

The SWORD and TRUMPET



"Blow ye the Trumpet and warn the People."

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

"Take the Sword of the Spirit which is The Word of God."

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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THE 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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IN THIS ISSUE

1. PERSON OF THE MONTH: James Chalmers	1
2. Frugality in a Wasteful Society	2
3. FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: Greener Grass	4
4. THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS	6
5. NEWSLINES	11
6. "Who Then Is Willing?"	14
7. SERMON OF THE MONTH: Come Now Let Us Reason Together	17
8. Three Views of the Christian and War	19
9. SONG OF THE MONTH: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"	22
10. BEGINNING ISSUES: Evidence for Creation or Evolution?	24
11. Ministry Trends for the Post-Everything Generation	25
12. Mennonite Nazis?	27
13. Elders Extending the Call	29
14. COUNSELING FROM THE WORD: Restored by the God of All Grace ...	33
15. Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer	35

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come," we are expressing the longing in our heart for the time when Jesus will come back. The devil will be bound, the earth will be renewed, the Antichrist will be defeated, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

(3) *There should be a concern for His will.*

The next phrase calls for God's will to be done "in earth." This may be an appeal for God's will to prevail on the earth. It may also be a request that God's will might be done in these earthly bodies of ours. Then, what we are really praying is: "Thy will be done in me as it is in heaven." In our bodies the laws of Heaven should be observed. The Bible says (Psalm 103:20-22) that the supreme desire of all Heaven is to do the will of God, and thereby to praise and to worship Him. And so, we pray in the Lord's Prayer, that such a condition will prevail in earth—perhaps over the wide earth, but also in these earthly bodies of ours.

To desire the will of God to be done in our lives is not always an easy thing. Ask the young father who sits at the bedside of his dying wife, or the aged sister who for thirty years has been confined to her bed as an invalid. Even Jesus prayed that the Father's will be done. Jesus always came back however with, "Nevertheless not my will but thine be done." The point is this: When we pray, "Thy will be done in earth," we are not necessarily asking for pleasure or fame. It may be God's will to put us in the place of suffering, or to cause us to pass through the valley of sorrow, in order to make us what He wants us to be. Thy will be done in me, O Lord, as it is in Heaven.

3. THE NEEDS OF THE FAMILY ARE MENTIONED

We pray, "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Here, in just a few words, our Lord has covered the needs of our whole life.

(1) *Our physical needs.*

The term "daily bread" most likely

stands for everything that we really need for our earthly existence. There are two words in the Greek language for "bread." The one means "cornbread," and the other (used here by Jesus), is a wider word meaning "food." Jesus selected a word which was worldwide in its scope. It includes the rice of the Hindu, the macaroni of the Italian, the oatmeal of the Scott—in short, it is a word standing for basic food in general. The God to whom the nations are but as "the small dust," and the God who inhabits eternity, is prepared to consider our needs, even down to the small details such as matters of our daily food. We are not told to pray for luxuries, but we are promised that we shall have enough. David (looking back in his old age), could say, "I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Psalm 37:25).

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we are declaring our absolute dependence upon God for everything, even for our daily bread. And even if one has plenty of money, still he must depend on God—for what is wealth if God withholds the gift of bread? Some readers probably recall the legend of King Midas. Above everything else, he wished to have the power to turn to gold everything that he touched. And when his wish was granted, he went about touching this and that, with the feeling that his wealth was piling up by the millions. But when he became hungry (and went to take bread into his mouth), the bread turned to gold. And when he became thirsty, the water turned to gold at the touch of his thirsty lips. He found that all his wealth was worthless if God didn't give him bread. The case of King Midas is merely a legend, but it is a sober fact that we are equally dependent upon God for our daily bread. He could withhold the sun and stop the rain and make the land barren, and the farmer with all his modern equipment and chemical sprays would be unable to raise a crop. We are absolutely in the hands of God, and it is supreme folly to suppose that we can live a single day without Him.

(to be continued next issue)

Person of the Month:

James Chalmers (1841-1901)



A Congregationalist of Scottish origin, James Chalmers felt God's call upon his life in his teen years. While at a church service, upon hearing the reading of a letter from a missionary to Fiji, James responded to his pastor's plea for missionaries. James felt that God would someday bring the Gospel to the cannibals in the South Sea islands through him.

In 1866, at the age of 25, Chalmers and his new bride set sail for the South Seas and New Guinea. However, they were not to arrive at their desired destination for several years due to shipwreck on the island of Rarotonga. The people of this island were known to be the most savage in Polynesia. While there Brother Chalmers began to learn the language and culture and to become accustomed to the climate. However, he could not forget New Guinea and the peoples there who knew nothing of God's salvation through Christ.

In the spring of 1877, James, now 36, and his wife were able to take a ship to Papua, New Guinea. The cannibalistic villagers of Suau kindly received their visitors and the Chalmers established a good relationship with them. James and his wife endeavored to live Christ before the natives.

Brother Chalmers' missionary work was enlarged when the mission back home in Great Britain gave him a small steamship with which he was able to visit over 100 villages and stay at those where he could begin to establish a church outpost. If it was a safe place he noted it and either returned himself or sent a teacher there. During these years the lives of him and his wife were threatened twice but God protected them.

In 1879, when Brother James was 38, tragedy struck his home, with the death of his wife who had been sick for a long time. Chalmers experienced overwhelming grief but chose to stay in New Guinea rather than return home for a time of rest. Instead, he became even more zealous in his mission work. He now believed that God's main purpose for him was to make friends among the natives in the various tribes and prepare the way for others, in years to come, to water and harvest the seeds he was sowing.

Due to his work in the villages, up and down the coast, Brother James was well-known. The people greatly respected him because of his courageous faith in times of danger and his Christlike love and concern for them. He was asked to preach in the villages and sometimes did it from the heathen places of worship. As a result of the faithful preaching of him and his assistants the people finally declared they would forsake cannibalism, and by 1882 the area was free of such horrible violence.

Brother Chalmers returned twice to Great Britain for rest and reporting, once in 1886, and the second in 1894 for the hundredth anniversary of the Mission. James was then 53 years old.

(continued on page 5)

Frugality in a Wasteful Society

by Dale Eby

When was the last time you threw away an item that was still useable? How much garbage does your household produce each week? This country of plenty has a reputation for large garbage cans and being careless with its abundance of material possessions. Does the Word of God speak to the issue of thrift, economy, and saving?

We understand man's duty is to worship the Creator of the universe and not the creation. However, to use, consume, or expend thoughtlessly or carelessly is out of character for the follower of Christ. In Matthew 14:20 Jesus was interested in frugality when, after feeding five thousand men (plus women and children), He instructed the disciples to take up the fragments (there were twelve baskets full). Matthew 15:37 says that after feeding four thousand men (plus the women and children) "they took up . . . seven baskets full." Scripture speaks of the disciples' concern about the "waste" of a woman's very precious ointment in the anointing of Jesus in Matthew 26:8 and Mark 14:4. Luke 15 speaks of what we call the "prodigal" son's misuses of that with which he'd been entrusted. Though the term *prodigal* is not used in the Bible, it literally means "recklessly wasteful; a person given to luxury or extravagance." Proverbs 6:6 encourages us to consider the ant: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." An ant is known for its foresight, industry, and economy. Proverbs 18:9 says, "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." Both the slothful and the great waster are destroyers. The slothful neglects his work, and things go to ruin. The great waster destroys things. Though we dare not

worship "things," it seems clear the Scripture is calling us to some level of frugality as we live in a wasteful society. There is a call to be careful in the use of what we have.

Let us draw some instruction from Proverbs 27:23-26 which says, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field."

1. "Do not be careless with what you have" (verse 23).

We are to use what we have, profit from it or give it away, guarding against needlessly destroying it. Giving diligence means giving attentive care. God gave us what we have. To be careless is to say we do not appreciate what God has given us. This country has a throwaway mentality, and the landfills are monuments to that. Garbage has become a nightmare for America. Here are some statistics about the garbage issues:

- Out of New York City come approximately 450 tractor trailer trucks plus 150 packer trucks of garbage per day.
- The average American produces four and one-half pounds of waste per day, or 1600 pounds a year.
- In 2002 New York City spent \$275.00 per ton to dispose of its trash. (*Gone Tomorrow—The Hidden Life of Garbage*)

It used to be we considered garbage to be discarded food or unmanufactured goods. Today that makes up only 24% of what is trashed. Packaging makes up a significant

PAGE 2

SWORD AND TRUMPET

amount of what is put at the curbside. Proverbs 27 says, "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." If that is done we will not be waste-free, but our stewardship will reveal a stark contrast to the norm of society. It is a blemish to our name as Christians when there is little prudence on our part. We are called to be thoughtful about what we have to use.

2. Remember you might not always have it (verse 24).

There is uncertainty to riches/possessions. God has done His part in providing; do your part in using wisely. Proverbs 24:30-34 says, "A little folding of the hands. . . . So shall thy poverty come." Those who do not make the most of what they have often lose out. Proverbs 13:23 tells us, "Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment" (prudence—careful management, economy). What is our mindset? Is it that there will always be more so we can discard what we presently have? Will the next generation do without because of our misuse? We read of "socially responsible" businesses. They are using recyclable goods to preserve the environment. There is another reason Christians are to be socially responsible. "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!" has meaning to the point that judgment from God is at the end of the needless waster's life (Isaiah 24:1-6).

3. Use what is available (verses 25, 26).

If you have hay, use it. If you have herbs, gather them. If you have lambs and goats get benefit from them. Psalm 104:14 says, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth." Proverbs 12:27 tells us, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious [not regarded as junk]." The book *Living More With Less* redirects our thinking about needs, wants, and desires. Greed and covetousness often motivate us to replace what we have whether worn out or not.

Would God be pleased if we took steps toward a more low-waste, more complete-use lifestyle?

4. Care brings blessing (enough).

"And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens" (verse 27). Care given with what we have goes a long way to meeting our needs. Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Sometimes our needs are met but because we are not prudent we lack and feel God let us down. Our carnal desire for extravagant living is condemned in James 5:3-5 for spiritual reasons. A simple, frugal lifestyle is in line with Scripture and has blessing. Author and teacher Harold Martin says, "Simple living is not a virtue in itself. It becomes virtuous only as the Christian contributes to the transformation of others who are needy. Christians should aim to live simply, concentrating less and less on accumulating material things and more and more on caring for people." Matthew 6:19, 20 says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

Our "treasures" are not usually geared toward practicality, but toward earthly status. God would have us find contentment and blessing with what we have been given to use.

Living frugally in a wasteful society involves a life of wisdom, discretion, and good sense. God says to ask for wisdom and He will give it liberally (James 1:5). We act responsibly because "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). May God help us. ■

—Used by permission from the *Mid-Atlantic Informer*; October 2008.

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Greener Grass

by Ben Waldner

Driving along a stretch of highway close to my home community recently, I noticed a patch of grass that was lush and green. There were no weeds or bare spots and it looked like it had just been mowed. It was quite attractive and refreshing. The grass in the yard surrounding our home is quite different. There is nothing attractive about it. We see the occasional bare spot, and weeds are plentiful. Most of it is brown and shriveled and in the process of dying. There are a few patches here and there with green in them. The occasional green blade that sticks up several inches above the rest of the grass in the yard seems out of place. We have not mowed for four weeks. Comparing the two patches of grass, I thought to myself, *Now wouldn't it be nice if our lawn was this green.*

As I reflected on this experience, I noticed a correlation between the attractiveness of the patch of lush, green grass compared to the wilted and drab grass in our yard, and the rest of my life. I frequently notice the more attractive "green

grass" as I journey and compare it to the "grass in our yard." I observe the neighbor's growing business, the newer vehicle with better gas mileage, and the new computer on my friend's desk. These look more attractive to me than the things I have. They have an appeal to me that the things I have do not. Can you identify with me? Do you find yourself looking over the fence at the "greener grass" and comparing it with the "drab grass" in your yard? Does the grass on the other side of the fence seem more appealing to you?

