

"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 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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Prayer for Strength

SAMUEL JOHNSON LYLE STUTZMAN

1. Fa - ther, in Thy mys - ter - ious pres - ence kneel - ing, Fain would our souls feel  
 2. Lord, we have wan - dered forth through doubt and sor - row, And Thou hast made each  
 3. Now, Fa - ther, now in Thy dear pres - ence kneel - ing, Our spi - rits yearn to

all Thy kind - ling love. For we are weak and need some deep re - veal - ing  
 step an on - ward one. And we will ev - er trust each un - known mor - row.  
 feel Thy kind - ling love. Now make us strong, we need Thy deep re - veal - ing

of trust and strength and calm - ness from a - bove.  
 Thou wilt sus - tain us till its work is done.  
 of trust and strength and calm - ness from a - bove. A - men.

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# Person of the Month:

## *Frederick J. Gingerich* (1878-1955)



Frederick J. Gingerich was born to Joseph C. and Catherine Swartzendruber Gingerich September 15, 1878, near Green Center, Iowa.

At the age of 15 he moved with his parents to a farm in Clarion, Iowa, where he lived until he was grown. In September of 1895, at the age of 17, Frederick accepted Christ as his Saviour and subsequently was baptized and became a member of a Mennonite church.

Although Brother Gingerich did not have the opportunity to go to high school or college he was a good student and was proficient in math and language and read extensively. After his conversion Gingerich was active in the Sunday school as a teacher and also as superintendent.

On December 22, 1901, at the age of 23, Frederick J. Gingerich married Katie Leichty. God blessed their home with the birth of a son. They also had the privilege of raising two foster daughters.

Gingerich was a good farmer who was concerned about the welfare of his herds and the quality of his soil. His godliness was evident in the way he handled his farming business. The Gingerichs also showed a real interest in spiritual things at home and were willing to serve the Lord through the church. As a result Brother Gingerich was ordained to the ministry of East Union Church, Kalona, Iowa, on January 10, 1909, at the age of 30. He ministered at the church until 1913 when he accepted the call to pastor the West Fairview congregation in Beaver Crossing, Nebraska, for the next six years.

In 1919 the Gingerich family moved West to join with a new congregation in Oregon, Bethel Church, which was organized in May of that year. On July 3, 1921, Frederick Gingerich, who was then 42 years of age, was ordained as bishop for this congregation as well as to have oversight of some other congregations.

Brother Gingerich ministered as a counselor and advisor far and wide and his influence was felt throughout his conference. Because of his godly wisdom and calm demeanor he was asked to serve on many conference committees, one of which was the Merger Committee. He also served several times as conference moderator and assistant moderator.

Gingerich was concerned that his church youth should have the opportunity to go to high school. Plans were laid and the end result was the birthing of Western Mennonite School. Brother Gingerich gave money for this endeavor as well as time and energy in the building of the facility. From 1944-54 he served as chairman of the original school committee.

Gingerich, mindful of the limitations to his ministry because of the aging process, encouraged his congregation at Bethel to ordain a bishop who could assist him in the work there. An ordination for this purpose was held on July 15, 1951.

For health reasons the Gingerichs began spending many winters in Phoenix, Arizona, to avoid the Oregon climate at that time of the year. As a result Brother Gingerich was asked to assist in the organization of the Sunny Slope congregation.

On December 5, 1953, Brother Gingerich's heart was saddened by the death of his faithful companion, Katie, after 52 years of marriage.

*(continued on page 6)*

# *Jesus Christ Is Lord*

by Timothy L. Cooley

**E**ons before there was a star or a planet or even space in the courts of Heaven, a beautiful creature moved gracefully before the immediate presence of the King of kings. He was beautified by the glory reflected from the Almighty. He was powerful, by the gift of God ordained to be a leader among the angels. He was standing in the immediate presence of Almighty God. He excelled in music. Songs such as we have never heard flowed from his harp, his hand, and his mind. Energetically he obeyed the commands of the Lord, but as he served he began to covet the glory of the Almighty, the power of the Almighty, the praise that only the Almighty deserved. He took to himself the glory of the precious stones, adorned himself, lifted up himself, and eventually convinced one third of the angels to give him their devotion. Together they rebelled against the Most High, devoting their love to Lucifer, the son of the morning. They staked their eternal destiny on one archangel and gave him their loyalty—but he wasn't worthy!

After the creation of Man, the same being (once beautiful and wise, now crafty and deceitful) invaded the Garden of God in Eden. He corrupted the woman, then the man, selling them the idea that they could be like God Himself—wise and self-determining—but they weren't worthy!

Generations passed and men began to exalt themselves one above the others. A mighty hunter before the Lord, named Nimrod, rose to power. He called the builders to unite in building a tower into the sky, a tower that would unite them, a

tower that would consolidate his power. The builders united. They baked bricks. They laid them row upon row. The architects had done their work well. "We will make a name for ourselves," the people shouted. Even God said, "Behold, the people is one . . . and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." But Prince Nimrod wasn't worthy!

In the country of Egypt, along the green shores of the Nile, in the very shadow of the Great Pyramid, the Pharaoh was visited by an eighty-year-old shepherd from the Arabian Desert. Gray-bearded Moses proclaimed the Ultimatum of the Almighty. "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, let my people go."

Pharaoh fumed, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him? I will not let the people go!" He goaded the slave masters to beat the people. He commanded the midwives to murder their babies. He rallied the military to chase down these "runaway slaves." He raised his fist against the Almighty and determined, "I am the god of Egypt!" His soldiers followed him valiantly; but in the end, his waterlogged body floated facedown, like a log in the Red Sea, bobbing beside the corpses of his generals, his soldiers, and his horses. The Pharaoh was not worthy!

In the greatest empire up to his day, Nebuchadnezzar, the great King of Babylon, amassed riches, conquered territory, piled nobles on top of generals, and stood above them all. In his pride, he constructed a giant gold image (90 feet high!) and hired the finest musicians in the world. Tens of thousands in a sea of humanity prostrated themselves before

**PAGE 2**

**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

his image. The poverty-stricken were there, bending their heads and their knees. The helpless and the hopeless were nodding their submission. The middle class merchants with their jewels were pompously offering their worship. The rich noblemen, with their silk garments—gorgeous purple and blushing scarlet rippling—proudly bowed their necks in submission. The military captains, marshals, and generals with all their honors and medals saluted and worshipped. Millions bowed to the ground and touched their foreheads to the dirt. But he wasn't worthy! It was all idolatry!

Alexander the Great stomped from his homeland Macedonia with 40,000 brave soldiers. They marched eastward and southward, then eastward again. They smashed down cities. They conquered nations and empires and armies up to twenty times their size, until Alexander ruled the world! Then he wept that there were no more empires to conquer! The Greek culture was exported to thousands of cities. People all over the world learned to speak the Greek language and studied the Greek stories about the origin of the universe. Greek science and philosophy were in demand. Kings and princes longed to be educated in Greek! What about Alexander's empire? It barely outlasted his short life. At thirty-three, it was all over! Alexander had hardly gasped his last breath before his empire was quartered and broken. Alexander the Great was not worthy!

In the grand city of Rome, paved with marble and studded with stately columns, Caesar was crowned. Trumpets blared. Drums thundered. Thousands chanted out their submission and worship. The very pavement of the streets vibrated with their applause. The senators chimed their slavish assent and Caesar was declared a god! From all over the world, the roads led to Rome. Iron-fisted armies executed the will of Caesar. Wheeled, almost winged, chariots sped

the news and the commands to the ends of the earth and back. Kingdoms crumbled and tribes trembled at his word. The whole world seemed to worship! Those who refused to burn incense to Caesar were beheaded, or tortured, or burned alive, or ripped apart by lions. But he wasn't worthy!

Across the centuries, rulers, kings, and emperors have crushed all who resisted their reign. Their iron fists seemed invincible and eternal. Thousands were stomped into submission, smashed under the wheels of their regimes. But they weren't worthy!

From the tiny country of France, the ambitious Napoleon stretched out his hand. He swallowed up much of Europe and set his sights on Moscow. The Little Emperor claimed such devotion from his soldiers that men would strike themselves to the ground just to display loyalty to his rule and to strike fear to the enemies. One wounded soldier winced under the pain of surgery without anesthesia. He moaned as the surgeon probed deeper and deeper to remove the bullet. "Be careful," he gritted, "if you cut any farther, you will find my emperor!" What devotion to the Little Emperor! But he wasn't worthy!

In Russia, a broken, intimidated boy, rejected and beaten by his father, Josef Stalin eventually found strength in rebellion. One day at school, he climbed on the back of another boy and began shouting, "Ya Stal, Ya Stal!"—"I am Steel!" Josef Stalin leveraged himself into power and engineered the most horrible ethnic purges. Multiplied millions were miserably murdered at his command. He shouted, "I believe in one thing only, the power of human will." His steel fist and his harsh boot crushed millions.

In the 1930s Adolf Hitler rose from the lowest levels of society in Germany. Barking out lies and promises, then chanting their staccato slogans, the Nazis clamored into leadership. Thousands screamed their thunderous applause.

Their revolution rocked Germany. Their Wehrmacht (war machine) and the Gestapo sent their tanks across Europe coughing out steel and shrapnel on their enemies. Their war planes raked the skies. Their bombs scorched the earth. Their missiles screeched and crashed and splintered even London.

“Heil Hitler!” It seemed the whole world would soon take up his praise. Six million Jews were exterminated. Fifteen to twenty million military personnel careened into eternity—killed in action. Civilian dead numbered approximately 25 million. Expenditures for war materials and armaments totaled at least \$1.154 trillion. In fact, between Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, the two of them were responsible for the deaths of 100,000,000 people! Who could resist? So many were chanting their obedience. But Hitler was not worthy! Stalin was not worthy! No human is worthy! No angel is worthy!

But there was One! There was One!! “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:6-11).

Jesus Christ “ascended up on high, . . . led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” He reigns “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”

There is no other Name! No one else is

worthy! Jesus Christ is King of kings!

After His death, Jesus descended into Hell and proclaimed His victory over Death, Hell, and the Grave! He ripped the keys of Death and Hell away from the devil, and ascended into Heaven.

Eleven disciples believed on Him. They were scattered, tortured, and many were killed. But because of their testimony others believed. Many of those were tortured.

For two thousand years, all Hell has tried to wipe out the church of Jesus Christ. They have tried to obliterate His Name and His Cross from human history, but they have never won! They cannot prevail!

The Emperor Julian the Apostate was raised under Christian influences, but when he rose to power, he turned against the church. He tried to bring back paganism and vowed to rid the world of the name of Jesus. He would only allow Christ to be referred to as “the Galilean.” As he lay dying from a battle wound, he gathered up some of his own clotted blood, threw it into the air and sputtered, “Thou hast conquered, thou Galilean!”

Since 1900, more people have been martyred for Jesus than in all the previous centuries combined! I can’t tell you what is ahead for Christians in this turbulent age, but I can promise you upon the Name of Christ, that His Church will prevail!

In Revelation 1, Jesus appeared to John the Beloved and announced, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

John testified, “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. . . .” *(continued on page 6)*

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



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

# **Taking Thankfulness a Step Further**

by George Quick

**J**ust for a moment, place yourself in God's position. You have sacrificed your Son in atonement for sin. Now you want to show the world the value of the prize Christ has won. How would you accomplish that? Would you provide a great miracle? If you did, would that be enough to illustrate the validity and power of the Gospel? The answer God chose might surprise you.

