

"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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But you can do something more. Let me share the vision of one congregation. This congregation invested in their minister by paying his way to a Ministers' Week. They actually hired a man to do the material chores in addition to paying his way. By doing this they were investing in their own congregation. They cared, not just expected the pastor to care. They cared enough to move themselves to action.

What does a Ministers' Week provide for shepherds? Consider the following:

1. It provides direct instruction in various topics. Even preachers need to be preached to.
2. It broadens a minister's horizons by exposing him to new material, new people, new ideas, new insights, new threats to the church, new resources, and fresh approaches. It also reminds and refreshes him with what he already knows.
3. It offers experience in humility by being surrounded by others who are spiritually ahead in various ways. Humility is integral to New Testament servant-leadership.
4. It offers the opportunity to share experience in dealing with issues that are common to humanity. The knowledge that one is not alone in the battle is quite an encouragement.
5. It renews and reinforces the concept that Christ builds His own church; ministers just cooperate with Him in His efforts. After all, successful pastoring happens when the pastor has a realistic sense of how small he is and how big God is. Successful pastoring is more about getting out of the way for God to work than it is about gaining perfect pastoring techniques and practices.

Of course a church can be an exercise in human strategy and wisdom. If so, that is all that it will be, something else human, one more of many such. But the church of Jesus Christ is meant to be much more than that. Jesus Christ is looking for hearts that are open and opening yet more for the work that He wants to do among men and women. This work is beyond words, books, and casual fellowship. This work is divine, deep, and life-changing. It is what happens when the divine conquers a human. When Jesus triumphed over suffering and death with resurrection, He unleashed a power that drew all men to Himself. When we participate with Him in death and suffering, we also share with Him in the power that draws all men to Christ. This is quite a privilege indeed.

Men do not need to be ministers to participate in this way but pastoring offers special opportunities to die. Thankless work, exercises in selflessness, the rejection that accompanies the prophetic voice—these are special opportunities for ministers. While it is all happening it may seem to be overwhelming. Ministers' Week is a special opportunity to gain courage and fresh perspective. To share in fellowship with those who have scars is a sacred experience.

What about your leadership team? Could one or more of them benefit by a special time of ministerial fellowship? Are you aware of the various Ministers' Weeks that are held across the nation? Check them out and strongly encourage your ministers to attend somewhere.

The next Shepherds' Institute, a traveling ministers' week, is to be held, Lord willing, from April 19-23, 2010, at the Pleasant Grove Mennonite Church near Goshen, Indiana. We would love to see your minister there.

For Christ and His Church,
 Chester Weaver
 Administrative Dean of the Shepherds' Institute

Person of the Month: *Christmas Evans* (1766-1838)



Christmas Evans was a Welsh Nonconformist minister, regarded as one of the greatest preachers in the history of his country. Evans was born, appropriately, on Christmas day in Wales, “a land of wild scenery and fiery preaching.” His early life was not memorable—after his father died, his mother sent him to live with her brother, a cruel drunkard.

He endured six miserable years with his uncle. He received no education, and at 17 was still illiterate, working as a farm laborer. Further, he lacked any moral or religious training. He fought often; only the providence of God kept him from being killed. Once he nearly drowned; in another brawl he lost his right eye. For the rest of his life, he had to treat the empty socket with laudanum (an opiate ointment) to ease the pain.

At 17, he went to work as the servant of a Presbyterian minister, and things began to improve for him. He came to know the Lord in a church revival, and soon learned to read and write. He began ministering in small ways, occasionally preaching or praying in cottage meetings.

After studying the Bible, he was influenced greatly by both Methodists and Baptists, eventually joining the Baptist Church, where he was ordained in 1790 and sent to a small, struggling work in the north of Wales. He “trusted God and saw a time of rich blessing,” and even met and married his wife, Catherine, in the church there.

Evans first came to prominence at an association preaching festival, becoming the talk of the gathering, “the newest preaching sensation in Wales.” His preaching style was very imaginative, and he was renowned as a humorous and passionate minister.

In 1792, Evans and his wife moved to Anglesey Island in northwest Wales where he served for 30 years. When he arrived, there were ten small Baptist societies. Evans rode his horse from one to another and eventually developed twenty meeting places where people eagerly assembled to hear his preaching. His ministry there saw over 600 people come to faith in Christ.

Evans taught himself Hebrew and Greek, and read the works of John Owen and others. “He often preached daily, and twice on Sunday,” and meditated and wrote his eloquent sermons while riding from village to village.

After Catherine died in 1823 and the churches in Anglesey left Evans’ leadership, he accepted the call to a small church in Tonyvelin in 1826. There he remarried to his housekeeper, Mary. He had a new experience of faith and power, though the enemy opposed the preaching of the Word. His final move in 1832 took him to a dying church in Caernarfon, where 30 members were struggling with a debt they could not pay.

God prospered his efforts. Great crowds heard him preach, and when the meeting house was filled, people stood outside and listened. The undertaking sapped much of his waning strength, and he was called home to glory on July 20, 1838.

Often, Evans had counseled younger pastors. He wrote to one, “Consider . . . the great importance to a preacher of a blameless life. . . . I remember the words of Luther that reading, prayer, and temptation are necessary to strengthen and purify the talents of ministers.” (*cont’d on p. 6*)

Discipleship Amid Affluence

by Virgil Schrock

Affluence means “an abundance of riches; wealth; opulence.” This describes many persons’ experience. Many people struggle economically, but some struggle because of their desire for opulence, not because of their lack of necessities. We will consider four Scriptures to guide us in understanding how to live amid affluence.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God”
(Matthew 6:33).

Christians live in this world as resident foreigners, which is the meaning of the word *pilgrims* in Hebrews 11:13. Resident foreigners pay taxes and otherwise contribute to the economy of the host country. They are protected by the laws of the host country. They abide by the laws of the host country, except those laws that require them to be disloyal to their own country. It is possible for the host country to require such things as serving in its military, even against the foreigner’s home country.

Because we Christians embrace the commandments and promises of God, we are misfits in this world. We do not rebel against this world. However, we obey the heavenly King, whose promises we have embraced. We have been redeemed through the blood of Christ and have received power to be the sons of God. Being sons of God, we are ambassadors for Him.

Everything we do, everything we own, and every attitude we take must reflect our loyalty to the kingdom of God. As pilgrims, our lifestyle reflects that our stay here is temporary. Accumulation of wealth, privilege, or honor is not our goal. Even financial security is not really a goal. Our security is in God, who owns all material wealth, and in whose hand we dwell.

“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” (Mark 10:23).

A rich young man had come to Jesus, asking what good thing he could do to inherit eternal life. He addressed Jesus well and seemed confident that he had done much already, toward achieving his request. When Jesus told him to sell what he had and give to the poor, and to take up his cross and follow Him, he went away grieved. Then Jesus said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” The disciples were astonished at His words.

But Jesus further emphasized the point. “Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Then the disciples were astonished enough to wonder who could be saved.

At this point, most of us get a strong urge to find some way to soften Jesus’ doctrine. Maybe “the eye of a needle” was a special gate in the wall of Jerusalem, through which a camel could pass if all his burdens were removed and he went through on his knees. Surely, a rich man could get into Heaven that way. However, such a gate apparently did not exist in Jesus’ day. If it had, the disciples would not

have been “astonished out of measure.” It would have made sense to them.

Jesus wanted us to understand that money is like poison. We use a poison as an antifreeze in the cooling systems of our cars. The antifreeze we use cannot be made nonpoisonous; it will kill us if we drink it. We cannot become immune to it; its potency must be kept at lethal levels to keep the coolant from freezing. Moreover, like antifreeze, money kills even in very small doses, if we drink it.

One day I did some work on the cooling system in one of our vehicles, and some antifreeze ran on the ground. Our boys were not with me when I did the work, but they later told me that our dog had died. They had noticed the dog lapping up something on the ground near the shop, although they did not know what the dog was drinking. And they also had watched the dog die. It was not a pleasant death. Apparently, something in the antifreeze tasted good to the dog, but it killed him.

Christians do have money. We are commanded to work, to have to give (Ephesians 4:28). In our economy, we work for money, we have money, and we give money. We are commanded that if any will not work, neither shall he eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). And if someone does not provide for his own house, he is worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8). A man provides for his house with money or the things money will buy.

Money, like antifreeze, is safe enough to handle if we do not “drink” it.

After Jesus spoke about a camel going through the eye of a needle, Peter said that they had left all. Jesus seemed to agree with him in the answer He gave, that those leaving all would receive a hundredfold. Yet Peter had a house in which Jesus had healed his mother-in-law. John had a house and took Jesus’ mother there after Jesus died on the cross. Some of them had kept their fishing equipment, for Jesus found

them fishing on the Sea of Galilee after His resurrection. How is it, then, that they had left their houses, lands, and all that they had? They still owned them, but they did not serve them. They were serving God even while they owned and used mammon.

Jesus understood the heart of the rich, young ruler who loved his possessions. He would be able to inherit eternal life only if he sold all that he had, distributed it to the poor, took up his cross, and followed Christ.

Money, like antifreeze, is safe enough to handle if we do not “drink” it. It cannot be made safe for drinking, and we cannot become immune to its lethal qualities by acclimation. But we can handle it all our lives and still be a part of the kingdom of heaven—if we do not drink it.

Life antifreeze, something about money tastes good. Money buys so many things: power, respect, honor. But except for the necessary things money will buy, all the rest that it buys will kill our spiritual lives. It buys the wrong kind of power, the wrong kind of respect, the wrong kind of honor, and so many wrong things. It matters nothing to money if what it buys is right or wrong. But it does matter to us, for our spiritual lives depend on doing this right.

“He that is faithful in that which he is least is faithful also in much”
(Luke 16:10).

Jesus said this in the context of the parable of the unjust steward. Jesus never questioned the validity of the accusation that the steward was unjust. What the steward did after he knew he would be dismissed gives good evidence that he had been accused justly.

The point of the story is this: the steward thought ahead to what would happen after his job failed to provide for him.

Jesus said, “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” Everything we work with in this life will fail. Every carpenter, even if he has worked for thirty

years, will one day drive his last nail. Every electrician will one day screw on his last wire nut. Every dairy farmer will one day milk his last cow. We will fail, and our work will fail. What remains? If we have used the mammon of unrighteousness well, it will have laid up treasures in Heaven.

Then Jesus taught us that the same principles, which make the mammon of unrighteousness receive us into everlasting habitations, work also in handling the heavenly treasures—the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who labor tirelessly, doing their work well, receive an increase. But those who are lazy or cheat cannot prosper.

Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” Actually, the danger does not lie in the quantity of material things we possess. It is true that very few people become rich without loving money and serving money. And it is also true for those who love money, that the more money they have, the more earthly, selfish, and sensual they become. They have no hope of the kingdom of heaven, in that condition. Their riches are dragging them into Hell. Yet it is not the quantity of money that destroys them. It is their service to it.

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13).

How can we handle money without serving it? We need to know, because getting to Heaven requires doing this right.

We know some things that are wrong. Expensive lifestyles squander large amounts of money and provide very little return. Expensive lifestyles are made to impress, and they demonstrate a love for this world. You have likely heard the oft-quoted adage: “We spend money we do not have, to buy things we do not want, to impress people we do not like.” The person who first made that observation understood something about the absurdity of lavish lifestyles.