While there is nothing inherently wrong with noticing and even enjoying the greener grass, our tendency is to lose sight of what we have, focus on what we don't have, and crave what others have. When our vision of what we have is obscured, it quickly affects how we relate to it. Focusing on what we don't have breeds discontent and increases ungratefulness. Cultivating our cravings further diminishes our ability to enjoy our blessings. What helps us think clearly when we experience greener grass situations?

PAGE 4

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Here are some suggestions:

Count your blessings.

Counting our blessings simple means to name those things we presently have. Blessings can be material or immaterial. A house, a vehicle, children, a spouse, and a church family are material blessings. Immaterial ones are health, strength, forgiveness, healthy relationships, and hope, to name a few. Identifying and naming our blessings is one way of cultivating gratefulness. Counting our blessings includes giving recognition to God who gives them (James 1:17). Blessings are gifts. Receivers should cultivate gratefulness for the gifts they receive.

Use what you have.

When the three servants in Jesus' parable were given different amounts of money, two of them used what they had been given, while the third went and buried what he received (Matthew 25:14-30). Let's learn from the two faithful servants. The first servant received five talents and the other two. The first servant could have found fault with the master for giving him five talents; he may have wanted two. The second servant could have found fault with the master for giving him two talents. Maybe he wanted five. Neither of them found fault with the master. Neither focused on what the other had. Both used what they had. Both were rewarded. Do you have \$10? Use it. Do you have \$100? Use it. Do you have 50 cents? Use it and you will be rewarded too.

Guard against covetousness.

To covet is to desire something inordinately. Things promise a fulfilled life, but they never quite deliver what they promise. That's why you had that sense of "something is missing" after you obtained that item you wanted for so long. Riches are deceitful. They promise reward but the real cost in obtaining them is masked. They cost more than they reward. Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the

abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Guard against covetousness by drawing close to the Lord. This is perhaps the most effective safeguard to covetousness. He doesn't just give life—He gives it abundantly (John 10:10).

Have you lost sight of what the Lord has given you? Begin to count your blessings. Name them one by one. Write them down. It may surprise you how many you have.

Have you focused on what you don't have? Reconsider what the Lord has entrusted to you. Ask Him to forgive you for judging Him. Ask Him to show you how to use the talents He gave you.

Have your desires become your masters? God gives more grace. Ask Him for help. "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4).

Greener grass is appealing, isn't it? But . . . it still has to be mowed. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the *Deeper Life Ministries Newsletter*, October 2008.

JAMES CHALMERS . . . cont'd.

James Chalmers decided to sail to the island of Goaribari with Oliver Thompson and a group of assistants. They sailed April 7, 1901, with plans to go ashore the following morning. As Chalmers and Thompson set foot on land they noticed all was not well. Cannibals with weapons seized the ship. Other cannibals took Chalmers and Thompson to a large building where they killed the men and prepared their bodies to be eaten. James Chalmers was received into the safety of his heavenly home April 8, 1901, at the age of 60.

When word of these violent deaths reached the rest of the world many were in shock. God used this terrible event for good, as many, upon hearing of this seeming tragedy, took up the challenge and volunteered to carry on the work which the Lord had begun through the faithful service of James Chalmers.

—Gail L. Emerson

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

JANUARY 4, 2009

Midwives Serve God

Exodus 1:7-21

In our lessons for January and February we move from New Testament characters (December's lessons) to the Old Testament. Some of these were rather obscure individuals yet they played significant roles in God's overall plan. Be sure to see their accomplishments in that light.

We cover a significant swath of Israel's history in these lessons. Don't fail to catch the way each of the individuals and situations we study in these lessons moves us on in understanding God's great plan for mankind. These lessons are actually a prologue to the events studied in December's lessons leading up to the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of mankind.

As today's lesson opens, the children of Israel had been in Egypt some 350 years and had grown into a large community. As we note from verse 7 they were very prolific and that was the cause of the conflict we see in today's text. In the perhaps 270 years since Joseph's death, the story of his rescue of Egypt from famine had faded into dim history, and now the descendants of Jacob's family were no longer looked upon with favor. They began to be feared for their potential in siding with Egypt's enemies and thus causing a threat to Egypt's stability as a nation (see Psalm 105:24).

To counteract that threat, the Egyp-

tians put them in bondage and subjected them to hard labor. They became virtual slaves of the Pharaoh and built for him the store cities of Pithom and Raamses. However, their efforts to wear down the Israelites and thus decrease their birth rate failed, as we note in verse 12. So they increased the pressure, but that failed also. What this Pharaoh, and his successors, failed to realize is that it is futile to attempt to thwart God's plan.

The Pharaoh's next tactic was to instruct the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill the Hebrew male babies. This created a moral dilemma for the midwives. They could not conscientiously kill the babies, but to refuse to do so would incur the king's wrath. Their fear of God was greater than their fear of Pharaoh, however, so they allowed the babies to live.

The king's rationale appears to be that by killing the male babies, not only would that reduce the Hebrew population, but that the women would then seek Egyptian husbands and thus integrate into Egyptian society, thereby diminishing the influence of the Hebrews. But it didn't work.

When confronted by the king about their failure to kill the male babies, the midwives gave an evasive answer that seemed to satisfy him. Undoubtedly there was truth in their statement that the "Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women," since those used to physical labor, as were the Hebrews, had an easier time in childbirth than those of the more elite society of the Egyptians.

PAGE 6

SWORD AND TRUMPET

“Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.” God’s plan to build a nation of the Hebrews was not to be thwarted. As a reward for the midwives’ faithfulness, God blessed them. The establishing of families referred to in verse 21 likely refers to the general increase of the Hebrew people rather than specifically to the midwives.

For thought and discussion

1. The fact that God often used obscure, seemingly insignificant people in His great plan should give all of us courage. There is something for everyone to do. Never disparage your potential to do significant work for God. Open yourself fully to His leading and control. The blessing will be yours.
2. Why did God leave the Israelites in Egypt so long when He had promised them the land of Canaan many years before?
3. What does this lesson, and its subsequent historical unfolding, teach us about those who attempt to destroy God’s people? Cite other biblical and historical examples.
4. When faced with a moral dilemma as were the midwives, what motivates our response, and where do we find the courage to do what is right? Discuss.

JANUARY 11, 2009

Rahab Helps God’s People

Joshua 2:1-14; 6:22-25

From last Sunday’s lesson we fast forward approximately 120 years to the beginning of the conquest of Canaan. The Exodus and the wandering were behind them, and the Israelites were now camped on the plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan awaiting orders from God to move forward. Moses was dead. Joshua was now in command.

Another phase in the life of Israel was about to begin.

But the city of Jericho stood in the way. It was necessary to defeat that city to open the way into Canaan. Joshua, no doubt remembering what had happened 40 years before, secretly sent two spies to scope out the city. These spies lodged at a place convenient for escape and where suspicion of their presence would not be so readily aroused.

However, as we note from Rahab’s testimony, verses 9-11, the city was on the alert, and the spies’ presence was discovered and reported to the king (verses 2, 3). But Rahab had a plan, so she hid the spies from the king’s men and lied about their whereabouts. She then sent the king’s men on a false pursuit and once the way was clear, sent the spies in another direction to safety (verses 15, 16, not in our text).

Before helping the spies escape down the city wall, Rahab conversed with them where they were hidden on the roof of her house. What she told them was that the fear of the Israelites had fallen upon their city and they knew that “the Lord hath given you the land.” Certainly this was heartening news for the spies and would be welcome news to Joshua, reassuring him of God’s care and protection. Rahab cited the experience of God’s providing a way through the Red Sea and Israel’s defeat of Sihon and Og as evidence that their God was indeed the God of heaven and of earth. As such, nothing could stop the advance of His people, the Israelites.

Rahab then proposed a deal to the two spies. She pled for kindness to her and her family during the invasion of the land in return for her kindness in preserving their lives. She knew the defeat of Jericho was inevitable and wanted to escape certain death. The spies pledged their lives as security for her and her family—as long as she kept quiet regarding their mission.

We see two examples of faith exhibited

in this situation: Rahab expressing her faith in a God whom she did not know (except that He was indeed in control of heaven and earth), and the faith of the spies (in that God and Joshua would honor their commitment to Rahab and her family)—heathen inhabitants of a land slated for destruction.

In the verses from Chapter 6, we note Joshua's instructions to the two spies to go "and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her." So Rahab and her family were saved. Her faith in the God of Israel was confirmed. And "she dwelleth in Israel . . . unto this day."

We do note in verse 23 that Rahab and her family were temporarily excluded from "the camp of Israel." This likely had to do with their purification and ritual procedures necessary to be accepted as full members with Israel. That they were eventually integrated into Israel is evidenced by verse 25 and her subsequent history as mother of Boaz and in the ancestral line of Jesus, the Messiah (see Matthew 1:5).

God always shows mercy to those who come to Him in faith.

For thought and discussion

1. The Lord's work involves strategy, as portrayed by Joshua in this lesson. Think of times when you saw the benefits of strategy in the work of building God's kingdom. Maybe some class discussion.
2. Is it ever right to lie to protect the life of another person? Be careful with this one, and be sure to look up appropriate helpful Scriptures.
3. For what reason did God honor Rahab? (See Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31.) Was it for saving the life of the spies, or what?
4. What do you think God's purpose was in having Rahab in the lineage of His Son, Jesus the Messiah? Discuss.
5. To enhance your study, read the rest of Chapter 2 and all of Chapter 6.

PAGE 8

JANUARY 18, 2009

Joshua Leads Israel

Joshua 3:1-17

Immediately after the return of the spies with their favorable report concerning the fearfulness of the inhabitants of Jericho and surrounding territory, Joshua made preparations to cross Jordan and begin the conquest of Canaan. Israel broke camp on the plains of Moab and moved to the banks of Jordan. After three days the officers went throughout the camp giving instructions for the crossing.

Joshua had been trained by Moses (Exodus 24:13; 33:11), chosen by God as Moses' successor (Numbers 27:18-23), and commissioned by God to lead Israel after Moses' death (Joshua 1:1-9). Now was a crucial time. Was Joshua up to the task? The people had pledged their support (Joshua 1:16-18); now it was up to Joshua to deliver. But Joshua was not in this alone. His trust and confidence were in the God of heaven and earth who had promised to be with him and guide him.

The instruction to the children of Israel was to follow the ark of the covenant—the visible symbol of God's presence among them. They were, however, to keep a respectful distance from the ark, both out of reverence and to make the ark visible to more people. They were also to prepare themselves spiritually and morally because the Lord God would be among them on the morrow. They would see evidence of His mighty hand at work on their behalf, therefore they must be pure and holy.

God also gave Joshua a promise, that through this river-crossing experience He would elevate him to a position of high respect among the people (see also 4:14). God wanted to make it clear to Israel that Joshua was to be respected as their leader no less than Moses had been. Joshua was now God's spokesman to Israel and God was about to confirm that position through Joshua's command of the present situation.