The church at Philippi, about 900 miles from Rome, was the principal city on the Egnatia Highway connecting Rome to Byzantium. Traveling merchants would have opportunity to hear the Gospel. It was critical that this strategic church know and live the Gospel. Paul said as much when he wrote, "Only let your conversation [manner of life] be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ" (1:27a). Even facing persecution, they were not to be terrified. As believers, they should have known that suffering for Christ was part of God's

plan.

When Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa he started with a dark background. In contrast, he painted her face bright and clear. It was the focal point of his great work. When God wanted to illustrate His glorious Gospel, He placed it in hearts that were dark with sin. Then He allowed His children to suffer. Why? Like the world, man's normal reaction to suffering is to complain. But because we have the Holy Spirit, we can respond in an extraordinary way. God knew that we could do this, so He commanded us to do it in Philippians 2:14. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings."

Satan knows that griping and complaining will destroy an effective Gospel witness. Could Satan be using your grumbling to hinder your witness for Christ? God's desire for the Philippians in verse 15 was that they "shine as lights in the world." Oh, that our own crooked generation might see us shine for Him.

Shame on us for grumbling and complaining when we have such an opportunity to demonstrate His Gospel to the world. How can we offer the world the Word of Life when we display such dishonor to our Saviour? If the Gospel hasn't transformed us, why would the world want it? If your life is gripped by complaining and despair, let me challenge you to do what Paul said in Philippians 3:1: "Rejoice in the Lord"! Surely you can find much that the Lord is doing in your life. Each day, fill your heart and mind with thankfulness for His goodness. Then tell others the wonderful things that Christ is doing in your life.

Many years ago, I took my wife to a Christian concert. It featured a husband and wife, singing about God's blessing upon their home. The wife said that earlier in the day she had washed her hair in preparation for the evening. She had extremely long

hair. To her horror, her hair dryer quit working. She gave it to her husband, and after a few minutes of tinkering, it was fixed. She was able to dry her hair, and "all's well that ends well." I can still see her in my mind's eye as she turned to the audience and said, as if letting us in on a secret, "I knew he could do it. He can fix anything." I thought, "That's got to be the smartest woman in the world." What do you think her husband did the next time she needed something fixed? She had learned, not just to be thankful, but to openly praise him for his goodness to her. God wants us to be thankful and openly praise Him just like that. When praise comes from those who are suffering, the point is clear: Only the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ can transform someone like that! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *BBN Voice*, Nov. 2008.



#### **JESUS CHRIST IS LORD . . . cont'd.**

John continues, "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

In Revelation 5, God pulled back the curtain of eternity and showed John a great multitude, hundreds of millions shouting, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Then every creature in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the

sea, shouted like the booming thunder, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Jesus Christ is worthy! He is worthy to open the Seals of the Book. He is the Saviour of the world. And He shall reign forever and ever!—King of kings and Lord of lords. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Convention Herald*, Nov./Dec. 2008.

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#### **FREDERICK J. GINGERICH . . . cont'd.**

Frederick had bought some land in Paradise Valley and had begun to develop the property. On July 15, 1955, at the age of 76, Frederick J. Gingerich went home to be with the Lord. His body was found outside his property in Paradise Valley. It is believed that he had had a stroke or heart attack. A memorial service was held at Sunny Slope on July 17, with the funeral services and burial at the Zion Church and cemetery in his home community in Oregon.

—*Gail L. Emerson*

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



## *A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**AUGUST 2, 2009**

### *The Effects of Complaining*

Numbers 11:1-6, 10-15

After their dramatic deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites had encamped at Mt. Sinai, where God gave Moses the Law and established regulations for their nationhood. Now, about a year later (Numbers 10:11, 12), they had moved three days' journey north into the desert of Paran where they again made camp. The joy of leaving Egypt had worn off and the people were beginning to complain that things were not to their liking. They began comparing their present somewhat limited resources to the abundance they had enjoyed in Egypt.

Six weeks after leaving Egypt God had miraculously provided manna to sustain them. Now, here in Numbers 11, they were complaining that they had no meat to eat. They remembered the abundance of fish they had access to in Egypt, in addition to the variety of fresh produce from their gardens. They were dissatisfied, so they voiced their complaint.

It would seem clear from the text that two instances of complaining are in focus in this chapter. The first three verses depict an unexplained situation that occurred at a place Moses named Taberah, or burning, which depicted God's response to the people's complaint. God became angry at their ingratitude. He had delivered them from bondage, led them through the sea and the wilderness, and provided both protection and sustenance; and they complained. And He became angry and vis-

ited judgment upon them.

When the fire of God's judgment fell upon them, the people cried out to Moses for help. Moses prayed and the Lord stayed His hand. However, those on the outer fringes of the camp were consumed by the Lord's fire. The name Moses gave to that place was in remembrance of the form of God's judgment.

In verse 4 it was the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the Israelites (see Exodus 12:38) who began murmuring about the lack of familiar food which they had enjoyed in Egypt. Their complaining rubbed off on the Israelites and they, too, began again to complain. They spoke disparagingly of the manna God had provided and longed for meat, something more substantial to sink their teeth into. Their ingratitude displeased both God and Moses: God, because He had so marvelously provided for them; Moses, because somehow he felt it reflected on his leadership.

Then even Moses raised a complaint to God. The burden of his responsibilities overwhelmed him and he asked God why He had dumped the responsibility of His people solely upon him. Moses said, "These are not my people." He was discouraged by their complaints and ingratitude. Verse 14 defines his complaint. Moses was so discouraged that he actually requested God to take his life. Instant death, he felt, would be preferable to the long-term burden of dealing with this complaining people.

Read on to the end of the chapter to see how God resolved both Moses' burden and the complaint of the people. God is always gracious and responsive to the needs of His

people. He proved that here, both to Moses and to Israel.

### **For thought and discussion**

1. What lies at the root of complaining, and how can that be addressed?
2. Why is it that it seems the people most blessed are the ones most likely to complain? Discuss.
3. Who was this mixed multitude spoken of here in verse 4 and Exodus 12:38? Why were they accompanying the Israelites?
4. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities God has entrusted to you, or discouraged by the response of the people God has called you to lead? How did you deal with it? How did God respond? What was the result?
5. There are lessons here for both leaders and people. Discuss appropriate ways of interacting so as to avoid the debilitating effects of complaining and discouragement upon a group.

### **Help for teachers**

*Lesson emphasis:* The devastating effects of complaining upon leadership and the unity of a group.

*Key verses:* Verses 1a, 11, 14

## **AUGUST 9, 2009**

### ***The Sin of Rebellion***

Numbers 13:20–14:12

While encamped in the wilderness of Paran, Moses sent twelve men, one from each tribe, to spy out the land of Canaan. As they neared their goal, Moses wanted information about the land and its peoples to help strategize their entry into the land promised by God. Chapter 13 tells the story. The men returned with a favorable report concerning the productivity of the land, but a fearful report regarding its inhabitants. Our lesson today deals with the people's response to the spies' report.

Somehow, the people had lost their trust in God. They allowed unproven fears to

override God's proven care and work on their behalf. It seems incomprehensible that these people who had been led out of Egypt, through the Red Sea on dry land, and had their food miraculously provided in the desert, would now doubt God's ability or willingness to see them safely into the land He had promised to give them. But such is the feeble nature of man. He is given to doubt the unknown.

The twelve men Moses sent to spy out the land of Canaan were prominent men, leaders within their tribes (see 13:1-3). However, all but two had a fatal flaw—they failed to trust God to perform what He had promised to do. As a result of their unfaithfulness they lost their lives. (Read the rest of the chapter.) And the nation suffered.

Giving ear to the doubters, the entire congregation wept over their assumed misfortune of having come so far and now not being able to enter the Promised Land. They also murmured against Moses and Aaron, threatening their leadership and perhaps even their lives (v. 10). They spoke contemptuously against God, charging Him with inability to carry through with His promise (v. 3). Things were in a sad state.

Incredibly, they even spoke of going back to Egypt! Had they so soon forgotten the rigorous labor and mistreatment under the taskmasters? What were they thinking? How had they in so short a time deteriorated into such unbelieving, irrational people? Obviously they had taken their eyes off God. They were thinking in mere human terms. They needed help.

Caleb and Joshua, the two faithful and believing spies, did their best to convince the people that their thinking was wrong. They, too, had seen the giants in the land. But they also remembered God's promise and the great deliverance He had performed in bringing them out of Egypt. They were men of faith. And vision. And courage. They realized the danger of rebelling against God's plan. Unfortunately, they found themselves in danger of death for their outspoken stand (v. 10).

At this point God intervened by reveal-

ing His glory before the gathered multitude in defense of His honor and the faithfulness of Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. God's word to Moses was, "Step aside, I will smite these people and disinherit them and make of thee a great nation." God was finished with His grumbling, unbelieving, rebellious people. But read on to discover the true greatness of Moses. He felt that God's integrity was more important than personal elevation.

### **For thought and discussion**

1. Reflect on Moses' wisdom in choosing a spy from each tribe. What was the value in that, and what lesson does that teach us regarding cooperative efforts today?
2. Why does doubt so often seem stronger than faith?
3. What was the result of the people's distrust of God's promise? What lesson does that hold for us?
4. What is at the root of rebellion, and why is it so dangerous? Discuss.
5. Sometimes it costs to stand for the truth. Examine your life and commitment. Suppose you were put on the line as these faithful men were. Would you be able to stand in the face of opposition, or even death?

### **Help for teachers**

*Lesson emphasis:* The damaging effects of rebellion and the strength required to stand for one's convictions.

*Key verses:* Verses 6-9

## **AUGUST 16, 2009**

### ***The Consequences of Disobedience***

Numbers 20:1-13

After being denied entry into Canaan because of their unbelief, the Israelites were turned back into the wilderness to begin the required 40 years of wandering. In the chapters between last Sunday's lesson and today's we see where Moses and Aaron's

authority was challenged, but authenticated by God. Various offerings were established and the Levites called to minister on behalf of the congregation.

Here in Chapter 20 we find Israel encamped in the desert of Zin, at Kadesh. The 40 years of wandering were over and entrance into Canaan was close at hand. Here at Kadesh Miriam died and was buried. Here also the Israelites found themselves again in a situation where there was no water (see Exodus 17:1-7).

Again, true to their nature, the people vented their frustration and displeasure against their leaders, Moses and Aaron. One would think that by now they would have been accustomed to God's providence these past 40 years and would trust Him to provide their need. But they did not. They complained to their leaders instead of trusting God. Again they wondered why they had left Egypt (see 14:1-4), or why the Lord had not consumed them when He destroyed others. Such is the nature of unbelief—irrational thinking. They had forgotten God's promise of a "land flowing with milk and honey."

Moses and Aaron went to the Lord for help. God again manifested His glory as evidence of His power and authority and in support of His chosen leaders. There the Lord gave Moses specific instructions. He was to take the rod "from before the Lord" (was this Aaron's rod? See Chapter 17), gather the people together before the rock and speak to the rock to bring forth water to assuage their thirst.

However, this great man Moses, the friend of God (Exodus 33:11), chosen and blessed by God to lead His people, became overwhelmed with his frustrations at the people and completely disobeyed the commands of God (see Psalm 106:32, 33). And it cost him the blessing of culminating his leadership of the people by taking them into the Promised Land. What a tragedy. But it goes to show that God's commands are not to be trifled with and that He will not overlook disobedience even among His most favored people.