Expensive lifestyles keep us poor (Proverbs 21:17). Elegant houses have

high prices, high taxes, high maintenance costs, and usually high interest costs on the mortgages. Serving the debt for owning a wealthy house is bondage. It is another way to serve mammon. We all need houses, but we do not need mansions.

Either what God thinks or what our flesh wants will control us.

Expensive foods are also part of lavish lifestyles. High grocery bills can often be avoided. Something is wrong when we cannot eat a certain food because it is a lower-class item. Jesus told His disciples on their missionary journey to eat what their hosts gave them (Luke 10:7, 8). Do you suppose He listened to their funny stories about the strange food those quaint people fed them? Do you suppose they refused to try something because it looked a little below their dignity? Who decides what the lower-class and upper-class foods are? We can waste a lot of money on some pitifully small amounts of food when we nurture some snobbish ideas about what we will or will not eat.

Our cars can easily demonstrate a love for this world. It is easy to tell when people buy vehicles for dependable transportation or when they think about the impression their cars will make. And every dollar spent on a vehicle to impress someone, who is probably not watching anyway, is a dollar wasted. Spending those dollars is serving mammon.

Has not God chosen the poor to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom? (James 2:5). The rich are out of their element in the kingdom of God. They enter by special provision (Mark 10:23-27). The poor are not saved because they are poor, but because of the blood of Christ. However, they are far more able to receive the kingdom of heaven. The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle James, took note that the kingdom is suited to them (James 2:5). The wealthy who have entered the kingdom have to keep themselves humble. The poor also need to be humble, but much of their lifestyle is already humble, since they cannot afford anything better. *(cont'd on p. 6)*

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Which Way Now?

by Richard M. Jones

Navigating the Church through these troubled times is proving to be an epic challenge. Homer had his *Odyssey*. So do we!

As Western Civilization continues “*slouching towards Gomorrah*,” the Church seems powerless to turn the hearts and minds of the nation back to the God of Scripture. The cultural indicators (divorce, cohabiting couples, militant homosexuality, births out of wedlock, sexually transmitted disease, drug and alcohol abuse, delinquency, and violence) are evidence that our generation is in danger of a moral meltdown. An unholy alliance of Hollywood and the secular state-sponsored education complex, protected and empowered by the godless political class of our nation are fueling the fires that are threatening our survival as a civilization.

While the battle for the heart and soul of our nation rages within our borders, the threat of radical Islam continues to challenge our national security. The need for moral character and spiritual

strength has never been more acute. We urgently need a revived Church.

So where should the Church go from here?

Business-minded strategists are selling their “new ideas” to ambitious church leaders. Their suggestions amount to little more than a repackaging of the tried and true marketing techniques of modern business. While some churches who adopt these strategies are attracting large crowds, the nation’s overall church attendance has fallen to under 20% for the first time in our history. Business technique does not satisfy the soul.

Some are urging us to update our message and music to fit the times. They would have us blur the distinction between Christian culture and contemporary culture and silence all of us who are concerned by labeling us “legalists.” (As my father would say, “The word *sir* is ‘Legal.’”) Their music is sensual in its beat. Their message wouldn’t trouble the devil himself. And the fruit of their labors

is undeniable evidence that compromise is no solution to our crisis.

There are those who believe that the hope for God's people lies in retreat. But hiding in fear is no solution. The world desperately needs to see living, active, victorious faith!

What we need is first-century, New Testament, authentic, original recipe Christianity! The ancient church stood against the same forces we are confronting today.

With an unshakable confidence in God and His Word, we know, ***"The gates of hell will not prevail!"*** ■

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

CHRISTMAS EVANS . . . cont'd. from p. 1

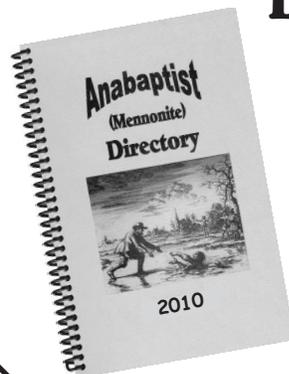
He also urged, "Always have a good book to read, instead of indulging in vain conversation. . . . You cannot commit some loved sin in private and perform the work of ministry in public with facility and acceptance."

With all his reputation for pulpit eloquence, "Evans should perhaps be remembered most as a man of prayer. He had three stated times for prayer during the day, and he regularly rose at midnight to seek the face of God."

Evans was "a man of God who gave himself unsparingly to the work of the ministry." God used him in a wonderful way to the blessing of many. —Bernard R. DeRemer

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DISCIPLESHIP . . . cont'd from p. 4

We often quote the following Scripture to youth: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation . . ." (1 Timothy 4:12). But this admonition was first written to a young bishop, who was probably about thirty (although we do not know his age for certain).

Church leaders need to be an example of the believers in conversation, or lifestyle. A church leader's lifestyle can be comfortable and adequate, if possible, but never fine and lavish. We serve either God or mammon; we cannot serve both. Either what God thinks

or what our flesh wants will control us. Either we live in a way that fits a disciple of Christ on his way to Heaven or we live as those who really like it here.

Our Lord will know those who used their money and time to serve Him, and He will give them eternal life in His presence. Those who did not use their time and money to serve Christ will be cast into Hell fire (see Matthew 25:35-46). We cannot serve God and mammon. ■

—From *The Christian Contender*, March 2006, Rod and Staff Publishers, Inc. Used with permission.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

Introduction to Quarter's Lessons

The Spring Quarter's lessons—March, April, and May—focus on the general theme of “Teachings on Community.” The lessons for March are taken from the Old Testament Books of Jonah and Ruth, depicting two different communities and showing how God worked in them. April's lessons are on the teachings of Jesus in regard to community and May's lessons feature the teachings of the church on community, taken from Colossians, Philemon, and Jude.

Everyone is part of some community, whether it is the local neighborhood, the church, or a business community. As a member of a community each individual faces certain challenges and carries certain responsibilities. It takes cooperation and harmony to make a given community function smoothly and there are obligations imposed upon each member.

These lessons both give us examples and principles to be followed in building and living in community. Allow these lessons to challenge and inspire you to more faithfulness and involvement in your community of faith.

Brief teacher's helps will be found at the end of each lesson. May God guide and bless your study.

MARCH 7, 2010

Mission to Community

Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-9

God had a message for the community of Nineveh and He needed a man to convey that message. So He called Jonah. Now Jonah was a prophet but he had an aversion to going to Nineveh and proclaiming God's judgment against it. The Assyrians were enemies of Israel and one would think Jonah would have been happy to see God's wrath poured out upon them. But Jonah also knew something of the mercy of God and therein lay his dilemma. He was afraid his preaching would bring results he was not ready to accept (see 3:10-4:2).

So, in an attempt to thwart God's plan, Jonah took off in the opposite direction. He

took shipping at Joppa, headed for Tarshish (likely Spain), to put distance between himself and the assignment God had given him. Now Jonah was human, and however much lip service he gave to God's sovereignty (see 1:9), he still had some things to learn about God and His power and persistence.

So after the storm and the fish ride Jonah cried to the Lord for mercy. He was ready to give up. There in the belly of the fish he acknowledged his sin and the complete sovereignty of God. After Jonah spoke to God, God spoke to the fish and it deposited him onto the shore (read Chapter 2). Now Jonah might have wished for the story to end at that point, but God still did not have man on the ground in Nineveh. So He gave Jonah a second call—a second opportunity to obey Him.

This time Jonah did not argue or run. He

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arose and set out for Nineveh with God's message of destruction for their great wickedness. Nineveh was a big city. Jonah entered into the city "a day's journey" and began to proclaim God's message of destruction. This would not have been easy for Jonah, because he was on foreign soil with an unwelcome message.

But the people understood the message to be from God (v. 5), accepted the threat of His judgment, and did what they knew to do to stay God's hand. They fasted in sackcloth and ashes, cried to God for mercy, and turned from their evil ways. Even the king, when apprised of the message of impending doom, humbled himself and joined his people in beseeching God for mercy. Their renunciation of comforts extended even to their cattle. They, too, were imposed a fast.

These people were serious. They took God's Word at face value. In a sense they had a deeper respect for God than did Jonah. They were afraid of Him—of His judgments and power. They wanted to live. They demonstrated godly fear in hope of God's change of mind toward them.

There is a great contrast in this passage between Jonah's reluctance to preach God's message and the openness of the Ninevites to hear what God had to say to them. There are lessons from both for us today. It is futile to run from God's will for us. He has means of pursuit and persuasion that far outstrip our ability to evade Him. The immediate and sincere response of the Ninevites to God's message is also instructive. They wasted no time in rectifying their conduct and pleading for God's mercy to spare them from destruction. How often do we impose on God's mercy with a delayed response to His call?

Each of God's children has a mission to proclaim His saving grace to their community. Let's be faithful to God's call in our individual settings.

For thought and discussion

1. The story of Jonah is so familiar that we may overlook some of the less obvious lessons contained therein. Search them

out in your study. For instance: Why did God send His prophet to a heathen kingdom? Why did He choose a reluctant messenger? What implications does this story contain regarding attitudes, cross-cultural outreach, consequences for disobedience, etc.?

2. Has God ever taken you through a difficult situation to bring you to obedience to His will? Care to share it with your class?
3. Repentance seems to be taken too lightly too often. What are "activities consistent with repentance" (Acts 26:20)? How do we assess true repentance? Discuss.
4. Is it harder to go to your friends or to your "enemies" with the gospel message? Why?
5. Suppose Jonah had not gone to Nineveh. What would have happened to them? And what happens when we do not obey God's call to take the message of salvation to lost humanity?

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: The importance of obedience to God's call.

Key verse: 3a

MARCH 14, 2010

A Community to Redeem

Jonah 3:10–4:11

Today's lesson picks up where last Sunday's left off and shows the results of Jonah's preaching. Most prophets and preachers would have been thrilled to see such wholesale repentance as a result of their preaching. But not Jonah. God in His mercy had relented from the punishment He had promised the Ninevites, but God's mercy was lost upon Jonah. He wanted to see the fire of God destroy this troublesome city. Jonah needed an attitude adjustment, and God proceeded to give it to him through yet another object lesson.

Jonah also had an anger problem (v. 1). Was he angry with himself for finally accepting God's assignment, and then having it turn out opposite from his expectations? Or was he angry at God for being

merciful and sparing Nineveh? Or was he just angry at the world in general? (See verse 9.) In His object lesson God taught Jonah about misplaced values and the effects of anger.

To Jonah's credit, he acknowledged God as "a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and relenting concerning promised calamity." While Jonah was projecting this mercy and compassion of God toward the Ninevites, he certainly had ample reason to apply it to his own relationship to God. He had willfully run away from God's commission, he pouted when things didn't go his way, and he showed utter disregard for the well-being of others of God's creation. Instead of complaining he should have rejoiced in God's mercy. Jonah was human. And as such he serves as a valuable lesson for us.

While Jonah expressed a desire to die due to his disappointment, he nevertheless had enough curiosity left to go out and camp, overlooking Nineveh to see "what would become of the city." He had prophesied judgment (3:4) and perhaps, just perhaps God would still follow through with the pronouncement of doom. Jonah wanted a ring-side seat should this occur. Perhaps Jonah was also concerned about maintaining his integrity as a prophet (see Deuteronomy 18:22). If his pronouncement failed to come to pass he would be discredited as a spokesman for God. More importantly, to his thinking, it would preserve the wicked Assyrians, mortal enemies of his nation, Israel.