Joshua called the people together and

SWORD AND TRUMPET

told them just how this crossing would take place. And that through their observation of the miraculous crossing of Jordan they would develop confidence in God's promise to help them drive out the inhabitants of the land, "seven nations greater and mightier than [they]" (Deut. 7:1). Joshua also instructed them to choose a man from each tribe to take a stone out of Jordan to erect a memorial in the Promised Land to remind subsequent generations of God's miracle there at the Jordan (see 4:1-8).

Then it was time to move out in faith. God's miracle did not happen until the priests bearing the ark were poised to step into the overflowing waters of the Jordan. When they stepped in, the flow of water ceased. It ran away below to the Dead Sea, and piled up 16 miles above, leaving a wide swath of dry riverbed for the multitude of Israel to cross over "right against Jericho." One can easily imagine the fear of the inhabitants as they observed the miracle of the parting of Jordan and the invasion of a multitude of people, numbering perhaps several million.

Now, finally, the children of Israel were in the Promised Land. The fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham some 750 years before was now complete. Yet there was much to do. The conquest and settling of the land, and its division among the tribes would take Joshua another 25 years until his death at 110.

Joshua was a faithful leader, blessed by God, revered by the people, and an example for all time.

For thought and discussion

1. It would have taken a big man to fill Moses' shoes as leader of Israel. Study the ways Joshua had been prepared for this task.
2. How did the ark of the covenant standing in the midst of Jordan inspire the children of Israel?
3. It is always difficult to be the successor to a successful leader. How can this transition be eased in the life of the church? Discuss.

4. What is the value of spiritual memorials? What forms may they take? What are significant ones in your life?
5. At times when God asks us to step out into seemingly turbulent waters, what confidence do we have of His constant presence and guiding hand?

JANUARY 25, 2009

Samson's Mother Prepares for His Birth

Judges 13:1-14, 24

Again we move forward on the timeline of Israel's history some 300 years since last Sunday's lesson. Joshua had passed off the scene and the nation had fallen into serious spiritual decline. (Read Joshua 24:31 and the first several chapters of the Book of Judges. Note especially 2:16-19.) Today's lesson focuses on the parents of Samson, the 12th and last of the judges of Israel. In spite of Samson's later profligacy, his parents appeared to be a God-fearing couple. They stood out among the lawlessness and wickedness of the day.

Verse 1 of our lesson depicts the all too familiar rise and fall of Israel's spiritual condition during the period of the judges. They sinned, God delivered them into enemy hands in punishment, they cried out to God, He heard and sent judges who provided respite from their oppression. But the reforms didn't last. It became a vicious cycle of apostasy, oppression, and despair tempered by short-term relief.

In the setting of today's lesson the Israelites had suffered oppression by the Philistines for 40 years. And once again God was preparing to raise up a deliverer. This judge was to be a special person, born under special circumstances, endowed with special strength and, even though he led a less than exemplary life, is listed nonetheless among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. This man was Samson.

The narrative opens with a description of Samson's parents, father Manoah and

his barren and unnamed wife, both of the tribe of Dan. One day an angel appeared to the woman and startled her with a message that she would bear a child—a special man-child who would “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” The angel also gave her specific instructions that she should abstain from fermented wine and all unclean foods. This son was to be a Nazarite, separated unto God from the womb, and she must begin that process in her own life.

Manoah was also astonished at this revelation and wanted to know more, so he entreated the Lord to send the angel again to instruct them in the care and raising of this special child. God honored his request and sent the angel again to the woman alone in the field. The woman quickly ran to get her husband. When he came he asked for verification if he was indeed the “man” who had spoken to his wife earlier. Receiving a positive response, Manoah then laid out his concern: How shall we raise and train this child? No doubt his wife had told him of the previous announcement by the angel that he would be useful in defeating Philistine oppression. How should they then train the child with this in mind, and the fact that he would be a Nazarite, set apart to God?

Again the angel repeated his previous instructions to the woman: abstain from strong drink and unclean foods. She, too, was set apart for her special role. When her time was fulfilled she bore a son and named him Samson. As the child grew, the Lord blessed him, and as he matured, the Spirit of the Lord began impelling him forward in his designated work.

The story of Samson’s life is a mixed one, yet he served under the blessing and direction of God. (Read the entire account of his life.) Though many times Samson was unfaithful to his charge, God honored his life and mission.

For thought and discussion

1. If you ever question the mercy and long-suffering of God, read the Book of Judges.

PAGE 10

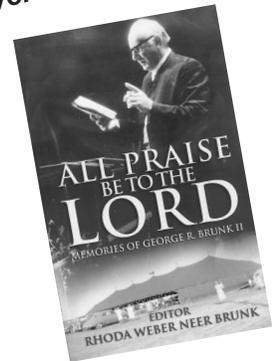
Your faith and confidence will be restored as you observe His patient dealing with a wayward and disobedient people.

2. Why is it so difficult for God’s people to maintain faith? Discuss.
3. Study the restrictions of the Nazarite vow. What was unusual about Samson’s case?
4. Does God still use messenger angels to speak or minister to His people today?
5. Couldn’t the attitude expressed by Manoah and his wife have a greater impact on our homes and families today? Discuss. ■

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Obama's ACORN Implicated

Everyone knows how Obama spent his early days as a “community organizer.” What he wasn’t so quick to tell us is what that involved. The organization he worked for was ACORN—Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. ACORN has had investigations because of voter fraud and instances of fraud spring up in fourteen different states. They’ve been registering dead people, felons, famous people, and fictional characters. In one case they registered the entire starting roster of the Dallas Cowboys’ football team . . . in Nevada. In another case, they even registered Mickey Mouse. In a number of other cases, they’ve offered cigarettes, money, and even marijuana to street people to vote Democrat.

ACORN is a strong supporter of Democratic candidates everywhere, but they’ve especially supported their insider friend, Barack Obama. In fact, Obama has given nearly a million dollars to ACORN this election to register voters to vote for him.

Unfortunately, their malfeasance doesn’t stop at stealing elections for the Democrats. The second sentence of ACORN’s website proclaims, “Its aims are to gain better housing for first-time homebuyers and tenants.” Indeed, they were instrumental in crafting and pushing legislation that required Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to give risky loans to those that could not afford it, the foundational reason for the sub-prime mortgage crash (which echoed throughout the entire economy). —Sources: *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, *AP*, *Bloomberg*

Further Reading: “Inside Obama’s Acorn” (<http://cli.gs/2gMdre>) in *National Review*, “State by State, Fraud by Electoral Fraud” (<http://cli.gs/2gMdre>) on *GayPatriot*, “Would the last honest reporter please turn on the lights?” (<http://cli.gs/VX4jTA>) in *Meridian*, “How the Democrats Created the Financial Crisis” (<http://cli.gs/ntaQv9>) in *Bloomberg*, “Voter Fraud” (<http://cli.gs/dXVSQ8>) by Ken Blackwell (former OH Secretary of State), and “Non-Ohioans Vote in Ohio? . . .” (<http://cli.gs/8DhP6H>) on *Palestra.net* (which is an investigative report about an instance of an Obama campaign worker fraudulently registering himself to vote and absentee voting in Ohio).

* * * * *

Firebrands to Flowers

“A [Jesus] film team traveled to a remote village in a Buddhist nation. On the road they passed by many stone gods and pagodas filled with idols. When they arrived, a feeling of darkness fell upon the hearts of the team members. They learned that the people worshiped ‘The Evil Spirit.’ They heard that witch doctors had considerable power to curse families and children, sometimes resulting in death.

“Fearful, but still trusting God, the team set up the projection equipment and showed ‘JESUS’ without incident. At the invitation to receive Christ, the ENTIRE village excitedly indicated their desire to follow Christ. Joyful, but perplexed, the team then learned what had happened behind the scenes.

“The witch doctors had plotted to destroy the team’s ministry. Out of sight, and hidden by the jungle bush, the witch doctors hurled red-hot coals at the team members running the projector. As the firebrands

flew through the air, the glowing embers were transformed into flowers that floated harmlessly to the ground. Everyone in the village saw it happen. In an instant they knew that the God who had sent the team—the God who created the universe—was greater than the ‘The Evil Spirit.’ ”

—Excerpt from the JESUS Film Project (via Luke’s *Kuepfer Kronicle*).

* * * * *

Another “Haditha” Marine Acquitted

Lieutenant Andrew Grayson has just been proclaimed “not guilty on all charges” by a jury. Grayson was one of the Marines involved in what the media and Democrats quickly dubbed the Haditha massacre. Charges of a war-crimes massacre and cover-up in Iraq quickly gained traction in an environment in which the Democrats and press were bitterly opposed to the war in Iraq. Sen. John Murtha (D-PA) was particularly equivocal and condemning, saying that the Marines had “killed innocent civilians in cold blood.” Eight Marines were charged with murder and covering up the incident.

What received far less attention was that the charges against six of them were dropped due to lack of evidence and Grayson was declared not guilty when brought to trial. The trial of the only remaining Marine has been delayed. The officer investigating has told the prosecution that, “the account you want me to believe does not support unpremeditated murder.” The prosecution has been dogged by their witnesses issuing contradictory statements. —Sources: *AFP, Wikipedia*

* * * * *

Bailouts Equal Rough Economic Ride

“Many Americans today are asking themselves how the economy got to be in such a bad spot.

“For years they thought the economy was booming, growth was up, job numbers and productivity were increasing. Yet now we find ourselves in what is shaping up to be one of the most severe economic downturns since the Great Depression.

“Unfortunately, the government’s pre-

ferred solution to the crisis is the very thing that got us into this mess in the first place: government intervention.”

—Excerpt from “Commentary: Bailouts will lead to rough economic ride” (<http://cli.gs/rQPtN3>) by Ron Paul on *CNN* (I suggest reading the whole thing.)

* * * * *

Piggy Pools in Hog Heaven

“WASHINGTON—Here, little piggies.

“Congressional deal-brokers yesterday slopped a mess of pork into the \$700 billion financial rescue bill passed by the Senate last night—including a tax break for makers of kids’ wooden arrows—in a bid to lure reluctant lawmakers into voting for the package.

“Stuffed into the 451-page bill are more than \$1.7 billion worth of targeted tax breaks to be doled out for a sty full of eyebrow-raising purposes over the next decade.”

The special provisions include tax breaks for: Manufacturers of kids’ wooden arrows (\$6 million), Puerto Rican and Virgin Islands rum producers (\$192 million), wool research, Auto-racing tracks (\$128 million), corporations operating in American Samoa (\$33 million), and small- to medium-budget film and television productions (\$10 million).”

If any congressperson who calls himself a conservative thinks that targeted tax cuts are good simply because they’re tax cuts, they’re wrong. This increased complication of the tax code will add to the tax preparers’ drag on the economy. Work that should not have to be done is wasted work. Even though these aren’t tax cuts in the traditional, fair, across the board, equal percentage tax cuts, I have to conclude that this is a far too typical Washington compromise: Democrats (and fiscally liberal Republicans) get increased government spending/responsibility/insurance/nanny-state, while Repubs (and fiscally conservative Dems) get a tax cut. And so the deficit increases. What I’m trying to figure out is that if this gives us the worst of both worlds or simply is half as good as it could be.

—Excerpt from “Piggy Pools in Hog Heaven With Pork-Packed Pact” (<http://cli.gs/mWD2vM>) in the *New York Post*.

* * * * *

Pope: Financial Crisis Shows Futility of Money

“VATICAN CITY—Pope Benedict XVI says the global financial crisis shows the futility of money and ambition.