Moses in the heat of passion derided the people instead of speaking to the rock. He struck the rock, twice, instead of speaking to it as God had commanded. He misplaced the emphasis on himself and Aaron instead of directing honor to God to provide. And he destroyed his image as a worthy leader by exposing his anger before the gathered congregation.

God responded to the people's need by causing water to flow from the rock. But that water came at a great price to Moses and Aaron. They had dishonored the Lord by their actions, so God denied them the privilege toward which they had looked and worked for the past 40 years. They would die on this side of Jordan. Disobedience brings its consequences.

Here again the place of this experience was named as a reminder of what happened there: Meribah, or the waters of strife.

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

1. Perhaps you have found yourself in a frustrating situation where it seemed easier to place blame than to trust God for results. Which is the more productive, and satisfying, route?
2. When faced with difficulty, why is it easier to look back than to look ahead? What is lacking?
3. There is symbolism in the rock out of which flowed life-sustaining water in the desert. See 1 Corinthians 10:4 for help in understanding its significance. Was there more than simple disobedience involved in Moses' striking the rock (twice) instead of speaking to it as God had commanded? Good for discussion.
4. What happens when we "lose our cool"? There are multifaceted consequences. Explore them.
5. This lesson should cause us to consider soberly the consequences of disobeying God.

#### **Help for teachers**

*Lesson emphasis:* The effect of complaining and the consequences of disobedience.

*Key verse:* Verse 12

**AUGUST 23, 2009**

### ***Teaching God's Laws***

Deuteronomy 6:1-9, 20-25

The children of Israel were poised on the brink of entering the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the desert. Here in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses recounts the experiences of those years. It was, in a real sense, Moses' farewell message to the people he had led these past 40 years. He recounted the history of God's goodness to them and warned of the consequences of disobedience to God's will and law. Moses looks back, and he looks ahead, giving reminders of the past and challenges for the future. Chapter 1:1-8 provides the setting. (Read also Chapters 4 and 5.)

Moses is speaking to the whole assembly of Israel. And here in Chapter 6 he gets down to specifics about keeping God's laws and passing them on from generation to generation (see also 5:1 and 6:2). Israel was about to embark on a new era in their national existence, and it was important for them to be reminded of the laws God had set up to govern them as an established nation in a permanent homeland. These laws would govern both their relationship to God and to one another (v. 1).

There were promises connected to their observance of God's commandments: long life, well-being, growth as a nation. Implied also was God's blessing on the productivity of the land (v. 3; see also 5:31-33). We also note from the last section of our lesson that the keeping of God's commandments provided not only ongoing reminders of His goodness to their nation, but also a right to God's continued blessing.

God's sovereignty and uniqueness, coupled with the people's corresponding wholehearted commitment to Him, provided the basis for their ongoing relationship. The continual importance of this relationship was emphasized by Jesus in Mark 12:28-33. And there the scribe's response showed how it was still understood many centuries from Moses' time.

In speaking to the adult Israelites, Moses emphasized that first of all God's commandments must be at the center of their personal lives. Their next responsibility, then, was to "teach them diligently unto [their] children." Their teaching program was to encompass all areas of life's experiences and interactions. In other words, God's Word was to be ever before them and they were to use every opportunity to coordinate God's laws with daily life.

It was assumed (v. 20) that children would sometimes ask the meaning and purpose of God's commandments and laws. That, then, would give the parent opportunity to explain God's constant care, provisions, and blessings. The continual observance of God's laws was intended to keep the relationship alive and to keep the nation in God's good graces.

The passing on of God's law, His mercy and providential care, is perhaps the greatest responsibility of parents in every generation. Teaching must be done continually, diligently, and in practical and meaningful ways. To fail is to endanger the spiritual relationship of succeeding generations. Let us today be as diligent in our endeavor as the ancient Israelites were instructed to be by Moses.

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

1. What is the value and importance of established laws? What happens without them?
2. What are some ways we can integrate the teaching of God's laws into our daily family experiences? Discuss.
3. Someone has well said that "a chain is no stronger than its weakest link." How does that statement apply to the crux of our lesson today?
4. What is the first and primary requirement for a successful teaching program?
5. We live in an era when many and varied voices clamor for our attention and that of our children. Discuss ways to offset these extraneous influences in our families with positive, God-centered living

and teaching.

#### **Help for teachers**

*Lesson emphasis:* The importance and methods of continual teaching of spiritual values.

*Key verses:* Verses 5-7a

## **AUGUST 30, 2009**

### ***Blessings for Obedience***

Deuteronomy 30:1-10

Throughout the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses recounted to Israel all of God's goodness to them while he had led them from Egypt to the brink of Canaan. He also warned them of the consequences of not continuing to obey the laws God had established for their social and spiritual well-being. God's continued blessing was conditioned on their continued obedience.

Chapter 29 outlines God's response to unfaithfulness on their part. It would lead to a withdrawal of His blessing, their removal from the land of promise, and destruction of the land itself. Chapter 30 then shows God's favorable response when they would come to their senses, repent, and turn back to God. That is the theme of today's lesson (see also Chapter 6).

God knew how fickle His people could be. In His foreknowledge He knew they would in time turn away from Him and that He would be obliged to punish them with banishment from their land. But even here, while God foretold through Moses this possibility, He also gave the promise of a remedy. Notice that God says in verse 1 "when," not "if." He knew it would happen.

God promised to restore His people when they repented "and gather [them] from all the nations whither [He] had scattered [them]." From the utmost parts of the earth He would bring them back and return them to their homeland. Not only would He restore them, He would also bless them and multiply them as a nation.

We know from Israel's subsequent history that some 800 years after Moses' warning it did come to pass when the kingdom of Judah went into captivity to Babylon. And after 70 years they were returned again to their homeland to rebuild their shattered lives and cities. God is faithful to His promises. And undoubtedly there are still some futuristic aspects of God's promise to Israel through Moses.

God promises that in the restoration of His people He would reverse the curses and put them upon their enemies: "them that hate thee," those who have persecuted them. God also promises that He will circumcise the heart of His people, giving them an inner, heart-motivation to serve Him. This inner, spiritual motivation would give them impetus to obey and serve God above that of merely keeping commandments. It would result in a heart religion (see also Ezekiel 36:24-28).

Notice how God promised not only spiritual blessings in this renewed relationship; He also promised plentiful offspring, growth of herds, and increase from the land (v. 9). However, all of this was predicated upon their response to "hearken unto the voice of the LORD [their] God, to keep his commandments . . . and turn unto the LORD thy God with all [their] heart and with all [their] soul" (v. 10).

Not only do Moses' words here hold

hope for Israel should they stray from God, but they also give us a picture of God's mercy extended to all who stray from God and turn back to Him in repentance. He is ever merciful and waiting to bless all who turn heart and soul to Him.

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

1. Why does it seem so easy for those who have been blessed by God to then turn away from Him? Discuss.
2. It seems difficult for people to grasp the fact that disobedience to God always brings its consequences. Why is this? Discuss.
3. What advantages do we in the Christian era have over the ancient Israelites in maintaining a right relationship to God?
4. Some would say that God has removed His blessing from Israel because of their continued unfaithfulness and rejection. What does the Bible say? How enduring are God's promises? How do we know?
5. Does God still promise other than spiritual blessings for those who are faithful to Him?

#### **Help for teachers**

*Lesson emphasis:* That God's blessings are conditioned on our obedience to His commandments.

*Key verses:* Verses 6, 9 ■

We are aware that some of our readers are using Sunday school materials from Christian Light Publications and using the *Sword & Trumpet* Sunday school lesson commentary as a supplement.

Beginning with the September-November 2009 quarter, Christian Light will no longer be using the International Sunday School Lesson outlines but will be going to a series of their own development.

Because CLP's material is proprietary, *Sword & Trumpet* will continue to use the International Lesson outlines. Therefore, the lesson texts will no longer be the same.

We are open to your comments regarding the ongoing usefulness of the *Sword & Trumpet* Sunday School Lesson Commentary. You may contact *Sword & Trumpet* at: P.O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803-0575. Phone: 540-867-9419. E-mail: [swandtrump@verizon.net](mailto:swandtrump@verizon.net).

# Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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

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## Diplomats' Gay Partners Given Marital Privileges

With President Obama's approval, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has instituted a new policy at the State Department that gives unmarried homosexual partners who work there the same privileges and benefits of married heterosexual couples.

—Source: *Washington Post*

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## The Hidden Hunger

Nicholas Kristof, an op-ed writer for the *New York Times*, is on a tour through five West African countries. Writing from Guinea-Bissau, he highlights the problem of malnutrition. While many in the West equate malnutrition with lack of food, that is often not the case. For every person that doesn't have enough to eat, ten more are malnourished—not getting enough micronutrients such as iron, zinc, Vitamin A, and iodine. Malnutrition is the cause of a third to half of all child deaths. An example of malnutrition's many effects is the many women who die in childbirth due to iron deficiencies (42% of women worldwide have anemia).

Kristof concludes with the solutions: "One solution is to distribute supplements to vulnerable people, or to fortify foods with micronutrients. A panel of prominent economists produced the 'Copenhagen

Consensus' on which forms of aid are most cost-effective, and it ranked micronutrient supplements as No. 1 (malaria prevention was No. 12, sanitation No. 20, and micro-finance No. 22).

"Americans typically get micronutrients from fortified foods, and the same strategy is possible in Africa. Helen Keller International is helping Guinea's leading flour mill fortify its products with iron, folic acid, and vitamin B (zinc is coming soon). We visited the mill, and managers said that the fortification costs virtually nothing—a tiny fraction of a penny per loaf of bread—yet it will reduce anemia, maternal mortality, and cognitive impairments around the country. None of this is glamorous, but it's hugely needed—and truly a bargain."

—Source and excerpts from "The Hidden Hunger" (<http://cli.gs/tn05ZB>) by Nicholas Kristof in *The New York Times*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Radio Show Host Tries Waterboarding

There is argument on the American political scene whether waterboarding should be qualified as torture. A pro-war, anti-Democrat talk radio host Mancow Muller put this to a personal test. Wikipedia writes: "On May 22, 2009, Muller had himself waterboarded during his morning radio program, having lost a listener poll deter-

mining whether he or co-host Pat Cassidy would be the one waterboarded. The talk show host had previously claimed calling the practice ‘torture’ was wrong, something he had hoped his reenactment would prove. Lasting only 6 seconds (‘8 seconds less than the average person’, according to program guest Marine Sergeant Clay South), Mancow afterward changed his opinion, saying, ‘It is way worse than I thought it would be, and that’s no joke,’ and described waterboarding as ‘absolutely torture.’ ”

I’ve been thinking about this whole torture argument recently in light of Romans 13 saying that governments “hold terror” “for those who do wrong” and are “God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.” Does torture fall under this description? Or should Christians speak against the government torturing? In any case, it illustrates clearly for me why a follower of Jesus cannot perform most functions of government. —Source: *Wikipedia*

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### **Verizon Refuses Emergency Phone Activation**

Ohio state troopers, Carroll County sheriff’s deputies, an airplane, two K-9 units, several fire departments, and 100 individuals on foot searched all night for a 62-year-old man who was lost. The sheriff contacted Verizon to use the man’s cell phone signal to locate him; however, the man was \$20 behind on his bill and Verizon refused to reactivate the phone for the EMS to find him until his bill was paid. The sheriff’s department finally figured out a way to pay the bill shortly before they found him, eleven hours after beginning the search.