Jonah built a booth for shelter while he watched and waited. God, in an act of redemptive mercy, caused a gourd vine to grow up to provide shade for Jonah, for which he was grateful. But then, as part of His lesson to Jonah, God provided a lowly worm to destroy the vine. He also caused a strong sirocco wind to arise and bring Jonah to utter despair for his life.

Then, with Jonah at his lowest point, God began to ask questions and lead Jonah to a full understanding of His compassion and mercy. God began with the gourd, a

simple, basically nonconsequential thing, but that which Jonah had regarded highly. Then God asked, "Now Jonah, if you had such regard for the lowly vine of a temporary, earthly nature, should not I have high regard for the souls of the Ninevites and even for their cattle?"

One wishes for a concluding verse to Chapter 4 (see question #5). But God has left it for us to ponder our own attitudes and response should we be found in a situation similar to Jonah's.

For thought and discussion

1. Do we at times take secret pleasure when people get their just desserts for their evil deeds? Are we too much like Jonah? What attitude would God desire we have when people suffer for sin?
2. Is it ever appropriate to express anger? In what circumstances might it be justifiable?
3. Evaluate and discuss Jonah's attitudes. What was wrong deep down? How can we avoid the attitudes displayed by Jonah?
4. What is the antidote for discouragement in our work for God?
5. If you could write a concluding verse to Chapter 4, what would it be? Have your class share their suggestions. It could make for lively discussion.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: The mercy and patience of God.

Key verses: 3:10 and 4:11

MARCH 21, 2010

Family as Community

Ruth 1:1-9, 14b-16

From Jonah's experience with the community of Nineveh, we now turn to the story of Ruth and her integration into the Community of Israel. We step back several hundred years in the life of Israel to the time of the judges for this story. But this account carries implications reaching far beyond the immediate setting. Ruth, the

central figure in these next two lessons becomes, through her acceptance into the Community of Israel (next Sunday's lesson), a significant person in the human ancestry of Jesus the Messiah (see lesson for December 6, 2009).

Famine drove Elimelech and his family from Bethlehem in Judah to the country of Moab to their east. The Moabites were distant cousins of the Israelites, but not normally held in high regard by them (see Numbers 22 and 25 and Deuteronomy 23:3, 4). However, Ruth, a Moabitess, was destined to become a participant in God's plan to bless all people regardless of race or ethnic origin.

Elimelech and family settled down in Moab, the sons both taking wives of the people of the land. But then tragedy struck. First Elimelech died, then the two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, leaving three widows to cope for themselves. In that time and culture, a woman without a husband, male heir, or close relative was at a tremendous disadvantage. They had no one to care for them. So it was a double tragedy for Naomi and her two daughters-in-law. They were without husbands and without means of support.

But then Naomi heard that the famine had lifted in Bethlehem so she made plans to return to her home country and kindred. Initially her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, intended to accompany her and it seems they set out with her toward Judah. Apparently Naomi had second thoughts about the wisdom of this and urged them to return to their parental homes. She anticipated that among their own people her daughters-in-law would stand a better chance of remarriage than they would by accompanying her to Judah.

Family ties ran deep in this family unit, however. Naomi found it difficult to give up her daughters-in-law, and they found it difficult to be torn from her. But Naomi sought their best interest. After much weeping and further persuasion (verses 10-13), Orpah returned, "but Ruth clave unto her." Again Naomi attempted to dissuade Ruth, but she

was adamant that she would cast her lot with Naomi, her people, and her God.

Obviously Ruth had been deeply impressed with this family of Israelites and had no qualms about identifying herself with them. And likely she had been introduced to the God of Israel through her marriage to Mahlon (4:10) and interaction with the family these ten years they lived in her country.

Ruth's statement to Naomi in verse 16 is a classic declaration of commitment and loyalty. She would not be dissuaded. She pledged herself in wholehearted commitment to a new community, a new way of life, and a new God (read also verse 17). Ruth unreservedly took upon herself a life-long and life-changing commitment to identify herself with God's people. For that commitment God gave her the privilege of becoming a human ancestor to His Son.

For thought and discussion

1. Have you at some time been uprooted from family and friends? What do we give up when a move becomes necessary for various reasons? What do we gain? Perhaps discussion would be helpful.
2. What is the responsibility of the church community to people moving into their community—whether members of their church or not? Discuss.
3. What are the dangers in moving a family into a non-church setting, and what is necessary to avoid spiritual disaster?
4. This lesson tells us much about human relationships. How are firm relationships developed? Discuss.
5. This lesson teaches us much about God's mercy and providence and the use of individuals in His great plan. Be sure you live up to the trust He may place in you to become a useful tool in His program.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: Deep family ties are built through relationships.

Key verse: 16

MARCH 28, 2010

Acceptance in Community

Ruth 2:5-12; 3:9-11

Last Sunday's lesson shows Ruth's choice to identify with the Community of Israel, most specifically Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem. Today's shows her acceptance into the community, specifically by Boaz, but by the larger community as well. (Read the entire book for context.) We also note in this lesson Ruth's industriousness and, through that, her commitment to care for her mother-in-law, Naomi.

To provide household needs, Ruth went to the fields to glean after the reapers. We note in Chapter 1, verse 22, that Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem "in the beginning of [the] barley harvest." Chapter 2:23 tells us that Ruth also gleaned during the wheat harvest. These harvests took place in the spring of the year from April to June. Ruth was not afraid of work, and being a much younger woman than Naomi and feeling obligation to her mother-in-law, volunteered for the lowly job of gleaning, an activity done by the poor of the land (see Leviticus 19:9, 10).

In the providence of God, who certainly was orchestrating these events from behind the scenes, Ruth came to glean in the field of Boaz, kinsman to Naomi's deceased husband Elimelech. Her diligence impressed the harvest foreman who related that to Boaz when he inquired "whose young woman is this?"

Upon hearing her identity, Boaz approached Ruth and invited her to continue to glean in his fields. He offered her protection and sustenance. Ruth was astounded by his generosity to her since she was a foreigner. She did obeisance to him, prostrating herself on the ground before him. It was just incomprehensible to her that he would extend such kindness to her, a Moabitess.

But then Boaz explained the motive for his actions. He had heard of her care and concern for Naomi, and how she had left her family and homeland to live among strangers. He also blessed her for transferring her allegiance to the God of Israel and wished God's blessing upon her for the sacrifices she had made. Boaz was a very godly and generous man.

Read the verses between the texts to provide background. What may seem strange to us was the accepted custom in Israel where it was important for land to remain in the family, and for there to be male succession within the family unit. When circumstances prevailed that precluded this, there was provision made for a kinsman-redeemer—one near of kin—to provide continued succession and ownership.

It occurred to Naomi that Boaz, though much older than Ruth, could fulfill the role of kinsman-redeemer and at the same time provide the security of a husband for Ruth, and thus also insure her own future needs (see 4:15). So she gave Ruth instructions on how to proceed in offering herself to Boaz in a way that would alert him to his potential role.

There was nothing immorally suggestive about Ruth's actions. Boaz admitted to her that night that "all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Undoubtedly he was attracted to her by her character and promised to proceed with plans to carry out his role.

Ruth's resulting marriage to Boaz not only provided for her and Naomi's needs, but through her lineage God has blessed people of all time and all races with the ultimate Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

For thought and discussion

1. Be sure you understand the very unsubstantial situation of Naomi and Ruth in the culture of their day. Then marvel at the way God orchestrated even simple events to provide for their long-range care.
2. This story provides excellent lessons on how to relate to foreigners, people in our midst who are of different backgrounds, races, and cultures. This should be good for discussion.
3. There are a number of specific character traits portrayed in this lesson. Name them.
4. Do you feel you are too ordinary or insignificant to be used in God's plans? Take heart from this lesson.
5. Think about and discuss what is necessary for building community.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: The importance of accepting people into our friendship and community even though they may be of different background, culture, or race.

Key verses: 2:11, 12 and 3:11 ■

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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

Outrage: Census Gives "Negro" Option

The U. S. Census Bureau runs a census every decade that includes such demographic data as ethnicity. The 2010 form includes an option for Black/African-American/Negro. They included Negro because many older blacks still identify themselves as Negroes, causing them confusion when presented with the politically correct "African American" as an option. Many of these blacks wrote in "Negro" in the write-in space. So in response, the U. S. Census Bureau included "Negro" in an effort to be "inclusive." Some blacks are outraged.

Chanou Wilshire is quoted as saying that she doesn't have an option on the form because she's an African-American, not a Negro. "It's highly offensive," she added.

Brooklyn resident Tiffany Campbell has the opposite perspective, saying, "How you define yourself I guess is subjective. But for me, that on a form doesn't offend me at all."

Words connected with racial issues are often sensitive. Terms like "negro," while touchy, have been used in legitimate, respectful ways. Often it depends on the attitude of the speaker. However, derogatory words like "nigger" are always offensive and have no place in the Christian's vocabulary.

— Source: WCBS2 New York City

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New Study on CO₂

Dr. Wolfgang Knorr of the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Bristol just released a study of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that found, in contradiction of other studies, that the proportion of CO₂ to other gases has not changed much since 1850. If correct, this is yet another blow to the global warming theory.

—Source: *Science Daily*

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"Fourth-Trimester" Abortions Legal in VA

"A loophole in state law is preventing Campbell County investigators from charging a woman they say killed her newborn baby.

"Deputies were called to a home . . . The caller said a woman in her early 20s was in labor. When deputies arrived, they discovered the baby had actually been born . . . ten hours earlier. Investigators say the baby was already dead when deputies got there.

"Investigators . . . say the baby was under bedding and had been suffocated by her mother. Investigators say because the mother and baby were still connected by the umbilical cord and placenta, state law does not consider the baby to be a separate life. Therefore, the mother cannot be charged.

"In the state of Virginia as long as the umbilical cord is attached and the placenta

is still in the mother, if the baby comes out alive the mother can do whatever she wants to with that baby to kill it,' says Investigator Tracy Emerson. 'She could shoot the baby, stab the baby. As long as it's still attached to her in some form by umbilical cord or something it's no crime in the state of Virginia.'

"The Campbell County Sheriff's Office and Commonwealth's Attorney's office worked unsuccessfully to get the law changed after another baby died in the county in a similar case. Emerson says they asked two delegates and one state senator to take the issue up in the General Assembly. He says the three lawmakers refused because they felt the issue was too close to the abortion issue.

"Emerson tells us there's a double standard with the law. If someone other than the mother harms a baby still attached to the mother, that person can be charged.

" '[The baby's father] was very upset. I think the grandparents were upset. I believe everyone was upset, except for the person who should have been upset, the mother,' says Emerson.

"The medical examiner says the baby was born healthy."

—Excerpts from "Mother won't be charged with baby's death because of law loophole" (<http://j.mp/AbortionVA>) on *WSLS 10 Roanoke, Virginia*

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Student Hit by Train

Nineteen-year-old Goshen College student Daniel Martin was hit by a train early in the morning on December 8, 2009, as he lay partially on the tracks. Martin sustained a leg injury which was not life-threatening. Police say they believe alcohol was a factor.

—Source: *Fox 28 WSJV South Bend, Indiana*

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Intelligence Failure on "Underwear Bomber"

On Christmas Day, a Nigerian man dubbed the "Underwear Bomber" (given

where he hid his explosives), ignited a bomb on a Northwest flight soon before it landed in Detroit, having come from Amsterdam. The bomb failed to properly explode, and merely injured the bomber and a passenger that tackled him.