“Benedict says that ‘now with the collapse of big banks we see that money disappears, is nothing and all these things that appear real are in fact of secondary importance.’ He urges those who build their lives ‘only on things that are visible, such as success, career, money’ to keep that in mind.

“The pontiff was speaking Monday as he opened the works of a meeting of 253 bishops at the Vatican.

“Benedict says ‘the only solid reality is the word of God.’”

A certain man who knew economic disaster quite intimately is quoted in aforementioned solid reality as saying, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

—Excerpt from “Pope: Financial crisis shows futility of money” (<http://cli.gs/2XJTXR>) in AP

“Missing Pyramid” Found

“SAQQARA, EGYPT—Egypt unveiled on Thursday a newly uncovered 4,000-year-old ‘missing pyramid’ and a ceremonial procession road where high priests, their faces obscured by masks, once carried mummified sacred bulls worshiped in the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis.”

—Excerpt from “‘Missing Pyramid’ Found by Egyptian Archaeologist” (<http://cli.gs/zn89Dv>) in AP

Global Warming Cult Disintegrating

“In early September, I began noticing a string of news stories about scientists rejecting the orthodoxy on global warming. Actually, it was more like a string of guest columns and long letters to the editor since it is hard for skeptical scientists to get published in the cabal of climate journals now controlled by the Great Sanhedrin of the environmental movement.

“Still, the number of climate change skeptics is growing rapidly. Because a funny thing is happening to global temperatures—

they’re going down, not up.

“Don Easterbrook, a geologist at Western Washington University, says, ‘It’s practically a slam dunk that we are in for about 30 years of global cooling,’ as the sun enters a particularly inactive phase. His examination of warming and cooling trends over the past four centuries shows an ‘almost exact correlation’ between climate fluctuations and solar energy received on Earth, while showing almost ‘no correlation at all with CO₂.’

“An analytical chemist who works in spectroscopy and atmospheric sensing, Michael J. Myers of Hilton Head, S. C., declared, ‘Man-made global warming is junk science,’ explaining that worldwide man-made CO₂ emissions each year ‘equals about 0.0168% of the atmosphere’s CO₂ concentration . . . This results in a 0.00064% increase in the absorption of the sun’s radiation. This is an insignificantly small number.’

“Other international scientists have called the man-made warming theory a ‘hoax,’ a ‘fraud’ and simply ‘not credible.’”

—Excerpt from “Thirty years of warmer temperatures go poof” (<http://cli.gs/8gjR2E>) in the Canadian *National Post*

Putin's Dog and the Former Soviet Union

After launching GLONASS, a Russian competitor to the US-run GPS, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin put a satellite tracking collar on his dog. His deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov commented, “She looks sad. Her free life is over.” In a reply that seems to typify not only his attitude toward his dog, but also his attitude toward the freedoms he has taken from the people of Russia and the former Soviet Union, Putin remarked, “She is wagging her tail. That means she likes it.”

—Source: *Reuters*

Recommended Reading

“Death in the Corn” <http://cli.gs/g3YATA> and <http://cli.gs/T4sqEu> and <http://cli.gs/upZ549> by Michael Yon is a riveting three-part narrative about a British Paratrooper unit at a Forward Operating Base in Afghanistan.

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

“Who Then Is Willing?”

by A. Clair Auker

Every day, millions of well-fed individuals sit down to enjoy another hearty meal. How many of them consider the retailer, distributor, packer, processor, or shipper back through the food-chain links that connect the plate to the farmer’s field? Beyond the farmer do they consider the One who gave the increase?

In many ways reading is the same. Like the food-supply chain, there are links between the writer and reader. Just as there is a farmer behind every good meal, there is a writer behind every writing, and behind any reading material of spiritually nutritive value there is an author of truth giving the increase.

We are thankful for people in this world who not only enjoy eating but who also enjoy providing food for others. As long as people like to eat there will be demand for food producers. And as long as people like to read there will be a demand for writers. No eaters without farmers, no readers without writers!

So dear reader, here is the question: Have you ever considered writing?

What if I’m not a writer?

Though the church is one body it is made up of members with different gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7; Romans 12:4-8). Not all are called to be writers. And whether a member is a writer does not determine his importance or value in the work of the Church. We are, though, responsible to exercise whatever gifts God has given for the benefit of the Church.

But how do we discern our gifts? Take leading singing for example. Some seem to have innate musical ability. They could carry a tune when they were toddlers.

Others do not seem to be born that way; they stumble a bit as they learn, but with practice they eventually become seasoned song leaders. Still others never do lead singing because it is simply not their gift. There may be others in whom the gift lies dormant and undiscovered because they never attempt to exercise it.

So it is with writing. For some writing seems to come naturally and easily. Others learn to write through sweat and toil. Some were never meant to be writers, but how many have never written because they simply never tried?

If you are not a writer, do not be too quick to conclude that you are not meant to be one. Give it a fair trial. Ask an experienced writer to give you counsel and critique your work. Most of all, seek the Lord’s guidance and help. If He is calling you to write, He will enable you.

Some potential writers are afraid their grammar will not measure up. While good grammar is appreciated and aids communication, you need not let limitations in this area keep you from writing. It is more important to be Spirit-filled and have something to communicate. If the product is worthwhile, others in the supply chain can work on the packaging.

How can I get inspired to write?

A nature photography award winner once observed, “If my heart isn’t in it when I’m looking through the viewfinder, it won’t be a good picture.” This principle is true in other forms of communication. A preacher must first be inspired himself before his listeners will be inspired. A writer cannot expect to reach his readers unless he himself is moved by a heartfelt burden.

Doing it from the heart is essential for effectiveness. *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7). “In his heart” is God’s pattern for giving and Christian writing is a form of giving.

So how does inspiration come? It is not something we crank up inside ourselves; rather it is a gift from God through His indwelling Holy Spirit. We must humbly fall on our knees and implore Him to make us willing, lay a burden on our hearts, and give us purpose and direction.

What if you have an assigned subject that just does not “strike you”? This is not a new problem; Sunday school teachers, preachers, and schoolteachers face it repeatedly. Usually, the inspiration comes once we invest time and prayerful study, especially as we search the Scriptures to find what God has to say on the subject.

Perhaps you will still conclude that the subject is not right for you, and you have a different subject you feel inspired to write about. If you request a change of subject, those who gave the assignment may be glad to accommodate.

How can I find time to write?

Ask the average person if he is busy, and he will answer, “Yes!” Most people feel they have insufficient time to do all they are asked to do. We must turn down some requests that come. But how can we know which ones?

The statement, “I’m too busy,” actually means, “I have more important things to do.” There is nothing wrong with this statement if a schedule belongs to God. Does He have a right to interrupt my plans and rearrange my list of things to do? Have I asked Him to sort out my seemingly conflicting priorities, and make His will my sole priority? Am I seeking first the Kingdom?

God gives each person enough time to do what He wants them to do. When we

face a request, the real question is: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” When we have asked this in faith, we can be at peace with the answer. If He wants us to accept, He will enable us to make the needed sacrifice. If He wants us to decline, we can do so without feeling guilty.

On the practical side, writing will not happen in your spare time, at least if you are like most people. It must be scheduled, and it requires determination and self-discipline. It may mean taking a day off work, but if the Lord desires this, He will pay you for it! *“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ”* (Colossians 3:23, 24).

On the other hand, if the Lord leads you to request an exemption from an assignment or an extension of a deadline, your promptness in communicating the request will certainly be appreciated.

What does writing accomplish?

God used the medium of writing to communicate His Word to mankind. Many stories in the Bible illustrate the power of the written Word. On a number of occasions, the reading of the Word wrought repentance and revival. The written Word repeatedly testifies to its own power. *“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

All believers today can testify to the power of the written Word in personal experience, and as they evangelize, they can witness its power in the lives of others.

Of course, the written Word is alive and powerful because of its Author.

These writings are on a level far above the writings of men. But even the writings of men can accomplish much, for good or evil. "The pen is mightier than the sword." However, the pen is even mightier when backed up by the Sword! Bible-based writing has power and value that other writings lack.

Christian writing can inspire the reader to a deeper love for the Bible, the church, and God Himself. It can strengthen his faith and courage in hard times. It can provoke him to love and good works. It can increase his Bible knowledge. It can teach new truths to the young and stir up the minds of the old by way of remembrance. It can even help souls find salvation.

Scriptural writing strengthens the church. Addressing current issues sharpens our collective conscience. Presenting truth and exposing error help preserve pure doctrine and Biblical practices.

A well-researched, Bible-based story or article can be a powerful tool in our teaching ministry. It can help us clarify our own thinking, "teach others also" within the

brotherhood, and answer the questions of individuals outside the church.

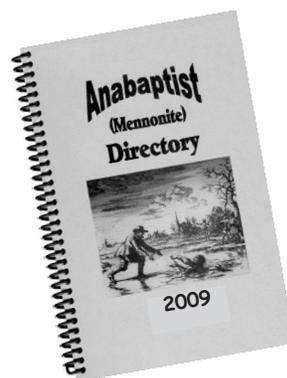
Suppose government officials would question our beliefs in a certain area, such as our refusal to participate in war. We can and should have a ready answer, but in such case, a previously published article on nonresistance could prove our official position.

Because writing has a degree of permanence, it helps to preserve history for the benefit of generations to come. We are thankful for the writings of the past, by which we gain insights into the church life and beliefs of those who have gone before.

Truly there are many benefits in writing, and many who benefit. Last but not least, the writer himself is blessed, as he opens up his heart for the Lord's blessings and in turn shares that blessing with others. Eternal good is accomplished, to the glory of God. "*Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?*" ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, October 2008.

Anabaptist (Mennonite) Directory 2009



Approximately 111 pages, listing churches and ministers not found in other major directories. Based on adherence to an accepted doctrinal standard—Schleitheim, Dortrecht, 1921, 1963 or comparative.

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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.

Come Now, Let Us Reason Together

by E. O. Jack Jones

*"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:
though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* – Isaiah 1:18

The man who has considered his own conduct concludes that he has not done everything he should, and that he has done many things he should not have done. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) is a proposition thoughtful men approve.

The Prophet Isaiah gives the gracious invitation of the Lord. "Come now, let us reason together." We understand that our God meets men at an intellectual as well as an emotional level.

The significance of the scarlet and crimson is to be found in the impossibility that attended every effort to remove such dyes from material so stained. We observe then, that the universal condition of mankind is that we have sinned against a holy God. We know that we have thus incurred a debt we cannot pay. If we are to avoid the punishment due our sins we must present ourselves to the One we have offended, and enquire if there is a way of mercy—any gracious remedy for

our sin.

To become aware of one's sin is to be convicted of it, found guilty in the court of conscience. This indicates God's activity in our lives. The Holy Spirit has come to convict us of our sin. It is painful, but we should thank God that He cared enough to show us our lost condition.

**"When I
have come
clean with God,
and intend with
my whole heart
to serve Him,
He knows, and
so do I."**

Repentance: Knowledge That Transforms

If we cooperate with this grace we will be led to repentance. When we reason with God about our sin we agree with Him that it must be abandoned. Repentance means that we have changed our mind about sin and righteousness. We now reject our willful disobedience as the right course of action for us.

Repentance is knowledge that transforms. It includes the knowledge of our rebellion against God and the resultant just penalty, but also the transformation that is characterized by a change of direction. This is also the evident work of the Holy Spirit in us, empowering us to do

what we know we ought to do. It is amazing to watch people who were slaves to sin set free as they turn in wholehearted repentance to the Saviour.