—Source: *The Dover-New Philadelphia Times-Reporter*

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### **Possible Reduction of Aircraft Fuel**

Researchers at the University of Warwick in Coventry, UK have discovered they can reduce drag by a substantial amount by waggling the wings of airplanes. This leads to a 20% reduction in fuel usage. It’s not

practical to actually waggle the wings of airplanes (wouldn’t that be lovely to look out the window of your plane to see the wings flapping away?), but they believe they can use small jets to redirect air over the wings in a way that mimics waggling.

—Source: *GreenBiz.com*

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### **Home: No Place for Bible Study**

“A San Diego pastor and his wife claim they were interrogated by a county official and warned they will face escalating fines if they continue to hold Bible studies in their home.

“The couple, whose names are being withheld until a demand letter can be filed on their behalf, told their attorney a county government employee knocked on their door on Good Friday, asking a litany of questions about their Tuesday night Bible studies, which are attended by approximately 15 people.

“ ‘Do you have a regular weekly meeting in your home? Do you sing? Do you say “amen”?’ the official reportedly asked. ‘Do you say, “Praise the Lord”?’

“The pastor’s wife answered yes.

“She says she was then told, however, that she must stop holding ‘religious assemblies’ until she and her husband obtain a Major Use Permit from the county, a permit that often involves traffic and environmental studies, compliance with parking and sidewalk regulations and costs that top tens of thousands of dollars.

“And if they fail to pay for the MUP, the county official reportedly warned, the couple will be charged escalating fines beginning at \$100, then \$200, \$500, \$1000, ‘and then it will get ugly.’

“Dean Broyles of the Western Center for Law & Policy, which has been retained to represent the couple, told WND the county’s action not only violates religious land-use laws but also assaults both the First Amendment’s freedom of assembly and freedom of religion.

“ ‘The First Amendment, in part, reads, “Congress shall make no law respecting an

establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” ’ Broyles said. ‘And that’s the key part: “prohibiting the free exercise.” We believe this is a substantial government burden on the free exercise of religion.’

“On a personal note, Broyles added, ‘I’ve been leading Bible studies in my home for 13 years in San Diego County, and I personally believe that home fellowship Bible studies are the past and future of the church. . . . If you look at China, the church grew from home Bible studies. I’m deeply concerned that if in the U. S. we are not able to meet in our homes and freely practice our religion, then we may be worse off than China.’

“Broyles also explained to WND that oppressive governments, such as communist China or Nazi Germany, worked to repress home fellowships, labeling them the ‘underground church’ or ‘subversive groups,’ legally compelling Christians to meet only in sanctioned, government-controlled ‘official’ churches.”

—Excerpt from “Home: No place for Bible study” (<http://cli.gs/ehThzy>) in *WorldNetDaily*

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### Quote of the Month

“We take wondrously adaptive capacities for human self-display—language, intelligence, kindness, creativity, and beauty—and then forget how to use them in making friends, attracting mates, and gaining prestige. Instead, we rely on goods and services acquired through education, work, and consumption to advertise our personal traits to others. These costly signals are mostly redundant or misleading, so others usually ignore them. They prefer to judge us through natural face-to-face interaction. We think our gilding dazzles them, though we ignore their own gilding when choosing our friends and mates.”

—Evolutionary psychologist Geoffrey Miller in his new book *Spent* (book not recommended). While I certainly don’t share his worldview, he makes a very interesting observation about human nature and consumerism, one that we would do well to take a lesson from.

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### NAVIGATING GRIEF . . . cont’d from p. 26

or not I would trust God, even as I looked death in the eyes while watching my brother die. This helped me realize that grieving is much like the experience of old-time navigators. To navigate the sea successfully, it was necessary to focus on an external reference point—the North Star or a lighthouse beacon, for example. Grieving well requires the same thing: focusing on God as our external reference point. It requires trusting in Him. Only then can we not be afraid. Navigating grief isn’t about leaning on truth or learning lessons. Essentially, that would be trusting ourselves and thinking that if we could learn what we needed to learn, then we’d be able to manage the crisis. This is not God’s hope for us in the midst of suffering; rather He desires for us to trust Him.

There is much more that could be said. To talk of the change in perspective that grief brought, so that the inconveniences of life no longer looked so life-and-death in nature, might be good. Or to dwell on how God seldom answers questions—even the questions that stand out boldly in a time of grief—might be beneficial. But maybe not. Maybe all such talk is the wrong thing to do, misleading in suggesting that there are answers and that grieving well is done by affirming truth and by trusting knowledge when what is really needed is to trust God. The remedy for me when I do what I have always done in the aftermath of death is to trust Him—in the midst of the sorrow, the loneliness, and the often unrelenting pain. The remedy for you, too, when you do what you always do, is to trust God. Then we will be more aware of His presence. We will know better His love for us—the love that is always there, even in dark circumstances. And we will know better the reality of God, that He is the living God who relates and loves and cares. He also does what He has always done. He comes alongside, not to be the remedy to pain and sorrow, but to be present with us in dark times. And He weeps with us. And that is enough. ■

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# Courtship, Engagement, and the Wedding

by Harold S. Martin

Marriage is not a human custom that gradually came to be accepted during the early history of mankind. Marriage is a God-ordained sacred institution, and it is intended to be a lifetime proposition. Jesus said, “*Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*” (Matthew 19:4, 5).

Marriage originated at the time of creation; it is not a mere human invention. In Genesis 2:24 God says that a man should leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they two “shall be one flesh.” That text, given at the beginning of creation, says four things about marriage. Marriage is to be:

- *monogamous*—one man, one woman; a man and his wife
- *permanent*—joined to one another speaks of a binding commitment, like epoxy glue
- *heterosexual*—given in the context of a man and woman (Adam and Eve)
- *a separate unit*—the word *leave* means “to abandon the former relationship”

## I. COURTSHIP

The Bible encourages young people to consider marriage—and certainly it is unwise for people to suddenly marry, without ever having paid any attention to each other or without really getting to know each other. Therefore we approve of courtship among young people—but there are some instructions that need to be passed along to youth.

### A. *The dangers of courtship*

There are many pitfalls during the years of courtship, but the most menacing danger is related to *habits which can lead to sexual intimacy*.

The primary reason why many marriages end in disaster is because during courtship the couple becomes too involved in *their physical attraction* for each other. They don’t really get to know each other as *persons* because the sexual attraction becomes predominant. It is very easy to overlook even obvious personality defects, since so much pleasurable emotion comes from the activities of touching and embracing (necking and petting). At those moments—when the passions are aroused—who cares about personality defects?

The sex experience is beautiful and right—but only within the bonds of true and honourable marriage. Why within marriage? Because God knows that the physical relationship between a man and a woman might lead to the birth of a child—and that the child will only get the proper nurture within the family situation of a godly marriage. The Bible says that “marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

In the Bible, fornication (sex experience before one is married) is classified as being equal to stealing and murder and idolatry. Most Christians would never think of committing murder—taking the life of another person—but God says that fornication is equally wicked.

What most people during courtship don’t seem to understand is that touching and

embracing *are simple acts* designed to pave the way to excite the passions for the ultimate act of sexual intercourse. Step by step, if these habits are started, you'll likely push back the barriers of what you permit until it is almost impossible to avoid the act of *fornication*.

Many young persons don't seem to recognize the principle in human behavior which is known as "the moral law of diminishing returns." The law simply says (when related to courtship practices) *that once* a couple has proceeded to one level of intimacy, it is almost impossible to return to a less intimate level. The couple who progresses from holding hands to the act of touching and embracing can scarcely ever return to the less intimate level and be satisfied.

And so a dating couple should enjoy each other's presence, carefully avoiding familiar intimacies that could tempt each other beyond the power of self-control. Those people who can't seem to get enough of each other before marriage (spending evenings pawing all over each other) are often the very ones who have all kinds of conflicts after marriage.

One of the best safeguards to a pure courtship is a well-planned date—an evening filled with activities that are all planned—things to do and places to go that are planned in advance.

- Visit the homes of lonely people in your community, especially the aged and widows and shut-ins. They enjoy having a group of energetic young people singing a song, engaging in conversation, or giving a word of testimony.
- Plan activities with the family at home. Spend time together cooking a meal, making candy, popping corn, looking at pictures, or playing simple games.
- Spend at least part of each dating period reading and discussing a passage of Scripture. Both can agree to read the same portion of the Bible at the same time each evening of the week. There's something special about knowing that your special friend is doing the same

thing you are doing at exactly the same time, even though separated by many miles.

These are things to do, and places to go, in order to make your courtship constructive and filled with purpose.

### ***B. The choice of courtship***

The Scriptures are clear: believers are not to even consider marriage with unbelievers under any circumstances at all. The Law in Israel forbade intermarriage with persons from the non-Jewish nations round about them (Deuteronomy 7:3). We are not to marry pagans. Believers are not to give their *daughters* to unbelieving boys or their *sons* to unbelieving girls. The New Testament commands the same thing. We are not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

To those who are not yet married, we must say this: Those who seek your hand in marriage might be generous and well-trained and handsome, but unless they are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ (not necessarily members of your church), and are concerned about obedience to the Scriptures (and give clear evidence of knowing the Lord), you must not even consider dating [courting] them. Failure to observe this basic law of God has led to shipwreck in thousands of homes—and any girl who marries a young man with the idea that she will change his undesirable traits after the ceremony is only inviting disaster! If a person is not honest and trustworthy before the wedding day, the words of a marriage ceremony will not change him. If he is careless about handling money before marriage, he will likely exhibit the same characteristics later on.

There are other instructions related to choosing a good partner. Sometimes I've been asked the question, "How can I know when I'm in love with the right person?" There is no formula that can be used to accurately answer that question, but here are some statements that will be true about the two of you if you are intended for each other:

### ***How Can I Know When I'm in Love With the Right Person?***

1. There will be a feeling that you've been lifted to a higher spiritual level through the association with your special friend. One young man said, "Every time I'm with her, she inspires me to become a better person."
2. You will have confidence and trust in your special friend, and will not really have a desire to date other persons. True love creates a "we" feeling.
3. You will want to see and meet and know your friend's parents—and brothers and sisters and relatives and friends.
4. You will have respect for the one you love—respect for that person's beliefs and convictions and moral standards. These things will be more important than his or her physical attractiveness.
5. You will be lonely when circumstances require the two of you to be separated. You will long for the day and the hour when you can be together again.
6. You will hurt when your special friend is hurt or criticized. You will rush to the defense of your friend and seek to support him (or her).
7. You will want your children to have the character qualities and attitudes which are evident in the life of your special friend.

If each of you is bubbling over with these seven characteristics, it is quite evident that love between the two of you is really growing. And remember that true love can thrive without physical contact. If you can't be together without hugging and holding and squeezing, something is wrong. The base for your companionship is too shallow. Your interest must be in *the total person*, not merely in his or her *physical charms*.

If you took a trip together shortly after your marriage—and you were in a car accident—and *the body* of the girl (or the boy) you just married is really battered—and her face is re-arranged—and the doctor says, "She will never quite be the same,"

would you still be able to love her and take care of her? True love is concerned about the total well-being of the potential partner, and is not merely a romantic dream about spending eternity in each other's arms!

### **II. ENGAGEMENT**

All of us have read the account of the engagement of Joseph and Mary, as it is given in Matthew 1:18-25. "Engagement" is a definite mutual agreement between a courting couple, stating that they will *plan for* and *look forward to* marriage. They prepare for marriage by further testing their love, further learning to make adjustments, seeking to correct faults, and making plans for the wedding day.