Many sources inside the intelligence community (and President Obama himself) say that U. S. intelligence agencies had a tip that Umar Farouk Abdulmutalab was planning to carry out a terror attack against the U. S., but failed to "connect the dots" and revoke his U. S. visa and place him on the No Fly List. The White House National Security Adviser James Jones says Americans will feel "a certain shock" when they read a soon-to-be-released report about how many clues were missed.

Surprisingly, when notified of the attempted attack, the head of the National Counterterrorism Center, Michael Leiter, did not return from his ski vacation until several days later. Many expect him to be fired. Obama is publicly upset at intelligence about the attack and the Ft. Hood shooting (in which Major Nidal Malik Hasan killed 13 people and wounded 30), both involving U. S. intelligence agencies having clues of the planned attacks, but failing to act upon the information.

—Sources: *New York Post, USA Today*

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Christians Crucified in Sudan

A rebel group in Uganda that calls itself the Lord's Resistance Army crossed the border with Sudan and crucified seven Christians. They also carried out other acts of violence including storming churches (and attacking those praying), desecrating buildings, and kidnapping several people. A Catholic bishop in the area organized three days of prayer, which culminated in 20,000 people walking two miles barefoot in sackcloth and ashes.

—Source: *The Catholic Herald* via the *Kuepfer Kronicle* (by Luke Kuepfer)

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CIA Base Bombed

A suicide bomber killed eight people inside a CIA base in Afghanistan in late December. He killed seven CIA officers and one Jordanian intelligence officer, injuring several more people. He reportedly was a Jihadi captured by the Jordanians and “turned” as a double agent working for the Jordanians. Apparently he was a triple agent. When he requested an urgent meeting with his handlers, purportedly with information as to the whereabouts of one of Al Qaeda’s top leaders, he was admitted into a meeting in the heart of a CIA base in Afghanistan that directed drone attacks against Qaeda and Taliban leadership. He was not searched before entering and shortly after entering the meeting, he detonated an explosive vest. —Source: *Fox News*

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Obama Appoints Transgendered Persons

Obama appointed “Amanda” Simpson to a job as a senior technical adviser with the Department of Commerce where s/he will vet defense and aerospace deals with other nations. S/he began life as Mitchell, the oldest of four Jewish boys. S/he has had various surgeries to alter his appearance.

S/he is the first openly transgendered person to be appointed by the Obama Administration though he has since appointed another. Mark Keisling, the executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, said that Obama is the first President to do so.

—Source: *Boston Herald*

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Gulf Launches Petro-Currency

“The Gulf monetary union pact has come into effect,” said Kuwait’s finance minister . . .

“The move will give the hyper-rich club of oil exporters a petro-currency of

their own, greatly increasing their influence in the global exchange and capital markets and potentially displacing the US dollar as the pricing currency for oil contracts. Between them they amount to a regional superpower with a GDP of \$1.2 trillion, some 40% of the world’s proven oil reserves, and financial clout equal to that of China.

“The project is inspired by Europe’s monetary union, seen as a huge success in the Arab world. But there are concerns that the region is trying to run before it can walk.

“Europe took 40 years to reach the point where it felt ready to launch a currency. It began with the creation of the Iron & Steel Community in the 1950s, moving by steps towards a single market enforced by [a] powerful Commission and European Court. The EMU timetable was fixed . . . in 1991 but it took another 11 [years] for euro notes and coins to reach the streets.

“Bahrain’s foreign minister . . . [said] the project would not work unless the Gulf countries first break down basic barriers to trade and capital flows.

“At the moment, trucks sit paralyzed at border posts for days awaiting entry clearance. Labor mobility between states is almost zero.

“The single currency should come last. We need to coordinate our economic policies and build up common infrastructure as a first step,” he said.

“Mohammed El-Enein, chair of the energy and industry committee in Egypt’s parliament, said Europe’s example could help the Arab world achieve its half-century dream of a unified currency, but the task requires discipline. ‘We need exactly the same institutions as the EU has created. We need a commission, a court, and a bank,’ he said.”

—Excerpts from “Gulf petro-powers to launch currency in latest threat to dollar hegemony” (<http://j.mp/GulfPetro>) in the *UK Daily Telegraph*

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Reflections From LA

by Lauren Mong

Editor's Note: These are a series of reflections from the streets of LA by a member of SMBI's Fall '09 choir tour.

ELUSIVE DANCING SHADOWS

December 19, 2009

Hunger. It defined the people I met in Hollywood. As I walked down the street of Hollywood, stepping on the famous golden stars, I sickened: malnutrition of the soul abounded. The striving for something *Real* and *True* was just as elusive as the shadows dancing from the bright lights. Never attainable—and, even more tragic, nothing is even there.

The eyes; that's what I noticed. Empty, pale malaise—with a desperate hunger for something, anything. How ironic; Hollywood is the definition of worldly fame and success. And, in the very Mecca of such brilliancy, the eyes of the people darted back and forth in unrest.

The cashier asked me, "How are you doing?" I smiled and said very well. His mouth opened in disbelief, "Wow, I never hear people saying they are doing well these days!" I laughed and told him that life really is good and wished him a happy holiday. He shook his head and said with a deep hunger in his eyes, "We really need more people like you around here."

Two different times that evening a person exclaimed how beautiful we were. One lady looked at us and said, "Wow, you have such natural beauty. It's amazing." Again, that same hunger. She continued, "You look like, like, um, pure." I laughed and told her, "That's what we are." Another deep look of hunger flashed in her eyes—she had just finished telling how her boyfriend hits her and her purple eye shadow didn't hide the dark shadows all around her eyes. Isn't it ironic? Hollywood,

in the center of fashion and pursuit of beauty, I'm told—with a long dress and a white "thing" on my head—that I'm beautiful. And right there, in the very heart of seduction and impurity, a girl longingly exclaims over our purity.

I looked at the girl. I looked at the cashier. I looked up at the glittering lights. I saw the movie actors and the limos. Is this as good as it gets? Is this really the end of what the world has to offer? Then, I looked inside of me. I saw there Jesus and enough love and security to last me an eternity. I'd be a fool to ever give a second glance to Hollywood.

But, then I looked at the girl again. And the cashier. And the many, many people walking the streets. I'd also be a fool if I didn't tell them about Jesus. They're hungry, and they desperately need my Jesus.

ZOMBIE

We walked down the famous street lined with stars in Hollywood. I looked down and saw a girl curled on top of a man, near a dog, and wrapped in dirty blankets and backpacks. Our eyes met.

She was with a band of traveling nomads. We stopped to talk to them. She sat up, and I sat down next to her. We shook hands with her and her three scraggly companions. She shyly grinned and wiped her hand before shaking mine. "I took a shower a few days ago, so I guess I'm still pretty clean." Zombie told me a little of her story. She was 19 and traveled up and down the west coast for the past five years. I eyed her rough male companions and then back to her. I read between the lines. Her life was anything but pretty.

They traveled from San Francisco to spend Christmas in Hollywood. They found out we were staying in a hotel. They looked at us longingly. Zombie said that the streets were their beds. They lived to have fun and get drunk.

Zombie still haunts me—her hungry, sad eyes. Her young, pretty face lined with worry and dirt. Her tragic life. I'm here, surrounded by love and joy. I'm safe, with friends and family. My life is beautiful. How can I share some of that beauty with Zombie? How can she get off the streets? How can she be rescued?

Snuggled in my own cozy living room, in Lancaster County, the streets of LA are a million miles away.

RAW PAIN

We sang at a homeless shelter in downtown Los Angeles. Standing in the harsh light, we sang—and I allowed God to thaw my heart. The women—poor, without a home—each had a story, a past, a hope, and a dream. My one wish for them was that God would give them a miracle of hope for Christmas . . . that God would restore their dreams that lay shattered at their feet.

After singing, we visited with the ladies. I became almost angry at myself. I saw the raw pain—some of the most raw, oozing pain ever—coming from their hearts, and I felt helpless. How can I give them the love of Jesus? He seemed trapped inside of me, and my words seemed hollow talking to them. But, I assure myself that the Spirit works in our weakness—and He was there. I know He was.

The first lady I talked to was large with chopped hair. She had a beautiful white smile. In our conversation, she whispered that she works with terrorists. She talked about secrecy and being undercover and learning things. I nodded. How do I enter into her confusion and bring peace?

The next lady I talked to also whispered to me, "I'm not God; I'm not an angel; I'm a healer." She was a short, dear-looking grandma with bright red lips and chunky gold earrings. She rambled on about being

a bio-chemist and assuring me that she will "tell them to tell me about Jesus." I left, upset with Satan, and how he has ravaged this woman's life.

I walked outside. Glancing up, I saw the bright towering skyscrapers of Los Angeles. I stood in a squalor of despairing women, each holding their earthly possessions close by them as they waited for supper. A Hispanic woman sat, tightly wound in an old gray coat. She rambled in Spanish. I'm not sure everything she said, but I kept nodding and saying, "Si," and "Bueno." I must have been doing something right because I kept getting hugs and kisses from her.

Coming inside, I talked to Pat. She looked at me with a queer smile and gushed a tirade of confusion, "When you have barn, there's a hay. And then you move the hay. And the real question is, Is it merry or is it merry? I think within my thinking, but I really don't want to enter into the thinking . . ." And the gush of confusion continued.

By this time, I was burdened with all the raw pain. Jesus wouldn't have tolerated it. All of a sudden, I felt like He was telling me to be bold and enter into Pat's darkness. I told her she didn't have to listen to the voices talking to her. Her eyes snapped to attention. I prayed with her, taking authority in Jesus' name over her. After the prayer, she was normal. She wasn't confused. I stood in awe of Jesus' power. We talked for awhile. Pat gave me a hug and told me, "I have a lot to think about."

The last lady was Rachel. A tall and beautiful lady with sad, cold blue eyes. She showed me her beaten face. "They're from my boyfriends," she grimaced. I grimaced with her. I asked her what I could pray for her. Her eyes swelled in tears, "My children. I gave two children up for adoption—a boy and a girl. I miss them. Pray they will have a happy Christmas, wherever they are." I left her—feeling sad and dejected, thinking about her, how she's scared in the big city, and wondering about her little boy and girl. Are they safe? *Jesus, take care of them.* (cont'd on p. 25)



Counseling From the Word

Affliction: Evidence of a Faithful God

by Jeremy Lelek

Most people who seek counseling are experiencing some type of affliction. For many, the affliction may emerge in the form of anxiety, depression, or anger, while for others the affliction may be recognized in marital devastation, death, or financial ruin. The protocol of Western ideology is that when such affliction arises, one must do everything possible to alleviate that which is causing the problem. Therefore, if a person is anxious, the primary aim becomes escape from fear.

If the problem is marital disharmony, the chief end is unity and complete elimination of relational strife. Of course, pursuing these goals is important, but taken to their extreme, they exhibit (or may foster) a very subtle form of hedonism (i.e., avoid pain and pursue pleasure no matter the cost). As a result, the image of ultimate existence becomes anxiety-free living or a perpetual, uninterrupted marriage of perfect harmony. Why is this a problem? There are several reasons to examine.

DEPRAVITY AND REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

First, such an expectation is profoundly unrealistic for someone living in a fallen world, corrupt in every detail and reality. Even Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye

might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). In other words, counselees should go ahead and expect difficulty in this life. But, solid biblical counsel will remind them of Jesus' own words that in Him they "may have peace."