And yet nothing has transpired to deal with the sin-stained soul of man. He has no power to eradicate the scarlet of sin. He can do nothing at all about his past. If he could repent so thoroughly that he never added to the crimson stain, yet it would remain in testimony against him.

If a man "turns over a new leaf," he yet has the first sordid chapters of sin in his life. His need exceeds the "new leaf." He needs a new book—a new start. He needs something described in the Scriptures as the new birth.

A professional counselor pointed out to me that as a minister of the Gospel I had more to offer people in need than he.

I drew him out, and he said it openly, "You offer people what they really need—a new start!"

Jesus told Nicodemus about it. "Ye must be born again." The necessity lies in the laws of inheritance. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." He was not merely stating the obvious.

He spoke of the fact that we are born in the moral image of the first Adam, and are thus "fleshly" or "carnal." We are of our father the devil.

"But that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Men who are born of the Holy Spirit are holy and spiritual. We are new creatures now in Christ Jesus. The old has passed away and everything is new.

Cleansing From All Sin

"Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Here is another figure to portray the salvation fact. Our God has the powerful cleansing agent to restore man to his original state of righteousness and true

holiness. It is revealed in the New Testament to be the precious blood of Christ. "These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The blessing of the New Birth is appropriated by faith. "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). Repentance implies confession, and when the confession is complete and the renunciation of sin total, there is no hindrance to saving faith.

This is not faith about Christ, but faith in Christ as the bleeding sacrifice for my sin. When I have come clean with God and intend with my whole heart to serve Him, He knows, and so do I! The knowledge that I have met His conditions leads me to the leap of faith that brings with it its own witness.

The love of God is now shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost who is given unto me. And His Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am the child of God (Romans 8:16). There are two witnesses. His Spirit tells me I am a child of God, and my own spirit assures me in that the sense of guilt is gone. Praise His Name!

"Let us reason together." God will show us our predicament, and also point the way out. He continues to reason with us throughout our Christian journey, guiding and directing us day by day. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

The Simplicity of Salvation

Many have stumbled at the simplicity of the plan of salvation. Men of pride found it to be folly, and unrepentant men

"When we reason with God about our sin we agree with Him that it must be abandoned. Repentance means that we have changed our mind about sin."

have found it to be a scandal.

But those who come humbly to the Saviour discover that He still saves to the uttermost. It begins when we are made aware of our spiritual need—that we are sinners against a holy God. It proceeds under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit as we are alarmed and convicted of the need for mercy and forgiveness. Repentance will follow as we cooperate with the Spirit, and He will graciously aid us in confession of our sin. Faith claims the promise, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us, and this same Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Nor does He abandon us there, for He leads us day by day, and enables us to

walk according to the will of the Spirit.

It is the privilege of every believer to enjoy the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He will lead us, “in the paths of righteousness” and finally to our heavenly home.

**“All that
sin and Satan
have ruined, God
will restore.
Though your sins
be as scarlet they
shall be as white as
snow, though they
be red like crimson
they shall
be as wool.”**

Let Us Reason Together

Why should any man refuse such a gracious, life-transforming, salvation?! “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” All that sin and Satan have ruined, God will restore. “Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.” ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Faith in the Future*, the monthly publication of Crusaders Churches USA.



Three Views of the Christian and War

by Charles Lehigh

Here are three views of the Christian and war: pacifism, militarism, and nonresistance.

1. Pacifism

This starts with the premise that all war is wrong. War is the worst scourge of mankind! It has caused more suffering and more violent deaths than any other scourge!

Think of the lives that have been disrupted. There would be millions of individual stories.

Pacifism claims war never settles anything! We say that the Civil War freed the

slaves, but the blacks were mistreated until the social conscience was aroused about a hundred years later. Great Britain freed their slaves before our Civil War, buying them from their masters and setting them free. Expensive, yes, but not as costly as four years of civil war.

Mankind's greatest ambition is to abolish war, and we are making progress towards that goal. The League of Nations and now the United Nations prove this.

What do we do? We need to apply political pressure! We need to push for disarmament. If all the nations disarm they cannot fight. We need to set the example.

2. Militarism

War is a necessary evil. We need to defend our country. If we disarm, other nations would soon destroy us. Our founding fathers gave us a great nation by means of the Revolutionary War. Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson were all God-fearing men and they fought for freedom.

God commanded war in the Old Testament. He ordered Joshua to drive out—exterminate—the inhabitants of Canaan. Saul was rejected as king because he refused to totally destroy the Amalekites.

3. Nonresistance

War is not always wrong. War does indeed decide some things. There was war in Heaven to decide who would rule there—God or Satan (Revelation 12:7).

The problem is who we fight for. In the World War an American who fought for Germany would have been a traitor. Some years ago Iraq and Iran were at war. Americans did not fight there because their nation was not involved.

In the Old Covenant/Testament God was dealing with a nation (Israel). He commanded them to fight for the national good. In the New Covenant God is working with a group called out of every nation (the church). Our kingdom is not of this world. If it were, then would we fight (John 18:36). We do fight for our kingdom. Second Corinthians 10:3, 4: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds).”

The nation in which we happen to reside is not our home country. We are ambassadors for Christ here (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are offering citizenship in our kingdom (Heaven) to those who will give their allegiance to our king.

How does a person act who is living in a foreign country?

- A. He will obey the laws as far as they do not cause him to disobey his own. (In Jamaica we drove on the left side of the road.)
- B. He will pay his taxes even if he does not approve of the use made of them.
- C. He is not subject to the draft nor does he accept military service in the nation in which he resides.

Brother Johannes Naas, an early Brethren minister in Germany, was encouraged to join the king’s body-guard. The recruiters hung him up by his thumbs and big toes but he still refused.

Finally they took him to the king who asked why he refused to serve.

Naas replied, “I would, but I have already accepted service for a greater king.”

King Frederick bristled. “Who is the greater king than I?” he demanded.

“The Lord Jesus Christ,” replied Bro. Naas.

King Frederick dismissed him.

There are two ways in which a person may lose his citizenship in the United States. One is to serve in the military of another nation. In the Second World War England was at war with Germany about fifteen months before America joined them. During this period a number of young American pilots joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and fought in the Battle of Britain. America approved their action, but they lost their American citizenship. It was finally restored by a special act of congress.

- D. A person residing in a foreign country does not try to control that country. He does not vote or accept public office in the country in which he resides. This would also cost him his American citizenship.

Some years after the Second World War, the communist party in Italy made a serious effort to take over Italy by vote. The election appeared close. The Pope appealed to the people to vote against the communists.

In America there was a considerable number of Italians who had obtained American citizenship but Italy still recognized them as Italian citizens because they were born there. The American president urged them to return to Italy to vote. A number did only to discover that by American law anyone who voted in a foreign country lost their American citizenship. It was restored by a special act of congress. (The communists lost the election by a narrow margin.)

The principle of our citizenship being in Heaven has been recognized. During the Civil War a group of young men from Upper Conewago were drafted. Elder Brown went with them to appeal to Governor Curtin. Bro. Brown explained our nonresistant position.

Governor Curtin replied, "I understand your objection to fighting but we elected Lincoln and he got us into the war. Now we must support him."

Bro. Brown replied, "It's not fair to say that we elected him because the Brethren always taught against voting because we are not a part of this world's system."

Governor Curtin recognized the validity of the reasoning. His decision: Those who voted should go into the army; those who had refused to vote could go home. My grandfather was one of those who went home. Governor Curtin felt that when we vote for a person we are responsible to support his decisions.

God controls the nations. Romans 13:1 says, "The powers that be are ordained of God." Daniel makes it even plainer (Daniel 4:32). Nebuchadnezzar was to eat grass as oxen "until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."

I feel that when we try to control the world we are attempting to take over God's job and are likely to neglect what God told us to do which is to teach all people all things that God commanded,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

We cannot know what God wants the world to be like at His second coming but we must remember that Christ is returning to overthrow all existing governments and to establish His own. This will establish world peace.

In short, pacifism and militarism make the same mistake of assuming that this world is our home and we (Christians) must control it. Their only difference is how we should control it. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Bible Monitor*, August 2008.



EVIDENCES . . . cont'd from p. 24

determined by our worldview or presuppositions.

Creationists and Evolutionists share the same evidence: we all live in the same world. The different positions are not determined by different evidence, but by different interpretations. It is not a race to see who can find the most compelling evidence, but which worldview leads to the most logical explanation of the evidence at hand.

This is why arguments trying to separate science and religion are futile. Evolution is not anymore scientific than creationism is and creationism is not anymore religious than evolution is. The same is true for the phenomenon known in western culture as privatized faith; it is a logical absurdity. Perhaps the best description of it can be found in James 1:8. If we want to walk in truth we must apply this principle in all areas of life. ■



Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

This column welcomes the submission of original hymns. Please send hymns, as well as applicable information about the author and/or composer to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

by Williams/Hughes

Lyrics: The commencement of a new calendar year is a time when many Christians think more critically than normal about overall direction of their lives. We consider how God has led us in the past year, and look forward to His continued direction in the year to come. Although this month's hymn does not specifically reference the New Year, its prayer for guidance is very pertinent to this time of year.

The biblical background for this hymn is the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The writer draws from their journey an allegorical parallel to each individual Christian's journey toward Heaven. The first verse references the manna that fell from Heaven to feed the people during their journey. Just as the "bread of heaven" fell for the Israelites in the wilderness, God gives us our spiritual food through His written Word, and the spoken exposition of it on Sunday mornings.

The second verse recalls two examples of God's provision and protection. The first is the water that poured from the rock when the people were dying of thirst, and the second is the pillar of cloud (by day) and the pillar of fire (at night) that directed and protected the people on their journey. Although we may not experience the pillar of fire showing us where to go, God does still lead and direct His people if they are committed to following Him. Crossing the Jor-

dan is often used to symbolize death. Just as the Israelites had to cross the Jordan before entering their Promised Land, we must die before we can enter our eternal rest.

The third verse of this hymn asks God to calm our fears and to "Land [us] safe on Canaan's side."

The text for this hymn was originally written in Welsh, by the "Sweet singer of Wales," William Williams (1717-1791). He was in medical school when he was converted, and eventually left the medical field to enter the ministry. Although he became a respected minister, his primary influence was through his hymns. Williams wrote approximately 800 hymns, but most of them have not been translated into English. Because of his prolific hymn-writing he has been referred to as the Isaac Watts of Wales. "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" was first published in 1745, and then translated into English in 1771 by Peter Williams (no relation to the author).¹ There are many variations of this text, but the three verses that are printed here represent one of the most common versions.

Music: "Cwm Rhondda" is one of several tunes that have been used with this hymn. The Welsh title of the tune means simply "Rhondda Valley." It was composed in 1907 by John Hughes, the organist at "Capel Rhondda,"² for a music festival that was

Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

CWM RHONDDA 8.7.8.7.8.7.