The couple should only enter into the betrothal period after much prayer, and with the full confidence that God has been leading. There's a new joy and thrill that comes when planning things together—thinking about the future together. This new, closer companionship will help determine whether your partner's love is really genuine, or whether it is only a clever imitation.

Sometimes when a young man becomes engaged, he thinks that because the matter of whom he is going to marry has been settled—he can now relax and let his ordinary behavior surface. He may have previously been play-acting. For this reason, sometimes, one (or both) of the partners realizes that the engagement was a mistake (and this is not to encourage breaking engagements)—yet while engagements should not be taken lightly, it is far better to break an engagement than to seek a divorce after marriage.

#### ***A. Qualities that should surface during engagement***

- A prospective marriage partner should have a strong faith in God and should accept the teachings of the Bible as his rule for life—including the practices of nonconformity and nonresistance.
- He should possess self-confidence, not

with an air of superiority thinking he knows it all, but with a positive feeling that he is going to meet and work through life's problems.

- He should manifest self-discipline, exercising reasonable control over his temper, his words, and his bodily appetites.
- He should have ambition and purpose, showing a sense of responsibility toward work, and toward getting things done on time.
- He should be willing to admit his mistakes, take responsibility for them, and vow to profit from them.
- He should have mature ideas about how to handle money. He should not be a miser who saves every penny, nor should he be a careless spender, spending everything as fast as he earns it.
- He should reflect a sense of respect for his home, his parents, and his brothers and sisters.

And of course, any person who looks for those qualities in a potential marriage companion should work diligently to develop those same qualities in his or her own life.

### ***B. Purposes for the engagement period***

Engagement is:

- a time when you prove your love, and guarantee that you are a team and are both going in the same direction.
- a time when you discover in each other an increasing companionship and a growing respect and admiration for each other.
- a time when you make plans for the wedding and the household that will be established.
- a time when you discuss such matters as how the money will be handled, how family worship will be conducted, who will take the garbage out, where you will live, and to which church you will belong. The Bible and wisdom teach that it is best not to live at either parental home. To "leave" father and mother means to abandon the former relationship, not to dishonor father and mother.

- a time to learn about the more intimate things of marriage—including sexual activity and the birth of children. Seek the counsel of someone in whom you have confidence and speak about the details. A helpful book on the subject (from a Christian perspective, for persons who will soon marry) is "*Sexual Understanding in Marriage*" by Herbert J. Miles.

It is very important to remember that just because you are engaged, you are not free to explore each other's bodies. Sexual relationships are for cementing the marriage relationship into a strong and permanent bond.

### ***III. THE WEDDING***

When it comes time to plan the wedding, determine to let the occasion be marked by simplicity and modesty. The money spent for a showy wedding is not an investment that will pay dividends; it is money spent that is gone forever. Think of the thousands of people in Africa and India who are dying this week.

The wedding is an important ceremony because marriage is a sacred event. Jesus says that at the time of marriage, the couple leaves Father and Mother and they cleave to each other. They are no more two, but one flesh (Matthew 19:6). Just as Satan tries to take *Christ* out of Christmas and the *resurrection* out of Easter, so he seeks to take *the deeper spiritual essence* out of the wedding ceremony and put trivia there instead.

#### ***A. The wedding event is often too elaborate and expensive.***

The average formal wedding today, among many circles in the Western world, involves decorations and gowns and suits and invitations and postage and pictures and a reception—so that the cost often falls between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and even more. Yet we are aware that a wedding ceremony can be beautiful and impressive and sacred without blindly following the routine cultural patterns.

There are ways to keep the cost of a wedding in a more moderate range. Here are some suggestions:

- Buy (or make) a nice mid-calf-length dress for the bride, and wear it occasionally after the wedding day.
- Have only a limited number of attendants for the wedding ceremony, and request that the attendants wear clothing which they can wear after the wedding day.
- Write your own personal notes of invitation instead of sending expensive engraved invitations.
- Consider limiting the reception to a light snack instead of a full meal. Weddings would be a lot more *Christian* if they were a lot less *elaborate!*

There is beauty in simplicity. A wedding is not intended to be a fashion show. It is to be one of the most sacred of all Christian services. The serious purpose of binding two hearts and lives together for a lifetime of home-building must not be lost in the midst of the formality and display of an elaborate wedding procedure. It does not cost much to walk to the front of a church auditorium, and seriously repeat the marriage vows, and then kneel together and pray.

### ***B. The wedding event is often built around the bride.***

The typical wedding in many cultures is saturated with matriarchalism. It centers on the bride, and thus violates the Bible principle of *mutual* love and dignity that should surround both parties in a marriage.

In some circles, the wedding format is something like this:

The people begin to arrive in the church building; there is quiet pre-ceremonial music; the ushers seat the women; the men tag along behind like frightened little puppy dogs. After a few musical selections, the clergy, the groom, and the best man appear from somewhere at the front of the church auditorium. Then, down the aisle come some sweet little girls carrying flowers, followed by some sweet big girls clad

in beautiful dresses (often very immodestly designed); and finally—the big, important, momentous occasion arrives! As the rear door opens—and in answer to the call of music—finally, here comes the bride!

All eyes are glued on the bride; the people smile and everybody stands; all eyes watch the bride's movements very carefully. After someone "gives away" the bride, the people sit down—and from that point the ceremony is in charge of the officiating minister.

It would be much more in keeping with mutual love if the bride and the groom would walk into the auditorium together—or even for the bride to come via one door with her parents, and the groom come via another door with his parents—and the two meet together at the altar, facing the minister in charge. In the Christian wedding, the worship, honor, and glory should be directed toward Jesus Christ, not toward the bride.

After the ceremony the newly married couple should be allowed to greet guests, and then leave the scene of the wedding in peace—with the echo of their vows ringing in their ears, the good wishes of their friends lingering in their hearts, and the blessing of God upon their marriage.

When two people stand side by side and promise to love and cherish each other until death separates them, it's not hard to believe that the angels in Heaven hush their songs for a while and stand in awe as they listen to the solemn vows. May God help each young person to find joy in living, whether your lot in life involves marriage or whether in the providence of God you happen to remain single. To those who have never married, and you are somewhat older, the right person *might still appear* on the scene—but if not, don't become discouraged. It's better to *want* what you don't have than to *have* what you don't want! ■

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## Counseling From the Word

# Current Church Issues, Research Project: Christian Counseling

Anonymous

### *Introduction*

The last hundred years have brought a noticeable shift from reliance on Gospel preaching and teaching to more emphasis on psychology and counseling. Some Christians have rejected the whole idea of counseling, holding that the pure Word of God as taught in our churches is sufficient sustenance for holy living. Others have attempted to extract the good in psychology by fitting it into a Christian framework. Christian counseling flourishes in our day.

Conservative Anabaptist groups have typically shied away from involvement in the counseling movement. Yet more and more Anabaptist members are seeking spiritual and emotional help through Christian counselors. There may be numerous reasons for this. Some are valid; some may not be. How should the church view counseling? How are unmet needs to be taken care of when pastors are unequipped or uninformed? Should the church be seeking to train more leaders to be “counselors”? Should the church find ways to team with Christian counselors?

This issue matters to me because of my own experience. My family and I experienced “counseling” and found it beneficial. Our counselors were able to

recognize and guide us through resolution of issues that had remained unaddressed for years, even though outwardly we had conformed to church life and regulations. It seemed to me that my pastors were not equipped to give the needed help, but I think they could have been. Ultimately, it is sad to me when Christians need to go outside their congregation for spiritual guidance and help. I would like to explore the possibilities for reasonable solutions to this problem by reading what others have written about the subject and by interviewing some Anabaptist church leaders.

### *Review of Literature*

In an article entitled “Christian Counseling in the Local Church,” Tim Good acknowledges that more and more Anabaptists are turning to trained counselors outside their own congregations for spiritual guidance and help. From personal experience, Mr. Good shows that in some situations, seeking this outside help is good, perhaps even essential in order to get objective perspective and input. Along with that, he acknowledges that there are many issues involved that can make the situation feel really sticky. How do the counselee’s pastors fit into the picture? How much should the coun-

selor work with the pastors? Who is the counselee ultimately responsible to?

Mr. Good says that proper communication between all three parties is essential. The counselor should not serve as a spokesperson between the pastors and the counselee. Rather, the pastors should be the ones to initially suggest outside counseling and should seek continued personal contact with the counselee about the counseling process. Mr. Good also emphasizes the importance of choosing counselors of godly character who practice healthy accountability.

Melvin J. Steinbron addresses this problem from a different angle in his book *Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* Based on the Scriptural instructions for Christians to minister to one another, specifically Jesus' instructions to all His disciples to serve each other in the kingdom, Mr. Steinbron emphasizes the importance of lay pastors in the church. Not all may be called to preach, but many are gifted with the ability to pastor, to come alongside and care for others who need guidance or help. He points out that many people need an understanding presence as much as they need wise answers. Lay people can and should be helping with this ministering work.

Donald Capps takes yet another approach in showing how preaching and counseling can be compatible as dual tasks of the pastor/pastors. In his book *Pastoral Counseling and Preaching: A Quest for an Integrated Ministry*, Capps indicates that pastoral counseling can complement preaching. He says, "Through pastoral counseling, one could become involved in the real problems of people instead of speaking in vague generalities from the safety of the pulpit." Capps points out that both preaching and counseling have similar structures consisting of four elements basic to giving spiritual guidance: identification of the problem, reconstruction of the problem, diagnostic interpretation, and treatment or intervention.

### **Research Method**

For a broader way to think about this issue, I will do personal interviews with two Anabaptist pastors and use a survey form to request input from two others. Questions for the interview/survey will elicit evaluation of the situation in question, suggestions for effective ways to address the issue or make changes, and input from personal experience.

### **Summary of Survey Results**

*The pastors who participated in this survey represent four Anabaptist denominations: namely, Church of the Brethren; Beachy; BMA; and Mid-Atlantic Fellowship.*

In answer to the first survey question—*Have you had congregants seek counsel outside your congregation?*—all the pastors I communicated with said yes. Two indicated there were very few; one said various ones have sought counseling outside the church; another simply replied in the affirmative.

The second question asked for input on why more and more Anabaptists are seeking help from counselors outside their congregations. The responses I received touched on some key issues involved, some relating to pastors and some to the congregants. The latter, when wrestling with their problems, may have qualms about opening their hearts to their fellow church members for various reasons. Their own pastors may be unequipped to work with certain issues. Perhaps they have tried to address a problem but no progress is evident. To the struggling individual, the expertise a counselor could offer may seem attractive. The counseling setting may be something of an escape from reality: one-on-one time with someone who cares, mixed with concentrated time for Bible study and prayer.

Part of the answer to survey question number two is pride. Needy people can resist exposing their brokenness to peo-

ple that know them well. It feels safer to go to someone with whom they can “start from scratch.” Needy people will also resist opening their hearts to pastors who have not acknowledged their own brokenness.

Two pastors, in answering the question, indicated that certain addictions people deal with—sexual addictions, anorexia, wrong use of the internet, etc.—or deeply psychological problems may require the kind of help a counselor could give. Sometimes people seek out a counselor in search of a truly unbiased and objective input from someone who does not know them so well and is farther removed from their situation. Or they may feel that what they are struggling with is deep-rooted and ongoing and will require more extensive time and guidance than what their pastor can give. Depending on the situation, individuals may seek help outside their community for the sake of confidentiality. And finally, as one pastor said, the fact is that Christian counseling is more available than it used to be. It carries less of a stigma and thus people are more open to it.

