is placed in precise “either/or” terms. Therefore, as counselees and Christians offer their hearts and lives to be mastered by desires that either counter or compete with God’s desires (as revealed in His Word), it is a blatant act of hatred towards God, and must be addressed in love.

To truly love those who profess faith in Christ is to point them to these verses, and ask them to interpret their own hearts through the very words of Jesus

Christ. As they abide in these words with brokenness and sincerity, it is in them (the words of God) that they will find truth that will forever set them free (John 8:31, 32).

Counseling Tips

1. Seek to understand human motivation from a biblical perspective. Begin by further studying passages like: Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 6:24; Romans 8:5-8; James 4:1-8; 1 Peter 1:14-16; Ephesians 2:1-3; and Galatians 5:16-18.
2. Seek to answer the questions:
 - Who or what is mastering this individual's heart?
 - What does this person desire most?
 - What desires dominate this individual's life?

- Why does he or she desire these things so intensely?
 - How does your counselee respond to such desires?
3. Consider the saying by Dr. David Powlison, "Even desires for good things can become evil in God's analysis of what makes us tick." What makes the person with whom you are working "tick"?
 4. Expose the love/hate themes outlined by Jesus in Matthew 6:24. Have counselees consider their own hearts in light of these verses, and have them journal their thoughts. Read the journal aloud together. ■

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Returning to God and the Church

by Luke B. Bennetch

Finding our way back to God and the church is a difficult pathway. Sin separates us from God and often brings church discipline. We may find ourselves confused or bitter about our experience. We may feel distant from the brotherhood. We may feel hurt, betrayed, or misunderstood by the people around us. Amid all these feelings, we long for a restored relationship. We wish we could return and be a part of the fellowship. But do people really care about me? Will they forgive me and accept me again? Is it possible for me to return to God and the church?

God is a loving God. He forgives sinners who come to Christ and confess their sins.

The church forgives and restores the penitent sinner too. Regardless of how bad the sin is that we have committed, there is healing and restoration. There is a way back to God and the church. The journey may seem long and lonely. It is usually difficult and at times may be frustrating, but it is well worth it!

Consider the Truth

The truth is we deserve God's wrath and judgment for our sins. We are not worthy of any love and forgiveness from God or our fellow man. God could have rightfully destroyed us in our sin and condemned us to eternal destruction. But instead, He

extended mercy to us and has given us opportunity to return to Him. Praise God for His love and mercy!

We also need to consider the fact that WE stepped out on God when we chose to sin. WE stand accountable for our choices. We may have faced extreme temptation or influence to do wrong. Our church brethren may have seemed unconcerned about us. Our home may have some needs that contributed to our failure. Yes, we live in an imperfect world with other people who are prone to failures too. But WE made the choice to commit sin. WE will need to take the steps to return to God and His church. We will need to want to come back to God.

The Journey Back to God

(1) Confess our sins and repent. The first step is to repent of our sin and confess it before God and the church. Maybe our sin is still covered and we are under the smiting hand of God's conviction. Possibly we confessed it privately to God but still have not found rest. We wonder, "Must I confess this before the church to find release and forgiveness?"

We need to confess ALL of our sin. Confess it voluntarily. Confess it in openness and contrition. Confess it to our ministry and ask their counsel about where this needs to be shared to clear ourselves. This is much easier said than done! We know we must take that step but we tremble and want to run and hide. We might have decided we will do it but then we shrink back and put it off again. This battle rages in our heart and we wonder, "Will I ever have the courage to confess this? But what will they think if they know everything I did?" We need to ask God to help us abandon self and trust Him through this. It will take the greatest level of humility to do this. The sooner we step forward and expose our sin, the sooner we can find relief and forgiveness. God has promised, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

Some people choose to cover their sin

until it is discovered. Lying to cover up our sins really makes matters worse. Voluntary confession always brings greater blessings for us. Others can more easily accept our confession and begin to trust us when we have opened up first and confessed what we did. The steps to restoration are usually lessened when we take responsibility for our actions.

As we confess our sins, it is important to focus on what we have done. It will be easy to think about others and how they influenced us. We will be tempted to reveal others who have done wrong and talk about their sin. But we must stay focused on our sins. We must accept responsibility for our choices.

We also need to turn away from our sin in complete repentance. We must make a clear choice to distance ourselves from the deeds we have done. Our choice to walk in faithfulness will demonstrate our seriousness with God and the church. God notices the actions and choices of the penitent. His people also take notice when we repent and choose to forsake sin and wickedness!

Complete brokenness and humility are so necessary on this journey. To make excuse for ourselves or to blame others will only hinder us and cause others to distrust us. We dare not glory in our past sins or leave the impression that we have some advantage over others because we have been to the depths of sin. We will need to be totally broken and contrite for our failure.

(2) Walk close with God. Another very important part of returning to God and the church is to commune with God daily. We need to read our Bible and pray every day. We should thank God for His forgiveness and mercy. We should ask Him for grace each day. James 4:6 says, "*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*" We will experience the grace of God in our lives as we commune with Him and meditate on His Word. We need His grace to carry us through difficult days.

We need to look for the promises of God and claim them for our own. We should

claim the promise of forgiveness. We need to trust that God will never leave us or forsake us. We must believe that God hears our prayers and cares for us.

At first, it may seem right to often tell God we are sorry for our failure. But God wants us to trust His promise of forgiveness and thank Him for it instead of repeating our confession to Him. To continually confess our past sins to God will eventually rob us of our peace. We need faith in the God of forgiveness and faith in the forgiveness of God! Faith in God's forgiveness will add new meaning and power in our lives. His grace will enable us to rise up and serve Him!

(3) Cooperate with the church. The church likely has a pattern of how confessions are made and when and how restoration takes place. We will need to cooperate in humility and willing surrender. To resist the efforts of our leaders will not bring God's blessing on us. We should cooperate fully without reservation. When we share in public we should be careful not to make statements that imply that everyone in the church has temptations to sin just like ourselves. It will be helpful to express appreciation for the patience and forgiveness of our fellow brethren and sisters.

(4) Be committed to the brotherhood. The church is the body of Christ and as we draw close to Christ personally we will desire to draw close to the church as well. God designed the church to be a help for us. We will need the help of other Christians to encourage us in this difficult journey. We should learn to open ourselves to the members in the church and share our experiences and thoughts. We need to be faithful in church attendance and participation. It is this open sharing and involvement that will help each member learn to trust us and accept us into the brotherhood again.

There will be those who have compassion for our needs and reach out to us in love. Many will understand and will care about us but some may struggle to put their thoughts of love and care into words. We

can help them best by our own responses of humility and openness. If they feel we are easily hurt or that we often take things the wrong way it will only make it harder for them to communicate with us.

It might surprise us, though, what problems we find at times in the brotherhood of believers. We might find people with critical or bitter hearts will befriend us. They may share experiences they faced where they feel the church was unjust. They may seek our help to prove the church has made mistakes. It will be tempting to join our efforts with theirs to try to justify our wrong. This kind of thing will not build us up and lead us closer to God and His people.

We may also meet those who we feel look down on us. They may seem to be self-righteous. We get the feeling they think they would never fail like we did. We must be careful that we are not just imagining these feelings. If it is indeed true, we need to love them anyway. We should pray that God would bless them and keep them for His glory. We dare never wish evil would befall them so they learn their lesson.

Likely, we will also meet individuals who make it their business to know all the details, true or untrue, and spread them around through the church. Gossip cuts deeply and leaves us in more pain. Satan may tempt us to give up completely in the face of this kind of problem. We are left with that awful question, "What did people hear about me?" It will be tempting to avoid people and stay away from church. But this only leads to more suspicions that we are not doing well. Instead, we will need a strong personal commitment to rise up and face the public and not allow gossip to ruin us further. Finally, God will bring every word into account that men say. God will be the avenger of all such gossip. Can we place these stories in His hands and let Him do His work in His time?

As you can see, we will need to purpose to overlook the faults of those around us. This may even include the leaders of the church, at times. We will see people make mistakes that will seem so wrong to us.

Somehow, in this journey it is common to find ourselves very sensitive to the failures of others around us. It may be all right to mention what we think we see, but we should be very careful to spend our energy and thoughts on our own journey of faithfulness at this point. We can commit our concerns about other people to God and let Him work on them in His own time and way. We must also remember that God will use imperfect people like this to mold our lives into His image if we accept His work in our life.

We also may need to establish accountability with someone who can help us through to complete victory. A church leader or a parent may be able to help us in this way. We should welcome their questions about our experience. We may not hide and cover things. We may not feel like, "This is none of your business."

(5) Be honest with our feelings. We will need to be honest with our feelings. There will be experiences and events that may be particularly painful for us. To sit aside while the rest of the group takes communion will be painful. Business meeting may be another reminder that others are being used but we are not. Others will be filling the role or roles we once filled and we may be tempted to jealousy. They may even be less gifted in that service than we were. All of these things will produce a host of mixed feelings and pain. We should cherish those moments of pain and face them honestly. It is part of the healing process. We dare not run away and hide if we want to move forward in our journey. Many times the places we want to avoid are the best places for us to be! It is good for us to share these feelings with a trusted brother or sister who can help us sort through our feelings. They can pray with us and help us find rest through these times.

Sometimes people run away from this pain. They busy themselves with something that they enjoy. Maybe they move to another area to escape this pain. They might try to start all over in a new area. But the remembrances are still there. The pain

is there to be faced at a later time. It is so much better to honestly work through our failures with those we love and find healing and rest right at home.

(6) Discipline our thoughts. We will need to be careful about our thought life. Satan will plant thoughts of self-pity in our hearts. We may feel like our punishment is too hard or too long. We may be tempted to think no one understands and cares. Sometimes we may feel like giving up completely. If we dwell on these thoughts, Satan will surely get us down and we will lose out.

Bitterness may also come tempting our hearts on this journey. We might be tempted to hold on to some supposed injustice until we are restored into the brotherhood and then we will set this straight. We might be tempted to watch closely for others to fail in ways similar to our failure and be sure it is taken care of fairly. If we choose to dwell on bitterness of any kind, we will lose our relationship with God and the church.

It will be easy to compare ourselves with others and feel we are doing fine. Maybe someone has a problem sleeping in church, while we are usually wide awake. We may notice this and might be tempted to say, "Why doesn't the church deal with this man? He has a problem." We must remember we are responsible for ourselves. Others will answer for themselves before God.

Philippians 4:8 says, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **honest**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are **of good report**; if there be any **virtue**, and if there be any **praise**, think on these things.*" We will need to choose these kinds of thoughts. Choosing good thoughts will help to establish our hearts in Truth. Allowing less than godly thoughts and feelings to fill our hearts will lead us away from God and into darkness of heart. It is very helpful to open up and share our thoughts with those who are close to us and are helping us through this journey. They can help us sort through what things are true and what is from the devil.