WILLIAM WILLIAMS, 1745

Arglwydd arwain trwy'r anialwch

Tr. Peter Williams and Others, 1771-2

JOHN HUGHES, 1907

1 Guide me, O Thou great Je - ho - vah, Pil - grim through this
 2 O - pen now the crys - tal foun - tain, Whence the heal - ing
 3 When I tread the verge of Jor - dan, Bid my anx - ious

bar - ren land; I am weak, but Thou art might - y; Hold me with Thy
 streams do flow; Let the fi - ery cloud - y pil - lar Lead me all my
 fears sub - side; Death of death, and hell's de - struc - tion, Land me safe on

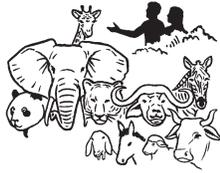
power - ful hand; Bread of heav - en, bread of heav - en,
 jour - ney through; Strong de - liv - erer, strong de - liv - erer,
 Ca - naan's side; Songs of prais - es, songs of prais - es,

Feed me now and ev - er - more, Feed me now and ev - er - more.
 Be Thou still my strength and shield, Be Thou still my strength and shield.
 I will ev - er give to Thee, I will ev - er give to Thee. A - men.

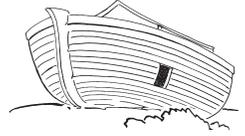
held at the chapel.³ Since then, it has become known as the unofficial Welsh national anthem, and bits of it are often sung by fans at rugby games. Although it was originally composed with this text in

mind, it is often sung with other words as well. ■

1. <http://classicalmusic.suite101.com>
2. www.bbc.co.uk
3. www.cyberhymnal.org



Beginning Issues



Evidence for Creation or Evolution?

Everyone has a bias – it's true!

by John Mullett

In the debate of creation vs. evolution or old earth vs. young earth we may be tempted to clutch for that one piece of evidence that refutes the opposing view beyond all doubt. We tend to think that we have to find something separate; something different from that of the opposition. If the news were to include an evolutionary headline such as, "Fossil Suggests Birds Evolved From Dinosaurs,"¹ it can be a tendency among creationists to react in a way that assumes that find or evidence as a victory for evolutionists, so now in turn they must find new evidence for the young earth creationist position that tops it. The same can be true in reverse, in which evolutionists, or those who believe in an old earth, may react in the same way to evidence creationists find in support of a young earth. However, when we do this we are misunderstanding the debate and what's at stake; which often leads to laying claim to sketchy "evidences" that have not been properly substantiated, which in turn can damage our credibility even more than simple ignorance.

It is vital that we understand the

1. Not a direct reference to an actual headline, it is only for illustrating the concept of this article.

nature of the debate and the level at which our dialogue must take place. Evidence does not come with an interpretation, ever; it must always be interpreted within a philosophy or worldview. Until the interpretation is applied evidence it is nothing more than a fact available for us to work with. It is not possible for anyone to be totally unbiased when interpreting evidence. Our presuppositions or axioms will always determine how we interpret the evidence we encounter, whether it is in the realm of science or some situation we are facing in life.

A fossil will never directly interpret itself; whether in reference to age, diet, habits, etc. . . . A fossil is simply the remains of the type of living thing (plant, animal, or human) it came from that was buried quickly (most likely by waterborne sediments) into the right environment for it to become mineralized. For example, if it's an animal, we may be left with a mineralized bone. So what does this bone present us with? Just that, a bone from something formerly living that is now dead. There are no data sheets informing us of anything more than that. Any further information derived from the bone is dependent on our interpretation which is

(continued on page 21)

Ministry Trends for the Post-Everything Generation

by Mark Irving

Editor's Note: *The following article addresses an important set of issues relating to our evangelistic responsibility today. However, it needs to be read with discernment and careful thought. Sword and Trumpet does not wholeheartedly endorse everything that is said here but we feel that it is important that conservative Anabaptists wrestle with these issues.*

A new generation in their teens and 20s desperately needs the truth and hope of the Gospel. Cleverly coined as “post-everythings” by author Tim Keller, many in this generation adopt an increasingly post-modern worldview. They resist purely rationalistic, propositional explanations for reality and are wary of exclusive truth claims. While this presents obvious challenges for evangelism, the good news is that they are also post-secular and much more open to dialoguing about spirituality, religion, and the supernatural. They are technologically savvy, morally relativistic, suspicious of authority, comfortable with change, concerned about issues of social justice, and committed to tolerance as the highest virtue. They are our future, and they need Jesus—but how do we reach them?

The quest for relevancy among post-everythings has undoubtedly led some believers down the path of theological compromise. While the emerging church is a lightning rod for controversy in this area (particularly the Emergent branch), thoughtful critics are faithful to commend the movement's ability to read the times and engage a post-Christian society in meaningful dialogue. Can we learn something about ministry from those in emerg-

ing church circles? After all, we are exhorted to test everything and hold on to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Could there potentially be some babies in the proverbial bathwater? Or, if you prefer, some vegetables in the emerging soup?

This article will attempt to highlight three healthy ministry trends often found in—though fortunately not exclusive to—the emerging church, trends that will help us respond in a relevant yet biblically faithful manner to the rapidly changing, post-everything culture. While holding unswervingly to the essentials of the faith, making some adjustments in ministry mindset can go a long way in introducing post-everythings to Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life for every generation.

From Information to Incarnation

Previous generations, influenced heavily by modernity, were often moved by well-reasoned arguments for the faith. In an era when science reigned, such informational arguments were productive in overcoming intellectual obstacles to the Gospel. If you aimed for their heads, their hearts were likely to follow. But does the “evidence-that-demands-a-verdict” approach have a shelf life among post-everythings who no longer offer unquestioned allegiance to modern empirical science? The answer to this question is both “yes” and “no.”

We are facing a different evangelistic and apologetic task with this new generation. The primary question has changed from “Are you rational?” to “Are you for real?” Post-everythings value authenticity, and the primary conduit for communicating

information to them is through authentic relationships. Growing up in an increasingly fragmented world, they long for connectedness. Introducing them to the claims of Christ involves adopting Paul's pattern of mission work among the Thessalonians: "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8). In other words, our contact with a new generation must be incarnational. We must embody the timeless message we proclaim in order to give credence to its truth. Unfortunately, the tendency for believers to retreat into the perceived safety and security of a "Christian" subculture has left a generation underexposed to credible representatives of the faith.

For us to be understood by a generation skeptical of truth claims, our outreach must begin with sharing our lives. Outside the context of a meaningful relationship, confronting post-everythings with polished intellectual arguments about what we believe and why we believe it will be perceived as intrusive at best and arrogant at worst. They first need to see our faith—personally and corporately—lived out and expressed in authentic loving communities.

The "evidence-that-demands-a-verdict" approach still works. It's just different evidence.

From Attraction to Mission

Reaching post-everythings also involves rethinking our ecclesiology. In recent decades, the dominant form of "doing church" in America has been the attractional model. I like to call it the *Field of Dreams* format: if we build it, they will come. It generally operates on the assumption that in order to bring people to Jesus, we must first bring them to church. Great effort is put into contemporary worship style, more dynamic preaching, better drama, impressive facilities, and programs that meet felt needs.

And yes, people come, but what type of

people? Recent research confirms that very few American churches are growing by way of conversion. Instead, the sheep are simply meandering to greener pastures. Church growth cannot be equated with church health. Even when growth does occur from conversion, it is usually people from a Christian heritage who are returning to their roots. As Earl Creps demonstrates, post-everythings remain largely unmoved.

"Sarah, a young professional woman, noted: 'We know you have tried to get us to church. That's part of the problem. Many of your appeals have been carefully calculated for success, and that turns our collective stomach. Take worship, for instance. You think that fashionable, cutting-edge liturgies relate to us on our level, but the fact is we can find better entertainment elsewhere. The same goes for anything you term contemporary. We see right through it. It is up-to-date for the sake of being up-to-date, and we are not impressed by the results.'"

Just because a ministry method is recent doesn't make it relevant to a shifting culture. To reach them with the Gospel, we don't need to be trendy, but we do need to be mission-oriented.

Being a missionary is a difficult task, especially when the culture shift has taken place in one's own backyard. As Paul did in Athens (Acts 17), competent missionaries embedded in a pagan culture diligently set about the task of contextualization—carefully studying the culture in order to find connection points for communicating the Gospel. This process is essential for dialoguing about the Christian faith in a way that an increasingly post-Christian society can understand. For instance, we can no longer assume that our hearers comprehend basic Christian concepts such as sin, God's Word, creation, the cross, or even God. They speak a different vernacular, and our "Christian-ese" will be misunderstood or met with blank stares.

Contextualization is something the emerging church seems to comprehend. However, we must simultaneously contend

for the faith (Jude 3), or we will have nothing worth contextualizing. We don't need to tinker with the Gospel to make it more palatable or relevant. The Gospel is already relevant. But like missionaries, we must attentively study our culture so that we can faithfully, yet intelligibly, communicate the unchanging message to a new generation.

From Suburban to Urban

In many ways, the emerging church has grown out of a reaction against a plastic, inward-focused, suburban version of Christianity devoid of influence and involvement in a hurting world. It criticizes the stale orthodoxy of churches and Christians that champion doctrinal definition but possess little concern for the poor and marginalized in society. Emergers disdain hypocrisy. So do post-everythings. So did Jesus. The solution, however, is not to redefine orthodoxy or soften doctrine but rather to authentically adorn the Gospel with action (Titus 2:10).

One wonders if the emerging church

would exist if fundamentalists in the early part of the last century had not largely jettisoned social concern in a pendulum swing away from the liberal social Gospel. Many doctrinally sound churches who are making inroads for the Gospel among post-everythings are heading back into the city and meeting social needs in tangible ways, reuniting orthodoxy (right belief) with orthopraxy (right practice).

Fishing for vegetables in the emerging soup involves avoiding the pitfalls of emergent syncretism on the one hand and legalistic separatism on the other. While culture will certainly continue to shift, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is the solid Rock we must winsomely present to our post-everything culture—using timely methods to proclaim timeless truth. ■

—Article first appeared in the Fall-Winter 2008 issue of *TORCH*, published by Cedarville University. Reprinted with permission.

Mennonite Nazis?

by Clifford Schrock

A Mennonite Nazi. These words make a shocking combination that clash in almost every area of ideology. Surely such a thing could never be! However, I recently heard the testimony of a lady who grew up in a Mennonite family in Germany during World War II. What captured my attention was that her father was also an officer in Hitler's Nazi army. No, he had not fallen away, left the church, and then joined the military. He was an active member in good standing in his Mennonite church **and** the Nazi party.

This begs the question, "How can these things be?" The story is much longer and more complex than I can write here, but the key seemed to be the secularization of the church and increasing pressure to

make a difference in the culture. Our German Mennonite friend joined the Nazi party early in its development, long before the beginning of World War II. It had not yet become a war machine, but a party for social reform and the rehabilitation of the German society. One of the arguments presented by his Mennonite friend that persuaded him to join was, "We need to get involved now, so that we can make a difference and influence policy development." Does that argument sound familiar?

As I ponder this story, I am reminded of another man who "sat in the gate" of his culture. It is one of the oldest stories of cultural preservation. Our old friend, Lot, moved into the city of Sodom. The recorded story does not tell us what his intentions

were in making this choice, but it does record that “he sat in the gate of Sodom.” Cultural history suggests that this involved some type of leadership in the city. The story in Genesis 18–19 records that it was not Lot, but his praying uncle, Abraham, that had significant influence in the preservation of the society. It is also significant to note that, ultimately, even Abraham’s intercession did not preserve Sodom.

As we observe the changing culture around us, it is obvious that it is decaying at its core. As a key illustration, the basic institution of every society—the family—is disintegrating on every front. The minority of children in America are growing up in stable two-parent families. Even as I wrote this article, I talked with a salesman who is raising two of his grandchildren. Their father is in jail; they were abandoned by their mother 2½ years ago, and they haven’t seen her since. Divorce, adultery, abortion, sexual abuse, common-law marriages, sodomy, and many other issues strike at the heart of the family unit. That is only the beginning of our social problems, and it is right to stand up and say, “We need to do something!”