In answer to the third question of the problem of covering inner struggle with outward conformity, one pastor answered with a succinct list of things the church needs to teach to counter this temptation: brokenness is human, the Christian is the only one equipped to work with the brokenness, and to refuse to acknowledge brokenness is to live in denial. As this pastor said, “When the above is thoroughly taught and caught true biblical counseling can begin.”

Other suggestions for possible solutions to this problem included encouraging fellow believers to grow in relationship with Jesus and in transparent relationships with fellow human beings. We need to call people to something higher than mere escape from Hell, to a higher purpose of living well in the Kingdom. This could happen through discipleship/mentoring structures as well as

through teaching of the deeper meanings of Scripture. Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:23 speak to the way we as humans tend to pay attention to the sometimes insignificant tangible things that we can control and “miss the inner purity of life and heart.”

The fourth question asked for an opinion on the value of Christian counseling. All pastors who participated in this survey felt it can be both an asset and a detriment to the church. To be an asset it must be Scripture-based (one pastor specifically mentioned nouthetic counseling [an intensively biblical method of counseling based on the Greek word for admonishing or warning] as a valid approach) and practiced by born-again believers. The more the counseling moves toward becoming a specific method rather than focusing on the power of God, the more dangerous it becomes, although learning some methods of how to teach and counsel from Scripture can be useful.

The aim of counseling should be restoration—to God, family, and church. When a struggling person finds help and hope through a counselor’s input and care, it may seem easier to work on a distant friendship with this human “savior” than to build the broken relationships that clutter everyday life. In the counselor-counselee relationship, either a one-way dependency or a co-dependency can become a problem: the counselee can come to believe that no one else understands or is able to help; the counselor may prolong the counseling process in order to meet an unfulfilled need of his own. Along with developing a dependency on the counselor, the counselee may, out of his excitement at finding answers, seek to share with others who are struggling. If he does this before he has tested and proven his newfound “wisdom” in the grind of everyday life, he can easily give misguided advice to the struggling people he sincerely wants to help.

When individuals do choose to seek

help outside their congregation, the re-entry process into the church can be difficult. This reentry process is eased if someone from the home church can stay in touch with the counselee throughout the counseling process. When the counselee returns, the congregation must be careful not to place undue pressure on him or expect perfection from his life. They must look for ways to assist the continued growth process rather than criticizing and tearing down.

The responses to the fifth question—the question on the specific place of counseling in or in relation to the church—were somewhat varied. Two responses indicated that counseling practiced under the auspices of the local church would be the preferred and most effective approach to meeting people's needs. The other two responses indicated a somewhat more positive view of Christian counseling done both inside and outside of the local church. From all the replies, a general consensus was that pastors or pastoral teams carry the weight of responsibility of meeting needs within their congregations. One pastor shared that in his congregation, effort is made to address practical life issues in preaching and teaching—both across the pulpit and in special men's and ladies' groups. Another pastor's response indicated that pastors need to distinguish between exhortation and exposition. This pastor said that if a congregation consistently hears sound exposition of Scripture, individuals will be able to live by the principles they are taught rather than by a set of rules developed from across-the-pulpit preaching that offers too many specific applications.

Although pastors are primarily responsible for the care of their congregations, this does not mean that they can or should be the only counselors: members of the body who are gifted for this ministry should be encouraged to develop and use their gifts. Persons involved in counseling can easily become weary. The

load is lighter when shared.

All the responses to this fifth survey question indicated that some kind of training is beneficial for both pastors and lay persons who are involved in counseling. This training could mean taking special courses, attending seminars, or simply looking for ways to improve relational skills through personal reading and interaction with others who serve in this field.

One of the pastors I contacted closed his response with these three verses, offering them as directives for building each other up within the body of Christ:

1 Cor. 12:26, 27 – *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

2 Cor. 1:3, 4 – *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

Gal. 6:1, 2 – *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

### ***Analysis of Responses***

I will begin my analysis by mentioning a few ideas that seemed to me particularly helpful in evaluating the issue of counseling. The idea that we need to call people to a higher purpose than mere escape from Hell struck a chord with me. Hiding sin is a human tendency, as several of the pastors pointed out. It is not merely an Anabaptist weakness. I think, though, that it can be a particular weakness of ours because of some of the distinctive practices we have. We do not necessarily need to give up the distinctives, but perhaps we do need more

teaching on basic Biblical principles. Here is where the exposition versus exhortation applies. When we learn to understand Biblical principles, we live more deeply—out of a greater wholeness—and less out of a shallow rule-keeping that can leave us empty and sick inside.

I liked the general consensus from all the pastors that counseling is the church's responsibility and that it is done best through teamwork which includes both pastors and lay persons. I think God gifts certain people with the ability to hear and care and give advice to spiritually needy people. These gifts should be exercised in the church, among the laity as well as in the ministerial body.

The pastors I interviewed all felt that some kind of training (at least personal education) is appropriate. I think if I would have done this survey 30 years ago, this would not have been the case. I am glad that this is an accepted view now. In the responses from the pastors, I think the openness to training was well-balanced with a consistent call to depend on Scripture and relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ and the Scriptures are foundational, yet I believe God wants us also to utilize other resources available to us.

I agree, too, that counseling outside the local church has its proper place. As the survey responses indicated, there are both dangers and benefits to consider. The dependency/codependency issue I think is pretty significant. We easily make people our gods, especially if they have walked with us through a very dark time and have helped us find answers. Wise are the counselors who will call counselees continually back to a dependence on God and His Word. Wise is the church who offers true friendship and support to the counselee and gives him space to put to practice what he has so newly learned.

As several of the pastors said, pride is indeed a huge issue in this matter of

whether or not people feel comfortable revealing their brokenness to their own congregation. And it can be an obstruction coming from either side. Church leaders who always seem to have it all together and have a formula for every problem do not feel safe. On the other hand, it takes a lot of humility to admit sin and brokenness to anyone, no matter how caring and humble they may be.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

I conclude:

- that Christian counseling has its proper role, both within the church and working alongside the church.
- that pastors are responsible for the health of their congregations but should share the work of counseling with lay members and should support/encourage those who choose to seek help outside the congregation.
- that counselors, both pastors and lay persons, benefit from training and seminars that offer instruction on Scriptural counseling methods and techniques.

I recommend:

- that lay persons look for ways to disciple each other and do not hold their leaders responsible for their own neediness.
- that lay persons examine their motives for seeking help outside their own congregations
- that pastors do not try to hide their brokenness, yet lead and serve their congregants with courage.
- that discipleship/mentoring structures take a more significant role in church life ■

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# ***Navigating Grief***

## ***Reflections on My Brother's Death***

by Dan Zink

January is cold in New Hampshire. Cold air, cold winds, blowing snow. It is cold and harsh weather for watching someone die—at least that was my experience when I visited my brother Chuck for the last time.

Chuck was at the end of his valiant battle with pancreatic cancer, a nasty disease that few survive. Unable to do anything more for him, the hospital staff sent Chuck home. He took his final ride in the family van. He climbed the steep, rough stone steps in front of his house as he leaned on me and on our other brother, Dave. He rested every two or three steps, mustering his remaining strength and making a supreme effort to climb his personal “Everest.” I wonder if, as he passed from the van to the house, he noticed for the last time the fresh air, the birds, the sun, and the clouds that he loved so much.

That last evening, his breathing became labored—alternating between moments of stopping and starting. We were waiting for death to come. It’s a hard kind of waiting. For a time we were focused on every twitch, our eyes glued on Chuck with uneasy anticipation. You can’t keep up that kind of vigil for long. The quiet talk gravitated to the sharing of memories of my brother’s humor and playfulness. It was a celebration of a life well lived and his impact on each of us. It was Chuck’s wife, Sally, who saw that he hadn’t restarted breathing that last time. “Chuck has stopped breathing,” she said. I took my brother’s right wrist and felt one beat, a second, and then nothing. His pastor had taken the other wrist. “He’s gone,” we said together.

My brother’s death jump-started a process of grief for our family that still continues. For

me, it was most intense in that first year, with the culmination coming 11 months after Chuck died, when Sally lost her own battle with cancer. As grief came upon me, I knew I had felt this before. My father died with I was five years old, so living with a missing person has been a way of life. And death has visited regularly enough. Our first child was still-born, prematurely. My wife’s mother died shortly after that. There was a miscarriage in between the birth of our two girls. My wife’s father died some years later. And there were others. In all of these experiences, I learned that it is hard to take in all that happens at the time of these events. “There is no real

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Although determined from the beginning to face the pain of this loss, I could not force myself to do it. In the aftermath of death, I did what I always have done.

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way to deal with everything we lose,” writes author Joan Didion in her book *Where I Was From*. I believe it is part of God’s design that enables us to protect ourselves from the intensity and depth of such great losses. But quite often we keep up the defenses long after they are useful. That is what I do. That is

what most of us do.

### ***Dealing With the Pain of Loss***

It strikes me that grieving is like house-breaking a puppy: you grab him by the neck and hold his nose in the evidence of his youth. But in this case, you as the griever are the puppy. You have to try to find ways to not run and to force yourself to face the wretched hole in your soul from the loss. I knew I would likely try to run from the pain of Chuck’s death. I would try to believe I was okay and that it somehow didn’t matter anyway. I had learned such strategies at a young age, starting when my father died. But wanting to grieve well, I made moves to

avoid the avoiding: I put my brother's picture where I would see it every day, and I played a song that reminded me of Chuck and his death. Yet I found myself diverting my gaze from the photo and hitting "skip" when that song came up on the CD player. Although determined from the beginning to face the pain of this loss, I could not force myself to do it. In the aftermath of death, I did what I always have done.

Friends tried to help. They spoke well-intended words, asked how I was, and talked with me—but all with little effect. They did not know my brother, and they were not there for any of this experience. My words cannot take them there. So I tended to keep my words to myself. I gave short answers. And I continued to do what I always have done.

My friends' words were limited in impact. "God is sovereign," some offered. Others reminded me that God works all things together for our good. God is sovereign and He *does* work all things together for good, but reminders of such truth in the midst of one's grief may not be helpful. To the mourner, these words can come off as an escape from entering into the grieving person's experience and make it appear that the comforter is uncaring. Such reassurances may be more about the intended comforter avoiding the grieving one's pain than bringing comfort.

In the freshness of grief, it is not time for theology, teaching, or correcting. The gospel—rightly understood—is the help that is needed. In the aftermath of death and the resulting sorrow, we don't need facts as much as we need a person. We need a personal, alive, relating God—not information about Him. And we need the whole gospel, not only the Jesus-paid-the-price judicial part, but also the you-are-in-relationship-with-God part. In these hard moments, we don't need more truth *about* God; we need more experience *of* Him. And we can invite people into this experience of Him through their experience of *us* as we are present, lis-

tening, accepting, and loving them.

### ***A Breakthrough***

His name is Ed. He was a student I had in class during a previous semester. I knew his name but not much else about him. At the end of class one day, I saw him come in and sit down. He was waiting for the lingering students to ask their after-class questions. I wondered why he was there.