MERCIFUL SUFFERING

Secondly, and possibly much more devastating, is that it builds a significantly unstable foundation upon which an alternative gospel is erected. Sound bizarre? Consider the following:

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalm 119:67).

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

"I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Psalm 119:75).

As stated in the first point, affliction in the Bible typically points believers toward a Person. Believers are being redeemed from all suffering as they learn to rest in the transforming power offered by the Gospel. And the central Person of the Gospel is indeed Jesus Christ. It is obvious by the words of the psalmist that in faithfulness to His children, God brings forth affliction for this very pur-

pose: to teach people about Himself. Salvation is not found in things like therapeutic healing of childhood memories or contextual family therapy any more than an aspirin or morphine can heal a malignant brain tumor. Good counsel will not evaluate healing by the alleviation of symptoms, but by a counselee's capacity to learn to trust a person in the presence of persistent symptoms. Such a contrast exposes two very distinct worldviews that will, by their very nature, shape the process of counseling.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT TRULY IS

Paul captures a proper worldview of biblical counseling when he writes, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"

COUNSELING QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER PERTAINING TO AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING:

1. How may I be praying for you during this time?
2. What are you doing to navigate through this difficult season?
3. What is this affliction revealing about you?
4. What is this affliction revealing to you about God?
5. How are you responding to God in your suffering?
6. What does this tell you about your view of God?
7. Is the Lord's mercy being revealed through your suffering?
8. Is your suffering related to sin? If so, how?

(Colossians 3:1-4).

There is much that may be taken from this passage, but for now, let it suffice to say that if counselors want to offer a Gospel-centered message, they will point counselees to "things above" when affliction and turmoil arise. For those who "be risen with Christ" (and that is everyone who exhibits a saving faith in Jesus Christ) all of life must be lived in reference to "things above, not on things on the earth." When the things of earth begin to take precedence (as a person approaches his or her afflictions), then the Christian existence, as it is intended to be, begins to disintegrate into something less.

The glories and sufficiency of God evaporate from consciousness, and the deceitful majesty of fallen reality blinds the child of God from what truly is. And what truly is, is a God who is faithful to complete His perfect work in "all things" (Romans 8:28, 29), even affliction. A reality so stunning, that Paul himself could only respond, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31b).

COUNSELING CONSIDERATIONS

1. Never underestimate the difficulty of a counselee's suffering, even if active and overt sin is involved.
2. Exhibit compassion. Weep with those who weep.
3. Ask counselees to meditate on Psalm 119:61, 71, 75. Have them journal how these verses may practically apply to their situation.
4. What "statutes" of God may apply in your counselee's situation? Discuss the importance of keeping these statutes (God's glory). Is there any sin that may be contributing to the situation?
5. Develop practical steps to help your counselee(s) "fix their minds on things above." On what should he/she be focused while enduring this trial? ■

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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 E-mail to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.

No Little People, No Little Places

by Francis A. Schaeffer

As a Christian considers the possibility of being *the Christian glorified* (a topic I have discussed in *True Spirituality*), often his reaction is, “I am so limited. Surely it does not matter much whether I am walking as a creature glorified or not.” Or, to put it in another way, “It is wonderful to be a Christian, but I am such a small person, so limited in talents—or energy or psychological strength or knowledge—that what I do is not really important.”

The Bible, however, has quite a different emphasis: With God there are no little people.

Moses’ Rod

One thing that has encouraged me, as I have wrestled with such questions in my own life, is the way God used Moses’ rod, a stick of wood. Many years ago, when I was a young pastor just out of seminary, this study of the use of Moses’ rod, which I called “God so used a stick of wood,” was a crucial factor in giving me the courage to press on.

The story of Moses’ rod began when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, telling him to go and challenge Egypt, the greatest power of his day. Moses reacted, “Who am I, that I should

go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3:11), and he raised several specific objections: “They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod” (Exodus 4:1, 2). God directed Moses’ attention to the simplest thing imaginable—the staff in his own hand, a shepherd’s rod, a stick of wood somewhere between three and six feet long.

Shepherds are notorious for hanging onto their staves as long as they can, just as some of us enjoy keeping walking sticks. Moses probably had carried the same staff for years. Since he had been a shepherd in the wilderness for forty years, it is entirely possible that this wood had been dead that long. Just a stick of wood—but when Moses obeyed God’s command to toss it on the ground, it became a serpent, and Moses himself fled from it. God next ordered him to take it by the tail, and when he did so, it became a rod again. Then God told him to go and confront the power of Egypt and meet Pharaoh face to face with this rod in his hand.

Exodus 4:20 tells us the secret of all that followed: *The rod of Moses had become the rod of God.*

Standing in front of Pharaoh, Aaron cast down this rod and it became a serpent. As God spoke to Moses, and Aaron was the spokesman of Moses (Exodus 4:16), so it would seem that Aaron used the rod of Moses which had become the rod of God. The wizards of Egypt, performing real magic through the power of the devil, not just a stage trick through sleight of hand, match this. Here was demonic power. But the rod of God swallowed up the other rods. This was not merely a victory of Moses over Pharaoh but of Moses' God over Pharaoh's god and the power of the devil behind that god.

This rod appeared frequently in the ensuing events:

Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood (Exodus 7:15-17).

The rod of God indeed was in Aaron's hand (Exodus 7:17, 19, 20) and the water was putrefied, an amazing use for a mere stick of wood. In the days that followed, Moses "stretched forth his rod" and successive plagues came upon the land; after the waters no longer were blood, after seven days, there came frogs, then lice, then thunder and hail and great balls of ball lightning running along the ground, and then locusts (Exodus 8:1-10:15). Watch the destruction of

judgment, which came from a dead stick of wood that had become the rod of God.

Pharaoh's grip on the Hebrews was shaken loose, and he let the people go. But then he changed his mind and ordered his armies to pursue them. When the armies came upon them, the Hebrews were caught in a narrow place with mountains on one side of them and the sea on the other. And God said to Moses, "Lift thou up thy rod" (Exodus 14:16). What good is it to lift up a rod when one is caught in a cul-de-sac between the mountains and a great body of water with the mightiest army in the world at his heels? Much good, if the rod is the rod of God. The waters divided and the people passed through. Up to this point, the rod had been used for judgment and destruction, but now it was a rod of healing for the Jews, as it was the rod of judgment for the Egyptians. That which is in the hand of God can be used in either way.

Later, the rod of judgment also became a rod of supply. In Rephidim the people desperately needed water.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel (Exodus 17:5, 6).

It must have been an amazing sight to stand before a great rock (not a small pebble but a face of rock such as we see here in Switzerland in the mountains) and to see a rod struck against it, and then to watch torrents of life-giving water flow out to satisfy thousands upon thousands of people and their livestock. The giver of judgment became the giver of life. It was not magic. There was nothing in the rod itself. The rod of Moses had simply become the rod of God. We

too are not only to speak a word of judgment to our lost world, but are also to be a source of life.

The rod also brought military victory as it was held up. It was more powerful than the swords of either the Jews or their enemy (Exodus 17:9). In a much later incident the people revolted against Moses, and a test was established to see whom God had indeed chosen. The rod was placed before God and it budded (Numbers 17:8). Incidentally, we find out what kind of tree it had come from so long ago because it now brought forth almond blossoms.

The final use of the rod occurred when the wilderness wandering was almost over. Moses' sister Miriam had already died. Forty years had passed since the people had left Egypt, so now the rod may have been almost eighty years old. The people again needed water, and though they were now in a different place, the desert of Zin, they were still murmuring against God. So God told Moses:

Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him (Numbers 20:8, 9).

Moses took the rod (which verse 9 with 17:10 shows was the same one which had been kept with the ark since it had budded) and he struck the rock twice. He should have done what God had told him and only spoken with the rod in his hand, but that is another study. In spite of this, however, "water came out abundantly" (Numbers 20:11).

Consider the mighty ways in which God used a dead stick of wood. "God so used a stick of wood" can be a banner cry for each of us. Though we are limited and weak in talent, physical energy, and

psychological strength, we are not less than a stick of wood. But as the rod of Moses had to become the rod of God, so that which is *me* must become the *me* of God. Then I can become useful in God's hands. The Scripture emphasizes that much can come from little if the little is truly consecrated to God. There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people. The problem for each of us is applying this truth to ourselves: Is Francis Schaeffer the Francis Schaeffer of God?

No Little Places

But if a Christian is consecrated, does this mean he will be in a big place instead of a little place? The answer, the next step, is very important: As there are no little people in God's sight, so there are no little places. To be wholly committed to God in the place where God wants him—this is the creature glorified. In my writing and lecturing I put much emphasis on God's being the infinite reference point which integrates the intellectual problems of life. He is to be this, but He must be the reference point not only in our thinking but in our living. This means being what He wants me to be, where He wants me to be.

Nowhere more than in America are Christians caught in the twentieth-century syndrome of size. Size will show success. If I am consecrated, there will necessarily be large quantities of people, dollars, etc. This is not so. Not only does God not say that size and spiritual power go together, but He even reverses this (especially in the teaching of Jesus) and tells us to be deliberately careful not to choose a place too big for us. We all tend to emphasize big works and big places, but all such emphasis is of the flesh. To think in such terms is simply to hearken back to the old, unconverted, egoist, self-centered *Me*. This attitude, taken from the world, is more dangerous to the Christian than fleshly amusement or

practice. It is the flesh.

People in the world naturally want to boss others. Imagine a boy beginning work with a firm. He has a lowly place and is ordered around by everyone: Do this! Do that! Every dirty job is his. He is the last man on the totem pole, merely one of Rabbit's friends-and-relations, in Christopher Robin's terms. So one day when the boss is out, he enters the boss's office, looks around carefully to see that no one is there, and then sits down in the boss's big chair. "Someday," he says, "I'll say 'run' and they'll run." This is man. And let us say with tears that a person does not automatically abandon this mentality when he becomes a Christian. In every one of us there remains a seed of wanting to be boss, of wanting to be in control and have the word of power over our fellows.

But the Word of God teaches us that we are to have a very different mentality:

But Jesus called them [his disciples] to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45).

Every Christian, without exception, is called into the place where Jesus stood. To the extent that we are called to leadership, we are called to ministry, even costly ministry. The greater the leadership, the greater is to be the ministry. The word *minister* is not a title of power but a designation of servanthood. There is to be no Christian guru. We must reject this constantly and carefully. A minister, a man who is a leader in the church of God (and never more needed than in a day like ours when the battle is so great), *must* make plain to the men,

women, boys, and girls who come to places of leadership that instead of lording their authority over others and allowing it to become an ego trip, they are to serve in humility.

Again, Jesus said, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). This does not mean there is to be no order in the church. It does mean that the *basic* relationship between Christians is not that of elder and people, or pastor and people, but that of brothers and sisters in Christ. This denotes that there is one Father in the family and that his offspring are equal. There are different jobs to be done, different offices to be filled, but we as Christians are equal before one Master. We are not to seek a great title; we are to have the places together as brethren.

When Jesus said, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11), He was not speaking in hyperbole or uttering a romantic idiom. Jesus Christ is the realist of all realists, and when He says this to us, He is telling us something specific we are to do.

Our attitude toward all men should be that of equality because we are common creatures. We are of one blood and kind. As I look across all the world, I must see every man as a fellow creature and I must be careful to have a sense of our equality on the basis of this common status. We must be careful in our thinking not to try to stand in the place of God to other men. We are fellow creatures. And when I step from the creature-to-creature relationship into the brothers-and-sisters-in-Christ relationship within the church, how much more important to be a brother or sister to all who have the same Father. Orthodoxy, to be a Bible-believing Christian, always has two faces. It has a creedal face and a practicing face, and Christ emphasizes that that is to be the case here. Dead orthodoxy is always a contradiction in

terms, and clearly that is so here; to be a Bible-believing Christian demands humility regarding others in the body of Christ.

Jesus gave us a tremendous example:

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. . . . Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:3-5, 13-17).

Note that Jesus says that if we do these things there will be happiness. It is not just knowing these things that brings happiness, it is doing them. Throughout Jesus' teaching these two words *know* and *do* occur constantly, and always in that order. We cannot do until we know, but we can know without doing. The house built on the rock is the house of the man who knows and does. The house built on the sand is the house of the man who knows but does not do.

Christ washed the disciples' feet and dried them with the towel with which He was girded, that is, with His own clothing. He intended this to be a practical example of the mentality and action that should be seen in the midst of the people of God.

Taking the Lowest Place

Yet another statement of Jesus bears on our discussion:

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms;

saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:7-11).

Jesus commands Christians to seek consciously the lowest room. All of us—pastors, teachers, professional religious workers, and non-professional included—are tempted to say, “I will take the larger place because it will give me more influence for Jesus Christ.” Both individual Christians and Christian organizations fall prey to the temptation of rationalizing this way as we build bigger and bigger empires. But according to the Scripture this is backwards: We should consciously take the lowest place unless the Lord Himself extrudes us into a greater one.

The word *extrude* is important here. To be extruded is to be forced out under pressure into a desired shape. Picture a huge press jamming soft metal at high pressure through a die so that the metal comes out in a certain shape. This is the way of the Christian: He should choose the lesser place until God extrudes him into a position of more responsibility and authority.

Let me suggest two reasons why we ought not grasp the larger place. First, we should seek the lowest place because there it is easier to be quiet before the face of the Lord. I did not say easy; in no place, no matter how small or humble, is it easy to be quiet before God. But it is certainly easier in some places than in others. And the little places, where I can

more easily be close to God, should be my preference. I am not saying that it is impossible to be quiet before God in a greater place, but God must be allowed to choose when a Christian is ready to be extruded into such a place, for only He knows when a person will be able to have some quietness before Him in the midst of increased pressure and responsibility.

Quietness and peace before God are more important than any influence a position may seem to give, for we must stay in step with God to have the power of the Holy Spirit. If by taking a bigger place our quietness with God is lost, then to that extent our fellowship with Him is broken and we are living in the flesh, and the final result will not be as great, no matter how important the larger place may look in the eyes of other men or in our own eyes. Always there will be a battle, always we will be less than perfect, but if a place is too big and too active for our present spiritual condition, then it is too big.

We see this happen over and over again, and perhaps it has happened at some time to us: Someone whom God has been using marvelously in a certain place takes it upon himself to move into a larger place and loses his quietness with God. Ten years later he may have a huge organization, but the power has gone, and he is no longer a real part of the battle in his generation. The final result of not being quiet before God is that less will be done, not more—no matter how much Christendom may be beating its drums or playing its trumpets for a particular activity.

So we must not go out beyond our depth. Take the smaller place so you have quietness before God. I am not talking about laziness; let me make that clear. That is something else, something too which God hates. I am not talking about copping out or dropping out. God's people are to be active, not seeking, on account of some false mystical concept, to sit constantly in the shade of a rock.

There is no monasticism in Christianity. We will not be lazy in our relationship with God, because when the Holy Spirit burns, a man is consumed. We can expect to become physically tired in the midst of battle for our King and Lord; we should not expect all of life to be a vacation. We are talking about quietness before God as we are in His place for us. The size of the place is not important, but the consecration in that place is.

It must be noted that all these things which are true for an individual are true also for a group. A group can become activist and take on responsibilities God has not laid upon it. For both the individual and the group the first reason we are not to grasp (and the emphasis is on *grasp*) the larger place is that we must not lose our quietness with God.

The second reason why we should not seek the larger place is that if we deliberately and egotistically lay hold on leadership, wanting the drums to beat and the trumpets to blow, then we are not qualified for Christian leadership. Why? Because we have forgotten that we are brothers and sisters in Christ with other Christians. I have said on occasion that there is only one good kind of fighter for Jesus Christ—the man who does not like to fight. The belligerent man is never the one to be belligerent for Jesus. And it is exactly the same with leadership. The Christian leader should be a quiet man of God who is extruded by God's grace into some place of leadership.

We all have egoistic pressures inside us. We may have substantial victories over them and we may grow, but we never completely escape them in this life. The pressure is always there deep in my heart and soul, needing to be faced with honesty. These pressures are evident in the smallest of things as well as the greatest. I have seen fights over who was going to be the president of a Sunday school class composed of three members. The temptation has nothing to do with size. It comes from a spirit, a mentality,

inside us. The person in leadership for leadership's sake is returning to the way of the world, like the boy dusting off the boss's chair and saying, "Someday I'll sit in it, and I'll make people jump."

One of the loveliest incidents in the early church occurred when Barnabas concluded that Paul was the man of the hour and then had to seek him out because Paul had gone back to Tarsus, his own little place. Paul was not up there nominating himself; he was back in Tarsus, even out of communication as far as we can tell. When Paul called himself the chief of sinners, "not meet to be called an apostle" (1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Corinthians 15:9), he was not speaking just for outward form's sake. From what he said elsewhere and from his actions, we can see that this was Paul's mentality. Paul, the man of leadership for the whole Gentile world, was perfectly willing to be in Tarsus until God said to him, "This is the moment."

Being a Rod of God

The people who receive praise from

the Lord Jesus will not in every case be the people who held leadership in this life. There will be many persons who were sticks of wood that stayed close to God and were quiet before Him, and were used in power by Him in a place which looks small to men.

Each Christian is to be a rod of God in the place of God for him. We must remember throughout our lives that in God's sight there are no little people and no little places. Only one thing is important: to be consecrated persons in God's place for us, at each moment. Those who think of themselves as little people in little places, if committed to Christ and living under His Lordship in the whole of life, may, by God's grace, change the flow of our generation. And as we get on a bit in our lives, knowing how weak we are, if we look back and see we have been somewhat used of God, then we should be the rod "surprised by joy." ■

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REFLECTIONS OF LA . . . cont'd from p. 16

So much raw pain. So many broken lives. How can their lives be changed? Looking at each one, I know that I could spend the rest of my life showing Jesus to the hurting women of the world.

A COSTLY PRAYER

She sat on the mall bench, holding her purse and watching people. Her wrinkled face was hid by big glasses and framed with curly grey hair. I started a casual conversation with her. She told me she was from Greece and wished me a happy holiday. As I was getting ready to leave, I asked her if I could pray for her. Her smiling face quickly changed—one second she smiled, the next second she cried. I was shocked to have a crying woman on my hands.

She sobbed, "Peace, peace, pray for peace. My family is fighting, and it hurts me so much." She clutched her heart. I

assured her I will pray for her family. She opened her purse and pulled out \$20. In broken English and wiping away tears, she told me that I had to take this money because I'm praying for her. I refused, "I don't want your money, ma'am. I want to pray for you." She insisted, "No, you must. Because you pray." I reluctantly took the money.

I left, holding the twenty dollars. From a distance, I watched her bow her head and put her hands on her face, for a long time. She remained still, no doubt quietly sobbing. I fingered the money and prayed, realizing how she must be desperate for something. It takes a certain desperation to give a total stranger \$20 for prayer.

All over Los Angeles, I saw that same quiet desperation. ■

—Lauren Mong is a freelance writer from Ephrata, PA. Reprinted by permission.



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.

All Glory, Laud and Honor



by Neale/Teschner

Lyrics: In the story of Jesus' life on earth, there was really only one major event in which He demonstrated (in a way the people could understand) the kingly aspect of His nature. When He taught the people and healed the sick, it was easy for them to understand His role as Teacher and Physician. When He drove the money-changers out of the temple and pronounced judgment on the egocentric religious rulers of the day, He clearly assumed His role as Prophet. His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection proved His capability of being our Savior. But even though many prophecies and other scriptures reference His being a King, Jesus did not overemphasize this aspect of His divine nature. His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is the only time that He allowed a large group of His followers to worship Him specifically as King.

"All Glory, Laud and Honor" uses the biblical account of the Triumphal Entry as the background and springboard for a present-day song of praise. The presence of the refrain divides this hymn neatly into two parts, and it is easy to categorize the refrain as the "praise," and the verse part as the "rationale" behind the praise: the "This is why we are praising You" section. The first two verses emphasize Jesus' kingship and divinity, with the second taking special note of how all the aspects of creation are involved in praise, from the angels to "All

things created" (possibly a reference to the stones that Jesus said would "cry out" if the people ceased their praise). The last three verses focus on parallels between the praises offered at the Triumphal Entry and the praises that we, the singers, are offering with this hymn. The final verse notes that the praises of the disciples that day were accepted, and requests the same for our present-day praises and prayers.

As with most hymns written in the first millennium after Christ, relatively little is known about the composer. However, we do know that he was born into the nobility, but chose to enter the ministry, eventually being appointed Bishop of Orleans, France. He was imprisoned on the grounds of suspected treason, and while in prison wrote the Latin verses from which John M. Neale derived the English version of "All Glory, Laud and Honor."

Music: The key of C major seems to have a majestic personality of its own, and is often used for marches, processions, and other celebratory pieces of music. As such, it makes a better choice for this text-tune combination than the tune's original key of B-flat. The transposition also allows a more comfortable starting pitch, and places all the pitches in a "brighter" register, without pushing the high range of most congregations at all. ■

1. songsandhymns.org/people

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

All Glory, Laud and Honor

VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN 7.6.7.6. with Refrain

Theodulph of Orleans, c. 820

Gloria laus et honor

Tr. John Mason Neale†, 1851

Melchior Teschner, 1613

REFRAIN (Sing after each stanza)

All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or To Thee, Re-deem - er, King,

To whom the lips of chil - dren Made sweet ho - san - nas ring.

1 Thou art the King of Is - rael, Thou Da - vid's roy - al Son,
2 The com - pa - ny of an - gels Are prais - ing Thee on high,
3 The peo - ple of the He - brews With palms be - fore Thee went;
4 To Thee, be - fore Thy pas - sion, They sang their hymns of praise;
5 Thou didst ac - cept their prais - es; Ac - cept the prayers we bring,

Who in the Lord's name com - est, The King and bless - ed one.
And mor - tal men, and all things Cre - at - ed, make re - ply.
Our praise and prayer and an - thems Be - fore Thee we pre - sent.
To Thee, now high ex - alt - ed, Our mel - o - dy we raise.
Who in all good de - light - est, Thou good and gra - cious King.

PART 2

Raising Girls to Be Godly Women in a Confused and Conflicted Culture

by Nina Fry
London, England

***Never before in our history have we been so eager
to tear up the blueprint of biology and redefine
our roles as men and women, mothers and fathers.***

REDEMPTION: RESTORING GOD'S DESIGN

Beyond Culture

In turning our attention to a biblical understanding of this issue I want to make clear that I am not just advocating a return to “traditional” roles for men and women. I say this for two reasons. First, “traditional” roles differ from culture to culture. Moreover, any one culture’s norm varies through the passage of time. To which culture would we look for *the* tradition? How far back would we go? Which historical era would we choose? Second, in one sense our culture’s “tradition” has resulted in the mess we now observe. The actions and reactions of our forebears have brought us to this state of confusion. Advocating that we reinvent the social structures or moral environment of another time—even if that were possible—could lead to the repetition of the same mistakes. We would look in vain for a culture or time where male/female relationships reflect God’s intentions perfectly. Since the Fall there has always been abuse of one sort or another. That is why our only sure footing is God’s

pre-Fall design for male and female as it is revealed in Genesis 1–2.

We must return to God’s Design in Genesis because it is pre-Fall.²⁴ As John Piper argues,

When the Bible teaches that men and women fulfill different roles in relation to each other, charging man with a unique leadership role, it bases this differentiation not on temporary cultural norms but on permanent facts of creation. . . . [T]he foundation of this differentiation is traced back to the way things were in Eden before sin warped our relationships. Differentiated roles were corrupted, by the fall. They were created by God.²⁵

Principles and Practice

There are several practical steps we can take to train up young girls with a biblical worldview while guarding their consciences from feminist influences.

(1) Teach a biblical worldview.

A biblical worldview begins with God at its center and with God radiating out at every point. Thus, knowledge of God is the starting point. This means that, from the earliest age, our girls must be taught theol-

24. Douglas Wilson writes, “The woman reflects the glory of God by reflecting the glory of man, whose glory she is. However much modern egalitarians do not like it, God did not make the world according to their specifications” (*Future Men* [Moscow, ID: Cannon Press, 2004], 17).

25. Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity,” 28.

ogy. The study of doctrine is not just for ministers and scholars. Whenever we speak of God to a little girl, we are teaching theology! This needs to be accurate. She must not be given the impression that the world centers on her (much loved as she is) or on other people, but on God. She has been made to know, worship, and enjoy Him. The character and attributes of God are foundational to a biblical understanding of life. As girls and women we will only begin to understand our place in God's purposes if we begin with God Himself: God is three in one (Father, Son, and Spirit—all involved in creation), Creator, Promise-Keeper, Holy, Sovereign, Compassionate, and Wise.

(2) *Teach that God has spoken and given us everything we need to live life with joy in Him.*

The Bible must be taught as the written word of God and as the final authority on all matters. We then need to teach from a view based in biblical understanding. Before we listen to historians, sociologists, educationalists, psychologists, biologists, anthropologists, or anyone else, we will stop to ponder the Maker's Instructions. The Bible must be our foundation.

(3) *Teach that everything in life relates to God, including our identity as girls/women.*

All goodness, beauty, and truth come from Him. We live in relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord. There is no area of life outside of His Lordship. There is no spiritual/secular divide. All our heart attitudes, character, choices, priorities, behavior, and circumstances are under His rule and we are being transformed by the work of the Spirit in our lives so that we are no longer controlled by the false messages of the world but can engage with the world to transform it as He changes us to be more like Jesus. We will then desire to bring glory to Christ by reflecting His glorious design for men and

women until the new creation.

(4) *Give definitions and demonstrations.*

The biblical definition of womanhood will need to be broken down and explained as girls grow up, but it will also need to be demonstrated or modeled so that they see a compelling picture presented to them. We need to be real about the heart issues involved in living like this, especially with teens, so that they know that such a spirit can only develop in total dependence on God.²⁶

(5) *Teach that this is a heart issue.*

If women have been deceived by promises of freedom, liberation, and independence, it is because it finds an echo in our fallen hearts. Just like Eve, we have a desire to take things into our own hands and corrupt God's order. The voices that call to us from our culture only have power over us because they appeal to the desires of our fallen hearts. It is the condition of the human heart that is at issue here. To present our girls and young adults with a list of do's and don'ts or a well organized program outlining the role of women will not suffice. Piper argues that, in winning people over to a vision of manhood and womanhood,

Not only must there be thorough exegesis, there must also be a portrayal of the vision that satisfies the heart as well as the head. Or to put it another way: we must commend the beauty as well as the truth of the vision. We must show that something is not only right but also good. It is not merely valid but also valuable, not only accurate but also admirable.²⁷

Presenting a biblical worldview is not enough. It is possible to affirm statements of truth but not engage with them. There must be a heart response and transformation that leads to joy, wonder, and worship of God. To leave worldly ways of thinking and behaving and to embrace God's way is to know true freedom and liberty in Christ. When we apply this to the way we live as

26. Piper offers this definition: "At the heart of mature femininity is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships" (Ibid., 37).

27. Ibid., 26.

men and women we will begin to worship Him in all our relationships with the opposite sex. The question that we have to answer, therefore, is “How does the Bible describe womanhood?”

Proverbs 31: The Ideal Woman

Dorothy Patterson has described Proverbs 31 as “a full length portrait of a godly heroine finished in fine detail.”²⁸ What kind of woman do we have here? She is a teacher and an accomplished business-woman. She organizes the food, the estate, the clothes, the furnishings, and the moral education of the household. She is loyal and faithful, respectful and dependable, and brings glory to her husband. As Doug Wilson has put it, “This passage denies that a woman’s place is *in* the home. It affirms that her *priority* is the home.”²⁹

The picture here is more akin to pre-industrial western society than that of the culture we now experience. The exuberant description of this woman carries with it a sense of fulfillment and joy. She is blessed by God and is a blessing to others. His goodness fills her heart and spills over to impact not only her household but all who encounter her.

The fact that she is the ideal woman should not discourage us. This portrait is beautiful and something to which we would want to aspire and to encourage our girls to emulate. This woman is not a downtrodden, oppressed, unhappy doormat but a joyous and energetic life-giver. She is confident but not overbearing. She is organized but not obsessive. She is generous but not self-referencing. She is beautiful but not vain, intelligent but not boastful, busy but not self-important. She is respected and respectful.

This woman seems to have avoided two particular dangers that are warned against later in the Scriptures (although examples of failure in these areas can be found throughout the Old Testament as well).

They are lack of submission (disrespect, complaint, taking authority) and lack of modesty (showiness, vanity).

Submission and Modesty: Contentious Issues

Titus 2 shows where feminine beauty comes from. It is from within. It is the overflow of a heart that trusts God—totally. This shows itself in submission. All the gifts and attributes that are listed are to be exercised in the context of this particular attribute. It is highlighted again and again throughout the New Testament and demonstrated repeatedly in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1, 5). Even though this biblical mindset is misinterpreted, misunderstood, and totally alien to our twenty-first-century sensibilities, it appears to be very important to God. Girls need to know not only the biblical definition of womanhood, but also of manhood as well. Girls need to be able to recognize the characteristics of a “worthy man.” It is this kind of man to look for in a husband, elder, brother in Christ. This is the kind of man who is safe to be with.

God’s purpose for husbands is to lead with love and integrity. His purpose for wives is to willingly submit to this leadership and to use their gifts and abilities to enhance it. Both of these roles take enormous strength and self-control if they are to be fulfilled in the way God intends. It is fair to say that this is the antithesis of modern thinking about womanhood.

How then can we raise it with girls? We can do so in the following ways:

Inspire them to live godly lives by pointing them to women of faith, both past and present. Study the lives of female Bible characters who were obedient to God. Read and tell the stories of female missionaries past and present. Encourage them to read Christian biographies for themselves. Introduce them to Joni Eareckson Tada’s books (there are children’s versions of her story as

28. Dorothy Patterson, “The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 373.

29. Wilson, *Future Men*, 150.

well as adult/teen level).

Also, point them to Noel Piper's *Faithful Women and Their Extraordinary God*.³⁰ One way to overturn the "doormat" image of Christian women and to expose the confusion between submission and oppression is to see the way that God has used intelligent, creative, energetic, determined, submissive women to accomplish great things in His kingdom—married or single. We copy the people we most admire. Let us point them to godly examples.

Help them to understand what the Bible means by "submission" so that they see the beauty of God's design. This will be done by teaching and example. How do we relate to men? Do we encourage and enable worthy leadership or do we undermine them (with humor). What should be our response when faced with ungodly behavior in men? This is a big issue for girls and women. Some reactions are self-protective because of past hurts. How should we deal with that? Which Scriptures help us in this situation?

Teach them to say no to a complaining or grumbling heart. I am not saying that girls should not share difficult times or puzzling circumstances with a trusted friend. Nor am I saying that girls will never have those times when they pour out their hearts before God in an agony of spirit (cf. 1 Samuel 1). No, by this I mean avoid the development of a discontented disposition.

In her book *Calm My Anxious Heart*, Linda Dillow introduces us to Ella—a missionary wife, and mother to one of Linda's friends.

Ella worked as a missionary with the pygmies in Africa for fifty-two years. She had left her country, her family, and all that was familiar. Primitive does not even begin to describe her living conditions in the scorching heat and the humidity of the African bush. But Ella found no relief because electricity, air conditioning, and other modern conveniences were only a dream. Some days it was so unbearably hot that she had to bring the thermometer

inside because it couldn't register past 120 degrees without breaking. Ella's daughter wondered how her mother had done it—how she had lived a life of contentment when her circumstances would have caused the hardiest to complain. Recently she unearthed a treasure, a much more significant find than gold or silver. In an old diary of her mother's, she discovered Ella's prescription for contentment:

- Never allow yourself to complain about anything—not even the weather.
- Never picture yourself in any other circumstances or someplace else.
- Never compare your lot with others.
- Never allow yourself to wish this or that had been otherwise.
- Never dwell on tomorrow—remember that tomorrow is God's, not yours.

Ella's eyes were fixed on eternity. Her tomorrows belonged to God. She had given them to Him. And because all her tomorrows were nestled in God's strong arms, she was free to live today.³¹

The key to submission to worthy men is submission to God. He superintends our circumstances. He has ordered our days before any of them came to be. He is sovereign. His sovereignty and goodness are at issue when we will not accept the circumstances.

This will inform the way we talk about our own circumstances as well as how we will react when girls bring a complaint or a moan. We will acknowledge their problem but not leave them with it. Even very young girls can be encouraged to think in this way, "Yes, that's very hard. I wonder what God wants you to do/or to learn in this." Encourage them to put their hope and trust in God. They will meet suffering, injustice, and unfairness in many situations in their lives. The way we help them to deal with difficulty now will either help or hinder them in the future.

Teach them about the beauty that lasts. In our culture girls need to learn about modesty. Purity and propriety are considered to be outdated concepts. We need to resurrect

30. Noël Piper, *Faithful Women and Their Extraordinary God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005).

31. Linda Dillow, *Calm My Anxious Heart: A Woman's Guide to Finding Contentment* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 11-12.

and remarket them. They are very positive attributes and very attractive when properly understood and lived out.

Teach them and show them that the development of character is *more important* than their appearance. This starts early. Comment more on good character than good clothes—even with toddlers! Work diligently to press 1 Peter 3:1-6 upon the consciences of teenagers. Study it, apply it, live it even though this is set in a marriage context. Godly character and attitudes are not learned at the altar. It's best to start young. In a culture that defines us by how we look, this is powerfully countercultural. "A gracious, unselfish, generous woman is truly beautiful in God's sight. Others will find her attractive, even if naturally speaking she is plain, for her expression and demeanor will be warm and giving."³²

Teach them to develop feminine qualities: purity, self-control, kindness, submission, contentment, good deeds, a gentle and quiet spirit. This instruction is not geared towards a particular personality type. It is about heart attitudes. Whether we are extrovert or introvert, chatty or quiet, these verses apply.

Getting Practical: The What, When, Where, How, Who, and Why?

What should we teach?

1. The Genesis 1 "helper" design is an exalted design.
2. The value of purity, modesty, and chastity.
3. The value of a submissive attitude—at present to parents. The limits to submission (not to submit to sin or abuse).
4. The value of a meaningful career—to glorify God and serve others by properly using gifts (not as a means to self-fulfillment; not making career a god).
5. The value of marriage, motherhood, homemaking; older women to teach younger women (but all for the glory of God, not making a god out of marriage/family/ home).

³² James, *God's Design for Women*, 276.

³³ Sharon James, "Manhood and Womanhood in Biblical Perspective," a seminar delivered at Chessington Evangelical Church.

6. The value of the great number of ministries that women can and should fulfill.
7. The value of inner beauty that lasts forever.
8. Positive female role models (from Bible and church history) who lived out godly womanhood.³³

In teaching these things, here is one trap to be avoided. One reaction to feminism is romanticism. This may be a greater danger for some girls—not the rejection of men but the idolizing of them to give what only God can. The romantic image of the ideal man is not helpful. The Jane Austin School of Romance does not encourage dependence on God for our well-being. If we make this mistake we will not be enabling women. Not even the closest relationship will meet needs that should only be met in God. To attempt to do so will put unbearable strain on a man and hinder his ministry. The same mistake can be made by looking to friends to meet our deepest needs. No human relationship can bear the weight of this expectation. We must constantly point girls to God, to put their hope in Him.

When and where should we teach the next generation?

1. At every opportunity.
2. Wherever we are (Deuteronomy 6:7).
3. At planned times and places.
4. In the family and in the church.

How should we teach the next generation?

1. By explicit teaching; by being intentional and repetitive. Children are immersed in equality-feminist ideas very early. They need to hear God's voice clearly and often on this subject.
2. By example.
3. In dependence on God.

Who should teach the next generation?

1. It is primarily the privilege of fathers and mothers to teach their daughters about manhood and womanhood. Children's workers and youth workers and the church

- family support and reinforce this teaching.
2. For children of families unattached to the church—children and youth workers, pastors, and church members will be their teachers and examples. The great hope, of course, is that these families will be reached for Christ and transformed by the gospel so that parents can train their own children in righteousness. In the meantime members of the church family will teach them and pray for them and their families.

Why should we teach the next generation?

1. Because they are bombarded with a godless worldview that can have disastrous consequences if it is lived out.
2. Because without the truth they will follow lies.
3. To keep them from sin.
4. To help them see that all of life is under God's rule.
5. To raise their eyes to Christ, enlarge their hearts with love for Him, and broaden their horizons with an appreciation of

His truth so that they live their lives to the glory of God.

This is an impossible task. But when did God ever ask us to do something that is possible? He asks us to do the impossible because it is His work and will only be done in total dependence on Christ. In this way, we experience the joy of living and working in relationship with Christ, and He gets the glory. There will be trial, failure, and pain along the way but “with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

May He deepen our joy in Him as we seek to equip and encourage the girls of this generation to be godly women who in turn equip and encourage the next generation until the Lord returns and we live with Him forever in the new creation.

“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised” (Proverbs 31:30). ■

—This article first appeared in the Fall 2009 issue of *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. www.cbmw.org. Reprinted by permission.

“Till Death Do Us Part” Video Project

April 16, 17, 2010

The Project

The Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites (FCM), in cooperation with *Christian Principles Restored Ministries International, Inc.* (CPR), is planning to produce a video series on Marriage and Divorce featuring the teaching ministry of Dr. Joseph A. Webb, Th.D., PhD. The title of this project is: *Till Death Do Us Part—Restoring Biblical Truth Concerning Marriage and Divorce*. Dr. Webb is the author of the book “*Till Death Do Us Part*” (*What the Bible REALLY says about Marriage and Divorce*) and his latest work, “*Divorce and Remarriage: The Trojan Horse Within the Church*.”

The Place

Wellspring Mennonite Church in Athens, TN. The facility is relatively small, therefore reservations will be made on a first come, first served basis. Intended for ages 13 years and older.

The Opportunity

Prayer and financial support are requested as the Lord directs. The cost for this project is anticipated to be \$5,000 to \$7,000. All contributions will be granted a tax deductible receipt. Funds received over and above the initial production costs will be split 50/50 between FCM and CPR Ministries.

Send your gift to: *The Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites, P.O. Box 106, Harrisonburg, VA 22803* and earmarked “*Till Death Do Us Part*” Video Project.

Copies of this video seminar will be available in DVD (video) and CD (audio) through FCM several months after the actual seminar.

Contact Information

If you would like to attend the video production in Athens, TN, please call Tony Forry at 423-507-0054 or e-mail him at tony.forry@netscape.com.

Landmarks

by Melvin L. Yoder, Gambier, OH

Steel pins mark the corners of our property. We would not consider moving them to gain more property. The property on the other side of those markers belongs to someone else. There have long been landmarks which marked what belongs to God's people and what belongs to the world.

One man and one woman given in marriage for life has long been a landmark between the church and the world. On the other side is easy divorce and remarriage, also gay relationships, to name a few "freedoms" outside property lines. The woman's veiling has always been a landmark between the Christian woman and women of the world.

Slowly, but surely, these landmarks are being moved to permit more of what belongs to the world to be in the church. By moving the markers slowly the change is not as readily noticeable. Sheer and form-fitting materials belong to the world, but we have moved the markers enough to allow some of these materials in some of our churches.

We attended a funeral service in a large Mennonite church. As we stood in the lobby, we observed the ladies coming in and getting their veils out of little cubbyholes where they had been stored since the last service. It was apparent that they have not totally removed this landmark, but have simply moved it over a bit, to excuse not wearing the veil except in congregational worship services. The minister in charge announced that the tickets for the Cleveland Indians' ball game would be available in the lobby after the service. It seemed to me that another landmark had been moved, or taken away, to allow more of the world into the church.

At our annual ministers' meeting in March of this year, the Bishop Committee

advised that we continue the non-use of the radio as a defining characteristic of the Beachy constituency. A few have chosen to remove this long-standing landmark. Such markers are always moved in hopes of gaining something good thereby.

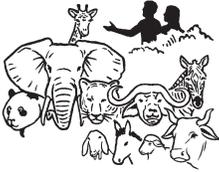
Years ago a neighborhood man hoped to gain real estate by disputing a boundary line. He claimed the line fence was on his property by a few feet and insisted the fence be moved. Surveyors proved that the fence was several feet on the other man's property. The man lost the dispute and became a laughingstock.

We can keep moving the markers to gain more property which in truth belongs to the world. But, in the end, we will be laughed to scorn—God has set the boundaries. Moving boundaries will bring calamity. God has said, "But ye have set at nought all my counsel [landmarks], and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Proverbs 1:25, 26).

Keeping the Lord's Day holy is very dear to most of us. But it can be seen that this landmark is also being moved. Sunday morning worship no longer has sole priority and is being skipped in favor of travel or certain functions and entertainments.

As I observe the changes coming into our churches, I wonder, *Are we trying to persuade God to go along with our wishes and thinking?* In Galatians 1, Paul faces this same dilemma. People were falling away from the truth and following another gospel. In verse 10, he asks the question, "Do I now persuade men or God?" Even in the final judgment men will try to persuade God that they are right, but He will say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." ■

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Beginning Issues



Joshua's Lo-o-ong Day

by John Mullett

In the past two articles I've addressed some arguments to avoid and touched on the necessary foundation—starting our thinking from the Bible—in judging between good and bad arguments in creation apologetics. Here I want to address another so-called “evidence” that has been fairly widespread and even published in various forms by Christians in the past. I also want to reiterate the necessary principles in discerning truth that I hope I'm conveying as I address these faulty arguments. My main goal is not to expose specific arguments to avoid, although that has its merits, but to promote the principles that will help reveal truth as we interpret life on a daily basis.

The story (and its variations) that I want to address in this issue pertains to Joshua's “long day” and Hezekiah's “turn back time” event. It usually goes something like this: *NASA discovered the sun and the moon weren't quite in the right place, and when checked into further, their computers revealed a “missing day.” By using the Biblical accounts of Joshua 10:12-14 and 2 Kings 20:8-11 scientists were then able to account for the missing day.* In the account in the Book of Joshua the sun didn't set and the moon also stopped for “nearly a whole

day” at Joshua's request. In 2 Kings 20 God answers Hezekiah's prayer to live longer by extending his life an additional 15 years. He then confirms His answer by granting Hezekiah's request that the “. . . shadow return backward ten degrees.” Obviously, for either of these events to occur, divine intervention was required as it involved literally stopping or turning back time.

Despite several attempts,¹ verifying sources and documentation of the “facts” has proven futile. In fact, based on the information available, this appears to be nothing more than a manufactured story based on wishful thinking. Most likely the stories originated from the desire of well-intentioned Christians to “prove” the Word of God as true.

Here is what's really at stake. First, when we resort to using stories and arguments with questionable veracity no matter how good they sound, we risk losing credibility. Second, the attitude of “needing to prove the Bible” reveals serious flaws in our worldview. The Bible is the measure of truth God has made available to us. All things should be verified against the Biblical record, not vice versa. When there is apparent conflict between the Biblical record and what we

observe in the “real world,” it is a sign that our interpretation, and consequently our worldview, may be wrong. All of our thinking must start from the Bible, and our thinking, not the Bible, is what must change when there is conflict. Finally, proving the past is beyond the scope of observational science. Whether using computers or not, unless the positions of the sun and moon prior to the events in Joshua and 2 Kings were known, there is no way to measure the “missing time.” Just as in radioactive dating methods, when the starting conditions are unknown, the results will be

based on assumptions. Without an eyewitness account recording every detail of every pertinent factor there is no way of recreating the past. If even one relevant factor is unknown all testing (and results) will be based on the assumptions required to “fill in” for it.

May God’s wisdom be prevalent and His truth illuminated in all that we discern as we live our lives for His glory. ■

1. Thompson Ph.D., Bert; Has NASA Discovered Joshua’s “Lost Day”? Originally published in *Reason and Revelation*, February 1999, 19[2]:14-15. <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2217>



An Open Letter to All Laymen



You are well acquainted with your shepherd’s humanity. You see it regularly. Likely you are bothered by his inadequacies. You notice where he needs yet to be sanctified. His failures are on display because of his position. But you love him anyway. You appreciate all his shepherding care and feel for him when he is unjustly criticized. You know that many times he has a thankless job.

Nevertheless his job is important. He is commissioned by God to shepherd the Lord’s flock. God is depending upon him to care for the flock by feeding it, guiding it to safe places, and protecting it against destructive influences. Just as Jesus Himself laid down His life for the sheep, even so must the undershepherd lay down his life in the interest of the flock.

How can all this be done with the limited time, limited resources, and limited ability of any leadership team? After all, leadership teams are human, not superhuman.

At least a leadership team is in place, not just one individual. That helps. But leadership teams are still human at their best.

What can you do to assist your leadership team to be the best they can be? You can—

1. Pray.
2. Provide material assistance.
3. Willingly shoulder tasks assigned to you.
4. Cooperate well with the Spirit of God as He works in the brotherhood.
5. Volunteer to fill a need as it arises.