As we struggle with what to do, perhaps it is healthy to step back and renew our vision of the larger picture. It is helpful to look at Jesus’ life and ministry to help us understand His vision for His people. The biblical record does not indicate that Jesus was very concerned about the issues of the popular culture. He did not address the evils of the Roman government, the corruption of the secular leaders, or the legal wrangling of the political elite. Yes, Jesus addressed social issues, but almost exclusively those within the religious establishment. Rather, His actions and message are consistent with His stated purpose, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Jesus does not seem to have been interested in social reform or cultural preservation. Instead, He was interested in personal transformation. Rather than attempting to legislate morality from the temple platform, Jesus led the multitudes to the foot of the

cross. Yes, I believe He was burdened by the evils of His time and the corruption of society. But, He understood that those evils poured out of hearts in bondage to sin which no empire, society, social program, or legislation could heal.

There is a significant number of youth coming into our classrooms at SMBI who don’t understand that the Kingdom of God is not of this world or of our culture. They are taking up the call of the Mennonite Nazis. Maintaining a culture is once again becoming more important than advancing the kingdom of God. Many young people and older brothers and sisters are feeling the weight of social decay. We face tremendous pressure from the broader Christian world to “get involved.” Yes, we need to get involved. Complacent secularization of the church is deadly. However, let us learn from history rather than repeating it. Who influenced who in Nazi Germany? What happened in Sodom? What was Jesus’ approach to the social issues of His day?

We do need to hear the cry of the people and the decay of culture should spur us to action. We must look beyond our businesses, farms, recreation, families, and churches and see the fields that are white and ready to harvest. We must get involved. As we ponder how to respond to the chaos of society, we must clarify our vision. We are called to the gospel of the kingdom and its life-transforming message. Our mission is to restore life through the life-giving blood of the Lamb. We have a message of hope for the despondent, healing for the wounded, liberty for the captives, beauty for ashes, joy for those who mourn, and salvation for the sinner. Let us not exchange that message for any other party, platform, or candidate.

Let us take on the mind of Christ and follow His example. Let us transform the world one heart at a time by the renewing of their minds. May we, too, lead the needy to the foot of the cross. Lord, help us hear the warning of the Mennonite Nazis. ■

—Reprinted with permission from SMBI’s quarterly newsletter, *The Monitor*, July–September 2008.

Elders Extending the Call

Helping Others Find Their Place in the Will of God for Missions

by David Blackney

Probably no other story illustrates our ambivalence about God's methods in calling out ministers of the gospel and missionaries than the one often told anecdotally in various forms throughout our country. Sometimes it is the Midwest farmer who reads the unusual formation of clouds making the letters "GPC" as a divine sign to "Go Preach Christ" but who was advised by his elders upon hearing his first homily that the proper interpretation was "Go Plant Corn!" In our mountains of Western North Carolina it is often told of the "moonshiner" who was "called" to preach by the boys making fun of him for staying too long at the still. As he was awakening from his stupor, they hid behind the trees and moaned out "*Go-o-o-o Pre-e-e-each the Gospel.*" Whereupon he promptly arose, announced his call, and spent the next fifty years preaching at any invitation while pastoring many churches, some small and some large, four of which he started himself!

Many would welcome a fellow laborer exhibiting such zeal regardless of the details of his pilgrimage. Others emphasize proper academic credentials before being recognized for ministry service. The Bible gives us many examples of individuals that God called into service from various backgrounds and through differing circumstances. Some churches, recognizing their responsibility, have sought policies that will guide them in the way they "recruit" their young people into Christian service. Many others, if not most churches, have not clearly

understood or accepted their role in finding the next generation of church and mission leaders. This role is often relegated to parachurch groups or Christian colleges. Church leaders often lack a plan to lead their young people into church and mission service. Sometimes the mixed counsel given to young people grappling with whether to commit their lives vocationally to Christian ministry is confusing in the absence of good shepherding.

Robertson McQuilkin, President Emeritus of *Columbia International University*, in his book that questions why so few attempt to take the gospel to the unreached, summarizes the contradictory counsel many have received when trying to discern a call to missions: everyone should go unless God stops them or no one should go if they can be satisfied doing something else; or you must not be listening for everyone is already called, the Great Commission is the only call you need! Some say, "Don't move without a divine call," while others say, "The need constitutes the call." Still others counter, "The need doesn't constitute the call—you need an apostolic calling"—while others insist, "A missionary call is no different than a call to a secular vocation."¹ The placement of unqualified or ill-equipped missionaries on the field who don't make it, or worse, stay on and do damage to the cause of Christ, prods us to want to do better.

And while we as pastors are acquainted with our own vocational callings and while we are familiar with the

academic discussions of what a missionary calling involves or whether or not it even exists, I wonder if a lack of clarity in our role of “recruiting” others could be contributing to the crisis we are facing in contemporary missions—the lack of new missionary candidates responding to a lifetime calling.

I subscribe to many missionary prayer e-mail services. Some send out daily calendars to pray for missionaries on their birthdays. It troubles me how many days in the month that the number of retired missionaries listed exceeds the number currently serving on the field.

Some new trends in mission activities have consumed much of our time, planning, and calendars. And while we live in a different age with many advantages that have influenced the way we do missions, nothing can substitute for the role church planting missionary pioneers play in extending the kingdom: not money, not nationals, not support or short-term personnel, not literature, computers, or radio and video media. We value these technologies and avenues of service and the work of many support missionaries and short-termers. But we are running out of the veteran missionaries to send them to. Dr. Ralph Winter, of the *US Center for World Missions*, editorialized,

Sending money cannot take the place of sending godly people, godly families. This is what it means to respond to Jesus’ call for us “to be my witnesses,” not just send words. Sending money is not sending witnesses. In all the remaining untouched people groups there are, by definition, not any local pastors to pay to evangelize. Actions speak louder than words—or checks. The sheer example of a Christian family is the most often underrated factor in missions!²

Some churches hope that short-term mission trips would be effective in not only changing their youth’s perspective on the world, but also result in sending more full-time missionaries into the

needy fields of the world. However, the research is beginning to confirm what many have suspected.

As youth groups pump out tens of thousands of students across the nation and overseas each year for missions that last anywhere from a week-long Spring Break to a three-month summer vacation, more researchers and mission experts are finding that STM (short-term mission) trips may not be producing expected results.

Fuller Theological Seminary’s Center for Youth and Family Ministry cited recent research that found the explosive growth in the number of STM trips has not been accompanied by similar explosive growth in the number of career missionaries. Also, it’s not clear whether or not participation in STM trips causes participants to give more money to alleviate poverty once life returns to “normal.” And participating in an STM trip does not seem to reduce participants’ tendencies toward materialism.³

Many argued that short-term missions is here to stay and we just need to do a better job with short-term volunteers. But somewhere I heard the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result! There must be a better way!

As a young man I was converted in college. I had a Catholic background and was unfamiliar with the “language of Zion.” God gave me a hunger for the Word, which I then began sharing with others. My peers began telling me that I was “called to preach.” I didn’t know what they meant. Later, a pastor was instrumental in helping me evaluate what was happening in my life. He helped me know and take the steps necessary for preparation for pastoral ministry. This kind of pastoral assistance is what is so needed in our day. It is consistent with the New Testament emphasis of the church recognizing and then “setting apart” those called of God to vocational/lifetime ministry. Acts 13 is

striking in the parallels of both the Holy Spirit calling and sending forth and the church setting apart and sending forth. Can we improve our part of the process as shepherds and elders? The intent of this issue is to help us be more proactive with our youth and young families who could be led into Christ's service. I'm convinced it is part of our calling as shepherds. The following examples and action points can guide us.

Be Like the Prophets

The church needs pastors who set the agenda for missions education and involvement based on an exposition of God's message and the challenge given in Scripture. Missions then becomes a primary concern regularly addressed and not just a peripheral matter. It becomes a pointed and clear responsibility of the saints. When we consider the experience of those veteran missionaries we are seeking to replace and how they answered the call to missions involvement, we find some startling contrasts to what some think has become essential for today. The vast majority of those missionaries had never been overseas before they went. Many had never met a missionary personally. What were the key factors in their responding to the call? It wasn't a "vision" trip but preaching that stirred their hearts for service. Messages regularly recalling, "*Moses, go down to Egypt and set my people free*" and "*Who will go for me? Here am I, Lord, send me*" and "*Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men*" and "*forsake all*" and "*lose your life to find it.*" These messages had impact. Their pastors told them of the command of God to go and challenged them to respond to the authority of "thus says the Lord" passages. They were inspired as youth to go. They read and heard the stories of missionaries during summer camps and Wednesday night programs told through flip charts or flannel-graph presentations. *Lay leaders and*

Who will go for me? Here am I, Lord, send me.

pastors regularly prayed publicly for God to call their members to give their lives to take the message to the ends of the earth. What makes the "loyal" generation so loyal? The more I interview them, the more I'm convinced it was a different kind of preaching they regularly heard growing up. I often hear them say, "Our pastors told us that God said go and that we must obey. So we went knowing He would make a way for us, because He promised to be with us." Rather than messages about how God could make their lives more satisfying and how to be more successful in their various roles, they were taught to expend themselves, to give themselves away for God's purposes, for His agenda—not theirs. Consider these *Action points*: Start using the technologies we have today to emphasize the stories and reports of fruitful ministries that are the result of long-term commitments and special training and God's gifted people, not just the culturally untrained observations and emotional responses of short-termers from their trips. There is a place for both, but the former is more beneficial to the body. Uphold the model of what you are aiming for in consecrated service and preparation rather than an experience most can have with the adventure of a trip. Help the congregation know the aim or end goal is not a trip taken but the consecrated service of the missionary they went to serve or encourage. Visualize for the congregation not just the needs or poverty of exotic places, but the steps individuals must take in personal response to God, in overcoming obstacles, and in effective training to contribute to the lasting changes that only the gospel can bring in those places. Pray in public services for more families to enter the harvest fields.

Be Like Eli

Sometimes we can become as dull as Eli in the presence of pervasive corruption and problems in our world and

church. Sometimes a lot of leaven can leaven us as well! But God still calls even in times of a dearth of the Word of God. Eli finally discerned that the Lord was calling the boy Samuel and told him how to respond to God and to be faithful in bearing even a negative message. *Action points:* Pray for God to help us perceive His activity in calling others who as yet may not even know the Lord and help them make a servant's response. Develop and project confidence in God accomplishing His purposes in the next generation, even when we have failures in our own. Challenge and equip the "gen-X-ers" to exceed their parents' efforts.

Follow the Master's Example

Jesus molded His disciples by spending time with them. He modeled ministry, made assignments for them, debriefed them, and sent them out again. He taught them how to travel: together, lightly and unencumbered while depending on others. *Action points:* Make your schedule work for your ultimate goals. Make time to spend with promising young men. Take them with you as you minister. Give them challenging assignments and help them grow. Remind them of what is essential for the task and not to be encumbered with unnecessary training and the debt that comes with it. Teach them to look to God as their source—not just people. Train your current leaders to be alert to reproduce themselves in the young men and women they serve.

Be Like Paul and Barnabas

Both these men drafted other disciples to serve with them in ministry. Paul wanted Timothy to go with him. Barnabas encouraged and used John Mark, even when he had disappointed Paul. *Action points:* Be on the lookout for those to train and assist in ministry. Don't overlook those who have initial problems or failures. Identify groups of people whom God could use. Those active in

ministry already and who are well spoken of by others may be able to be drafted into service if you take the initiative to ask them. Consider the families with skills like construction or nursing that could be used effectively in extending the gospel. The children of current missionaries are another potential pool, but will take more effort on your part to know since they are separated from you geographically. They will need help in developing "home church" relationships here in the states, out of which confidence can grow. Be encouraged: don't let your failures in "recruiting" or the initial failures of some "recruits" deter you from looking and working with more candidates now. And finally consider if God wants you as pastor or elder to go yourself.

As pastors we have a role in mobilizing the saints for missions. We are not alone in this task. God ultimately calls and equips. But He uses us to proclaim His Word and encourage and train those responding. As a pastor, myself, I want to be appropriately engaged in helping others find their place in God's will for missions. Guilt trips and manipulation are never appropriate. Guidance and shepherding are. Many of our members are responding as sacrificial supporters of those who go. But how many have heard from my lips that they should consider the possibility of going themselves? It takes both. Let us pray for each other that the Lord of the Harvest will help us be fit vessels in extending His call to launch the next generation of church planters. ■

1. Robertson McQuilkin, "Who's Calling?," **The Great Omission**, Baker Book House, 1984.
2. Ralph Winter, **Mission Frontiers**, November-December 2005, p. 4.
3. Audrey Barrick, *Think Tank Urges More Effective Short-Term Missions*, Christian Post, Wed., March 14, 2007, 05:04 PM ET.
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Counseling From the Word

Restored by the God of All Grace

by Scott Lowery

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:10, 11).

The Book of John records a very tragic scene in which the beloved disciple, Peter, denied that he knew Jesus Christ, not only once, but three times (John 18:15-27). Jesus had predicted this event (John 13:38), but Peter with all determination was convinced that if Jesus encountered danger, he wouldn't just claim the Lord as friend, he would literally lay down his life for Him. Sadly for Peter, Jesus was correct, and when questioned whether or not he was a disciple of Christ, Peter indeed denied this fact on three separate accounts.

There is no doubt Peter had to have been devastated by this sequence of events. Like many counselees we encounter, he felt he had enough determination and faithfulness to God that he would be able to never fall in such a flagrant manner. A sense of failure and condemnation must have been very present with him as the events of that evening raced through his mind. This tendency is an all-too-familiar one among believers. The young man struggling with lust and pornography who promises never to view another illicit site. The violent husband who promises never again to hit his wife and children. The disillusioned wife,

abhorring her promiscuity, who recommitments to faithfulness in her marriage. The anxious college student who guarantees he will no longer fall prey to peer pressure. The “cutter” who hands over her razor blades committing to never mutilate her body again. All promises, all commitments, all guarantees, centered in personal determination, but destined for utter failure. These are the kind of people who will no doubt need the restorative hand of someone who alone possesses the omniscience to strengthen them in their most discouraging battles.

When Peter denied Jesus, it must have felt like the beginning of the end for him. His master had been arrested, and now he found himself a traitor to the one he loved most. But God had something amazing in store for Peter, and it would no doubt provide a basis for Peter's ministry in the coming years. The Book of John concludes this particular drama with an account that is just as glorious (if not more so) as Peter's denial was tragic. In John 21:15-19, we read that Jesus himself, following His resurrection, restored His beloved disciple. Jesus essentially asked Peter three times (the same number of times Peter had denied

Him), “Do you love me?” Peter, no doubt remembering his cowardly betrayal, answered “yes” each time the question was posed. The final words recorded in this dialogue were those of Jesus who said to Peter, “Follow me.” These were the very same words Jesus had spoken the day he called Peter to serve with Him in ministry (Mark 1:17). In essence, Jesus was reestablishing Peter in the ministry to which He had called him years before. Without the Lord making a personal effort to restore Peter, who knows if he would have ever returned to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Habitual sin, as well as difficult life circumstances, will often mirror the scenario of Peter and his denial. Counselees may be as determined as ever to get or do better, but may often feel overwhelmed with failure and hopelessness when their own determination does not get them the results they want. That is why, as a biblical counselor, it is imperative to point them to the One who promises to restore His own. Consider the words of Peter, likely influenced by his own encounter with Jesus: “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Peter 5:10, 11, ESV). Praise be to God! When counselees fail or counseling methods do not deliver, how wonderful it is to point our counselees (and ourselves) to these marvelous words. Peter, counseling those who were suffering, reminded them that in the end, it is God who will restore. It is God who will strengthen. It is God who will establish. Make every effort, as you counsel others, to build this foundation for them early on so that they will cherish the goodness, mercy, and faithfulness of God regardless of success or failure. Then in the very midst of struggle, they can proclaim, like Paul, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Counseling Considerations

1. Ask your counselees to read 1 Peter 4:19. While they are commanded to “do good” in the midst of suffering, do they also seek to “entrust their souls to a faithful Creator” in the process?
2. If not, seek to understand where they are putting their trust. Is it in you, the counselor? Is it in your methods of counseling? Are they placing hope in results such as self-control, peace, joy, confidence, sobriety, approval, etc.?
3. Once you assess the center of their hope, help them understand the futility of such a mindset. Have them read Ecclesiastes 2:12-17. Discuss how hoping in even good things will ultimately turn out to be folly. “Good things” for counselees may be things such as sobriety, self-control, joy, peace, etc.
4. Once you have had this discussion (points 1-3), point counselees back to 1 Peter 5:10, 11. Help them reorient their agenda to first and foremost hope in God (over and above counseling results). What does Peter assure the believer in this message?
5. Ask counselees to read John 18:15-27 and John 21:15-19. Have them journal on the following questions:
 - How do you relate to Peter in John 18:15-27?
 - Do you tend to rely on your own determination for change?
 - What attributes of Jesus are revealed in John 21:15-19 (i.e., love, compassion, etc.)?
 - As a Christian, do you believe God is as personally committed to restoring you in your failure as he was Peter? Why/why not? ■

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Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer

by Harold S. Martin

The Lord's Prayer appears twice in the Scriptures, with only slight variations. The Prayer occurs in the Gospel of Matthew as part of the Sermon on the Mount, and also, Luke records the Lord's Prayer in answer to a question from one of Jesus' disciples, when the disciple said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

The Prayer is really a prayer for the disciples to pray, but it was our Lord who taught it, and therefore we frequently speak of it as the Lord's Prayer. The disciples did not ask Jesus, "Teach us to preach" or "Teach us to sing." They said, "Lord, teach us to pray." Men and women can teach other human beings to become great orators and good singers, but only Jesus can teach disciples of His to become great masters of prayer. More is accomplished by prayer than has ever been accomplished by preaching, for without prayer even our preaching becomes cold and empty and without power. The songwriter asks some sobering questions: "Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray? In the name of Christ the Saviour, did you sue for loving favor as your shield today?"

Few passages of Scripture are as well-known as the one recording the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. We frequently use the Prayer, but lest we become content with merely repeating it and paying little attention to its real meaning, we want to try to examine its real spirit and the meaning of its words. The Lord's Prayer is a family prayer.

1. THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY IS ADDRESSED

We pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." Notice who He is. He is our Father. There was a time when we were children of

wrath even as others are, and we could not address God as "Our Father." But God, who is rich in mercy, and for the great love He had toward us, has made us spiritually alive so that we might enjoy fellowship with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. John says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). And now, as we approach Him in prayer, we come as a devoted son to a loving Father.

An earthly father usually wants the best for his children, and yet he may not always know what is best, and even if he does know, he may not always have the ability to grant it. But our heavenly Father has all these qualities. His love wants the best for us. Whatever is good for us, *He wants us to have*. "No good thing will be withheld from those who walk uprightly." And not only that, His wisdom *knows what is best for us*. And what is even more valuable, He has the ability to grant it! Surely it is a blessing to be a member of the family of God, and to have a Father like that. He is one who pities our weakness and pardons our sins and supplies our needs. We should always be grateful for this Father-son relationship—a blessed relationship between those who are saved and the God who saved them.

Remember that not all people can call God, "Our Father." Jesus told certain religious Jews of His day, "You are of your father the devil." John says it is only those who have received Jesus Christ as Saviour that have been given the right to become "the sons of God." An unsaved man praying, "Our father," would really be addressing the devil (John 8:44). That is why we call this prayer the "family prayer," because it is only those who have become the children of God

by faith in Jesus Christ, who have the right to address God as “Our Father.”

The words “Our Father which art in heaven” are intended to impress our minds with a sense of God’s majesty and greatness and power. When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we are addressing the One who inhabits eternity. And while our God is everywhere, His headquarters are in Heaven, and from there He sees all that comes to pass on the earth. And He invites us to come boldly to Him that we might obtain mercy, and grace to help in time of need. See Hebrews 4:16. And so when we begin the Lord’s Prayer, the Head of the family is addressed.

2. THE INTERESTS OF THE FAMILY ARE SOUGHT

For all members of God’s family, the primary interest and concerns are not their own things, but the things that belong to God. So often we think of ourselves and our own needs first. We pray about *our* needs, *our* family, *our* church, *our* country, (and if we have a few minutes at the end, we pray for the missionaries)—but Jesus’ model prayer implies that this is all wrong. Before we think of ourselves and *our* needs, we must start with our great concern about God, and express our concern for *His* honor and for His glory.

The Lord’s Prayer is a *form*—“When ye pray, say . . .” (Luke 11:2).

It is also a *model*—“After this manner therefore pray ye . . .” (Matthew 6:9).

In this model Prayer, Jesus points out that the first activity of praying is not getting something for ourselves, but getting something for God.

(1) There should be a concern for His name.

The word *hallowed* (in the phrase “Hallowed be thy name”) means “to render or to pronounce holy.” This is the desire that the very *name* of God and all that it represents may be honored among mankind. God revealed Himself to the Children of Israel under various names. He was known to His people in Old Testament days as “Jehovah,” which means “the self-existent one.” Many variations of that name are given in the

Scriptures. Sometimes it is “Jehovah-jireh” (the Lord will provide). Sometimes it is “Jehovah-shalom” (the Lord our peace). There are many other names that describe the various attributes of God.

When we pray “Hallowed be thy name,” we express a deep desire that the name of God (and all His attributes, and all that He represents) may be pronounced holy. And remember that words such as “goodness” and “mercy” and “grace” are attributes of the Most High God, and one who sincerely prays the Lord’s Prayer will be careful not to use those words carelessly in daily conversation. It is mockery to pray “Hallowed be thy name,” and then use His name and His attributes lightly in daily conversation.

(2) There should be a concern for His kingdom.

We pray “Thy kingdom come,” and the Bible predicts the setting up of a great kingdom on earth, with Jesus Christ as King. We need only to look upon the world about us to see that this promise has not been fulfilled. This kingdom is not going to come into being by a vote of the people, but by the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus will be King in all the earth, and the knowledge and glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Iniquity will no longer abound. Nations will beat swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. The lion will lie down with the lamb. And blight and poverty will be forever gone. This is not a dream. This is the teaching of the Bible (Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-5). The day is coming when Jesus will reign over the whole earth.

The whole message of the Bible points forward to the time when Jesus shall be King. Daniel (when interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar) saw “a stone cut out without hands,” which crashed into the great image of Nebuchadnezzar, and brought it down to dust. “This,” said Daniel, “is the kingdom which the God of heaven shall set up, which shall break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44, paraphrased).

And so when we pray “Thy kingdom