When all the others had gone, he came up and commented about my brother's death and asked, "How are you doing?" Others had asked that same question, and though I appreciated their concern, his question was different. Somehow I knew that he understood that there was no simple or clear answer to that

question. And I knew Ed was willing to wait while I tried to find words to express the part of grief that was center stage at that exact moment. And then he asked if he could drop in again to see how I was doing. I said, "Yes." And he did. Each week or two throughout that semester, Ed stopped by after class and we talked. Some days I had to reach to find something to say because I had not thought about my brother or his death much; avoiding it all, I suppose. Other days there was something fresh that I needed to share with another person. Ed's consistent and caring presence helped me face my grief more than I would have on my own. Ed became a special friend to me.

A day or two before my brother's death, I remember searching through the Psalms looking for a passage that fit the moment. Almost everything I read talked of the demise of enemies and the victories of God's people. *My brother is downstairs dying. I know where he is headed, but this doesn't feel like victory*, I thought. Then I came across Isaiah 12:2: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." That fit, and it opened my eyes. The question was whether

*(continued on page 15)*

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[God] also does what He has always done. He comes alongside, not to be the remedy to pain and sorrow, but to be present with us in dark times.

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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 expositional 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.*

### *One in Heaven, the Other in Hell*

*One Man Tormented, the Other Comforted  
No Crossing Over; No Second Chance;  
Destiny Is Fixed and Fixed for All Eternity*

by Oswald J. Smith (1891-1986)

*There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*

*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

*But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they*

*which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

*Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

*Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*

*And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*

*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:19-31).*

#### **Not a Parable**

This is *not* a parable. I know that Jehovah's Witnesses say it is and then invent a fantastic interpretation to suit themselves. They say it symbolizes the Jews and the Gentiles. They cannot take it as it reads, for

it contradicts and overthrows everything they teach about the future life, so they have to construe it as a parable.

But it is *not* a parable. It is not even called a parable. It is a record of a historic fact. Jesus knew this rich man and Lazarus. It really happened just as He told it. It was “a certain rich man,” one with whom He was acquainted.

In parables names are never given; search and see. Never does Jesus give the name of an individual in any of His parables, but here He does. He says the beggar’s name was Lazarus. He lived; he was a beggar; he is now with Christ. Someday we will see him. Had this been a parable, his name would never have been mentioned. This tragedy occurred; it really happened. Do not think of it, then, as a parable.

Here are two pictures—one on this side of the grave; the other, the other side. Here are pictures of two men—the first in this world, the second in the next. Let us look at them, for they could easily be pictures of you or of me. What happened to them could happen to us.

### ***I. THE FIRST PICTURE***

In this first picture, there is a rich man—a man of the world. He was prosperous and contented. He had all that money could buy. He lived in a mansion, had servants to wait on him, and fared sumptuously every day. Depressions never affected him, for he had an abundance.

I have no doubt that he was highly respected in his community. He had many friends—rich men generally do. His clothing was of the best—“purple and fine linen.” He must have held an important position. In any case, he lived in luxury and wanted for nothing.

God did not condemn him for being rich; that is, if he got his riches honestly. He must have been thrifty and industrious. Those who are lazy do not make money. He had used his brains. He had saved. He was not a spendthrift.

And he did not idle away his time taking it for granted that the country owed him a

living. He had invested his talents to the best of his ability and had prospered. The Jews always considered it a sign of God’s favor when a man made good. There is not a word of censure because he was rich.

The trouble was, as with so many both rich and poor, he had left God out of his life. He did not feel his need of God. He lived for himself and for himself alone.

And he had a heart of stone, for he was unmoved by the sight of poverty right at his door. He showed no mercy. All that he got, he kept. He had nothing for others and nothing for God’s work.

Self-satisfied as he was, he did not take God into account. I have known rich men who have been humble, devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ who have used their money for God’s glory and have been a blessing to thousands. But this man had no use for God. God was not in his thoughts.

Now there is another part to this first picture. It portrays a beggar by the name of Lazarus. Day after day he crawls to the estate of the rich man and, unable to stand, lies at his door, hoping for some of the crumbs so eagerly devoured by the hungry dogs under the table.

Lazarus, almost devoid of clothing, is covered with sores—ugly, running sores, all too common in the East. No physician is sent by the rich man to take care of him. No comfortable bed is provided upon which he can rest his weary body. In fact, he seems to be without friends.

But he is not alone; the dogs are his companions, for they too are hungry, and they seem to be able to sympathize with him. At any rate, they gather around and lick his sores.

Poor Lazarus! What a tragedy! Was he always thus? I do not know. Something terrible must have happened to bring him to such depths. Surely it could not have been his own fault. He was not a drunkard. As a matter of fact, he was a God-fearing man. He may have had a happy home.

Perhaps he became ill and lost his job. Finally he got into debt, and the creditors

came. Perhaps, like Job, his wife turned on him. Yet no complaint does he make. No word of bitterness does he utter. Humbly he accepts his lot and leaves himself in the hands of God. How sublime his faith!

### *Death*

And so they live, the rich man and the beggar. But at last, as with all mankind, life ends and death comes. Both die, first the beggar, then the rich man.

One day the servants notice that the dogs are acting strangely. Some of them look as though they have been gnawing on human flesh. They look, and behold, the emaciated body of the beggar, or what is left of it! Someone dumps it into a ditch out of sight, and Lazarus is no more.

Never again will the rich man be plagued with his presence. Never again will the dogs lick his sores. He is gone and gone forever—or so the rich man thinks, if indeed he thinks at all, as he makes his way in his purple and fine linen to his heavily laden table while his servants hurry to wait on him!

Poor Lazarus! No longer will he suffer with the cold. Never again will he feel the pangs of hunger. No more will his sores itch and burn. His poor, wretched body—wracked by pain, foul and unkempt—is at last stiff and lifeless.

But now it is the rich man's turn, for he too must die. He sends for the best physicians, for he is deathly sick. Medicines are prescribed. Every remedy known to medical skill is used. Servants tiptoe back and forth. There upon his luxurious bed he lies, breathing heavily. No effort is spared to save his life.

In the grate a fire is burning to keep him warm. Friends and relatives gather round. But it is all of no use. Money cannot save him. The rich man too must die.

Lavish are the preparations made for his funeral. It must be one of the best in keeping with his station in life.

The city's most famous undertaker is there. The most expensive mourners are engaged. No such coffin was ever seen

before, at least not in his community. It is the best that money can buy. The pallbearers are his richest and closest associates. They carry the dead on their shoulders. He is lauded by everyone. And he is buried in his own sepulcher in the most prominent part of the cemetery—a sepulcher fit for a king.

It is a grand spectacle, and for days the funeral of the rich man is the talk of the town. He “was buried.” Yes, he was buried while the beggar was not. And that is the end.

### *II. THE SECOND PICTURE*

The end did I say? Has the story indeed closed? Is there nothing more? What! Death the end? Never!

It would have been the last we knew of the story, had it not been for Jesus. But Jesus saw what transpired immediately afterward. He could see into the other life, and He knew what had happened.

Jesus draws back the veil, and now He goes on with the story of the rich man and the beggar. There is another picture—a picture of life beyond the grave. Let us look at it.

First of all, Jesus directs our attention to the beggar. He sees him die, and so do we. But He sees what happens the moment he leaves his body. We cannot, so He tells us.

Jesus sees the angels of God standing nearby, invisible to mortal eyes, invisible as yet to the beggar himself. They wait for him to draw his last breath and to vacate his tenement of clay.

At last it is all over, his struggles cease, and he is slipping from his fleshly imprisonment. A moment later and he is free.

Lazarus looks around. The scenery has not changed. There is the mansion of the rich man. There are the dogs. And there beside him is the body that was once his.

Suddenly he glances up, and there, to his amazement, are the angels. With a glad smile he turns toward them. Eagerly they encircle him. Comforting words are spoken. They bear him aloft. He is conducted to Abraham's bosom, the Paradise of God.

Oh, what a scene! What a glorious experience!

My friend, let me pause a moment. Why do you fear death? Do you now know Jesus? Is He not your Saviour? Then let me say that you have no need of fear. You will not be alone. Even now the angels are waiting for you. The moment you close your eyes on this life, they will be there to welcome you. You cannot see them, but you will see them then. They will show you the way. You wouldn't know it yourself, but they will guide you. They will bear you Home.

Isn't that a comforting thought? But best of all, it is true. The Word says so, not only here, but in many places. The angels will be the first to introduce you to Heaven; they will escort you Home.

But what of the rich man? We left him in a rich man's sepulcher. Now we see him again, as Jesus continues the story. And where is he? In Hades, the prison house of Hell-bound souls. What is his condition? He is "in torments." As he suffers, he looks up and sees the beggar Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom.

What a contrast! Yes, and what a calamity!

The rich man is quite conscious, you see. There is no indication of soul sleep, nor has he been annihilated. He is there, and he is conscious of all that is going on around him. He sees, he hears, he speaks, and he feels. He suffers. The unconscious do not see or hear, neither do they speak, feel, and suffer. He was not unconscious.

### *Prayer in Hades*

Now at last the rich man prays—I say at last, for I doubt if he had ever prayed before. As a matter of fact, he probably never before felt the need of prayer. He had all he required and did not have to ask for anything. At least, he thought he had all he required, but he was not conscious of his greatest need—his need of God.

And so now he prays. Why not? There is nothing wrong with praying, is there? We all need prayer. Prayer is all right; it is a good thing to pray. But the rich man's pray-

ing got him nowhere. What was the matter? Two things.

**First, he prayed to the wrong person.** "Father Abraham," he cried. Now Abraham was one of the greatest of all saints. And if "saint" Abraham couldn't help him, then what saint could?

Why people should pray to a lesser saint when the greatest can do nothing for them, I cannot understand, yet they do. They pray to all the little saints—Saint Nicholas, Saint Christopher, Saint Joseph, Saint Anthony, Saint Teresa and, of course, the virgin Mary. But who are they in comparison to Abraham? If one of the greatest of all the saints cannot help, of what use is it to pray to the lesser saints?

Surely if any saint could answer prayer, Abraham could. But not a thing could he do. So, it is of no use praying to a saint. Even the Catholic Bible declares, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). So he should have prayed to Him, but he prayed to the wrong person. That was his first mistake.

**Second, he prayed too late.** He should have prayed while he was still in the body, but he waited until he had departed from this life, and then it was too late.

Hades is not the place to pray. Prayer is never answered in Hell. But millions are making the same mistake today. They will not take time to pray now, but they will pray in the midst of their misery hereafter, and then it will be too late. They will cry, but their cry will be in vain. Their wails will go unheeded there. Now is the time to pray.

### *His First Petition*

In his prayer he offered three petitions, and I want you to note how they were dealt with. Here is the first: "*Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame*" (Luke 16:24).

It was a prayer for himself. It was a cry for mercy: "Water! Water!" Not a bucketful, not a cupful, not even a spoonful, just a

drop! A dip of his *finger*, not even the hand—and not even the whole finger, just the tip of it!

Oh, what desperation! What torture and misery! No water in Hell? No, not a drop—only devouring flames. Unspeakable torment!

It was a prayer for mercy. Yes, but he had showed no mercy when he had the opportunity—not even to Lazarus. His heart was hard as flint. He knew not the meaning of the word, and now he cries for mercy.

And Lazarus, the beggar—Lazarus who had been beneath his notice on earth, Lazarus whose services he never needed before—Lazarus is now his one and only hope. “Send Lazarus.” He was now, he thought, his only friend. Oh, if only Lazarus could help him. And in a wail of agony he offers his first petition.

But now for Abraham’s reply. Let me quote it for you in his own words. “*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented*” (v. 25).

“Son, remember.” Remember! Why, that was the very thing that he didn’t want to do! Oh, if only he could forget! But that was what tortured him most.

Of course he remembered. He remembered his former life, his life of ease and comfort. He recalled all the good things he had once enjoyed. He remembered his days of prosperity—his lovely home, his large bank account, his rich food.

He remembered too, that cool, refreshing breeze and the cold days and nights when he enjoyed the warmth of a fire.

Yes, and he remembered the beggar lying at his door, and even the stray dogs. He could see them now as they fought over the crumbs that fell from his table and then turned to lick the nauseating sores that covered the skeleton form of Lazarus. How he wished he could forget! But he had to remember.

You, too, will remember. That is what will make Hell really Hell.

You will remember your sins; they will

haunt you, every one. Those deeds done in secret—you will never, never forget them.

You will remember the girl you ruined and damned, the little child you abused, your wasted money and, worse still, your wasted life.

You will remember the many times you heard the Gospel and the times you rejected the invitation to accept Christ. You will recall how the preacher pleaded with you and how you left the meeting unsaved.

Yes, and you will remember how your mother and how your wife prayed for you. Oh, if only you could forget! But you cannot. You must, and you will, remember.

But that is not the end of the answer. Abraham has more to say. He points out that the situation has been reversed, that the rich man who had enjoyed the good things of life is now tormented, and that Lazarus, who had known nothing but suffering, is now comforted. Then he continues: “*And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence*” (v. 26).

What does he say? What new revelation is this? A gulf; something between. He says two things about it.

**First, it is a “great” gulf.** I think of the Grand Canyon. To me it is a great gulf, yet it might be possible to find a way to cross it—but not this gulf. It is so wide that no one can cross it. It is a great gulf. That means eternal separation. That was why the rich man saw Abraham “afar off.” He had landed on the wrong side of the gulf, and there he had to stay.

“In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Eccl. 11:3). There can be no crossing over. Destiny is fixed and fixed for all eternity. There is no second chance.

What now have the Russellites to say? The Bible says that the gulf is too great to cross, that no one on the other side can ever get over, that there is no way to bridge the chasm. No second chance and no opportunity of being saved thereafter! The rich man is still there. He has been there for

some two thousand years, and there he will remain. He can never, *never* cross to where Lazarus is.

Oh, my friend, beware lest you too land on the wrong side, for if you do, you will never get over! It is a “great” gulf.

**Second, it is “fixed.”** In other words, it can never be removed. The Grand Canyon has been there for thousands of years, but this earth shall pass away. The fixed gulf remains forever; it will never disappear. Millennium upon millennium will come and go, but the gulf will still be there. The saved and the lost will never be united. They will always remain apart. The gulf is “fixed.”

### ***His Second Petition***

Now for his second petition—realizing that his own condition is hopeless, he begins to think of others. And thus he prays: “*I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest sent him to my father’s house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment*” (Luke 16:27, 28).

It is a good thing to be concerned about one’s relatives, but why wasn’t he concerned before? Why didn’t he speak to them when he had the opportunity? Why leave it so late?

Perhaps his father was still living. I imagine he was. Possibly the rich man had been the eldest of the family of six brothers. Some of his brothers may have been mere children. Be that as it may, he couldn’t bear to think of his brothers sharing his doom.

Are we concerned? Do we pray for our relatives now? Or are we too going to leave it until it is too late? Perhaps you are not saved yourself, and you know you are going to Hell. Tell me, do you want your wife to go with you? Do you want your children to suffer as you will suffer? Have you no burden for those you love? My friend, you had better get anxious now; it will be too late then.

So he prays for his brothers.

But now what is Abraham’s answer?

Marvelous, indeed. Listen to it: “*They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them*” (v. 29).

Brief, was it not? Yes, brief indeed, but right to the point. In other words, he said this: “They have the Bible. They have the Word of God. They have the God-breathed writings of Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them.”

Oh, the value he places on this Bible! How he honors the Word! It, he says, is all-sufficient. If they will not listen to the voice of God through His prophets, they will not listen to Lazarus. The Word will be their condemnation.

My friend, you have the Word. If you haven’t, you can get it. Bibles, Testaments, and Gospels are sold and even distributed free of charge in countless millions. What more do you need? It is God’s Word you want. It will tell you how to escape Hell. It will reveal to you God’s salvation.

All the information you need is in the Bible. Hence, you are without excuse. No one from the other world can help you. By God’s Word you can be enlightened, and by it you can be saved. Yes, and by His Word you will someday be judged. Then hear the Word and listen to what God says: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

### ***His Third Petition***

But not yet is the rich man through, for he is desperate. For himself, he knows there is no hope; but, oh, those brothers of his—can he not do something for them?

He makes one last attempt. He prays once more. Here is his final petition: “*Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent*” (Luke 16:30).

What desperation! “. . . if one went unto them from the dead.” If a miracle could be wrought, if a dead man could be raised—that’s it! Let there be a resurrection, something to startle them. “Raise Lazarus and send him to them.” Thus he argued and thus he prayed.

Now for Abraham’s last words, his final

answer: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (v. 31).

A lot of people think that miracles would convince men. But miracles, my friends, only harden hearts. There was another Lazarus who was raised from the dead, raised after he had been dead four days. Were the rulers convinced? Did that miracle soften their hard hearts? You know it did not. It only made them more determined than ever to get rid of Jesus.

Again, Abraham's only answer is the Word of God. It, and it alone, must suffice. If men will not be convinced and saved through it, there is no hope for them. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," if they reject the Old Testament Scriptures, they must perish.

A miracle would not help. The Israelites witnessed miracle after miracle wrought by God through Moses; still they rebelled; still they murmured and complained; still they perished in the wilderness. No, says Abraham, not a miracle, but the Word of God. Once they have God's revelation, they are responsible for their decision.

Not another word is spoken. The rich man is silenced. He has offered his last prayer, and now, in horror, he must await the coming of his five brothers, one after the other, unless they repent. The curtain falls and all is over.

Ah, but is it? Where is he now? What does he think today?

My friend, you have a choice to make. You can choose to spend eternity with Lazarus, or you can go on as you are and finally go to that place of torments to which the rich man went. It is for you to decide, but you must make a decision, and soon, or it will be forever too late.

Will you then hear the Word of God and open your heart to Jesus Christ, or will you perish in your sin? "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

You will be "carried by the angels" to your home on High, or you will be "buried, and in Hell lift up your eyes, being in torments." Which is it to be? It is for you to say. ■

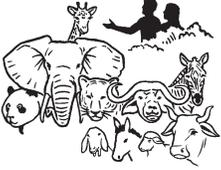
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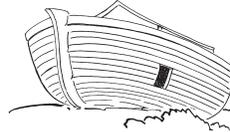
## WHY I BELIEVE IN CREATIONISM . . . cont'd.

to God? The Bible is primarily the history book of the universe and God's revelation to man offering life now and for the future. While it is not a medical handbook, science textbook, or a comprehensive course on finance, it is accurate in those instances when it touches on all of those areas. If it's not accurate in those areas, then how can we trust the rest of it? If it's not all true, then it's left to fallible man to discern what is true and what is not. Suddenly we find ourselves heeding the words of man vs. the Word of God. Without a dependable standard of truth we have no way to accurately measure anything by.

We've tended to separate the "secular" from the "spiritual" in such a way where the Bible has become a book of religious stories vs. the "manual" for life which it really is. This has at the very least contributed significantly to the lack of trust in the Bible. I believe it's the believer's responsibility to connect the Bible with the real world. When we do that it will show the world the message of the Bible really works. In next month's article I want to share some interesting facts and statistics of how the Bible has shown itself to be not only reliable, but the inspired Word of God. ■



## *Beginning Issues*



# **Why I Believe in Creationism**

by John Mullett

In past articles I've written about various scientific evidences or mechanisms, when interpreted properly, fit best logically in a biblical timescale and model. However, as I wrote in last month's article, every scientific model starts with a belief system thus determining how evidence is interpreted. I've also stated we are not fighting over evidence, but rather the conflict is at the level of the involved belief systems. Which means we all start with a bias and it's important that we have the correct bias. Recently I was told, "The difference between a creationist and an evolutionist is the creationist believes what he is told and the evolutionist believes what he sees." While the last part of that statement is wrong, the first half of that statement is actually correct or at least it should be.

So what does it all mean practically? It means that ultimately I do not believe in creationism or the biblical timescale because of the evidence, no matter how compelling that evidence may be. I believe in the biblical model because it's what God tells me to believe, then I interpret the evidence within that model. You may ask, "But what if science

seems to indicate otherwise?" That is exactly the question the Church of the 19th and 20th centuries compromised on, trusting the wisdom of men more than the Word of God, but as scientific research has progressed the accuracy of the Bible has been confirmed in numerous instances. Once the Church compromised, its foundations became like shifting sands, changing time and again as new discoveries conflicted with the latest compromise(s). Had the Church trusted the Bible all along, that foundation would have remained stable all along.

The Bible claims repeatedly to be the inspired word of God in verses such as 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, "*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.*" (KJV)

It really is a matter of trust. The question is who are we going to trust: the Word of an infinite, omniscient, perfect and holy God; or the words of finite, fallible, sinful man who by nature is opposed

*(continued on page 34)*



# 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.*

## Prayer for Strength



by Johnson/Stutzman

**Lyrics:** This nineteenth-century hymn emphasizes our dependence on our heavenly Father for strength to meet life's challenges. The opening phrase calls us to worship, in God's "mysterious presence kneeling," and recognizes the deep need of every human heart to feel God's love. Only once we begin to understand the depth of God's "mysterious" holiness will we begin to realize our own weakness spoken of in the second half of the verse. Out of a realization of our weakness comes the request for God to grant us "trust, strength, and calmness." A sense of trust in the goodness of God is essential for understanding the basic principles of salvation, as well as making sense of the world in which we live. Strength is another important ingredient for living the Christian life. Apart from God's power working in us, fallen man is incapable of living up to God's standard. Calmness is the direct result of our trust in God's goodness and the strength that He gives us to base our lives on that trust.

Returning to the subject of human frailty, the second verse speaks of our wanderings "through doubt and sorrow," but then recognizes that God can use those times to help us grow. When we allow God to use times of doubt and sorrow to develop trust in Him, it becomes easier to "trust each unknown morrow" completely to Him. The conclusion of the verse is that

God will see us through all the challenging times ahead.

The third verse is essentially a more emphatic restatement of the first, bringing us back to our kneeling position in God's presence. It calls even more urgently for God to grant us the trust, strength, and calmness that we need to live as He wants us to.

**Music:** The music for this hymn originated in 2004 as a choral work for mixed choir. Lyle Stutzman was studying music at a community college in Kansas and was required to complete an independent study project with a faculty mentor for receiving a particular scholarship. The result of this project was the choral version of "Prayer for Strength," which was subsequently simplified to this hymn tune in 2007. The melody is very simple, consisting only of a short ascending-descending phrase that is repeated (with slight variations) four times. The simplicity of the music complements the simple prayerfulness of the text.

Lyle is a recent graduate of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, with a bachelor's degree in Music Education. During the last few years he has taught music in a number of venues, including Pilgrim Christian School in Kansas, Elnora Bible Institute in Indiana, and Shenandoah Christian Music Camp in Virginia. ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET