

THE PREACHER'S MAGAZINE



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the Book of Judges

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suitable for Framing

by Gill Fox

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"I don't care how low it gets, dear, you're MY Billy Graham!"

THE PREACHER'S MAGAZINE

Proclaiming Christian Holiness

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Authors should address all articles and correspondence to Editor, *Preacher's Magazine*, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131.

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by
Wesley
Tracy



Did Jesus Really Eat Yogurt?

Reading a Bible study published in an evangelical periodical, I discovered that Jesus was a health food person. No record of His wolfing alfalfa sprouts—but at least we now know, the lesson writer explains in bold-face print, that Jesus was a yogurt eater. After all, research shows that when Isaiah in chapter 7, verse 15 of his prophecy wrote “butter and honey” (KJV), he really meant “yogurt and honey.” Since this is a Messianic passage, the lamp of logic sheds its wise gleam upon us and the truth dawns—Jesus (being the Messiah) had to be a yogurt eater. This discovery leads us to the truth of the title of the 2½-page article “Jesus Was No Junk Food Junkie.”

Talk about getting right down to where we live!

The lofty purpose of the article was to prove that “nutritious snacks taste good.” What more important topic could young adults study? Dried figs, almonds, raisins, grapes, dates, and the like were recommended (who can afford such stuff?) in the place of pizza and Pepsi. These are, we are reminded, more like “those foods eaten by Christ.” (Do you realize that Jesus never tasted Dr. Pepper or Twinkies?)

The same day I read this Bible study activity, I read a report from a community of Christians in Brazil. I kept mentally interchanging the ideas in the two articles.

Junk food such as sugar and coffee causes health and personality problems. Many minor crimes are caused by the way junk food makes a person feel and think. Junk food hurts the body. But it also causes personality problems.

The vast majority of the people lead lives of doing without. The poor majority have no fixed work; they

work for hire in the fields, earning 12 cruzeiros a day (about \$1.15). That fieldwork does not provide enough to live, but only to vegetate. This is why many experience hunger.

We each eat about 100 lbs. of sugar per year. Sugar causes all sorts of ailments including “rotten teeth” and “obesity.” Let us all substitute fresh fruit for sugary snacks.

The people (in our Christian community) thank God when they have beans, corn, and manioc root meal. Such “food” does not provide enough to live. They live by moral force; they live because they withstand it somehow.

Junk food, especially soft drinks, causes “difficulty in sleeping, bellyaches, and elimination problems.”

“All the children have swollen bellies, and are vomiting with dysentery which is endless.”

Americans are “fish deficient.” We should eat more fish instead of so much ham and beef.

*There is meat for one day, but for eight days there is none. Health is very poor. Sometimes a father has five or six children, and four die. They die of need, disregarded, because they cannot be treated. Hence, most of the diseases occur among the children. Many adults are also sick and cannot buy medicine. There are sick people in almost all the houses.**

Then the evangelical Bible study for young adults really zeroes in on the tough, hard-to-face question:

"How does your *snack life* compare to the foods Jesus ate?"

Should we call for the rocks and the mountains to fall on us as we examine our "snack life"?

Instead, I think of the conversation I had last month with my Asian friend, Dak. His hometown was bombed almost out of existence. There was no food. Starving people were everywhere. Dak and his family lived for weeks on grass. They would gather what grass they could find and boil it for grass soup. "The worst thing about starvation," Dak said, "is not the hunger itself. It is the subhuman, self-centeredness that you are reduced to. If I saw anything to eat, I would grab it—even if I had to knock down my starving little sister to get it."

Examine my "snack life"? Try to snack on the things Jesus munched on? You can examine your "snack life" if you wish, but I have to examine something a lot more basic than that.

Isn't there something far deeper than "Shall I trade in my Coke and Eskimo Pies for Granola and kadota figs in order to be more Christlike?"

My problem is that so much of my religious life lately could be filed under "trivial." I still haven't been able to adequately answer Stanley Mooneyham's embarrassing question, "What do you say to a hungry world?" I can't avoid that question even by sidestepping into a prayer closet. I know I'll be judged on how I treated people less fortunate than I. After all, I've read Matthew 25 more than a couple of times.

What are holiness churches doing about world hunger? A lot more than ever before! But some of us still have a lot of catching up to do. For example, trying to write this editorial sharply reminds me that it has been over a year since I gave an offering to the Nazarene Hunger and Disaster Fund.

But back to the all-important inquiry—was Jesus or was He not a yogurt eater?

I don't really know, but I promise you that if He was, He ate it plain, out of a gourd. I mean, who could even contemplate Jesus sitting at sunset on the shore of the Sea of Galilee slurping "pink strawberry" yogurt with a plastic spoon? 

*Alvaro Barriero, *Basic Ecclesial Communities* (Mayknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981).



AND NOW— HERE'S NINA

Martin Luther is not the only one who turned to God in a thunderstorm—so did Nina Beegle, the new assistant editor here at the *Preacher's Magazine*. Nina was an airline stewardess. Somewhere between Seattle and Denver her aircraft challenged a severe storm. It turned out to be a dumb challenge—the plane was losing every round. There in that airplane-turned-lightning rod, Nina prayed for salvation. "I was hanging over hell," she said, "and I knew I would drop right in if that plane crashed."

Nina kept the vows she made that night. After attending Cascade College and Willamette University, she married a minister, Rev. John Beegle. She now has 32 years in as a preacher's wife. Nina and John have five daughters and a son. Randall, their son, is associate pastor and minister of music at Westbrook Church of the Nazarene, Indianapolis.

When you rummage around in Nina's portfolio, you come up with some unique experiences. For years she has been a successful free-lance writer, selling many articles to dozens of Christian publications. She has worked in radio as well. She was the director of continuity and traffic (this has something to do with writing and the minute-by-minute daily log) for an Illinois radio station, WGSB. She has lots of editorial experience too. She served for two years as assistant editor of *Light and Life* magazine. Most recently she put in a five-and-one-half-year stint as assistant editor of *Edge* magazine and, at the same time, of *Leadership Resources*.

All these experiences meld into a delightful set of qualifications that make Nina Beegle a true asset to the readers of the *Preacher's Magazine*. 

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Christ the Lord

by Robert A. Raines

It is striking that in most of the Resurrection stories Jesus appears to His disciples incognito at first—the Stranger on the road to Emmaus . . . the Man Mary thought was the gardener . . . the One who appeared in the Upper Room . . . the Stranger on the beach.

We can't be certain as to just what occurred there on the beach or in the Upper Room or in the garden or on the Emmaus road or in the tomb; we don't know what *really* happened. Rather, we can more readily reflect on what we know *didn't* happen.

The resurrection of Jesus was not a physical resuscitation. There is certainly no indication that the disciples plotted the resuscitation of a "dead" Jesus. His risen body was somehow different from His former earthly body. Even though the scars of the Crucifixion could be seen, His close friends did not recognize Him at first. It's true that He ate with them and talked with them, but He also came and went in a strange fashion—through closed doors and solid walls. Before, His day-to-day bodily reactions had seemed just like theirs, but now there was a strange and frightening difference. The apostle Paul seemed to catch a hint of the meaning of this strange difference when he wrote that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:50, RSV).

The resurrection of Jesus was not a mental hallucination. While there is much that is missing from our understanding of the details of the death and burial of Jesus, we know that His family and His disciples were heartbroken and depressed, and that those who removed His broken body from the Cross were convinced of His death. We know, too, that after the climactic event of Easter morning their gloom was dispelled and they were changed people. No longer were they frightened and cowering—now there was a boldness and a confidence about them not unlike that of Jesus. Something dramatic happened that changed the lives of those disciples—the Resurrection was a *happening*, an *event*,

not a "bit of beef" as Scrooge defined Marley's ghost to be . . . more of gravy than the grave, not a bit of dream or fantasy or wish projection. Its reality is demonstrated in its results—no mental hallucination here.

The resurrection of Jesus was a personal encounter of the risen Jesus in which there was communication and then ultimate recognition. Perhaps the earliest documentation of the Resurrection has been given us by Paul: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day . . . that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive. . . . Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me" (1 Cor. 15:3-6, 8, RSV).

From this we see that Paul regarded his own encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road to be as valid as Christ's earlier appearances to the disciples . . . an appearance that, of course, was nonphysical.

When that Stranger on the beach during those early morning hours told the fishermen to throw the net on the other side of the boat, they followed His instruction. The results were unbelievable—the nets were loaded almost to the breaking point with wiggling and flopping fish. As the weary fishermen looked on in amazement, one of them said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

Easter Is Discernment

Easter is discernment of the risen Christ in the events of our time and in the relationships of our lives. When, like the disciples, the nets of our lives are empty and then suddenly begin to fill up with new meaning—it is the Lord! When we're preoccupied with failure or defeat, and it begins to dawn on us that nothing is final, that there's another chance, a door opening out of the wall—it is the Lord! Ernest Hemingway worded it well in an affirmation that works both ways: "Man can be defeated



H. Armstrong Roberts

but not destroyed. Man can be destroyed but not defeated."

When we receive a fresh insight, when for a moment we *know* we are forgiven, when a new idea bursts from nowhere into our consciousness, when our hearts turn over and the wheels of hope start spinning again—it is the Lord! Easter is discernment of the extraordinary in the ordinary—the apprehension, as Eliot wrote, of “the point of intersection of the timeless with time.”

A friend shared this thought with me during the Lenten season a few years ago: “To me, Lent is a reminder that the fullness of time precedes the pursuit of happiness. The recurring cycle of the Lenten drama is a reminder that we all get second chances in our lives—chances to catch an insight, to subdue a temperament,

to hear a friend’s voice, to march to a different drummer.” How true. But so often the distractions bleed off our sensitivity to the Easter season. We become preoccupied with other things—right and good things—our day-to-day routines, music, art, church work, club activities, our own good times . . . and we have failed once again to participate personally and intimately in the deep meaning of Easter.

Another friend rolled aside the curtains of her deepest feelings with this moving story of insight received through what I like to think comes from a unique and penetrating awareness of the fact of Easter. “Ten years ago I received a scrawled, almost illegible letter from an old lady known only to me as my California grandmother. The letter contained this poem:

*"Father Time is telling me every day
The home I live in is wearing away
The building is old and for the days that remain,
To seek to repair it would be quite in vain.
So I'm getting ready to move."*

My friend continued, "One day soon afterwards I discovered that my grandmother 'had moved' when I received all the letters and photos I had sent her over the years. They were carefully arranged in a red leather case with handwritten instructions on the outside to send the contents to me. That afternoon I sat down to go through the many pieces which were in the package: birthday greetings sketched in the erratic hand of a five-year-old; crayoned hearts for Valentine's Day; my first school picture; long letters of a 13-year-old which poured out feelings and problems too private for anyone closer to home.

"As I looked at my life through her eyes it was an eerie, solemn moment. Beyond the sadness of her death and the nostalgia of my own memories, I suddenly realized that in preparation for her leave-taking my grandmother had arranged to send her part of my life back to me; she was giving back to me all that she loved about me—only better because she was now part of it. As I sit now pondering these things, I realize anew how she had left me alone to give witness to what we had once shared together. I am a witness for her, for myself, for our friendship. And I know that in some inexplicable way, marked by the deepest sadness, the greatest joy, and a bundle of old letters, I have been made a new person through the gift I received from her."

Easter is the time to celebrate our discernments, to remember those times when we cried out of the deepest sadness or the greatest joy, "It is the Lord!"

Several years ago I attended a seminar on creativity with a group of friends. It was a fascinating time of exploring our own individual creativity, how it is stifled and released. In the worship service on the last day people shared the insights that had come to them during the weekend. One woman shared a simple but significant discovery. Though she didn't say so, I think she had been suffering from an overdose of the "feminist mystique"—that is, the feeling that every woman must have a "career" and spend at least five nights a week at meetings and be twice as smart as her husband. But as a result of our time together she said with great relief and gratitude, "In these days I've come to realize that my vocation now is to be a wife and mother." Then she hesitated, looked at her husband, and said, "No, John's wife."

It was a beautiful affirmation of her husband, their marriage, her own vocation. And it was a recognition of the fact that there is no art so demanding of creativity and imagination as the *art of loving* a child, a husband or wife, friend, colleague, parent. It seems to me that we talk a lot about brotherhood, as we must and should, but I also believe we should talk more about friendship, wifehood, and husbandhood.

Years ago I came home late for dinner one evening after being engaged all afternoon calling on members of my congregation. I was met at the door by my wife, hair standing on end, a screaming baby in one arm, and a

soiled diaper on the other. Her first words were, "Why don't you call on me sometime?" You could say it was a discernment situation for me. I don't recall saying, "It is the Lord," but at that moment I understood exactly how she must feel. Unfortunately, I never seem to learn, but need to be constantly reminded that I have neglected or have been insensitive to the people who are closest to me in my family and at work. It seems that we can be so involved earning money, getting ahead, doing our duty, keeping the house spotless, or saving the world while our own personal relationships disintegrate.

A friend of mine showed me a letter from his son, a college sophomore, which began, "Beloved Father." The letter was made up entirely of a marvelous, witty, and affectionate journey through his current thoughts, escapades, and hopes. As I read the letter, I reflected on how this father must have done a lot of right things to have a son who felt free to share his life in such a natural way. And then I thought of sons and daughters who seldom write their parents, and when they do, the letters are nothing more than perfunctory notes. What a tragedy it is for whatever reason, when sons and daughters are unable to share their lives with their parents!

What a liberating experience it is at the Easter season to be able to celebrate our discernments as we remember those times when we have cried out of the deepest sadness or the greatest joy, "It is the Lord!"

Easter Is Commitment

Easter is commitment to feed the Lord's sheep—the Lord's people—all of His sheep, the black sheep, the sheep in wolves' clothing . . . every last, lost, and least one of His human flock. Discernment of the risen Lord is authenticated by our commitment to feed His hungry sheep—to serve and relate to His people. All around us are lonely and alienated people who are looking at us and asking, "Do you love me?" even as Jesus did three times of Peter. Then you will recall that Peter answered, "Lord, You know I love You," and Jesus responded, "Feed My sheep."

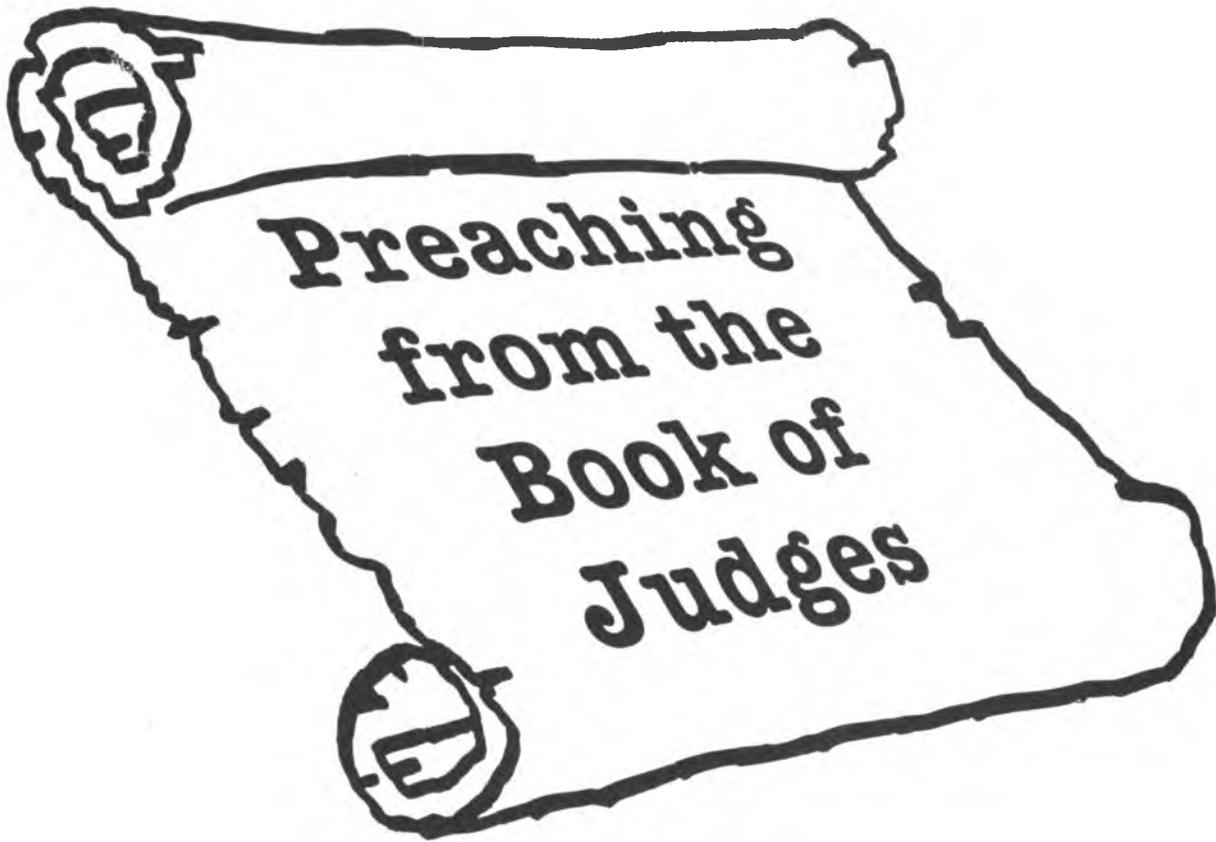
In his play *A Delicate Balance*, Edward Albee probes the rights and responsibilities of friendship. On a Friday night—Good Friday—Harry and Edna go to the home of their dearest friends, Tobias and Agnes. Harry and Edna have had a strange and terrifying experience of emptiness, of dreadful lostness such as comes to children in the dark. In desperation they have come to the home of their friends . . . to stay . . . to move in . . . to live with them.

After Agnes has taken them to the guest room, she tells Tobias that their friends are ill—victims of a deadly plague—that neither of them is immune, and that it is quite possible the delicate balance of their family life may be destroyed.

Tobias replies, "What am I supposed to do? Say: 'Look, you can't stay here, you've got trouble. You are friends, but you've got to be clean to stay here.' Well, I can't do that. No, Agnes, if that's all Harry and Edna mean to us, then what about us? When we touch; when we promise; when we say yes, but only *if* . . . if there's any condition, Agnes, then it's all been empty."

Saturday Harry and Edna stay in their room. Throughout the day and late into the night Tobias agonizes over

(Continued on page 61)



by Joseph Coleson

*Professor of Old Testament
Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Ore.*

The Book of Judges has always fascinated readers partly because of its portrayal of human heroism and colossal human failure. But more than that, its interest and importance stem from the fact that this is a record of God's direct interventions in a crucial period of Israel's history and thus of salvation history.

Preliminary Hermeneutical Matters

The normal hermeneutical considerations which are essential to the exposition of any biblical text include location of the text in its canonical, historical, geographical, literary, and theological contexts. As the standard tools give ample guidance, we will discuss here only two important points.

Canonical Context

The Book of Judges forms a natural sequel to the Book of Joshua. It describes the process of settlement made possible by the military successes of Joshua. Both books probably received their final form in the reign of David or Solomon, Israel's Golden Age, when

interest in her history was strong. This means that their only canonical antecedents were the five books of the Pentateuch, the Torah. We must not, therefore, attempt to make the Book of Judges say what it does not intend to say. We may not import into any text a theological stance or understanding that we have derived from a later text. We may show how God has later revealed more on a given subject, but we must remember two things if we do. First, we must not try to make the earlier text possess the later theological content if in fact it does not. Second, an explanation of the later theological understanding is not an exposition of the earlier text.

Another important canonical consideration arises from the arrangement of these books in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible has three major divisions: Torah, Prophets, and (Sacred) Writings. Within the division of the Prophets, there are two subdivisions, the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets consist of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The Latter Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve (Minor Prophets).

The significance of this arrangement lies in the inclusion within the category of prophetic writing, four (or six) books that we have normally classified as history. Now, of course, it is history; this has been called the world's first history writing. But it is prophecy also, in ancient Israel's understanding of the term, and should be in ours as well. Prophecy is not just foretelling the future. It is declaring the whole counsel of God for the here and now; this the Former Prophets do along with the Latter Prophets.

Literary Form

The second preliminary consideration arises from the literary form in which the greater part of the Book of Judges is cast. Most of the book is written in episodic narrative prose. It consists of selected episodes in the careers of some of the judges. There is a minimum of transitional material and theological editorializing on the part of the author. For the most part, he allows the stories themselves to make the points that he considers important.

This means, then, that to preach from the Book of Judges is to preach incidents or episodes in the lives of individual judges. Many of us have enjoyed preaching biblical stories; we have not always done it well. How is it to be done?

One ought not to answer that question by preaching typologically. An exegesis based in typology is too shallow, and it is subject to virtually no control. Having made the point, for example, that Gideon's deliverance of Israel from Midianite domination is a type of Christ's deliverance of mankind from sin's domination, one has exhausted the legitimate typological possibilities of the Gideon story. Any further remarks on the efficacy of Christ's work must be based on other texts. But a sermon whose points are based on other texts is not a sermon from Judges about Gideon.

If one does try to extend the analogy into allegory, he/she soon finds the train running too fast to jump off. If one finds some parallel between the swords, lamps, and pitchers of Gideon's band and aspects of Christ's work, where is the parallel in Christ with Gideon's fleece put out in doubt, or with his many wives and concubines? If one has found the former, who is to say that he/she ought not to look for the latter? For that matter, would not Hammurabi's erecting of a defensive wall outside Babylon against the nomads of his day be an equally valid type of Christ's work, on this procedure? Many of the elements in Gideon's story are present in Hammurabi's as well. Ridiculous, you say? No more than some of the examples we read from certain church fathers of the Alexandrian school. The impossibility of control is the key here.

Another pitfall is shallow moralizing. It is true that the Old Testament saints are examples for us. The New Testament itself plainly says so (Heb. 11:39—12:1). Yet if all we can say is, "Gideon teaches us not to try to fleece God," or "Don't be like Samson, a slave to your physical appetites," we have not expounded the text. We have wasted our people's time.

How, then, ought we to preach these story texts? First, we must be careful to discover and disclose the point that the author of the passage is conveying. Of

course, in the stories of Judges that point is hardly ever explicit. The stories are themselves illustrations of the point, which is the theme of the book, namely, Israel's continual apostasy and God's dealing with her concerning it. Of course, we need to make application, and the application is obvious. We, too, must be vigilant against apostasy.

But is not this, too, shallow moralizing? Yes, of course, by itself it is. But we must go further, much further. We must so immerse ourselves in the dilemmas and challenges these heroes of the faith confronted that we can feel with them their weaknesses and their strengths, identify with their emotions and their thinking on the issues they faced. Then we will begin to see that they were not so different from us after all. While the historical, cultural, and geographical conditions were vastly different, most of the issues they faced can be stated in exactly the same words we use to state the issues that confront us.

Homiletical Themes

What are some of the issues with which the Book of Judges deals? While a significant number of issues are raised directly or indirectly, a few can be considered major themes of the book.

Fidelity and Infidelity to the Covenant

The Book of Joshua describes the two major military campaigns under Joshua, which broke the back of Canaanite resistance to the incoming Israelite tribes and allowed them to begin the settlement process. The Book of Judges describes some of the settlement process. From a historical perspective, this was a slow gaining of strength by Israel, who settled at first in the uninhabited or sparsely inhabited areas of the central mountain range of Galilee, Samaria, and Judah, and in the Negev. But the Book of Judges explains it primarily from the theological perspective of the covenant God had made with Israel.

The covenant God made with Israel at Sinai is familiar as a dominating motif of the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 28 is the most explicit expression of the blessings for observing the covenant and curses for violating it. In the Book of Judges, chapters 2 and 10 are explicit editorial discourse setting forth the author's thesis that the oppressions Israel endured were the fulfillment of these curses because she had violated the covenant. The clearest statement occurs in 2:20-22; God begins His indictment, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant . . ." (NASB). Almost all the rest of the book is illustration after illustration of this charge. The various oppressions by foreign powers are thus explained as God's just punishment of Israel for her transgression of the sacred compact.

God's Character

We can learn much about the nature of God from the Book of Judges. It is one of the strengths of the story form that it can convey character much more forcefully than can mere description. Thus, God's jealous anger over His people's infidelity burns through the page when we read the dialog between God and Israel in chapter 10. God's reply to their distress culminates in verse 14,

"Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress" (NASB). But the white heat of His anger serves also to accentuate the depth of His mercy, for we are told only two verses later that when Israel began to serve Him again, "He could bear the misery of Israel no longer" (NASB). Merely to structure a descriptive sentence ("God was very angry with Israel, but when they repented, He had mercy upon them"), though it relays the same information much more briefly, is to demonstrate its inferiority as a means of giving us insight into God's character.

The stories of Judges also demonstrate for us that God is the God of history. Sometimes He initiated the action directly, as when He appeared to Gideon and instructed him on nearly every phase of the campaign against Midian. Sometimes He used an intermediary, as Deborah the prophetess. Sometimes He worked through people and events in a less direct manner, as in the campaign against Moab initiated by Ehud's assassination of Eglon. But in every situation God was aware beforehand of all the details. He was directing and intervening, and He was overruling the intentions both of Israel and her oppressors.

God's Larger Historical Purpose

The two preceding considerations help us to notice that the Book of Judges has its contribution to make to the assessment that God has a larger purpose in history. Historical recollection is an important element of the Song of Deborah celebrating Sisera's defeat (Jud. 5:4-5), and in Gideon's discussion with God in which he was commissioned to lead Israel against Midian.

Most people are aware of the author's assessment of the last two episodes that he related. The theft of Micah's idol and the rape/murder of the Levite's concubine are offered as quintessential illustrations of the anarchy of the period. But it is the author's understanding of why such crimes were even possible that is of interest here. Looking back on the period from his own perspective as a citizen of the United Monarchy, he understood that it was because there was no king in Israel (Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Thus, there was a recognition that God's purposes extended into the future as well as continuing from the past. The past and the future aspects of God's saving activity justify the very recording of the history that is the Book of Judges. The covenant with Israel at Sinai, whose breach is so vividly depicted in Judges, is just a part of a larger Promise-Fulfillment theme that begins in Genesis 3 and continues through to Revelation 22.

Another aspect of God's larger purposes in history is His use of the surrounding nations. He explicitly stated that His purpose in leaving some of the Canaanites was to test Israel (Judg. 2:21-23). Then in each case of foreign oppression, the author took care to point out that it was God's doing. Thus by statement of intention and by illustration the author demonstrated that God's sovereignty is not limited to Israel but extends over all nations.

Faith and Uncertainty

Deborah, Gideon and his band of 300, and Samson have been cited as examples of faith since Hebrews 11

was penned. They (and others of the judges) have been admired for the courage to act on God's assurances in the face of overwhelming odds. They define for us, and again in a way no mere descriptive sentence can, what faith is.

However, the other side of the coin is also instructive. Many of these people who acted in faith also acted in doubt and uncertainty. Barak would not go without Deborah, yet in the end he went. Gideon would not go without thrice testing God, yet in the end he went. Jephthah would not go without making a rash and totally unnecessary vow, yet in the end he went. God prefers unadulterated faith, and their doubtings cost each of these something. But if one has no strong faith, God accepts the weak faith of which he/she is possessed and honors it. Each of these was also used of God to effect a mighty deliverance of His people.

God's Use of Human Leadership

God does intervene directly in the affairs of men. Nevertheless, even though He may be acting at the same time independently of them, God most often raises up human leaders through which to accomplish His purposes.

The leaders depicted in the Book of Judges were from diverse backgrounds, socially as well as geographically. Shamgar's surname suggests that he may have had a non-Israelite heritage, at least through part of his ancestry. Gideon was the son of a prosperous landowner. Jephthah had been disinherited as illegitimate by his brothers, and was captain of a band of brigands. The two things they all had in common was their faith in God, however imperfect, and their ability to lead people however tentatively exercised. Both these characteristics sprang from their conviction that God had singled them out for the performance of a definite task. God called, encouraged, and enabled these leaders, in spite of their own deficiencies and the magnitude of the tasks He set them.

Though other themes could be adduced, these are perhaps the major ones. They are also illustrative of the effort that must be made in the study before a text from Judges can be taken into the pulpit. We dare not offer warmed-over moral platitudes, with pale one-dimensional characterizations of 3,000-year-old men as "examples" of what or what not to do.

But these texts can be preached, if we will take the trouble. Their issues are our issues, if we can only help our people to recognize them. If we can, these texts will speak a powerful word to our condition. John Bright writes of the Old Testament word addressing itself to the "B.C.-ness" which is still very much a part of each of us.¹ To preach God's Word, and not our own, from the Book of Judges costs in time and in labor. The rewards, for both preacher and congregation, more than justify the cost.

Note

1. John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 201. In addition to Bright, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981); and Kaiser, *The Old Testament in Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), are also helpful.

BIOGRAPHICAL EXPOSITION:

How to Preach on Bible Characters

by Oscar F. Reed

*Professor of Preaching
Nazarene Theological Seminary*

Ready to try a different way of communicating in preaching? This is not the only way, but it is one suggestion that might improve the sterile patterns of a lot of preaching.

We must admit that a great many of us are Greek rather than Hebrew in our understanding of sermon preparation. As Eugene L. Lowry in *The Homiletical Plot* observes, we need to transform our “intuitions into articulate form.” In order to accomplish this task, we must lay aside—“at least temporarily—many of the cherished norms about sermon anatomy.”¹ For example, we assume we must state our text, divide the sermon into explicit burdens, and be sure that it is logical, progressive, and coherent. We have been taught the science of preaching as though we were a bunch of “architectural engineers.”

Have you ever thought that preaching, after all, is *telling a story*—the most wonderful story ever told? If the Bible is the telling of a story, rich in narrative, metaphor, simile, poetry, and biography, should not our preaching reflect the literature we preach from? And in particular, does narrative say anything to us about a way of preaching that will speak to those who have heard the gospel every Sunday for years?

Now understand, I am not speaking about just telling a story! Nothing can be more discouraging and defeating than for contemporary hearers to listen to the bare recounting of an Old Testament or Gospel narrative. This kind of preaching merely strings events together. It does not attempt to come to terms with truth and is a poor excuse for expository preaching.² As Fred W. Craddock says,

Any person who can bring lively new ways of thinking and speaking to a church grown cynical about its own lectern and pulpit; any person who can move in on our vague and sterile concepts with a language of imaginative elasticity; any person who can offer an alternative to the predictably dull patterns of studying, speaking, and listening beyond which few of us have ventured; any person who has the grace to restrain the display of knowledge in or-

*der to evoke and increase my own; any person who . . . awakens in me the sense of having already known; any person who can bring to our heavy business the delights of wit and humor and the pathos of personal investment; that person is always welcome in my cottage, even if his presence is a judgment on my own dull efforts.*³

A preacher can do that if he seeks to discover the enduring spiritual, doctrinal, ethical, and moral truths in a way that the hearer will sit contextually in the scriptural setting as though he were there. That sense of immediacy in preaching takes planning, study, skill, imagination, and prayer. *But you can do it!*

The Abuse of Narrative

Examples of confused and subjective exegesis are only too common. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., tells of a sermon from 2 Kings 4:1-7—a story of a widow who was not able to meet her bills. The creditor threatened to take her two sons as slaves. Elisha instructed her to borrow vessels from her neighbors and pour from the one jar of oil until all were filled. The text records the miracle of the Lord’s providential hand through the instrumentality of the prophet.

Now, the preacher stressed the point that we being empty of self are in a condition to be filled with the Holy Spirit—since oil *is always* a symbol of the Holy Spirit.⁴

After the service, one parishioner was heard to say, “Humph, the speaker never finished his text, for the woman was told in verse 7 to go out and sell the Holy Spirit and pay her debts.” Such a subjective use of narrative is spiritualizing a passage beyond the parameters of the text.

The Early Church was famous for its spiritual allegorizing, but unfortunately some were more concerned about the “blessing” than they were about the exegesis; and I’m afraid that some modern evangelical preachers fall into the same trap.

No area is more vulnerable than the Old Testament. One of my pastor-students admitted that in six years

How can you sell the Holy Spirit and pay your rent?

of preaching he never preached from the Old Testament. This, in spite of the fact that 77 percent of God's total revelation is found in the Old Testament—an area that has some of the richest sources for preaching that a pastor will find anywhere. As Walter Kaiser concluded:

All sorts of "shortcuts" and "innovative ideas" are being introduced as substitutes for the proclamation of the Word of God. These substitutes include . . . transactional therapy, fellowship groups, what do you think (pooled ignorance), Bible study groups, topical seminars, and just plain Christian entertainment in music, films, and variety programs. . . . The formula of the Reformation epitomized in 1 Thess. 1:5 still holds: The Word of God plus the convicting work of the Holy Spirit equals dynamite, the power of God and full conviction of men and women.⁵

My point is that the exegete must first come to terms with the biblical author. Granted, he brings *himself* to the task as well as his *ecclesiastical context* and the interest of his *hearers*; but in the end he must discover the author's intentions, words, and understanding in his culture before he can move from the "then" to the "now" in the use of biblical narrative.

When one begins to tell a biblical story, then, he has a responsibility to do his homework. Narrative is always given in the Bible for a purpose within the context of the passage or book of which it is a part. The preacher must use the instruments of hermeneutics to understand a passage "then" and to draw viable material for "now." He will recognize the historical tradition from which it arises, the form of literature it represents, the author's arrangement and selection of materials, the theological affirmations drawn from the narrative, and the possible applications he can legitimately draw from the story.

Such a procedure does not exclude imagination, humor, illustration, and application which can bring the biblical story to its contemporary setting. But neither does the use of such ever divorce the message from its authentic biblical understanding.

The Story of Ruth

Supposing we wish to preach from the short story of Ruth and Naomi. Its setting is in Bethlehem—the story is about the fortunes of two poor widows. It is one of the masterpieces of storytelling, revealing how the daily events of birth, marriage, and death can become the material from which great literature is formulated. The writer is ambiguous, for he tells the story without interpretation. The Daniel and Joseph sagas made their point, but the story of Ruth is told and left. There are several theories why, but the Bible is not explicit concerning these.

The story is set in the time of the Judges and con-

cludes with the family tree of David. Since the observation at the close of the story makes Ruth an ancestress of David, there is a certain connection with 1 Samuel, but that is an extra.

Since the author has not spelled out what his point is, the work remains open to us so that we might discover what the story is saying. The ambiguity presents an opportunity to see what themes are running through the story.

R. M. Hals, studying the references made to God in Ruth, suggests that the story is told to depict the providences of God in the smallest matters of life, but that His activity is usually hidden from human sight. Others have suggested that the narrative intends to show that in spite of obstacles, those whom God protects fare well.

The most popular interpretation of Ruth today is to see the book encouraging tolerance and acceptance of aliens. A pamphlet published in the 1930s called it "An Idyll of International Friendship." They assume, then, a postexilic date which argues against the exclusiveness of Ezra and Nehemiah who fought against mixed marriages. "They say this author wants to remind the strict Jews of his community that even David himself had a Moabite ancestress and by making her the heroine of his story to make an appeal for the acceptance of outsiders into the Jewish community."⁶

Certainly, there is a surprising tolerance of foreigners in the story, and perhaps this could be a motif for the story. However, many scholars believe Ruth was written earlier than the postexilic period—and if so, one must accommodate his understanding to the period from which the story occurs. Nevertheless, the heroine of the story is a Moabite and smashes any chauvinistic attitudes grounded in national or racial pride, and there are times when a congregation needs to hear that truth.

Another major theme is *hesed*, one of the key words of the Old Testament, which we render, with a good deal of liberty, as "loving-kindness," "steadfast love," "loyalty," and "covenant love." It is what Ruth and Orpah showed to Naomi and their dead husbands (1:8). It is *hesed* that Boaz showed to Ruth in favoring her among the gleaners (2:20). It is what Ruth showed to Boaz, choosing an older rather than a younger man (3:10). The story may be read as a message about the triumphs of *hesed* over all obstacles, and this may be a good theme to enjoin to the narrative.

A Sermon on Ruth

While one must use his imagination in the telling of the idyllic story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, there are certain insights that will help. For one thing, what Paul says about *agapē* in 1 Corinthians 13 is much of what the Old Testament means by *hesed*, particularly 1 Cor. 13:7, "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes

all things, endures all things" (RSV). This theme can run through the story.

Again, the preacher may want to become one of the characters. He could become Ruth, Naomi, or Boaz telling the story as they saw it.

Another way is to tell the story as a conversation, taking advantage of your understanding of the customs, the laws, and, most of all, the pathos that enters the narrative.

Certainly, the preacher will ignore those items of the story which the author does not tell us, such as what really happened that night at the threshing floor.

In conclusion, the preacher can show Ruth as one of the great examples of love that Paul later exhibits in 1 Corinthians 13. It is a great story of self-giving love which comes from God and which is known in Jesus. It is a love of "other regard" which we see in parents, good friends, and neighbors. "It is the kind of love which keeps the world going."⁷

The story, in analogy, can be used as a call to holiness, or certainly the spirit of holiness.

The narrative is one of the best and most subtle ways of preaching doctrine. Structured preaching on doctrine is not as well received today as telling "the story" in a new and exciting manner. Narrative is one way of doing it.

Eugene Lowry has suggested that the preacher follow five stages in developing a sermon sequence. His discussion is well worth reading and following in certain kinds of preaching—certainly narrative. He proposes five basic sequential stages in the sermonic process.

1. *Upsetting the equilibrium* (oops!). Interest is first established by a "psychological stage of ambiguity"—in which some kind of conflict or tension is introduced.

2. *Analyzing the discrepancy* (ugh!). We are asking *Why?* Diagnosis is central to the homiletical task.

3. *Disclosing the clue to resolution* (aha!). The "overarching purpose" of analysis (step 2) is to arrive at the explanatory *Why*. Where is the explanation?

4. *Experiencing the gospel* (whee!). Now that the clue to resolution has been disclosed, the context is ripe for experiencing the gospel (and not before!).

5. *Anticipating the consequences* (yeah!). What, then, am I to do about this?

Such an approach to preaching "the story" takes the sermon away from pure structuring and places the emphasis on development. Why don't you try it sometime? You may find your people more interested and challenged by this kind of preaching than by your usual "three points and a poem."



Notes

1. Eugene L. Lowry (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), p. 5.
2. Walter J. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 197.
3. Fred W. Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), p. 6.
4. Kaiser, pp. 198 f.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 202. Walter Kaiser has a very fine chapter on "The Use of Narrative in Expository Preaching."
6. This excursus of Ruth is taken in part from Donald E. Gowan, *Reclaiming the Old Testament for the Christian Pulpit* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), pp. 68 ff.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
8. Lowry, pp. 25 ff.

DEBORAH AND BARAK: FOR TIMES LIKE THESE

by C. E. Baldwin

*Professor of Bible, Nazarene Bible College
Colorado Springs*

The *Distressing Days of the Judges*, the title of Leon Wood's book, is suggestive of a rich field of biblical preaching. In preaching one's way through Judges, the first major step of exegesis is to:

Select a Meaningful Passage of Scripture

The entire parade of the Judges, of course, comes within the framework of the Historical Books, or better, the Deuteronomistic History of the Old Testament. In series preaching on the characters and events in Judges, the next consecutive cycle and person is the obvious choice. This study involves the Deborah and Barak material in Judg. 4:1-24 and The Song of Deborah, 5:1-31. The limits of this passage are clearly set and obvious in a change of time, oppressors, and persons. At the opening, chapter 3 closes with verse 31, "And he too delivered Israel" (RSV). Verse 1 of chapter 4 is clearly transitional in the words, "And the people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died" (RSV). At the close, the entire movement ends in 5:31, "And the land had rest for forty years" (RSV).

With the broader limits of a working passage chosen, the next step is:

Study the Passage

These two chapters should be read in their total context from modern translations as many times as possible. From a reading in the NKJB, NASB, NIV, RSV, and JB, there is opportunity to "immerse and soak" in the material. After such meditation one is able to "listen" to the text.

This reading involves the context, which requires going back to the beginning of the book. After a general introduction in 1:1—2:5 there is, in 2:6—3:6, a broad overview introduction and reflection on the age of the

Preparing to Preach from Judges 4:1—5:31

judges. The general theme of this area is noted in the cycles or steps indicating the relationship between God and the people. These important steps are:

1. As long as Joshua and his generation lived, the people remained faithful to God (2:7).
2. The people forgot God and displeased Him by serving other gods (2:10-12).
3. God abandoned the people to surrounding enemies (2:14-15).
4. God provided deliverers who are termed “judges” who, by their spiritual character and zealous leadership, brought the people back to the worship of the true God (2:16-18).
5. When they had no judges to lead them, they went into backsliding and once again followed other gods (2:19).¹

The account of Deborah and Barak is usually given as the fourth in this series, but the study of the context reveals a problem. Shamgar is listed in 3:31, but the opening of the Deborah and Barak section connects with Ehud in 3:30, after an 80-year period of rest. It is quite possible that Shamgar, as a minor judge, is to be placed elsewhere in the text. This, therefore, would make the Deborah passage reflect the third major oppression against Israel.²

This reading process now focuses upon the actual working section. Careful comparison, without working through the actual Hebrew text, leads to the conclusion that the *Jerusalem Bible* probably contains the best translation of this material. It is used here for all further exegesis.

During the reading the passage may be surveyed and outlined to gain a working knowledge of its content and basic meaning. A detailed content outline of the entire unit may also be profitable. This enables one to see the broader outlines of structure and to better perceive the interrelationships and movement of the main units.

After reading, establishing a working passage, and outlining, the next step is to deal with:

Literary and Critical Concerns

This passage (chapters 4—5) is composed of two separate accounts of the *same event*—the defeat of the Canaanite powers under the leadership of Deborah and Barak. Chapter 4 is narrative while chapter 5 is poetry.³ Within the narrative or prose section, there are literary features involving speaking, commands, declarations, prophecy, and objections. Chapter 5 is poetry. Matthew Henry observes that it is “the only preserved poem of that age of the Judges . . . designed as a psalm of praise.”⁴ Concerning the song, *Broadman Bible Commentary* notes:

The precise literary form of the song is difficult to determine. It has been considered a triumphal ode, a thanksgiving psalm, a propaganda song, a liturgical composition for worship celebration and reenactment. On the whole, it seems best to regard it as a

religious victory song closely paralleling a thanksgiving psalm.⁵

In analyzing and comparing the text, some obvious differences are noted; some textual critical problems are present, though no serious ones. Due to the twofold thrust of the unit, one must make working comparisons between translation in chapter 4, as well as differences between the prose account of chapter 4 and the poetic account of chapter 5. There are a number of minor textual matters that were compared with variants such as 4:4, “the wife of Lappidoth” (JB). This can be translated from the Hebrew “a woman of Lappidoth.” The ending of the word is not commonly found in the name of a man. Therefore some understand it as the name of a place.⁶ Other textual matters involve uncertainty as to the exact meaning of the Hebrew word. Probably the most serious textual difference is in 4:8, where the JB adds the words “for I do not know how to choose the day when the angel of Yahweh will grant me success.” This comes from the Septuagint (LXX). This addition suggests that Barak was certain of a divine call but did not know the exact time to attack. He desired Deborah’s presence to inform him when to strike (cf. 4:14).⁷

A more interesting critical concern is the comparison of the poetic song of Deborah (chapter 5) with the prose account (chapter 4). The song follows the general pattern of the narrative, but there are differences. The main differences are in omission of names such as Jabin and Tabor; the addition of names of other tribes of Israel; and the difference in the way Sisera died. Since this song is older than the narrative, some allowance must be made for obvious expansions or omissions. The differences do not make any significant change in the overall meaning of the passage.⁸

The Function of the Passage

The complete unit of chapters 4 and 5 functions as a link or step in the chronological progression of the history of the judges. Probably the greater function is the presentation of another of the “mighty acts of God” to highlight His power and to ascribe glory and honor to Him.

The Theological Affirmations

The various paragraph units (pericopae) and single texts of this section contains principles that give authority to proclaim divine truth.

1. God will not tolerate sin! When a people go into sin, God disciplines with the judgment of oppression (4:1-3).
2. God will have mercy! God honors a proper repentance for sin and a cry for mercy. He raises up people and uses them to bring deliverance (4:3a, 4-16, 23-24).
3. In His cause against evil God uses those individuals who possess and manifest proper character, obedience, faith, and courage (4:4-16).

4. It is futile to fight against God and righteousness. God uses various and strange methods to bring about His holy purposes. The common tent peg and hammer in the hand of the humble woman Jael, to the forces of nature in stars and the flooding river Kishon—all conspire against sin and wrong (4:17-22; 5:20-21).
5. Against seemingly impossible odds, and with meager resources, God's people prevail through His power to bring greater glory to God.

Preaching the Passage

In the broader scope of Judges 4—5 there are, of course, many preaching ideas, depending upon emphasis and design. An excellent series of messages could be developed from the inherent theological principles. When one spans the hermeneutical arch and brings the “always” of the passage into present-day relevant application of the means, there are rich and satisfying possibilities.

The chapters probably lend themselves best to character sermons. Utilizing the broader principles of the paragraph units or texts, individual sermons could be preached on Deborah, Barak, and Jael. Also, a powerful message could be preached on God fighting against wickedness and triumphing over evil, focusing on the defeat and death of Sisera. He was, as T. Crichton Mitchell aptly suggests, “The Man Who Stumbled over the Stars.”

As a brief example, note one way a sermon could be developed on Deborah.

IN TIMES LIKE THESE

JUDGES 4:4-16

Introduction:

A song of some years ago had the words: “In times like these, you need a Savior.”

In the “distressing days of the judges” the people could well have sung “In times like these, we need a person . . . a person used of God to lead us!” Those were critical times in Israel. (Develop here a brief account of the historicosocial setting, sin of the people, Canaanite oppression, etc.).

In these times God raised up leaders—one, a woman—and, mainly through her, brought victory and deliverance to an oppressed people.

Our modern times are also “distressing”—in fact, awesome and frightening. There are today forces of evil oppression against God and righteousness. We, too, stand in need of a person or persons under God to stem the tide of sin and wickedness.

Proposition:

In times of great spiritual stress and need, God will use individuals for His cause if He can find one of proper character. The qualities of Deborah are suggestive for holy people in God's cause today.

In times like these . . .

I. There Is Need for Deep Spiritual Commitment (4:4)

Deborah was a “judge” and “prophetess.” These words are suggestive of her character and devotion. She lived close to God, was inspired by God, and heard

God's words. She was not merely a civil judge, she was God's servant. Matthew Henry suggests that Deborah “judged” in the areas of things pertaining to God and His cause. Is it not possible that her spiritual influence caused the people to once again grow hungry for God?⁹

It is only people of deep, passionate prayer, keen spiritual sensitivity, and full commitment to the divine truth of God who can be a force against today's wickedness. In times like these . . .

II. There Is a Need for Dedicated, Spiritual Compassion (4:5)

As a judge, hearing the deep needs of the people, the text implies that Deborah evidenced compassion. With her spiritual sensitivity and insight she had a deep sense of true justice. She saw the depth of reality and was obviously crushed to tears and then outraged by Israel's subjection to and oppression by the Canaanites. She became one of, and felt *with*, the people. Deborah saw deliverance as imperative!¹⁰

Fully recognizing the problem of truly identifying with people in spiritual need is the prime requisite of one who would do something for God in these times.

In times like these . . .

III. There Is Need for Desperate Spiritual Courage (4:6-16)

(Develop the details of this section to show Deborah's holy, determined faith and abandonment in courage.)

Note how the structure of the passage displays her courage and willpower. The verses are like heavy hammer blows:

4:6a “She sent for Barak.”

6b “This is the order of Yahweh, the God of Israel.”

4:7 “I will entice Sisera . . . I will put him into your power.”

4:9a “I will go with you.”

4:14 “Up, for today is the day . . . Yahweh marches at your head.”

(JB)

Conclusion:

Through Deborah's commitment, compassion, and courage, God's power could be made manifest. Through her, spiritual forces were unleashed that brought defeat to God's enemies.

There is a dire need today for persons who will “dare to be a Deborah!” Who will dare to be used of God “in times like these”? 

Notes

1. From the *Jerusalem Bible* (JB), Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., p. 309.

2. For a discussion of this problem see Leon Wood, *Distressing Days of the Judges* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), pp. 8, 175-81.

3. George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 2:711.

4. Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), 2:144.

5. Clifton Allen, ed., *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970), 2:408.

6. Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, p. 139.

7. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), 2:117.

8. *The Interpreter's Bible*, 2:717.

9. Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, p. 139.

10. *The Interpreter's Bible*, p. 714.

GIDEON

Commissioned by God

by Albert J. Lown

Evangelist, Keighly, England

The faith of Gideon offers comfort and challenge to three classes of Christians. First, those who shrink from the task of witnessing for God in an unsympathetic, perhaps critical home. Second, to those who sincerely, but mistakenly, exaggerate actual or imagined inferiority when God's call to service and leadership has been clearly heard. Their own judgment of being the "least" is entirely at variance with the divine command, "Go in this thy might" (Judg. 6:14). Faith alone can bridge the gulf between "least" and "mighty." And third, to those, in a special sense, who are tempted to discouragement, even the relinquishing of responsibility due to the superficial devotion evidenced by others more gifted and fitted for high office.

Gideon had to overcome these three disheartening experiences, almost totally devoid of human encouragement. Alone in his family, and, apart from a remnant, alone in battle, like David he encouraged himself in the Lord. He is an example of those who wax valiant in fight and develop courage in the midst of conflict, displaying gifts hidden from themselves, their families, and their friends, when first called by God. They accomplish great things for God and His people, yet do not think of themselves as great in any way.

The inspiration of the life and exploits of this selfless leader, soldier, and judge was . . .

The Clear Call of God

The national background to that call is outlined in the sorrowful, heartbreaking picture drawn in the opening verses of Judges, chapter 6. A burnt child normally dreads the fire that brought pain and disfigurement; but Israel, after 40 years of rest and prosperity through the victories of Barak and Deborah, again "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (6:1), and obeyed not His voice, bringing upon themselves slavery and misery. Failing to honor God with the wealth He had given, Israel found that sin and poverty replaced that affluence. Oppressed, they sought refuge from the marauding Midianites in dens and caves of the earth. Their oppressors cleverly al-

lowed them to sow and tend their fields, and then swooped down upon farm and field to confiscate the harvest. They were driven to thresh in secret—as Gideon was doing—possessing neither spirit nor will to resist their foes and fate.

When they did cry to the Lord in their distress, God sent a prophet to bring them to repentance, before sending an angel to prepare a deliverer. In faithless, dark days, God's call came to a thinker and worker: a farmer's son who was desperately seeking to save a remnant of harvest for his family, as his faith also struggled for survival. The threshed quantity was small and the risk great; yet, resolved to do what he could while he could, Gideon threshed under near-impossible conditions.

The call of God is always of grace and foreknowledge, but it is never given to slackers and shirkers, to any who give less to their daily task than they profess to give to God. The God who knows the heart also knows the hands. The qualities Gideon revealed in a dangerous, distasteful task were those God would need and use in a wider sphere of greater challenge.

Gideon's mind was as busy with questioning as his hands were with threshing. He reasoned, If God is with His people, why is there national defeat and disgrace? Why the vast difference between the glorious past history of Israel (related to him by his backslidden father) and the present ignominy of bondage? His thinking was sincere, agonizing, but mistaken in throwing the blame for present disasters upon God. If God would work His miracles as in former days, the desperate position would speedily change. If God would raise up His own superman, graced with irresistible charisma, there would be light in the darkness of despair.

Thus he mused; not realizing that God was seeking, waiting for a willing, yielded channel. In compassion . . .

The Lord Looked upon Him

In the lonely, thinking worker, God discerned a potential deliverer for His cowed people. Whereas Gideon

(Continued on page 62)



by T. Crichton Mitchell
Professor of Church History and Preaching
Nazarene Bible College, Colorado Springs

ABIMELECH— THE BRAMBLE KING

Upstart, outsider, renegade, terrorist, dictator, opportunist, assassin, or what?

About 160 years had passed since the death of Joshua. Because of Israel's sin and recalcitrance God's theocracy was not working—or rather, it had not been sincerely tried. And now arises Abimelech, the son of Gideon—who is also Jerubbaal.

Probably he should not be numbered with the judges of Israel. He is an interloper: his reign, if such we may call it, was a mere marginal incident in Israel's history, and his "kingdom" too was marginal, a little kingdom that died with him; a kingdom whose infant baptismal font was an altar stone drenched with the blood of 70 of his brothers.

Abimelech in one way symbolizes

the enemy within Israel, the mixed multitude with the heathen worship, but what relevance could such a story possibly have for days like ours? Is it just another terrorist tale from the Middle East? Let us see.

I. Our Approach to the Scripture Passage

The passage selected for us is Judges, chapter 9. The theme of the passage is the story of the rise and fall of one of the sons of Gideon, also called Jerubbaal (8:34-35).

Muldor and Ridall, in the *Beacon Bible Commentary*, divide the record into three parts, which seems to make the handling of it more useful than the 10 sections presented by Candall in the *Tyndale Commentary*, or the 8 of the *Broadman Commentary*.

Comparing versions, it seems to me that the *New English Bible* offers the preferable version in terms of keeping the story full and flowing without too much division. It tells the tale in 10 paragraphs of which the 5th is rather lengthy but acceptably coherent (vv. 26-41).

The *Jerusalem Bible*, which so often provides most insightful notes, is not lacking in this respect with regard to the rise and fall of "the bramble king." The JB has also some touches of the translator's art that offer both food for thought and expressions to help communicators get the message across. For example, the wily approach of Abimelech to his clan in Shechem (italics added): "Speak, I pray you, in the ears of *all* the men of Shechem" (KJV); "Say in the ears of *all the citi-*

zens" (RSV); "Whisper a word in the ears of the chief citizens" (NEB), becomes more direct and subtle in the JB: "Please put this question to the leading men." That version also presents Jotham's fable in poetic form with the stanzas carefully and clearly distinguished, and the approach to and response of the various leafy nominees for kingship more effectively visualized.

Indeed, in my opinion, after comparison of half a dozen renderings and at least as many commentaries, little more than the text and notes of the *Jerusalem Bible* is required for a relatively full grasp and comprehension of the story of the rise and fall of Gideon's son Abimelech.

II. Background to the Story

The death of Gideon (8:22-35). This sad event for Israel must have occurred quite a number of years before the rise of Abimelech. Clearly Gideon's 70 sons had grown to manhood, since Jotham, the youngest of them, was old enough and mature enough to publicly appeal to the citizens of Shechem (9:6-7). And the oldest had fought against the Midianites (8:20).

It is always pitiable when a respected and heroic leader is blinded by his power and forgets the higher source of it.

The final chapter of Gideon's life appears as a distinct anticlimax to the heroic actions of the earlier section, and the man who had given such a magnificent lead to his fellows now sets a deplorable example of self-indulgence in which he, his family, and the whole nation were involved.¹

Having refused kingship, probably from ulterior motives, Gideon nevertheless proceeded to live and act like a king. He requested a gold-ring offering from his army and received an incredible fortune, added to that which he had already taken as booty (8:22-27). That booty belonged to Jehovah, the Architect and Giver of the victory (Num. 31:48-54). Gideon also made an ephod, that was an official garment of the Jewish high priest (Exod. 28:4), somewhat like a Mexican poncho, adorned with precious stones. And like a typical Eastern monarch he collected a harem (Judg. 8:30).

Perhaps Gideon had no intention

of self-exaltation or of leading the people astray; nevertheless that was the ultimate effect of his post-victory behavior, and it was not helped by the name he gave his illegitimate son Abimelech, i.e., "my father a king" (8:32). His ephod became an object of worship and a snare to his own family and himself (8:27). Into such a situation came Abimelech, aspirant to a throne, born of one of Gideon's concubines.

Is it really too much to suggest that Abimelech's cruelty and ambition was at least partly due to his father's behavior? That, however, is the most that can be said for him. Does this background, linked to the drastic story of our section, suggest the dangers of relying on a glorious past? Is it not also provocative along the lines of the blindness of power? And is it saying something to us about the cult of comfort, or the perils of pride? Perhaps also in terms of the ephod it speaks of the spectre of transferred authority, which is in the long run no authority at all. The background may also by way of inference illustrate the power of example, and the horrors born of jealousy and rivalry.

III. The Rise and Fall of the Bramble King Abimelech (9:1-57)

A. *The Shechem Connection*

Abimelech was an inside outsider. He was the son of Gideon who had 72 sons; but his mother was a woman of Shechem, a city of considerable importance in the history of Israel.

There the Lord appeared to Abram (Gen. 12:6-7); there also had Jacob camped, purchased the ground on which he camped, and built an altar to the God of Israel (33:18-20). In these parts young Joseph went looking for his brothers, only to be sold by them to merchants from the very nation later defeated by Gideon. And here also had Joshua led Israel in renewal of their covenant with God (Josh. 9:30-35).

In short, although we have no record of the city being conquered by Joshua, it was part of the territory of the tribe of Ephraim and a place of sacred memory. But it was also a bit of a problem to the sons of Jacob (Gen. 34:25 f.) and to their descendants. It was still preponderately Canaanitish in its popu-

lation and by religion. That religion was the worship of Baal-berith, god of covenants and oaths, and had infected Israel's traditional patriarchal worship of Jehovah.

Abimelech's mother was a Shechemite, and he probably felt little kinship with most of his father's other sons. He did not share his father's conviction about kingship, and he saw and seized his opportunity in the inclination of the Israelites towards kingship (8:22).

B. *The Maternal Connection (9:1)*

It was his mother's brothers Abimelech first sought out, and then the whole family clan. He had set his heart on what his father had declined yet sought. According to the culture of the times the concubine might live with her clan (cf. Judg. 14:15; 15:1), but apparently Abimelech had lived in his father's family. Now, however, the death of Gideon changed everything. The brothers eyed him closely; he felt his "outsiderness," and returned to his mother's clan nursing dreams of power.

C. *The Problems of Ambition*

Abimelech had three serious problems.

Problem 1. What to do with 71 brothers, most of whom had stronger claim to leadership than he

Problem 2. Money

Problem 3. Men

Problem number two was answered with a special gift from the treasury of the gods. Blood being thicker than water, his clan supplied the cash; not out of any really sincere motives (v. 16, NEB) but simply in response to his agreement through his mother (vv. 3-4).

Problem number three he answered by hiring personnel for a kind of SLO, Shechem Liberation Organization. He gathered them from the riffraff and criminal element: "worthless scoundrels" (JB), "idle and reckless men" (NEB), "worthless and reckless fellows" (RSV): a real "Billy the Kid" gang.

D. *Bloodbath at Ophrah*

Problem number one he answered by returning to his father's estate in the little district of Ophrah (v. 5) and using his hired killers to round up all but one of the brothers whom he hated. He then slaugh-

tered them like sacrificial animals on the selfsame stone altar on the selfsame day (cf. 1 Sam. 14:31-35; 2 Kings 10:7-11).

And thus, at the head of a cutthroat army, Abimelech had little opposition and was proclaimed king of Shechem at the hallowed site of the plain oaken pillar beside the memorial stone built by Joshua at Bethmilla. His kingdom, however, was not over all Israel but over the Shechemite territory.

IV. The Fable of the Fugitive (vv. 7-14)

That 72nd son who had escaped the cutthroat gang? What about him? Does not he serve as a sort of ghostly conscience or furtive accuser? Suddenly he appeared like the avenging angel on the slopes of Mount Gerizim where half of Israel had proclaimed their promise of obedience to Jehovah (Deut. 27:12 ff.).

With a voice that awoke the echoes, the 72nd son delivered his "Mark Antony" speech, one of the very earliest pieces of didactic poetry in all Hebrew literature. It is in the form of a fable, but, as it turned out, it was also a prophecy. It was not a parable nor a metaphor, but a fable. In fables the imagination presents the truth in imaginary ways: animals, fish, birds, and in this case trees are made to impersonate people, and to speak, act, and think like human beings.

This fable of the trees is a story within a story. It might be extracted and used on its own. Indeed it frequently has been. For, like many other fables, it has been a delight to young and simple minds alike. The danger is that we convert it into an allegory, not remembering that this form of speech lays its meaning on the surface and is not to be approached analytically. The Lord Jesus, Master of metaphor and parable, had no place for fable in His teaching method; it is a one-dimensional method of pressing one point for one purpose, even when we see many possible applications of the point.

Jotham's fable has as its point the fact that only the best candidates should be appointed to the highest office. Thus there is an impressive descent in the nature of the various trees approached until the least

worthy is elected simply because the best were unwilling to sacrifice in order to serve.

V. The Meaning of the Fable

To Adam Clarke this fable was:

... the oldest, and without exception the best fable or apologue in the world . . . ; every part of this, a few expressions excepted, illustrates itself, and tells its own meaning.²

Clarke concludes his treatment thus:

There is much of the moral of this fable contained in the different kinds of trees mentioned. 1. *The Olive; the most profitable tree to its owner, having few equals either for food or medicine.* 2. *The fig tree; one of the most fruitful of trees, and yielding one of the most delicious fruits, and superior to all others for sweetness.* 3. *The vine, which alone yields a liquor that, when properly prepared, and taken in strict moderation, is friendly both to the body and mind of man, having a most direct tendency to invigorate both.* 4. *The bramble or thorn, which, however useful as a hedge, is dangerous to come near; and is here the emblem of an impious, cruel, and oppressive king.*

As the olive, fig, and vine, are said in this fable to refuse the royalty, because in consequence, they intimate, they should lose their own privileges, we learn that to be invested with power for the public good can be no privilege to the sovereign. If he discharge the office faithfully, it will plant his pillow with thorns, fill his soul with anxious cares, rob him of rest and quiet, and, in a word, will be to him a source of distress and misery. All this is represented here under the emblem of the trees losing their fatness, their sweetness and good fruits, and their cheering influence.

In short, we see from this most sensible fable that the beneficent, benevolent, and highly illuminated mind, is ever averse from the love of power; and that those who do seek it are the thoughtless and vain, the ambitious, and those who wish for power merely for the purpose of self-gratification; per-

sons who have neither the disposition nor the knowledge to use power for the advantage of the community; and who, while they boast great things, and make great pretensions and promises, are the tyrants of the people, and often through their ambition, like the bramble in the fable, kindle a flame of foreign or domestic war, in which their subjects are consumed.³

Almost all interpreters take the view that the meaning of the fable was that since none of the higher class trees that are useful and productive, as well as beautiful and strong, would accept the anointing as king, it passed to the most unproductive and most dangerous little scrub which could, as many wilderness bushes do, explode into fire and start something beyond control—including setting the mountainside ablaze.

Keil and Delitzsch explain it thus:

Oil, figs, and wine were the most valuable productions of the land of Canaan, whereas the briar was good for nothing but to burn . . . The briar, which has nothing but thorns upon it, and does not cast sufficient shadow even for one to lie down in and protect himself from the burning heat of the sun, is an admirable simile for a worthless man who can do nothing but harm. The words of the briar, "Trust in my shadow," seek refuge there, contained a deep irony, the truth of which the Shechemites were very soon to discover.⁴

The line is that the able and gifted people, most fit for leadership in church, city, and nation, are too absorbed in other things to become involved in religious, civic, or national leadership. Therefore power passes into the control of the unworthy, inadequate, and potentially dangerous candidates. For the bramble is not only willing but eager to take power.

The Shechemites had forgotten their debt to Jerubbaal; they had broken faith with him and his family. He had fought for them, risked his life for them, rescued them from the power of Midian; and they had repaid all this by financing and supporting a scoundrel, "the son of his

slavegirl" (JB), because he was their brother (vv. 16-18).

Note that Jotham disclaims connection with *his* half brother.

The application of the fable is arresting in that Jotham directs it not to Abimelech, who is beneath notice, but to the lords of Shechem. The irony is strong:

"Very well," cries Jotham ". . . if you have acted in sincerity and good faith towards Jerubbaal and his family, then may fire come out of Abimelech and devour the leading men of Shechem and Beth-millo; and may fire come out of the leading men of Shechem and Beth-millo to devour Abimelech!" (vv. 19-21, JB).

What is described here is total ruin—as though two enemies each firing an atomic rocket at the other in the same instant were right dead on target!

And having delivered his message, the fugitive Jotham took flight again beyond the reach of bramblebush fire (v. 21).

VI. The Fable Was a Prophecy, and the Prophecy Was Fulfilled

The fire from the bramblebush soon destroyed Shechem (vv. 42-49); and fire from Shechem and Thebez destroyed the bramblebush king (vv. 50-57).

Friction and discontent arose between Shechem's lords and their bramblebush king. A fifth column within the city nibbled at his security. An insurrection arose, which although ruthlessly quelled by Abimelech, nevertheless made him even more nervous and violently ruthless with regard to all opposition. Eventually he attacked Shechem and razed it to the ground, scattering salt over its ruins to preach its barrenness (vv. 45-46).

The lords took refuge in the crypt of the temple of El-berith in nearby Migdal-shechem together with a thousand of the population (v. 46). But the bramblebush was blazing: Abimelech roasted them alive (v. 49) and headed for the other trouble spot in Thebez. There the population barricaded themselves into the fortified tower (vv. 50-51). The blazing bramblebush king, relying once again on fire set by his own hand (v. 52) as he sought to smoke

them out, was struck down, not by a brave soldier, not by a sharpshooter, but by an upper millstone dropped from the tower roof by a woman (vv. 52-53)!

Mortified in spirit and shamed, he commanded his armour bearer to run him through with his sword (v. 54). Thus was the destroyer destroyed, and the bramblebush trodden to ash by Gideon's God!

The sacred chronicle sums it up magnificently:

Thus God made the evil recoil on Abimelech that he had done to his father . . . as God made all the wickedness of the people of Shechem recoil on their own heads too. And so the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal came true for them (vv. 56-57, JB).

VII. Sermon Suggestions

The following three outlines may be resourceful for fleshing out your sermons on this portion of God's Word:

The Great Avenger

Reading: Ps. 94:16-23

Rom. 12:14-21

Textual focus: Judg. 9:56-57

"Thus God required the crime of Abimelech . . . God also made all the wickedness of the men of Shechem fall back upon their heads" (RSV).

These might be tied together with a strand from the old economy (Deut. 32:36, 39) and one from the new covenant (Heb. 10:31).

Introduction:

A familiar poem declares:

Careless seems the Great Avenger—

*History's pages but recall
One death-grapple in the darkness*

*'Twixt old systems and the Word.
Truth forever on the scaffold:*

*Wrong forever on the throne;
But the scaffold sways the future,*

*And behind the great unknown
STANDETH GOD within the shadows*

Keeping vigil o'er His own.

Body:

I. God Is Boss!

The law of God is never broken: it cannot be broken (cp. Ps. 119:142,

89). It is written in the stars over our heads and the ground under our feet (cp. Judg. 5:20). The Ten Commandments are but a digest of His eternal laws, written for our good and guidance.

II. We Must Obey God

God's law cannot be broken, but we may break ourselves against the law of God.

A. Individually, as did Abimelech, v. 56a

B. Collectively, as did the lords of Shechem, v. 56b

Conclusion:

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! But as someone has said, "It is a much more fearful thing to fall out of them!" We submit our hearts therefore to love and obey God with sincerity and trust, praying,

"My times are in Thy hands,
My God, I wish them there!"

Blind Ambition

Judg. 9:1-2

Introduction:

Blind Ambition is the title of John Dean's analyses of the national Watergate tragedy. Carnal ambition is a hard taskmaster; it drives people into reckless and dangerous actions.

A. *Diagnosis*

I. *Ambition is often blinded by jealousy.* Jealousy may grow into hatred as with Abimelech (v. 5). Jealous hatred makes calm thinking impossible. For:

II. *Jealousy infects judgment.* The jealous person looks on others as rivals or competitors; this probably was Abimelech's heart trouble. Alexander Pope wrote:

*All seems infected that the infected spy,
As all looks yellow to the jaundiced eye.⁵*

III. *Jaundiced judgment shatters peace*

1. It destroys personal peace; inwardly with self, outwardly with others, upwardly with God.

2. It endangers national and world peace. Rivalry among political parties and jealousy between nations is the lighted fuse on the catastrophic time bomb. Peace is threatened by the jaundiced eye, moving

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SERMON STARTERS ON SAMSON

We asked someone to write an in-depth homiletical study on Samson. Though it came as a shock, that person turned down the opportunity! But facing the possibility of going to press with the theme "Preaching from the Book of Judges" without something on Samson was unthinkable. When it was too late to ask for another homiletical study, we quickly wrote to 15 ministers, asking them for some sermon starters on Samson. Ten of them didn't bother to answer our letter, but 5 sent us these outlines. Compare them with your own homiletical masterpiece on Samson, and you should be able to whip up a good one.

SAMSON: AN OUTWARD NAZARITE

by David L. Martinez, Jr., *Pastor*
Olive Street Wesleyan Church
Kansas City

Introduction: With the focus today on physical fitness, it is good for us to focus upon where our real strength lies. We do not have to go to the comics to find a Superman example. God's Word lifts up for us a true historical character from whose life we may learn. His name—Samson.

- I. **Samson: The Separated Servant** (Judges 13:2-5)
 - A. Called from birth to serve God
 1. to begin the deliverance of Israel (v. 5)
 - a. Israel had worshipped other gods (10:6-7).
 - b. Israel would be under Philistine rule for 40 years (13:1).
 2. to be a Nazarite (v. 5)
 - a. Nazarite: one separated/dedicated to God
 - b. There were time-period Nazarites:
 - (1) vows (Num. 6:2-21)
 - (2) example—apostle Paul (Acts 18:18; 21:23-26)
 - c. There were lifetime Nazarites
 - (1) Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11)
 - (2) John the Baptist (Luke 1:15)
 - (3) Samson—the separated servant of God
 - B. Ceremonially clean but inwardly unclean
 1. He followed the outward abstinence requirements (Numbers 6):
 - a. touched no unclean thing
 - b. no razor touched his head (16:17)
 2. He failed inwardly to cultivate purity:
 - a. Parents were concerned about religious training (13:8).
 - b. Samson failed to listen to sound advice (14:3).
 - II. **Samson: The Sensuous Slave** (Judges 13—16)
 - A. Physically strong/morally weak
 1. Known for his physical acts of strength (16:5)
 2. Known for his uncontrolled lust (14:2; 16:1, 4)

- B. Plays with the temptress/pays a large tip
 1. Ignores inward vow for outward satisfaction
 2. Consequence is that strength is sapped
 - a. Not even Samson truly realized Source of strength:
 - (1) not uncut hair (16:17b)
 - (2) it was his covenant with God (16:17a)
 - b. Disobedience violates not only the law but authority (16:20).
 3. Used of God, yet unable to continue
 - a. Helped to begin "deliverance of Israel" (16:30)
 - b. But only the "Spotless One" can say, "It is finished."

Conclusion: One's outward appearance is not the priority. Spiritual strength is to be desired above the physical. Samson had to lose his "sensual eyes" before he could bring down the curtain on his foes. We must inwardly consecrate our lives to God and allow Him to help us with our areas of weakness.

SAMSON'S HERITAGE

by Michael E. Grimshaw, *Pastor*
Church of the Nazarene
Bremerton, Wash.

Scripture Reference: Judges 13:16

Text: Judges 13:1-25

Purpose: To illustrate the importance of both the heritage we receive and the one we pass on.

Intro: Webster defines *heritage* as "that which is inherited, inheritance; hence, the lot, condition or status into which one is born; birthright." He goes on to clarify: "something which one receives or will receive from a parent or predecessor."

All of us are the recipients of a heritage, and also the givers of a heritage. This is true not only of the individual but also of the Church, the nation, and all other institutions to which we belong.

I. The National Heritage Received by Samson (13:1)

- A. Little words say a lot
 - 1. Single word—Again
 - 2. Speaks of a repeated pattern of action
 - 3. Seems to be one of the prevalent themes of Judges—"The children of Israel did evil."
 - 4. Such a small word suggests such a large problem.
- B. This is the story of national failure
 - 1. Begins in religious failure
 - a. Judges 2:11-13
 - b. Forsook the Lord God
 - c. Served other gods
 - d. Accommodated the gods of the land
 - e. G. Campbell Morgan—"The trouble that came to these people from surrounding nations was very severe and very terrible, but it never would have come if they had not turned their backs upon God."
 - 2. Leads to political failure
 - a. This is the story of every nation that turns its back on God.
 - b. Our political breakdowns are the result of our impotent religions.
 - c. Legislation, foreign policy, giant budgets are not the answer for a nation that has "turned its back on God."
 - 3. Illustration: Impact of Wesleyan revival upon England
 - a. Scriptural challenges:
 - (1) Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."
 - (2) Psalm 144:15: "How blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!" (NASB).

II. The Family Heritage Received by Samson (vv. 2-25)

- A. Uniquely announced
 - 1. Angel of God
 - 2. Illustration: Shared with some great announcements of history
 - a. Birth of Isaac
 - b. Birth of John the Baptist
 - c. Birth of Jesus
- B. Instructions for prenatal care (vv. 2-5)
 - 1. Nothing intoxicating
 - 2. No unclean food
 - 3. More than ceremonial cleansing
- C. Instructions for early childhood care (v. 5)
 - 1. Nazarite vow
 - a. No strong drink
 - b. Never cut hair
 - c. No contact with dead body
 - 2. Set apart
 - a. Importance of child dedication
 - b. Illustration: Great emphasis in our local church on this special event
 - 3. Specific instructions
- D. Godly environment
 - 1. Aware of God's messenger (v. 6)
 - 2. Aware of God's leadership (v. 6)
 - 3. Father concerned about spiritual life (v. 8)
 - 4. Interested in God's leadership in child rearing (v. 8)

- 5. Illustration: Personal illustration of families who did it all right, yet one or more children chose the way of sin.

III. The Personal Heritage Given by Samson

- A. Heritage of great power
 - 1. Battle with lion (14:6)
 - 2. Battle with men of Ashkelon (14:19)
 - 3. Battle No. 1 with Philistines (15:7)
 - 4. Battle No. 2 with Philistines (15:14-17)
 - 5. Sign of power at Gaza (16:1-3)
 - 6. First experience with Delilah (16:8-9)
 - 7. Second experience with Delilah (16:12)
 - 8. Third experience with Delilah (16:14)
 - 9. Power lost (16:15-22)
 - 10. Power regained (16:23-30)
- B. Yet, heritage of limited purity or rightness
 - 1. Samson's own uncontrolled revenge
 - a. Revenge is the Lord's, not ours.
 - b. Samson's revenge in chapter 15 seems to lack God's approval or anointing.
 - c. Suggests that we need to be careful to know God's will. Even though He may have blessed past efforts, we dare not automatically *assume* that everything we want to do is right or will be blessed by God.
 - 2. Samson definitely did not leave a rich heritage so far as his relations with the women in his life.
 - a. Wife: total disaster
 - b. Prostitute: placing himself in jeopardy
 - c. Delilah: Samson destroyed himself
- C. Power and purity are not synonymous, as illustrated by the life of Samson
 - 1. Not all of those given great power by God were necessarily good.
 - 2. All who seek power are not necessarily seeking purity. Illustration: Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:1-25).
 - 3. However, the greatest power in the world is the power of purity.
- D. A certain sense of sadness in his death
 - 1. Some see a "hero's" death.
 - 2. Some might even see suicide.
 - 3. Most impressed with the fact that it was death of one who had so much potential and yet had so much problem living it.

Conclusion:

- A. It is important what our heritage is.
- B. It is important to learn from our heritage.
- C. It is even more important what kind of a heritage we will give!

SIN IS BLINDING, BINDING, AND GRINDING

by Jeffrey Sparks, *Pastor*
Church of the Nazarene
Ashtabula, Ohio

Text: Judges 16:20-21

I. Sin Is Blinding (v. 21)

- A. Samson was physically and spiritually blinded.

- B. Many cannot see their own need, their own failures.
- C. Many cannot see where they are headed, the end products of sin, nor the outstretched arms of Christ.

II. Sin Is Binding (v. 21)

- A. Samson was so strong no one could defeat him—suddenly he was captive.
- B. Satan's binding starts gradually—suddenly one is not the master but the mastered.
- C. Sinful habits, activities, friends, relationships—bind, cripple, and fetter.

III. Sin Is Grinding (v. 21)

- A. Samson became a work animal grinding grain that would fill the bellies of his tormentors and captors.
- B. Sin will grind away at a person's:
 - Heart
 - Mind
 - Resources
 - Soul
 - Good name
 - Body
 - Relationships
 - Integrity
 - Desire to be holy
- C. End result of sin is to be ground up and used up and broken up.

Conclusion: (vv. 27-30)

- A. God gave Samson another chance.
- B. Avail yourself of God's opportunity to be saved, rescued, and freed.
- C. Do not take a second best for your life—spare yourself the scars, humiliation, and waste of sin.

SAMSON—THE PLAYBOY

by C. L. Newbert, *Pastor*
First Church of the Nazarene
New Bedford, Mass.

Scripture: Judges 16:15-21

Text: Judges 16:21

Introduction: The often repeated and trite definitions of sin connected with Samson: (1) Sin is blinding; (2) Sin is binding; and (3) Sin is grinding, are very true.

I. Dedicated as a Nazarite

- A. A child of promise (13:5; 16:7)
- B. Chosen to deliver Israel (13:5)
- Yet Playing with the Enemy (14:1-3)
- A. Went too close to enemy territory
- B. Chose wrong companions
- C. Disregarded his spiritual endowments
- D. Transgressed the law of God

II. Spiritual at Times (13:25; 15:14)

—Yet Under the Power of Evil (16:1-4)

III. Childish in His Pranks (15:4)

—Yet Mighty in Battle (15:11-14)

IV. Strong in Physical Strength (16:3, 9, 12, 14; chapter 14)

—Yet Weak in Temptation (16:15-17)

He hungered for pleasure, sex, and selfish gain.

Illustration: My barber once said to me, "The average person drinks poison, breathes poison, and craves crime for entertainment."

Conclusion: With burned-out passions—homeless and helpless, Samson becomes like a mouse being played with by a cat. The playboy becomes a plaything. He hears the laugh of Satan and feels the sting of death.

A TRIAD OF TRUTHS FROM A TROUBLED MAN IN A TROUBLED TIME

by John E. Beegle, *Pastor*
First Free Methodist Church
Kansas City

I. The Minority Becomes God's Enabled

Text: Judges 15:9-11

Intro.: Samson's conquest aroused the fear and anger of the Philistines and, at the same time, caused the alienation of his submissive brother Israelites.

- A. The Anger of the Enemy (vv. 9, 10b)

Their strategy indicated that a grudging respect for Samson had begun to occur in the enemy camp.
- B. The Anxiety of the Afflicted (v. 10a)

Those who submit to the enemy have forgotten that there is One mightier than all others who can deliver.
- C. The Ambassadors of the Unwilling (v. 11)

The majority were pleading with Samson to join them in their surrender to the usurpers and to stop rocking the boat.
- D. The Answer of the Able
 1. One man plus God, though clearly a minority, is stronger than the majority. Even the high treason of 3,000 of Judah's finest could not deter him.
 2. Because of his divine selection and enablement Samson was able to actuate the divine equation and put to flight thousands of both friend and enemy.
 3. While the drumbeat of the enemy disabled many men, the cadence of the Spirit enabled the one man (15:11c).

II. The Invincible Are God's Anointed

Text: Judges 15:12-15

Intro.: The mood of the people called for coexistence with the enemy in Samson's time. But the Spirit of the Lord moved for deliverance rather than servitude. As Samson was, so any Spirit-anointed person is invincible even when the enemy cries against him.

A. The Angle of the Appeasers

These 3,000 timid souls were eager to let the house be given over to the seven worse demons even before it was swept (15:12-13).

(Continued on page 27)

Everybody knew about Jephthah, but nobody who
“mattered” called on him—for anything. Until one day . . .

JEPHTHAH

by R. T. Kendall

Minister, Westminster Chapel, London, England

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of . . . Jephtha[h] . . .” (Hebrews 11:32).

Jephthah was a rugged outcast of Israel whose leadership was suddenly needed; Jephthah had an ugly blemish on his life that is better remembered than his faith.

If the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews had not mentioned him, who among us would have thought to do so? Most of us think of the blemish of Jephthah and consequently do not see his faith. Our writer was not a legalist; he could see past the blemish.

Yet it is a fact of life that people tend to remember the bad, not the good. Neville Chamberlain is still remembered for one thing primarily: his failure to recognize Hitler for what he was. Richard Nixon will be remembered primarily for Water-gate. But our writer wants us to look at Jephthah not for his mistakes but for his faith.

One of the more interesting things that emerges from the account of Jephthah is the question of the “mainstream.” What is the mainstream? All of us—whatever our Christian tradition or background—tend to think that we are in the mainstream of Christianity. A mainstream is defined as “a river with tributaries”; figuratively it is the “chief direction or trend.”

Who then are the mainstream of Christianity? The Roman Catholics think they are. The Church of England think they are. The Reformed tradition think they are (via Calvin

and Augustine). The Mennonites and certain Baptists think they are (via the Anabaptists and Donatists). I know a man who is sure that he is in the mainstream; he has forecast that if revival ever comes, it will come to America. By America he means Kentucky. By Kentucky he means Ashland, Ky. By Ashland, Ky., he means a certain street in Ashland (and a certain address). All of us feel—or want to feel—that we are the true heirs of the apostles, whatever visible tradition we may lay claim to.

One thing is certain, however, about Jephthah: He was clearly *not* in the mainstream. But that is what our writer would like about him. Our writer delights in focusing on the torch of God’s glory being passed to the unexpected. Jephthah was the son of a prostitute. Consequently he was disinherited (Judg. 11:2).

Worst of all: Jephthah attracted the scum of the earth. While Jephthah was obviously a born leader, he attracted only those nobody else wanted. This made him immensely unattractive to the “mainstream” of ancient Israel. Nobody who “mattered” took any notice of Jephthah and his band. Jephthah and his followers were avoided like the plague. One might also add that Jephthah himself probably grew up with a chip on his shoulder. After all, he had a bad start in life and grew up feeling rejected.

But I wish to give a slightly different definition of “mainstream.” It is that to which God turns and through whom He is pleased to manifest

himself. It tends, by the way, to be “outside the camp.” Our Lord Jesus Christ was not exactly in the mainstream of His day. He suffered “without the gate” that He might sanctify His people with His own blood. “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:12-13). When God turns to a particular body of men, it often takes everybody else by surprise. God has a way of making the unlikely and the unexpected the centre of His most recent activity.

Everybody knew about Jephthah, but nobody who “mattered” called on him—for anything. Until one day. When the children of Israel were absolutely desperate, they turned to the scum of the earth for help. This they did when the children of Ammon made war against Israel (Judg. 11:4-5). They even made Jephthah their captain; he was in a strategic bargaining position and had the whole of Israel on their knees begging to him. Jephthah’s first task would be to forgive the world and get that chip off his shoulder. At any rate the mainstream was now at Jephthah’s leadership and command. The torch was passed to him. Suddenly he was the wave of the future.

But what of Jephthah’s faith? It was a brilliant understanding of God’s purpose in history. Jephthah may have been an outcast in Israel, but he knew his history. He had done his homework. Never underestimate this—that God uses knowledge.

We are told that Stephen spoke with such authority that "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). Jephthah put his enemies to shame by his knowledge of God's purpose in history. What happened was this. The king of Ammon picked a quarrel with Israel concerning an event which had taken place 300 years before; he accused Israel of stealing their land.

Did the king of Ammon have a point? Not at all, argued Jephthah. Point by point Jephthah traced every step of the children of Israel from the time they left Egypt. When Israel was attacked, God gave them power to defend themselves. Furthermore, it was the Lord God who dispossessed the Amorites; who would want to fight against God? Moreover, continued Jephthah, "You Ammonites have a god; what has he given you?" Not only that; the king of Moab didn't strive against Israel. "Are you any better?" One last thing, continued Jephthah: "We have been around for 300 years; why are you getting anxious all of a sudden about a matter that your predecessors took no notice of?" Jephthah's conclusion was this: Let God settle the whole matter (Judg. 11:27).

That was Jephthah's faith; he was mastered by the truth.

I wish I could end the story of Jephthah there. But I cannot. I refer to that awful blemish in Jephthah—what everyone remembers, undoubtedly one of the strangest and most foolish acts of history. Jephthah was a strong man and a great thinker. A man's genius is usually his downfall. Every man has his blind spot. Said Calvin: "In every saint there is always to be found something reprehensible." Jephthah made a vow—a foolish, needless vow: If God would truly defeat the enemy, he would give Him a sacrifice. What would it be? The first animal (or person) he met at his house (Judges 11:31).

God gave Jephthah the victory. But not because of the vow. The victory was already assured by Jeph-

thah's own brilliant argument. But Jephthah began to doubt his own word. He felt this need to make a vow. A vow is nature's way of robbing God of His glory. Vows do the very opposite of what people think they do. A vow is concocted not because of the Spirit but because it makes *us* feel better. We take our feeling better to be the Spirit's witness. We project that good feeling upon the backdrop of God's heart and claim it as His will when it is almost always nothing but our own unbelief given self-righteous dress.

The clearest hint for all ages regarding vows and God's will is to be seen in Jephthah's case. First, when it came into his mind to make a vow, God rebuked his unbelief by letting him make a foolish vow. Secondly, the seal of God's disapproval was in letting Jephthah's own daughter be the first to walk through those doors of his own house. Jephthah's greatest folly yet is in thinking he had to keep this silly vow.

One may argue that the Law says one must keep any vow one makes (cf. Deut. 23:21). I answer: the Law

is not of faith (Gal. 3:12). Jephthah showed himself a man of faith when he disputed with the king; he showed himself a foolish legalist when it came to trusting the very God he had exalted. Legalistic thinking can lead people to do crazy things. It is amazing how one can be brilliant in one area of Christian living and utterly blind in another!

I offer this advice regarding vows (other than the marriage vow and the vow to be a Christian): Don't make them. And if you have made them, forget them. As to God's revealed Word, don't make vows; keep His Word instead. You are bound to His Word before you make a vow. When you vow to do what the Bible has *already* revealed, you become your own kind of mediator; but if you vow to do something not clearly revealed, you are self-righteously upstaging God's righteousness (this is why vows lead to the grossest bondage).

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The image shows a detailed financial and ownership statement for a publication. The form is titled "STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION" and includes sections for publication information, financial data, and circulation statistics. The publication is identified as "THE NEW YORK TIMES" and the date is "MAY 15, 1981". The form is filled out with specific numbers and percentages, such as a gross revenue of \$1,000,000 and a net revenue of \$1,000,000. It also includes a table for circulation data and a section for sales.

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by Alvin S. Lawhead
Professor of Old Testament
Nazarene Theological Seminary

GRACE

in the Book of Judges

It has been said that there is much about war in Judges, but little about worship. This being the case, it is admittedly difficult to see expressions of grace in Judges—difficult, but not impossible. We believe that Judges shares in the miracle of divine inspiration along with the other 65 books of the Bible and has its place in the total story of divine grace for fallen mankind. Some would object to the thought of grace in Judges, arguing that grace is properly a New Testament subject. (“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17, RSV). While grace is a Christian concept by nature, yet it is anticipated and has its precedents in the Old Testament. Wherever God is at work among men, there is divine grace.

The Hebrew word for grace, *hen*, is translated in the King James Version as “favor” in 26 texts, and as “grace” in 38 texts. However, it is often noted that the former translation is nearly always preferable.¹ As with most Hebrew words, *hen* is not an abstract term but expresses

in a remarkable way the *redeeming favor* of God toward man as an active working principle. The root verb of this noun is *hanan*, which according to *Strong's Concordance* means to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior.² In the lexicon by Brown, Driver, and Briggs it is stated that when *hanan* is used of the Lord, it refers to bestowal of favors or of redemption from enemies, evils, or sins.³ It occurs as an adjective 13 times in the Old Testament, and in 12 of these occurrences it is connected with mercy.

In Judges the word *hen* appears only twice. In 6:17 Gideon says to

the angel of the Lord, “If now I have found favor with thee, . . .” (RSV); and in 21:22 concerning the daughters of Shiloh, “Grant them graciously to us . . .” (RSV). Neither of these references is of much help in discussing the topic at hand. However, the fundamental idea of grace is present in Judges in three distinct areas, and we now turn to these three considerations.

God's Grace in Israel's History

In order to appreciate the reality of grace in Judges, we must see clearly the total historical context of ancient Israel, of which the period of the judges is the latter part. Judges comes near the completion of a story which began centuries earlier with Abraham and the promise of a land to his descendants. All of the stages in the historical sequence of this story reflect manifestations of divine grace.

At the beginning of the story there is no question that the call of the patriarchs and the promises given to them constituted acts of divine

A Christian preacher is a proclaimer of divine grace. Can such a theme be found in the Book of Judges?

grace. Likewise, the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, followed by the covenant experience at Mount Sinai, and the conquest of Canaan under Joshua were also expressions of divine grace, celebrated in Israel's hymns (Exod. 15:1-18; Judg. 5:2-31; as well as numerous psalms), and acknowledged in her history.

Judges fills an important historical gap between the initial conquest of Canaan and the inauguration of the monarchy, telling how God delivered His penitent people from periods of invasion and harassment by neighboring peoples.

Throughout this entire sequence of historical events it is essential to the biblical point of view to interpret all of this spiritually—it is the work of God on behalf of His people in loving faithfulness. The initial call to Abraham was of God, as were the promises, renewed to successive patriarchs; the deliverance from Egypt was by the mighty hand of the Lord; Canaan was conquered because the Lord fought for Israel; and the victories of the judges were due to the power of the Lord.

All of this reflects a consistent pattern of biblical interpretation which carries on through the prophets and the apostles (including Revelation). Thus grace is descriptive of God's dealings with His people, even in national and international considerations. It is in this broad, general sense that grace is not only present in Judges but is essential to its proper interpretation.

The pastor who preaches from Judges needs to be aware of this general historical context and this expression of divine grace before he can appropriately make application to the contemporary scene of the truth in this book. Once aware of this context and expression of divine grace, he or she can confidently proclaim the power and blessing of God on behalf of His people in fulfilling His redemptive purposes.

An "Overplus" of Grace

However, within Judges there is also a narrower historical context which brings the reality of grace in this book into sharper focus. The overall picture of Judges is one of a series or repeated cycles of back-

sliding, oppression by some enemy, repentance, and deliverance by a divinely appointed judge. (See Judg. 2:7-19 for a summary description of this oft-repeated cycle.)

Despite Israel's repeated expressions of unfaithfulness to God, the Book of Judges eloquently portrays that He readily responded to their sincere plea for mercy and restoration with compassion and grace. This is not to suggest that there is such a thing as cheap grace or that God is somehow soft on sin. Rather, we are to draw from Israel's experience as recorded in Judges the following truth:

True repentance is always followed by a renewal of divine favor [grace]. The fact that God deals with nations and individuals in accordance with their regard or disregard for His moral laws offers a lesson the emphasizing of which can never become superfluous. Even at this early date in this history of revelation these basic truths are reflected in human experience.⁴

For our purposes, we would especially emphasize the gracious response of God to Israel's true repentance by providing a deliverer in the person of a judge. These individuals were raised up by God and made effective instruments of deliverance on behalf of His oppressed people. Ryrie says, "The 14 judges were an overplus of grace for the recurring lapses into idolatry."⁵

Gracious Empowerment

The final consideration of grace in Judges concerns the men who were empowered by God's Spirit in order to accomplish His purposes of deliverance. In the case of the judges the specific effect of the Spirit is that of empowerment, which also is one of the most important emphases which the New Testament makes regarding the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Acts 1:8).

The New Testament doctrine of grace which centers on the personal redemption and transformation of the individual through Christ has not yet come to light in the Old Testament. Accordingly, one needs to guard against reading New Testament Christian experience into the

Old Testament and its characters, or drawing a direct line from the Old Testament to the New Testament in such matters. However, we can be confident that Scripture as a whole is consistent with itself, and the principle of empowerment of God's people by the presence of His Spirit is a common factor of grace in both Testaments.

In the case of four of the judges it is recorded that the Spirit of the Lord empowered them for their respective tasks. These four are Othniel (3:10); Gideon (6:34); Jephthah (11:29); and Samson (13:25, 14:6). We may safely assume that a similar gracious empowerment of the Spirit came to the remaining judges, although this is not stated specifically in the text.

In dealing with these expressions of the Spirit's empowerment, the preacher should note the variations in wording. In the cases of Othniel and Jephthah the Spirit of the Lord "came upon" them. The Hebrew verb used here does not designate an abstract or ontological state of being, but rather refers to a happening, an event, or experience.

With Gideon (6:34) the Spirit of the Lord "took possession of Gideon." (This is the rendering of the RSV; the KJV simply repeats "came upon Gideon," and does not accurately reflect the different Hebrew verb used here. See the further discussion on this text below.)

In regard to Samson, one reference (13:25) says, "And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir (move) him"; the second reference (14:6) declares, "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him" (RSV).

Special attention needs to be given to Gideon and his experience of empowerment through the Spirit of the Lord. We are first introduced to Gideon as a rather fearful farmer threshing wheat in a winepress (6:11); lacking in faith ("But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian," v. 13, RSV); lacking in self-confidence ("my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" [v. 15, RSV]); and a doubting Thomas ("If now I have found favor with thee, then show me a sign that it is thou who speakest with me" [v. 17, RSV]). It was necessary to awaken in Gideon the warrior, the leader, the

man of God. And this confidence was to spring out of confidence in the empowering presence and grace of God. "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valour" (v. 12, RSV).

A further indication of empowering grace in the life of Gideon occurs in the statement in v. 34, "But the Spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon," noted earlier. It is significant that the Hebrew verb used here means to put on a garment, to be clothed. Thus, the text says literally, "The Spirit of the Lord

clothed Gideon." This is paralleled in the admonition of Paul in Eph. 4:24, "And put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (RSV). The Greek verb in this text has the same sense of putting on a garment, being clothed. In this vivid description concerning Gideon we see the truth of God's empowering grace in the Book of Judges in its clearest and sharpest focus.

In conclusion, it is this empowering grace of the Spirit of the Lord upon the judges of ancient Is-

rael which causes the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to include these men as heroes of faith in 11:32-34. 

Notes

1. C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Grace* (London: Epworth Press, 1956), p. 8.
2. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Nashville: Crusade Bible Publishers, n.d.), p. 41 of Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary.
3. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, *The New Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Lafayette, Ind.: Associated Publishers & Authors, 1980), pp. 335-36.
4. C. F. Burney, *The Book of Judges* (London: Rivingtons, 1920), p. cxxi.
5. C. C. Ryrie, *The Grace of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), p. 13.

SERMON STARTERS ON SAMSON

(Continued from page 22)

B. The Angle of the Eager

In a remarkable display of love for his treasonous countrymen, Samson did not want to have to slay his brethren. He obviously did not signal his punches in this subtle strategy (15:12b-13a).

C. The Anticipation of the Agnostic

Satan has revealed his inferiority to Christ through the ages. The Philistines either refused to acknowledge that Samson's strength was from Jehovah and thus could not be restrained with ropes, or they were simply so spiritually blind that they could neither see nor understand this mystery clear to the end of Samson's life. Except for the treacherous trap of Delilah, they kept making the same stupid attempts to immobilize him and indeed seemed to forget the secret she had extracted from him (16:22; 15:13c-14a).

D. The Ability of the Anointed

Jesus is able to set at liberty the captive and set the prisoner free.

1. The fact that the lords of the Philistines were completely baffled as to Samson's source of strength lends credence to the possibility that he appeared to be a very ordinary man.
2. God delights in making the weak mighty, empowering the powerless, and making the rejected stone the Chief Cornerstone.

The uncomeliness of Calvary's Central Character is to those who refuse the anointing of the eyesalve of the Eternal Apothecary.

As the angel of the Lord worked wondrously for his awestruck parents, so the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson and the common became the conqueror.

III. Need Supplied for God's Appointed

Text: Judges 15:15-16

Intro.: Cain complained that his circumstances caused his declension. His company is great. The fall of man is traceable to the kicking of the traces. Satan

suggests God's methods and means arise from meanness. His company is great. Samson illustrates that God needs only an available person, and then He supplies all the needs.

A. The Availability of Necessities

1. God has promised to supply all our needs. "What is that in thine hand?" introduced through Moses God's ability to take things that are not to bring to naught things that are.
2. God will accept the surrender of the natural and transform it that we may prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (15:15a).
3. Samson needed a weapon. A Saturday night special jawbone was providentially within hand reach.

B. The Activity of the Appointed

1. Jesus used mud in a miracle. Jehovah used the jaw of a dead donkey in the hand of Samson.
2. We often spend precious years searching for a more refined tool instead of getting on with the appointed mission using what God has supplied (15:15b).

C. The Application of the Available

1. Some would justify the application of the jawbone to the hips and thighs of his traitorous countrymen. Samson made no such grievous error.
2. God supplied the weapon and the power. Samson applied it properly to the enemy.
3. The Word and the Spirit are necessities, available to us (15:15c).

D. The Accomplishment of the Purposeful

1. Samson seemed to have a one-track mind.
2. Samson's determination to destroy the Philistines is most remarkable within the context of a national suicide pact and his own passion for pulchritude.
3. On this side of Calvary and Pentecost we enjoy a victory Samson did not know. Through Christ we are delivered from the body of death and given new life and a new heart to enable us to walk in the statues of the Lord. All we need for victory is in Jesus (15:16). 

THE PASTOR'S APTITUDE FOR ATTITUDES

by Rendel Cosand

*Pastor, Up River Friends Meeting
Belvidere, N.C.*

Attitude is more important than aptitude!" With these words a businessman commencement speaker challenged a central Ohio high school graduating class. If this is true in the secular world, it is also true in the sacred. If this is a maxim for the person in the pew, it applies also to the person in the pulpit.

In a recent study of the Book of Philippians, I have been intrigued by some truths suggested there regarding the pastor and his attitudes toward people.

1 The pastor should agonize over people. Paul did. In anguish he wrote of the earthly minded in 3:18-19a: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction." He saw perishing souls lost and doomed. To the church he wrote in Galatians 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

When Paul bade farewell to the Ephesian elders, he reviewed his ministry among them with these words in Acts 20:31: "Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

For 53 years pastor of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, the great soul winner and evangelical Anglican preacher Charles Simeon prayed daily on his

rooftop. Of him Bishop Marcus Loane commented, "No one ever knew how often that roof was the silent witness to his sighs or his tears."

2 Pastors, let us guard against becoming angry with people.

I heard a prominent Christian psychologist tell of counseling a pastor. The latter came to him about a bad relationship which he was having with a man in his parish. With a tense voice the pastor spoke of his "concern" for the man. The counselor called to the pastor's attention his clenched fists. Finally the pastor admitted, "You know, I think maybe I've been angry with him for about two years . . . I've never been able to recognize and admit it myself . . . I knew all along that he was angry at me."

Pastor Moses became angry with "the church in the wilderness" in the desert of Zin. His outburst of "Hear now, ye rebels" (Num. 20:10) cost him an entrance into the land of Canaan.

True, there is a holy anger. Jesus drove money changers out of the Temple. And before healing a crippled hand (Mark 3), Jesus looked on the unbelievers "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" (v. 5).

Nevertheless, it is dangerous and often carnal for the pastor to have

anger toward the board member who disagrees with his program, or the elder who "opposes progress," or the people who give him a rough time. Spite has no place in any Christian, certainly not in the minister.

In Philippians, chapter 1, Paul writes of "some" who "preach Christ even of envy and strife . . . supposing to add affliction to my bonds." Instead of getting all uptight or lashing back, Paul rejoices because "Christ is preached," regardless of the motive. "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (v. 19) helped his attitude toward such inconsistent people. We need that Spirit too.

Paul more than once had to guard against harshness. He was more apt to be harsh than Barnabas, for example. The late missionary Charles Cowman once wrote, "Brethren, let it not be said of us that we are holy but hard." Our spirit must be tempered with tenderness.

3 Appreciate people. Pastor, every person in your parish, in your community, is just as important as you are. This includes those who are different, those whom you don't understand, those hard to reach.

Paul appreciated people. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" (1:3). "I have you in my heart"

(v. 7). "I long after you all" (v. 8). He addressed them as "my joy and crown" (4:1).

If you genuinely love people, it will show. They will detect it. Love them for what they are, and for what they can become. Love them because God loves them, made them, redeemed them. They may not yet have responded to that redemption, but love them anyway.

Speak words of appreciation. Thank your Sunday School teachers for teaching, your organist for playing, your ushers for ushering, your treasurer for keeping books and paying bills. Occasionally express to your board or congregation your heartfelt gratitude for a comfortable parsonage (or housing allowance) and their support in prayer, finances, and encouraging words. Thank them for that vacation time.

We don't have to be gushy or flattering. We can and should be appreciative, respectful, interested, concerned.

4 Acknowledge people's needs.

Pastor, how commendable that you think of your people as great and that your relationship is warm and loving. On the other hand, don't allow friendship, admiration, closeness, to blind you to their deep spiritual needs.

This is a mistake that parents often make with their children. We tend to think of our children as well behaved, religious, special to us, and surely "good." Meanwhile they may be slowly but surely going the way of the world and substituting self-righteousness for salvation.

It's possible for a friendly pastor to be blind to his people's spiritual needs. His rose-tinted glasses may keep him from spotting the wolves which invade and destroy the flock.

Not so with Paul. He prayed (1:9-11) for those Christians to be loving and without offense, and to be filled. He urged their unity and steadfast courage (1:27). He rebuked complaints and arguments (2:15) and exhorted to consistent, godly living. And he warned them (3:2) to "beware of evil workers."

5 Pastor, don't focus on your own needs.

So many do, even among

evangelicals. Too many pastors are in the parish ministry, to an extent at least, for what they can get out of it. In 2:19-21 Paul contrasted the unselfish Timothy with others. I hope he exaggerated a little when he lamented, "For all seek their own."

Paul was "low key" even about his own physical and emotional needs (4:10-18). We should be too. We certainly should not promote our luxury "needs," reputation needs, ego needs, ecclesiastical "needs." We should ask ourselves, "Am I in this pastorate to feather my own nest, or to climb to a higher rung on the ecclesiastical ladder, or for greater self-exposure to the church and to the world?"

Preacher, why down deep are you so concerned about or interested in yourself?

I don't agree with Quaker founder George Fox on the definition of "hireling ministry." He thought that no one should receive money for preaching. (George had some money without doing secular work. I don't know how he got it.) I don't think that a preacher who accepts a check from a church treasurer or a love offering from a congregation is necessarily a "hireling." But a hireling is one who is more concerned about self than service, who is in the

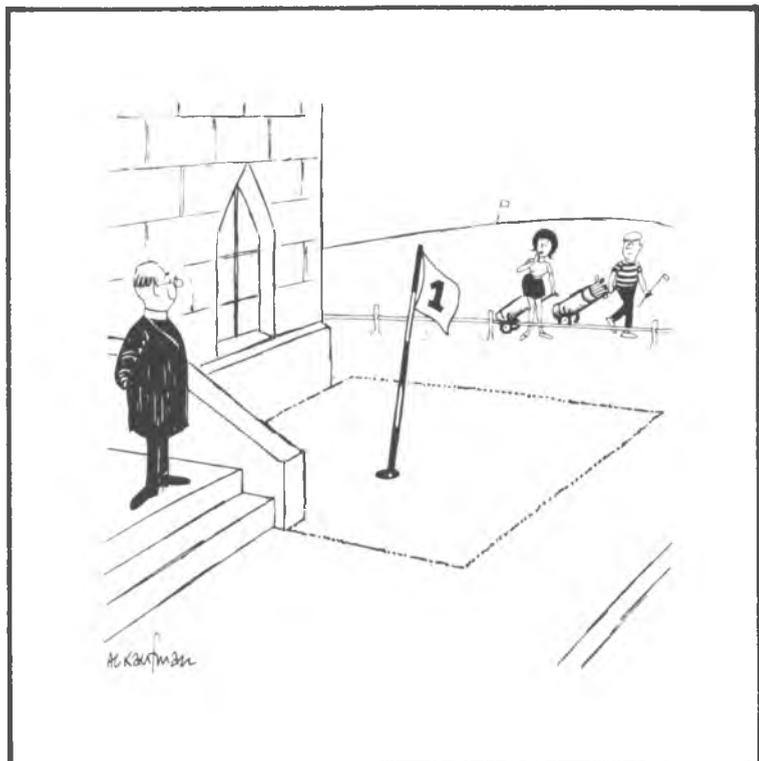
pastorate basically for what he gets out of it.

6 Focus on the people's needs. Pastor Paul wrote, "I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (4:17).

When you enter your office early in the week, is it with a doleful, "Oh, I've got to get two more sermons before next Sunday! What a grind"? Or rather, is it with a concerned heart cry, "Lord, help me this week, both in and out of the pulpit, to meet the needs of people"?

True, we should aim for homiletical skill and public-speaking excellence. But in going into the pulpit, our greatest concern should be, "Lord, please enable me to speak to needs today. Use me to bring help, healing, grace to those out there who are lonely, hurting, discouraged, perplexed, disappointed, double-minded, hungry, guilty, hard-hearted, stubborn, deceived." This is far more important than "getting through another sermon."

Written from prison, this great letter (Philippians) is minus laments and complaints and self-pity about the writer's hard times. Paul's heart goes outward, not inward. He closes with "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (4:19). 



Church Planting: New Testament Style

The church planting mission to Thessalonica was undertaken with conspicuous divine guidance. Paul was planning to travel east into Bithynia but the "Spirit of Jesus" headed him off (Acts 16:7). Instead Paul was "called" to Europe. After a turbulent mission in Philippi, Paul headed for the chief city of Macedonia—Thessalonica. It was the governmental, commercial, and social hub of the region—and it had a Jewish synagogue.

In a comparatively short time a devout congregation thrived in Thessalonica. Its zeal and example soon became known throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1:8). In the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes a sort of "apologia" for church planters. Hopefully we can review it with profit.

1. Intrepid Boldness

"Though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition" (v. 2, RSV). At Philippi, Paul and Silas had been flogged, an experience not quickly forgotten. But the pain of the whipping was not all; the apostles had been publicly insulted and humiliated. A little later at Thessalonica it looked as if there was going to be a repeat of the Philippian experience. Luke tells us that the whole city was in an uproar against the missionaries, incited by the Jews (Acts 17:5), and Paul describes it as

"great opposition" (v. 2). In spite of this, Paul and Silas boldly persevered without regard to the personal danger involved.

Most of us will know nothing of violent opposition like that, but there are other situations that no less demand the same quality of endurance inspired by the Spirit. Ours will not be the experience of mob violence, but it may be the disheartening continuance of indifference to our ministry, utter carelessness about spiritual things, and the general disinterest that regards us as unwanted anachronisms. To continue our ministry with zeal and enthusiasm in those circumstances will require boldness born of the sure call of God to us.

2. Scrupulous Stewardship (vv. 3-6)

Paul speaks in v. 4 of his ministry as approved of God to be *pisteuthenai to euaggelion* which the RSV and NIV happily translate as "entrusted with the gospel." To be given the stewardship of the gospel is a solemn responsibility, and Paul argues his *apologia pro vita sua* with six strong negatives.

His proclamation of the gospel was not *erroneous* ("does not spring from error" [v. 3, RSV this par.]), i.e., it did not rest on imaginations, illusions, or deceptions. It was not *prestigious* ("uncleanness"), exalting Paul rather than Christ. It was not *devious* ("nor is it made with guile"), a clever manipulation of emotions to ensnare



CARL BAKER RESIGNS LARGE PASTORATE; SETS PRECEDENT FOR CHURCH PLANTING

This is more exciting than them all," says Pastor Carl Baker of the new Gettysburg Project for which he recently resigned his large pastorate at Columbus First Church of the Nazarene. The Carl Bakers have pastored at West Chester, Pa.; Grand Rapids First; Pasadena Bresee; and Columbus First churches.

The board of Columbus First Church backed the Bakers unanimously in this move, sending along to the new project

converts. Nor was it *obsequious* ("words of flattery"), flattering men into a false Christian security that ignored the necessity of repentance and confession. It was not *avaricious* ("a cloak for greed"). In this missionary party there was no Balaam or Gehazi or Ananias. Finally, Paul's proclamation was not *pretentious* ("nor did we seek glory from men"); these church planters had not "stood on their dignity," demanding service and privilege.

3. *Endearing Gentleness*

"We were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children" (v. 7, RSV). Having presented his strong denials in reply to the false charges made by his opponents, Paul now turns to the positive side of his ministry and that of his colleagues. Theirs was a ministry characterized by love and self-giving. Paul's comparing himself to a nurse may at first seem a little surprising, illuminating a side of the apostle's character we might not readily think of. When the occasion demanded, Paul could openly rebuke Peter (Gal. 2:11), dispute warmly with Barnabas (Acts 15:37-39), and publicly castigate Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:8-11), but among his Thessalonian converts he was as gentle as a nurse. Here is a picture of protective pastoral care; the church planter nourishes, cares, and provides for the spiritual growth of those whom the Lord has given to him.

4. *Sacrificial Self-giving*

"So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us" (v. 8, RSV). Paul and Silas gave to the Thessalonian church not only the gospel and their time and energy and sacrificial labours, but they gave also their very selves. Paul speaks of being "affectionately desirous" (Gk. *homeiromenoi*), a term that long was uncertain until a tomb inscription illustrated it, using it to express the deep yearning of sorrowing parents over a dead child. These apostles really cared about their converts and thought no sacrifice too great to make for them.

5. *Honest Labour*

"For you remember our labor and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God" (v. 9,

RSV). The sheer hard work of the Thessalonian mission is brought out emphatically. Paul and Silas had *laboured* and *toiled* and done it *day* and *night*. The inference here is that Paul worked some manual employment (he was a tentmaker by training, Acts 18:3) and so did the other missionaries, to prevent any financial burden falling on the Thessalonians. Paul and his colabourers were not ashamed to work with their hands to provide their own livelihood; and while this may be neither possible nor necessary in modern church planting, it does underline for us the importance of being honest, industrious workmen. In this calling, there simply is no substitute for hard work.

6. *Proved Integrity* (v. 10)

"You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behavior to you believers" (v. 10, RSV). Our ministry is always open to both human scrutiny and divine evaluation, and Paul is not afraid to appeal to both. "You are witnesses, and God also." Without exegeting each of the three adverbs in detail, we note that "holy" refers primarily to the inner disposition, and "righteous" has to do with all outward conduct and behaviour. These two are stated positively; then follows a negative adverb, "blameless," embracing both the former and adding up to a total of uncompromised integrity. Their integrity was a proof of the gospel they preached.

7. *Solicitous Affection* (vv. 11-12, 17-20)

In all, Paul changes the figure of his commitment from that of a nurse to that of a father. He had exhorted and encouraged and charged every one of these Thessalonians to live a life worthy of God. Paul's concern was not merely to count converts but to make disciples—men and women in whose lives was to be seen the likeness of Christ. Such was the apostles' affection for these believers that Paul speaks in v. 17 of being "orphaned" of them when forced to leave Thessalonica. But that was not all. They had an intense longing to return (v. 18), for their love for the Thessalonians made separation painful. Nothing mattered more to these church planters than the spiritual growth of their converts. The apostles' hope and joy and crown and glory (vv. 18-19) was the growing in grace of their spiritual children. 

30 of their adult members as "missionaries." These 30 will open their homes to fellowship ministries in the new area, will serve on boards and committees, and will attend all the services of the church regularly for a 12-month period.

The new church will meet in a public school facility in the northwest quadrant of Columbus which they have leased for a day-care center the past year. Purchase of this building is in their planning.

They expect to be ready to organize in 12 months from their October 4 initiation date. They further project the launching of another new congregation, in cooperation with Columbus First Church, within a three-year period.

For the Bakers it was not a hasty decision to leave an established church with 506 members for a nonexistent one. It followed weeks of heart-searching and prayer. "Mrs. Baker, our boys, and I believe this is God's plan and

His will for us at this time," writes Pastor Carl. "It is a bold step for my family. I thank God for their confirming dedication."

J. Wilmer Lambert, district superintendent of Central Ohio District, says, "The sacrificial and dedicated move of the Bakers, we think, is outstanding. It will set a pattern, perhaps, for other pastors of larger churches who would be willing to make this type of commitment for church planting." 

The Minister's Study Habits— or Lack Thereof

At our recent pastors' and wives' retreat Leslie Parrott made the statement, "The library room is the most important room in our home." That statement reflects the paramount importance of study—that integral discipline in the life of a minister.

Ralph Earle said to a class of seminarians, "Ladies and gentlemen, if you are going to study properly, you will have to keep the seat of your pants on the seat of the chair." William Greathouse during a district assembly admonished the pastors "to take several hours of each day for serious study."

It was John Wesley's conviction that if a man did not have an inclination toward study, he was never called into the ministry.

William Barclay makes the statement, "The teacher must never teach without the most careful and conscientious preparation. If the task is of such awe-inspiring importance, then to approach it unprepared is nothing less than sin."¹ Barclay offers this keen and penetrating insight: "The harder a man works and thinks and studies to find out the meaning of the Word of God, the more the Holy Spirit can reveal to him."²

W. A. Criswell is of the opinion that "no man can meet the demands of a pulpit who does not constantly and earnestly study."³ He amplifies his thought further by suggesting, "Take time for prayer and study and preparation. If the message is of little cost to the preacher, it will be of little value to the congregation."⁴

It is almost self-evident that a pastor will be a consistent student. Allow me to give a couple of reasons.

Study Is Important

Leander Keck says, "The pastor needs to be a working theologian in order to be an effective preacher."⁵ I believe that as pastors we are beneficiaries not only of the theological process, but as participants in the theological process. If our contribution is to be viable, we *must* study.

G. C. Berkouwer shares the insight "that theology likewise should not pretend to be an unmoved guardian of the truth. As a matter of fact, theology shows little sign of serene immobility. There is restless searching going on, a groping for ways to understand the gospel more clearly."⁶

He goes on to say, "But, conscious as we are of the unrest and the hesitations, the zigzag lines and the self-corrections, we are experiencing not only the limitations

of all theological thought, we are also receiving signals that theological unrest is part of the quest that has been given to the church for all time. It is the quest for a deeper and richer understanding of the unsearchable riches of the gospel."⁷

The *why* behind study becomes obvious—pastors are a part of the theological process in that we are consistently teaching our parishioners theology. This is an awesome responsibility! We must be as correct as possible. The eternal destinies of our people lie with us. We influence their thinking in an eternal way.

What to Study

It seems that all great preachers, ancient and contemporary, have their favorite areas of interest, yet all have common denominators. Pastors such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, W. A. Criswell, Charles Spurgeon, G. Campbell Morgan, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and many others seem to agree that the following areas need careful study:

1. Theology. To study theology would include apologetics, dogmatics, (Barth, Carl F. H. Henry, or Berkouwer), systematic theology (Wiley, Pope, Miley, Tillich). The individual disciplines, e.g. Christology (Bonhoeffer, Schillebeeckx), ecclesiology, hamartiology (Kühn).

2. Church history. Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, is excellent, as well as the works of Latourette. Also any study of the church fathers is good.

3. Commentaries and critical studies. W. A. Criswell felt this was especially important. It is hard to recommend a particular commentary because the needs of each pastor are so vastly different. The commentaries I read 10 years ago I seldom use now—yet they were important then. As we progress in our learning, we will need different commentaries.

4. Everything. Spurgeon was of the opinion the pastor should read widely in every field: (1) you preach to people in every walk of life, and (2) theology addresses and permeates every area of life. He felt also that effective illustrations could be taken from things read.

5. Biographies. Reading about the lives of great men and women can enrich us. Their hardships, victories, reading habits, self-discipline, etc. can be inspirational to us as well as instructional.

6. The Bible. The primary importance of studying the Bible is assumed.

Nazarene

UPDATE

UPDATE EDITOR, NINA BEEGLE, PASTORAL MINISTRIES

PREACHING

"From that time Jesus began to preach."

In doing this Christ established the priority and power of preaching.

"... it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed" (1 Corinthians 1:21). In this statement the Bible clearly proclaims the importance of this—preaching.

It is awesome to realize that God is depending on "preaching" to bring to pass the salvation of men!

We must acknowledge for our own good and the possible reaching of humanity that the essential purpose of preaching is to gain personal decisions to seek and find God—this fact we as preachers *must never forget!*

To make this happen God has the unbeatable combination of a man and His Word. Together they become the mighty force for salvation on earth. It is unthinkable that God would shackle himself and His program on earth to a weak, ineffective, defeatable gesture.

The Bible at many times proclaims the power of God's Word—no tool so mighty as the Word. We read also in that same Book about God-used men who accomplished His work even under adverse circumstances.

He chose and changed men!

He called and commanded men!



By General Superintendent
V. H. Lewis

He anointed and equipped men!

He led and recompensed men with victory.

He is effective in and through men.

So preaching becomes a human/divine combination. Preaching is the great call, the great assignment, the vast challenge, the life-dominating, soul-firing force.

The Bible uses the word *preaching* and its variations nearly 150 times in the Old and New Testaments. There is no record of failure in preaching. When God is in it, evil is confronted and pushed back, and decision for Christ is offered. It is then that the hearer stands at the "golden door."

Preaching's offer has been rejected by men, but the price of so doing is tragedy.

If a person knows all the writings of men and knows not the truths of the Bible, he lacks the knowledge most needed, essential, and practical for life.

If a person knows only the Bible and is ignorant of what men have written, he knows what matters most and with it he can learn how to live—it has in truth been called "the Book of life."

Churches and denominations have been known to stray from preaching. Men are prone to do less than preach and yet call it preaching.

Let us review in our minds what preaching really is and strive at all times of public speaking to do it.

The Church of the Nazarene urges this. We are a church of one Book. We believe in a God-called ministry. We believe that you and your Bible, with a pure heart and eager mind and led by the Holy Spirit, are able to accomplish His will—where you are, now!

We are not wrong in this firm faith in you under those conditions.

Christ set the pattern for us when He said, "I must preach the kingdom of God."

A complimentary subscription to the *Preacher's Magazine* is sent to all ministers in the Church of the Nazarene from the Nazarene Publishing House.

Place your church inside the dotted lines!



MISSION ACTION IS MAKING HISTORY

**75 NEW CHURCHES . . .
IN ONE DAY
OCTOBER 23, 1983**

TO COMMEMORATE OUR 75th ANNIVERSARY WE WILL BE WORKING WORLDWIDE TO PRODUCE 75 NEW FULLY ORGANIZED CHURCHES ON JUBILEE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23.

A Diamond Jubilee plaque will be given every church that organizes on October 23. Every church that sponsors a new work will get a citation as well as the pastors of sponsoring churches. There is still time for your church to build a new Body of Christ in your community, and to organize by October 23. Help your church to make history by parenting a new, fully organized Church of the Nazarene in 1983.

288 new churches to be organized from September 1, 1983, to September 1, 1984. This will equal the number of Churches of the Nazarene in existence at the Pilot Point meeting of union 1908.

EACH REGION OF THE WORLD AND EACH DISTRICT IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA IS TO REPORT TO CHURCH EXTENSION MINISTRIES ON THE HEADQUARTERS WATS LINE STARTING AT 12:00 NOON KANSAS CITY TIME ON OCTOBER 23 AND CONTINUING TO MIDNIGHT.

Call 1-800-821-2154

"I'll be listening."

Raymond W. Hurn

Church Extension Ministries

In Ohio, Texas, Florida, Oregon . . . across the United States and Canada, pastors are leaving large and comfortable pastorates to begin home mission churches. "It is bold, risky, challenging," writes Pastor Carl Baker of Columbus, Ohio. "It cannot succeed unless God blesses it." But the Bakers believe God is leading them to leave their church, with a membership of 506, to begin a new work in Columbus. And they believe God will bless.

In Nebraska, Michigan, Florida, Ohio, and other districts, entire districts are putting shoulder to wheel, in support of new churches, with great success.

Established churches are sponsoring new churches in South Carolina, Colorado, New York, New England . . . many other places. The "cluster idea" of every five churches sponsoring a new church is beginning to take hold.

Seminarians are fanning out across the country, taking up the challenge of mission churches, both ethnic and Anglo.

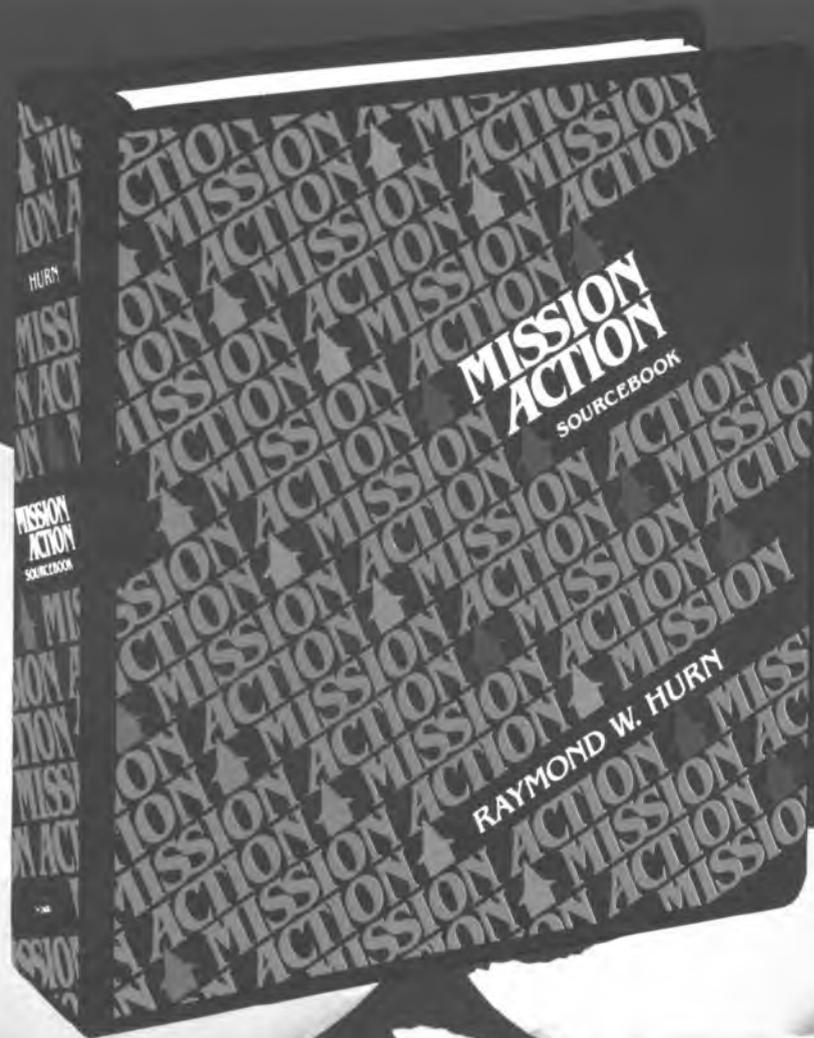
Mission Action Committees are being activated locally and on districts for total mobilization.

The methods and means vary, but the mission is sparked with enthusiasm, and the Lord is adding to the church.

Mission Action is gaining impetus—with your help we can reach the goals set for our Diamond Jubilee.

Let's mobilize for Mission Action!

It's out!!



READY FOR ACTION

Is your church ready for Total Mobilization?
Is your Mission Action Committee selected and activated?
Then you are ready to follow the steps of church growth through Mission Action . . .

1. A survey of the harvest potential.
2. Development of an action plan.
3. Preparing the church for outreach.
4. Cultivating the target community.
5. Launching the Mission Action church.
6. Maintaining the outreach ministry in progressive stages of development.
7. Organizing the Mission Action church.
8. Providing permanent facilities.

\$14.95 for one copy.

\$11.95 each when you order two—one for the pastor, one for the Mission Action Committee.

Order from the Nazarene Publishing House
P.O. Box 527, Kansas City, MO 64141.

LET'S CELEBRATE OUR DIAMOND JUBILEE WITH 75 NEW CHURCHES

«Massive Baby Hunt»



BABIES FOUND

SS ATTENDANCE

APRIL 10
"OUR BABIES" DAY

APRIL 17
CONCERNED GRANDPARENTS' DAY

APRIL 24
"LOVE FINDS A BABY" DAY

MAY 1
BABY DAY CELEBRATION

MAY 8
MOTHER'S DAY

MAY 15
ALL FAMILY DAY

NAZARENE FAMILY WEEK

May 8-14, 1983

Nazarene
Family
Week

May 8-14, 1983

NAZARENE NIGHT AT HOME—

MONDAY

Family '83

NAZARENE FAMILY WEEK

May 8-14

family '83

May 8-14

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

Monday

FAMILY NIGHT AT HOME

Church of the Nazarene

Family '83

Nazarene Family Week

May 8-14

FAMILY '83

May 8-14

Church of the Nazarene



In praise of a Christlike
marriage, the heart of a
Christlike home

NAZARENE FAMILY WEEK

May 8-14, 1983



A Christlike marriage is the heart of a Christlike home

Nazarene Family Week—May 8-14

Pastor: Clip art for your promotion of **Nazarene Family Week, May 8-14, 1983**. Write or call for your free **Family Week Packet**. Limited supply, first come, first served. Office of Marriage & Family Life, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131. (816) 333-7000, Extensions 364, 365.

Begin Your *NEW ASSEMBLY YEAR*
with the . . .

MINISTER'S DAILY WORKBOOK

FOR WEEKDAY—

A six-day work-schedule chart for keeping notations on calls, appointments, and meetings.

FOR SUNDAY—

A full page for recording sermon theme, text, songs, special music, announcements, attendance, and offerings, and summarizing previous week's activities.

FOR ANNUAL REPORT—

A systematic method of recording information necessary to *complete your district report* at the end of the church year.

Other Features—Monthly Expenditure Reports, Membership and Subscription Record—*identical to the "Annual Report of Pastor" form*. Also includes calendars; sheets for recording children dedicated, funerals, marriages, baptisms, names and addresses; and summary of year's activities.

All material comes in a quality, Dura-plus vinyl, six-ring binder with handy storage pocket in back. Pocket-size, 7¾" x 5½" x 7/8"; ½" rings with "push open" button at end. Includes sheet lifters. Takes 7¼" x 4¼", six-ring fillers.

MINISTER'S DAILY WORKBOOK may be started any time of the year. However, begun *with your NEW assembly year* and used consistently throughout the following 12 months, it will provide fingertip information for meeting the deadline for next year's annual report. Ideal for inserting sermon notes too.

R-52 Binder with R-51, R-53 inserts **\$8.95**

For the more than 2,500 pastors now using this "Workbook" . . .

R-51	Annual Replacement Refill	\$3.00
R-53	Address Sheets	(Package of 20) 50c
R-88510P	Plain Filler	(Package of 50) \$1.00
R-31011	Binder	\$6.50

Prices subject to change without notice.

An Essential Helpmate That No Pastor Should Be Without!

NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE

Post Office Box 527, Kansas City, Missouri 64141



4 PRACTICAL REASONS why
your church should use . . .

UNIFORM CHURCH TREASURER'S RECORD

1. Offers simplified accounting, understandable even to those with no formal bookkeeping training
2. Gives a detailed financial picture of each department and auxiliary of your church
3. Provides the pastor with all needed data for preparing his annual report
4. Flexible in its use for any church—large or small

**For nearly 25 years widely accepted
as an effective church record system in the
Church of the Nazarene.**

In addition to the Department Journal Sheets and Summary Reports are such helpful forms as: Counters' Reports (in triplicate). Individual Ledgers (for local, district, general budgets), Monthly and Annual Reports, and Individual Giving Records—all in one handy binder.

Instructions and sample forms provide a concise, clear, "how to use" explanation. The Dura-plus vinyl, three-ring binder is imprinted in gold. Thumb release. Size 10¼" x 11½" for 8½" x 11" inserts.

R-150 Includes each of the following items	\$15.95
R-165 OFFERING REPORT BLANKS	(55 triplicate forms) \$5.95
R-163 CASH DISBURSEMENTS and RECEIPTS JOURNAL	(Package of 25) \$1.95
R-164 LEDGER SHEETS (For Local, District, General, etc., Budgets)	(Package of 25) \$1.75
R-151 MONTHLY REPORT FORMS (13 Each of Summary, Expenditures, Budget Progress Form)	(1 Package of 39) \$1.75
R-168 INDIVIDUAL GIVING RECORD SHEETS	(Package of 25) \$1.25
R-169 DIVIDERS	(Set of 8) \$1.75
R-149 THREE RING BINDER	\$5.95

Prices subject to change without notice.

*A Self-contained Record Book for
Maintaining the Unified Treasury System in Your Church*

NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE
Post Office Box 527, Kansas City, Missouri 64141

Make one of your nest eggs the General Church Loan Fund.



Including the General Church Loan Fund in your financial planning can build nest eggs for you and a new church for a fellowship in need.

Your personal loan to the Fund is backed by the General Church and will be returned to you with up to 10 percent interest.

There is a constant need for money in order that loans may be made to growing churches.

An investment in the Fund can help secure the future for you and a young church. It makes dollars and sense.

Keep our young churches growing.

Inquire General Church Loan Fund
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City, MO 64131

Your choice of

3 Offering Envelope Sets

Features worth considering . . .

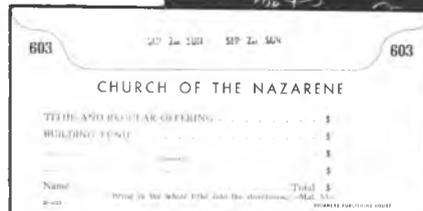
- All perpetually dated
- Sets never out of date
- Start any time of the year
- Attractive flip-top box suitable for mailing

SIZE: 3 x 6 1/4"



Check size **1**

Regular style **2**



Imprinted "Church of the Nazarene" and contains a year's supply of envelopes with the same number throughout to identify it to the contributor, plus a pledge card, "how to use" leaflet, and a "defray the cost" envelope.

Available in consecutive numbers (example: 324-56) and orders will be filled from the next series of numbers available in our stock.

NOTE: Requests for specifically designated numbers series and imprint will be treated as custom-printed orders and prices will be adjusted accordingly.

For CUSTOM-PRINTED ENVELOPES, write for SPECIAL BROCHURE.

Children's set **3**

with Picture Story

SIZE: 2 1/2 x 4 1/4"



Gives boys and girls a sense of personal pride; encourages the habit of systematic giving. Scriptures are repeated on two envelopes: one with a Bible picture; the other with a modern scene. Set of 52 envelopes include space for amount, name, and address. Single pocket style.

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|---|
| OX-603 | CHECK SIZE | \$1.15 ; 12 sets for \$12.25 ; 25 sets for \$23.25 |
| OX-502 | SINGLE | 95c ; 12 sets for \$9.95 ; 25 sets for \$18.50 |
| OX-503 | SINGLE Multiple-Fund | |
| O-39 | CHILDREN'S SET | \$1.00 ; 12 sets for \$11.00 ; 25 sets for \$22.00 |



SIZE: 2 1/2 x 4 1/4"



**NO
MINIMUM
ORDERS**
**ORDERS
FILLED
AT ONCE**

Is There Hidden Giving Power in Your Church?

Seated in YOUR congregation on any Sunday morning may be "hidden giving power," people whose giveable assets are unknown even to them . . . because they think only in terms of cash gifts. But they actually can give more, can give through plans which provide them with additional income, plans which help them make use of government-approved tax benefits, plans that can solve their money management worries, and plans that can bring lifetime satisfaction as they have a greater part in helping fulfill the Great Commission. It can all happen through the HORIZONS Planned Giving Programs, helping congregations discover their own giving power.

Hidden Planned Givers may be . . .

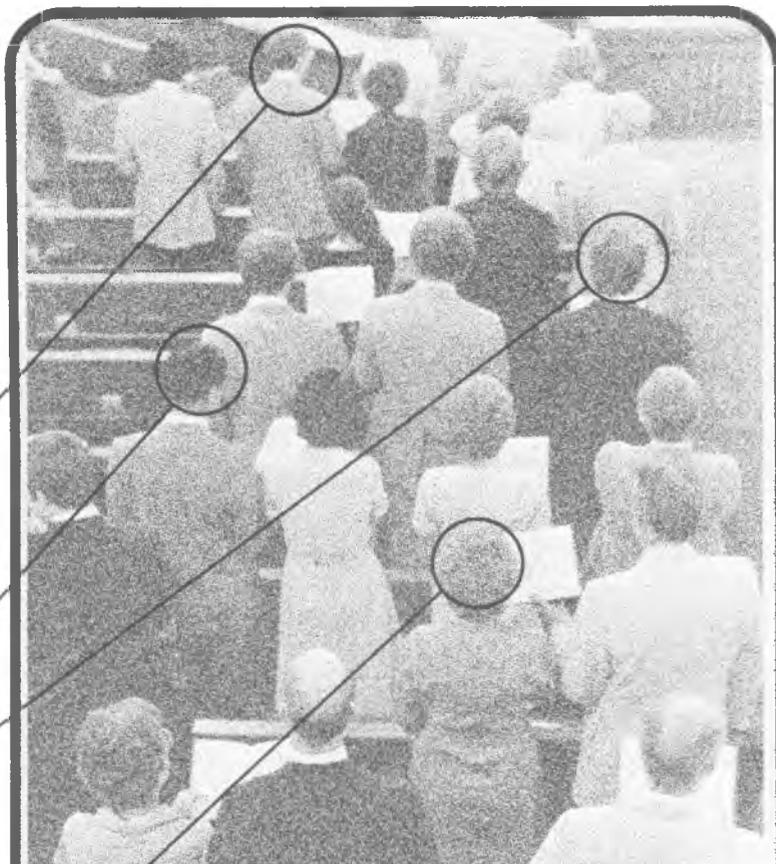
dedicated people who have never written a will and who would cherish the opportunity to plan a bequest for the church while also providing for their heirs ●

stockholders who could turn unproductive investments into additional annual income ●

members who hold real estate which they never plan to use ●

people who have few if any heirs, who need to know God can use their resources to enlarge their heavenly family ●

Your church can begin here:



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HORIZONS, WRITE:

Life Income Gifts Services
Church of the Nazarene
 6401 The Paseo
 Kansas City, MO 64131

IN CANADA:
Church of the Nazarene
 Executive Board
 P.O. Box 30080, Station "B"
 Calgary, Alberta
 T2M 4N7



HORIZONS PLANNED GIVING PROGRAMS



- A speaker to present biblical stewardship and planned giving options.
- A weekend wills clinic including slide presentation.
- Brochures for church families on "How to Write a Will That Works."
- Other

Please send me information about how my church can benefit from the HORIZONS Planned Giving Program. I am especially interested in the items checked at left.

NAME _____

POSITION _____

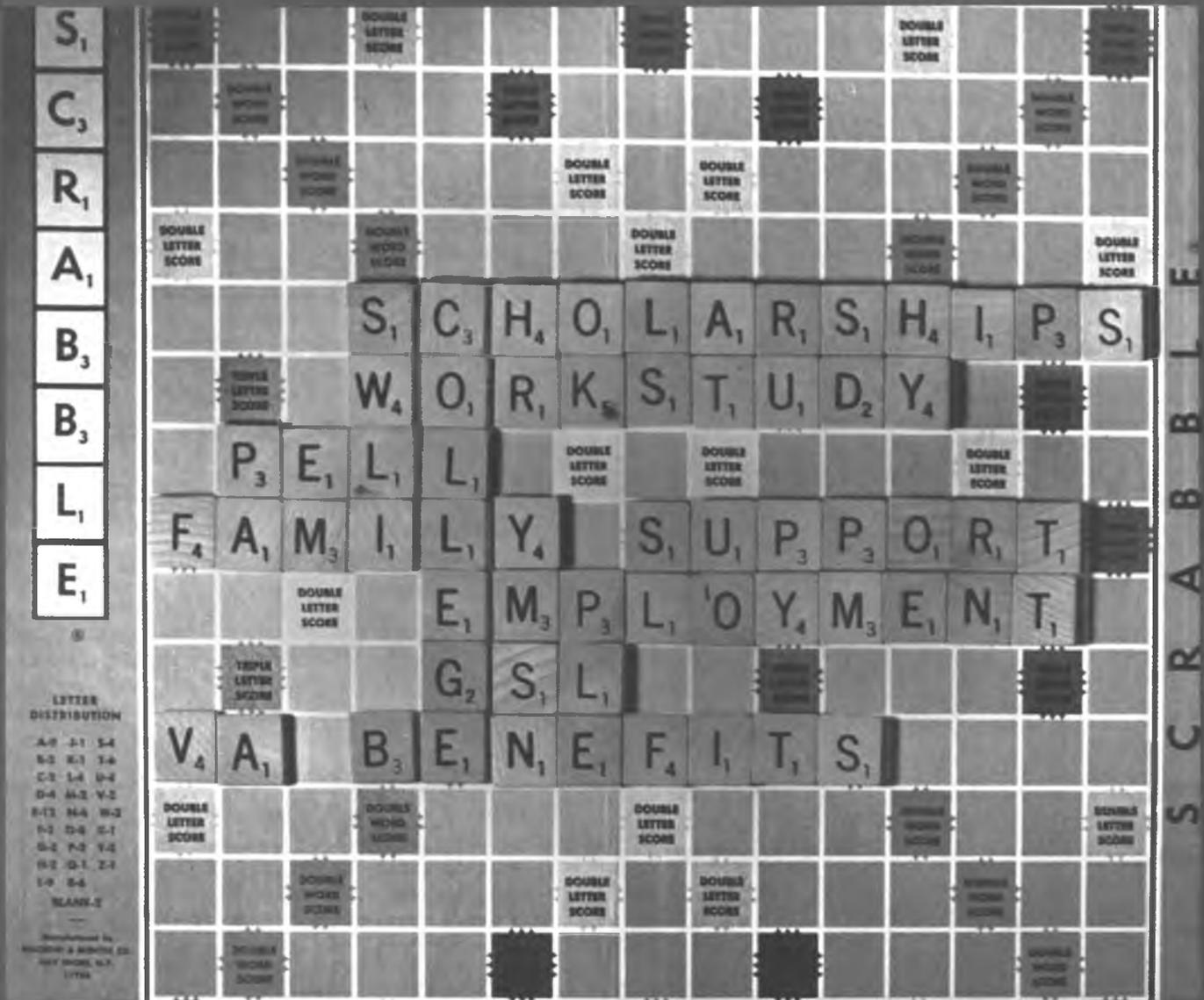
CHURCH _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____



FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES

- Loans
 - GSL
 - NDSL
 - PLUS
 - Regional Loan Programs
 - State Loan Programs
 - Nursing Loans
 - Emergency Loans
- Grants
 - Pell
 - State Grants
 - Local Church
 - District
 - Regional
 - P.K.
 - M.K. Loan/Grant
- Other
 - GI Bill
 - Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Social Security

- Scholarship
 - Academic
 - Athletic
 - Music
 - Activity
 - Service
 - Department
 - Ethnic & Minority
 - Parent's Employers
 - Civic Groups
 - Need-based
 - Memorial
 - General Superintendents Scholarship
- Employment
 - Summer
 - Off-Campus
 - Work-Study
 - Assistantships
 - On-Campus

For further information, contact your college financial aid office and your high school counselor. Financial Aid resources vary at each college.



THE SHEPHERD'S LIFE

Coming to you each quarter from Pastoral Ministries, Wilbur Brannon, Director

LEADERSHIP • INSPIRATION • FULFILLMENT • ENRICHMENT

COURSE OF STUDY INFORMATION

OUT OF PRINT—

The following books are out of print:

- No. 212 *History of Christian Education*, C. B. Eavey
- No. 224.2 *The Multiple-Staff Ministry*, Marvin T. Judy
- No. 224.2b *Evangelistic Bus Ministry Manual*, Harold C. Davis
- No. 234e *Fun Plans for Church Recreation*, Agnes Durant Pylant

Contact the District Board of Ministerial Studies or Pastoral Ministries for replacement texts.

WHAT TO DO—

There are several options when a book is out of print and a replacement text is being researched:

- (1) If your district has a library, look into borrowing the book;
- (2) Borrow the book from another student—the District Board of Ministerial Studies secretary can inform you of other students who are or have been enrolled in the Christian Education program;
- (3) Search at Christian bookstores in your area for possible availability;
- (4) Complete other courses and return to that course when a replacement text has been selected.

CHANGED—

The following reading book for Course No. 334a has been changed:

Song Leading, W. Hines Sims, has been replaced by *Five Practical Lessons in Song Leading*, Don Brown.

REVISED—

The 1981 edition of the **HANDBOOK ON THE MINISTRY** is being revised and availability is slated for spring 1983.

REMINDER!!

Examinations are to be taken *closed book only*. Please refer to the **HANDBOOK ON THE MINISTRY**, HM 431.3. □

DOUGLAS'S SHORT TENURE IN PASTORAL MINISTRIES ENDS



Dwight Douglas came to the Nazarene Headquarters from Seattle on June 1, 1979, to serve as general coordinator of training in the Division of Christian Life. He directed Teaching/Learning Conferences and developed teacher training materials. He also developed several video programs.

On April 1, 1982, he accepted a position of leadership in the office of Continuing Lay Training (CLT).

He came to Pastoral Ministries July 1, 1982, to assist in the new VideoNet Program which will provide continuing education, information, and other pertinent material for pastors. Plans and development for this program were cut short when he accepted a call to Portland (Oregon) First Church, leaving August 31. A replacement is expected soon to carry on this important ministry. □

VIDEONET IS COMING

A Monthly Videotape Subscription Program for Pastoral and Congregational Use

Video Network, a communication medium for pastors, will present unlimited training opportunities for pastors and lay leaders. It will also provide a church-based view of current events, theological issues, and other pertinent, up-to-date information that pastors have been asking for.

- Continuing Education Training Segments
- Nazarene News and Views
- Critical Issues in Pastoral Ministry
- Technical Services
- And much more

Watch for further announcements about

VIDEONET

THE CHAPLAIN—HE IS A PASTOR TOO

CAPTAIN LEROY A. BEVAN, CHAPLAIN OF CHAPLAINS

Many Nazarenes have served as chaplains in the armed forces in the 65-year lapse between the first, William Howard Hoople (1917), and Chaplain Bevan, now serving as full-time chaplaincy coordinator. But Chaplain LeRoy A. Bevan, Captain, CHC, USN (ret.), is the first to head this cadre of devoted clergy within the denomination, working within the structure of the Division of Church Growth in Kansas City.

Bevan's assignment began May 1, 1982. He has set his goals for the first year within what he calls a "Ministry of Visitation," which has included district superintendents, college presidents, and headquarters personnel across the U.S. and Canada, and executive people in the armed services. He has also attended the Far East Nazarene's Servicemen's Retreat in Seoul, Korea, and the European Nazarene Servicemen's Retreat in Germany.

Into his heavy travel schedule, Captain Bevan sandwiches one week of each month for administrative duties at the headquarters office.

With this good beginning, we urge pastors and district superintendents to welcome the chaplains and their families within your constituencies, and to make them feel a part of the Body of Christ there. Our chaplains need the support of their church. □

FIRST NAZARENE CHAPLAIN: WILLIAM HOWARD HOOPLE

With World War I as its launching pad, the Church of the Nazarene gave its first chaplain to the men who serve their country in time of war. "Pop Hoople" as he was lovingly called by the boys in uniform, literally gave his life in that service. He died at the early age of 54 as the result of walking over a battlefield where he inhaled poison gas.

William Howard Hoople was born in Herkimer, N.Y., in 1868, and was converted to Christ in his early 20s. Early in his religious experience he was called to preach. According to an earlier edition of the *Herald of Holiness* he "threw into the gospel ministry the vigorous enthusiasm and unrestrained energy of young manhood." All evidence is that these attributes did not diminish with age.

IS YOUR PASTORS' SUPPORT GROUP STARTED?

"I just couldn't find opportunity to call a fellow pastor and discuss the case studies provided in the *Preacher's Magazine* last quarter. But the need in my life is still there and I wish I had."

Is this where you are now?

Then call that pastor friend NOW and make a luncheon appointment at some midway point. A new opportunity has been provided. Turn to page 34 of this



Above: Chaplain LeRoy A. Bevan, Captain, CHC, USN (ret.), Nazarene Chaplaincy Coordinator, was assigned to denominational status May 1, 1982



Right: Wm. Howard Hoople, first Nazarene to serve as spiritual leader to servicemen.

Photo courtesy of Nazarene archives.

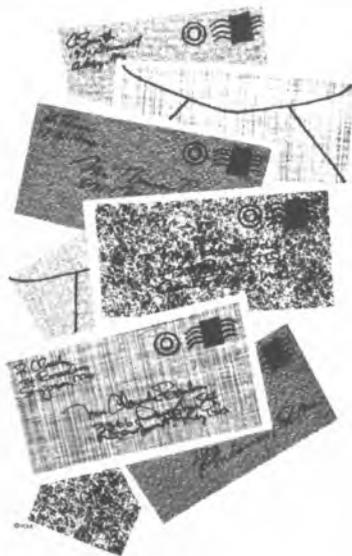
He engaged in a fruitful ministry in the New York area for many years and was known as one of the area's "best loved and ablest exponents of entire sanctification."

When World War I came, Rev. Hoople felt called to minister to U.S. servicemen. His beautiful singing and excellent preaching brought him favor with the U.S. troops in France, and his tent "was a place of almost constant consultation and praying the boys through. His prayers were full of tender and uplifting compassion mixed with great faith."

Following the war he again took up the threads of his pastoral work, though he never again enjoyed good health. He organized a mission church in Brooklyn which later became one of the original churches to be built into the foundation of the Church of the Nazarene. The poison gas incident cut short his ministry, and he died in 1922. □

magazine and read the case studies there. When you call your pastor friend (or friends) suggest that they bring their *Preacher's Magazine* also so you can discuss the case studies together.

With this as an opener it will be easy for you to share your problems and dilemmas in confidence. A pastoral support group in your area may be a lifeline for you or a peer pastor. □



ASSOCIATE PASTORS—

We need your resumes! Our file is growing, but is far from complete. Send for the convenient form: "Profile for Multi-Staff Ministers" which you only need to complete. Let us hear from you **SOON**.

Write to me: Rev. Wilbur W. Brannon
 Pastoral Ministries
 6401 The Paseo
 Kansas City, MO 64131

PASTORS—

Do you need an associate? Feel free to call our office for information. We can tell you who is available and can help you fit the individual to your staff needs.

Call me: Rev. Wilbur W. Brannon
 816-333-7000

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1982-83—The Year of the Young

May 30—June 3, 1983	NIROGA, California
May 30—June 7, 1983	NIROGA, Hawaii
June 13-16, 1983	Faith and Learning Conference—ONC
June 20-26, 1983	World Youth Conference, Oaxtepec, Mexico

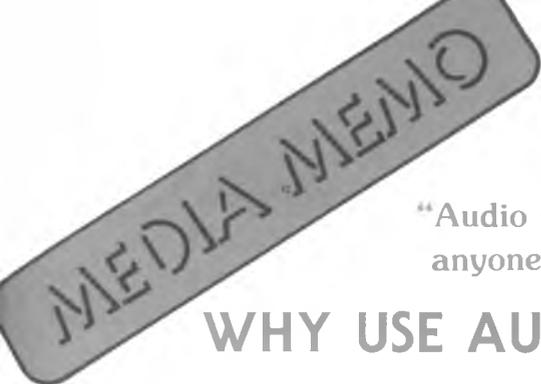
1983-84—The Year of the Diamond Jubilee

August 29—September 4, 1983	Youth Week
September 12-17, 1983	NIROGA, Glorieta, New Mexico
September 19-23, 1983	NIROGA, Ridgecrest, North Carolina
September 26-30, 1983	NIROGA, Adirondacks
October 4-6, 1983	Conference on Evangelism—Winnipeg
October 9-16, 1983	Diamond Jubilee Week
October 10-14, 1983	NIROGA, Canadian Rockies
October 1983 (Tentative)	Chaplains' Retreat
October 1983	European Military Personnel Retreat
December, January, February	"How to Live a Holy Life" Enduring Word Series Sunday School Lessons
January 3-5, 1984	Conference on Evangelism—Phoenix
January 17-19, 1984	Conference on Evangelism—Fort Worth
January 24-26, 1984	Conference on Evangelism—Tampa
February 20-24, 1984	NIROGA, Florida
SUMMER, 1984	WILCON II, College Campuses
May 28—June 1, 1984	NIROGA, California

1984-85—The Year of Church growth

Goal—75,000 New Nazarenes

August 27—September 2, 1984	Youth Week
September 10-15, 1984	NIROGA, Glorieta, New Mexico
September 17-21, 1984	NIROGA, Ridgecrest, North Carolina
October 1-5, 1984	NIROGA, Adirondacks
October 1984	European Military Personnel Retreat
February 18-22, 1985	NIROGA, Florida
June 20-22, 1985	General Conventions, Anaheim
June 23-28, 1985	General Assembly, Anaheim
August 26—September 1, 1985	Youth Week
September 9-14, 1985	NIROGA, Glorieta, New Mexico
September 16-20, 1985	NIROGA, Ridgecrest, North Carolina
September 30—October 4, 1985	NIROGA, Adirondacks
October 14-18, 1985	NIROGA, Canadian Rockies



AUDIO CASSETTES

(Prepared for your Media Resource Notebook by Media Services.)

“Audio Cassette Technology can be a time and money saver for anyone involved with training and communication!”

WHY USE AUDIO CASSETTES?

- **ECONOMICAL**

Equipment and tape are relatively inexpensive.

- **INDEPENDENT LEARNING**

Normal learning time can be reduced through stimulating and self-paced cassette programs. Learners become productive faster, with less supervision.

- **FLEXIBILITY**

Scope of use is unlimited. When combined with printed materials, visuals, work sheets, etc., learning and communication is improved through the use of more of the senses. Facilitates increased attention, retention, and recall.

- **STANDARDIZED WORLDWIDE**

Interchangeable with all cassette players, recorders, sound/slide and filmstrip projectors

- **SIMPLICITY**

Equipment and cassettes are easy to obtain and easy to operate.

- **AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES**

Tape, equipment, and excellent prerecorded resources are in abundant supply.

- **EASILY STORED**

Cassettes are compact and can be easily cataloged for convenient storage and access.

USES?

- **OUTREACH**

Worship services can be recorded for those unable to attend.

- **TRAINING & EVALUATION**

Lessons, sermons, board meetings, etc., can be recorded for rehearsal and evaluation to discover areas of improvement.

- **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Guest speakers and various special productions are available on cassettes.

- **STUDY AIDS**

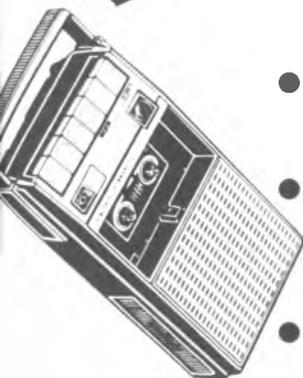
By itself, or with visual helps, Audio Cassettes can be used to generate interest and more effectively present study material.

- **MUSIC**

Can provide musical accompaniment when desired or needed.

- **“LIVING LETTERS.”**

Audio Cassettes can be used to send a “personal” message.



ORGANIZATION & STORAGE?

- **LABELING**

Every Audio Cassette should have an appropriate label with adequate program information.

- **CODING**

A letter or color code can be used to categorize recordings for quick sorting. For example, red dots may indicate children's education, blue dots for teacher training, etc.

- **SHIELDING**

Use of plastic snap-on shields or plastic storage units should be used to help in storage and protection of the tapes.

- **STORING**

Tapes should never be stored near equipment or wiring carrying heavy current loads. The resulting magnetic fields may affect the recorded materials. If possible, tapes should be stored in a location having about 50 percent humidity and a normal temperature range of 15-20 degrees Celsius.

RESOURCES?



- **MINISTER'S TAPE CLUB**

A quarterly audio digest for pastors, covering a variety of themes and news items.

- **ENDURING WORD CASSETTES.**

For adult Sunday School teachers. An excellent narration and commentary on the Lesson Exposition. An important tool for shut-ins, the blind, and lesson preparation while on the go.



- **LOCAL CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORES**

Here you will often find a wide variety of Audio Cassette resources available.

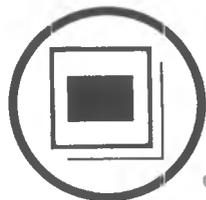
- **AUDIOVISUAL CATALOGS**

Along with many other A.V. catalogs, your Nazarene Publishing House Audiovisual Catalog makes a large number of outstanding recordings readily available to you.

(For further information on Audio Cassettes see your Nazarene Publishing House Audiovisual Catalog or contact Media Services.)



Films,



Slides,



Videocassettes

MISSIONS

Films

HAITI: A NAZARENE HAPPENING (FR-135)

20 min./color. \$15.00 rental. 1980

Portrait of a rapidly growing mission field. This film documents the account of two growing churches in Haiti, and the Work and Witness teams that helped in some of the construction.

THEY CRY IN THE NIGHT (FR-134)

50 min./color. Freewill Offering rental. 1980

Powerful, spellbinding story of pioneer Nazarene missionary Harmon Schmelzenbach's trek into northern Swaziland, and his successful struggle to plant the Church of the Nazarene.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD FOR CHURCHES (FR 130)

28 min./color. \$10.00 rental. 1978

Discusses tensions that surround planting of new churches.

TO WIPE THE TEAR (FR-128)

35 min./color. \$25.00 rental. 1977

Graphic portrayal of medical missionary Dr. Orpha Speicher, the hospital she built, and the lives she touched.

MISSION: EUROPE (FR-125)

52 min./color. \$7.50 rental. 1974

Introduction of the Church of the Nazarene in Germany, Holland, Denmark, Portugal, and Switzerland. Includes highlights of European Nazarene Bible College.

ALABASTER STORY (FR-123)

12 min./color. \$10.00 rental. 1974

Shows the dramatic story of Alabaster giving during 1974—celebrating the 25th anniversary of its beginning.

TO MAKE A MIRACLE (FR 120)

32 min./color. \$25.00 rental. 1972

Inspiring story of God working on various fields—and our part in His work. Contains testimonies of those whose lives have been changed by Christ.

Slides

Rental. \$7.50; Sale. \$25.00

Adult 1983 Slides:

ALABASTER, YOU AND THE SON

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Sharing their thoughts about this changing continent are Dr. Richard Zanner, regional director of the Nazarene work in Africa; Dr. E. V. Dlamini, General NWMS Council member, and employee of the Swaziland government; Mrs. Lela

O. Jackson, general NWMS president, and former missionary to Swaziland; along with Dr. Louise Chapman, former missionary to Swaziland, and general president emeritus of NWMS.

IT CAN HAPPEN

30 min./color. 1982

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CASA ROBLES ON CAMERA

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Interview with retired Nazarene missionaries at Casa Robles retirement center. Discussion includes the Medical Plan and Retirement.

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Inspirational sequel to Casa Robles on Camera.

ELMER SCHMELZENBACH

(VT-67)

60 min./color. 1979

This long-time missionary tells senior adults attending one of the NIROGAs about experiences from his many years on the African mission field. (Rental: \$8.75 VHS; \$8.00 Beta II; \$11.25 U-Matic. Sale: \$18.00 VHS; \$14.50 Beta II; \$30.00 U-Matic.)

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VISUAL ART DEPARTMENT, NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE
(Monthly slates published in the first issue of the "Herald of Holiness" each month)

A

ADAMS, MICHAEL. (C) 1653 Guava Ave., Melbourne, FL 32953
ALLEN, ARTHUR. (R) 2440 Castletower Ln., Tallahassee, FL 32301
ALLEN, JIMMIE. (R) 205 N Murray, Sp 244, Colorado Springs, CO 80916
●ANDERSON, LAWRENCE & KAREN-LOUISE. (C) 43 Mammoth Rd., Rte 3, Londonderry, NH 03053
ANDERSON, ROBERT. (R) 6100 S.W. Raab Rd., Portland, OR 97221
ARMSTRONG, C. R. (R) 2614 E. Yukon St., Tampa, FL 33604
●ARMSTRONG, DONNELL. (R) Rte 9 Box 464K Fairmont, WV 26554
●ARMSTRONGS, LEON, LINDA, AND FAMILY. (R) 3906 Poplar Grove Dr., Vinton, VA 24179
ATKINSONS FAMILY CRUSADES, THE. (R) c/o NPH* (Full time)
ATTIG, WALTER W. (C) 21 Larkspur Dr., Belleville, IL 62221

B

●BAKER, RICHARD C. (C) 3590 Coal Fork Dr., Charleston, WV 25306
BALDWIN, DEAN. (R) 18155 S Ridgeview, Olathe, KS 66061
BALLARD, O. H. (C) 7113 S Blackwelder, Oklahoma City OK 73159
●BATERS, ROBIN. (R) 3955 Romestant Rd., Norton, OH 44203
BEARDEN, LES. (C) P.O. Box 162, Xenia, OH 45385
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BOCK, DON. (C) Box 412 Washington Court House, OH 43160
●BOHANNON, C. G. & GERALDINE. (R) 420 S Curry Pike, Bloomington, IN 47401
BOHI, ROY. (C) 349 Choctaw Pl., Yukon, OK 73099
●BOHI, JAMES T. (C) 1600 College Way, Olathe, KS 66061
●BOND, GARY C. (C) 410 S Clay St., Sturgis, MI 49091
BOONE, FORD. (R) 2232 Sloane St, Jackson, MS 39204
BOSHALL, JAMES T. (R) RR 2, Box 157, Eastwood No 10, Parkersburg, WV 26101
●BOWERS, LUCILLE. (C) 701 N. Buchanan, Little Rock, AR 72205
BOWKER, A. STEPHEN. (R) 235 S Coals Rd, Oxford, MI 48051
●BRAUN, GENE. (C) 4418 Silkirk Ln. E., Lakeland, FL 33803
BREWINGTON, JANE. (C) 281 Hendley Rd. No D, Penn Wynne, PA 19151

●BRISCOE, JOHN & FAMILY. (C) Box 78, Canadian, OK 74424
BROOKS, GERALD & JUNE. (C) c/o NPH*
BROOKS, STANLEY E., JR. (C) Rte 1 Box 245, Westmoreland, NH 03467
BROWN, FRED. (R) 344 Avonwick Pl., Gahanna, OH 43230
●BROWN, ROGER N. (C) Box 724, Kankakee, IL 60901
BROWNE, CHARLES E. (R) 2532 Parchmount Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49004
●BUCKLES-BURKE EVANGELISTIC TEAM. (C) 6028 Miami Rd., South Bend, IN 46614
BUCKLIN, GENE. (C) Box 228, Oakes, ND 58474
BUDD, JAY B. (R) 1385 Hentz Dr., Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
●BURCH, SAMUEL. (R) 210 S. Water No 4, Olathe, KS 66061 (Full time)
●BURKHALTER, PAT. (R) P.O. Box 801, Atlanta, TX 75551

C

●CARR, KEITH. (C) RR 1 Box 2, Parsons, WV 26287
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CAYTON, JOHN. (C) Box 675, Middleboro, MA 02346
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CHAPMAN, L. J. (R) Box 44, Bethany, OK 73008
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●COFFEY, REV. & MRS. RUSSELL E. (C) 1841 128th Ave Hopkins, MI 49328
COLLINS, LUTHER. (C) 1215 Lyndon St., South Pasadena, CA 91030
●CONE, ANDREW. (R) 173 E. Puente, Covina, CA 91723
CONNETT, JOHN W. (R) 807 Fair Oaks Dr., Champaign, IL 61821
COOK, RALPH. (R) 6355 N. Oak, Temple City, CA 91780
●COTTAM, DAVE. (R) 508 Cherry Vale, Edmond, OK 73034
●COY, JIM & MARTHA. (R) 4094 Bresee Ave., Howell, MI 48843
CRABTREE, J. C. (C) 3436 Cambridge, Springfield, OH 45503
●CRANDALL, VERNON & BARBARA. (C) 11177 S 30th St., Rte. 4, Vicksburg, MI 49097
●CRANE, BILLY D. (C) Rte 2, Box 186, Walker, WV 26180
●CROFFORD, DON. (R) 254 Southridge Dr., Rochester, NY 14626
CULBERTSON, BERNARD. (C) 100 N.E. 8th Pl., Hermiston, OR 97838

D

●DALE, TOM. (C) Box 85, Hunters, WA 99137

DARNELL, H. E. (C) P.O. Box 929, Vivian, LA 71082
●DELL, JIMMY. (R) 4026 E. Flower St., Phoenix, AZ 85018
DENNIS, CARL. (R) 411 Veritas, Nashville, TN 37211
●DENNIS, DARREL & BETTY & FAMILY. (C) 1009 S Sheffield, Indianapolis, IN 46221
●DENNISON, MARVIN E. (R) 1208 S.E. Green Rd, Tecumseh, KS 66542
●DITTMER, THEODORE, and FAMILY. (R) 152A Coleridge Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80909
●DIXON, GEORGE & CHARLOTTE. (C) Evangelists and Singers c/o NPH*
●DODDS, LARRY. (R) Rte 5, Box 385, Burlington, IA 52601
DODGE, KENNETH L. (C) 2956 Rollingwood Dr., San Pablo, CA 94806
●DOROUGH, JIM & CAROL. (R) c/o NPH* (Full time)
DOWTY, PAUL. (R) Rte 3, Box 741, Broken Bow, OK 74728
DOYLE, PHILIP R. (R) 3468 White Pine Dr., Walnut Port, PA 18088
●DUNMIRE, RALPH & JOANN. (C) 202 Garwood Dr, Nashville, TN 37210
DUNN, DON. (C) P.O. Box 132, Bartlett, OH 45713

E

●EASTMAN, RICK. (C) P.O. Box 278, Eureka, IL 61530
●EBY, PAUL & MARTHA ANN. (R) P.O. Box 100441, Nashville, TN 37210
EDWARDS, TERRY W. (R) Box 674, Frederick, OK 73542 (Full time)
ERICKSON, A. WILLIAM. (C) 3714 Oak Road, Bartlett, TN 38134
●ESSELBURN, BUD (THE KING'S MESSENGERS). (R) S R 60 N, Rte 1, Warsaw, OH 43844
ESTERLINE, JOHN W. (C) 4400 Keith Way Bakersfield, CA 93309
●EVERLETH, LEE (R) 300 Aurora St., Marietta, OH 45750
EVERMAN, WAYNE. (C) P.O. Box 377, Stanton, KY 40380

F

●FADER, WESLEY. (R) 7093 Colorado Springs Dr., Springfield, VA 22153
FILES, GLORIA; & ADAMS, DOROTHY. (C) c/o NPH*
FINE, LARRY. (R) 1909 E. 152nd St., Olathe, KS 66062
FISHER, WILLIAM. (C) c/o NPH*
FLORENCE, ERNEST E. (C) P.O. Box 458, Hillsboro, OH 45133
FORMAN, JAMES A. (C) Box 844, Bethany, OK 73008
FORTNER, ROBERT E. (C) Box 322, Carmi, IL 62821
●FRANKLIN, DAVID. (R) 701 Victory Dr., Collinsville, IL 62234
FREEMAN, MARY ANN. (R) Box 139, Gas City, IN 46933
FRODGE, HAROLD C. (C) Rte 1, Gelf, IL 62842

G

GARDNER, JOHN. (R) 6016 Norton Rd., Lakeland, FL 33805
GANTHROP, WAYLAND. (C) Box 115, Mount Erie, IL 62446
●GILLESPIE, SHERMAN & ELSIE. (R) 305 E Highland, Muncie, IN 47303 (Full-time)
●GORDON, ROBERT. (R) 928 Prairie Rd., Colorado Springs, CO 80916
GORMAN, HUGH. (C) Box 3154, Melfort, Saskatchewan, Canada S0E 1A0
●GORMANS, THE SINGING (CHARLES & ANN). (C) 12104 Linkwood Ct., Louisville, KY 40229
GRACE, GEORGE. (R) 909 W. 9th, Coffeyville, KS 67337
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GRIMES, BILLY. (C) Rte 2, Jacksonville, TX 75766
●GRINDLEY, GERALD & JANICE. (C) 539 E. Mason St., Owosso, MI 48867
GROVES, C. WILLIAM. (C) 2558 Stoney Way, Grove City, OH 43123
GUSTIN, STEVE. (R) 536 E. Haltern, Glendora, CA 91740

(C) Commissioned (R) Registered ●Preacher & Song Evangelist ●Song Evangelist
*Nazarene Publishing House, Box 527, Kansas City, MO 64141

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H

- ◆HAINES, GARY. (C) c/o NPH*
HALL, CARL. (C) Box 7086, Clearwater, FL 33518
HANCOCK, BOYD. (C) c/o NPH*
◆HANSON, BRIAN & CHERYL. (R) 1201 Westerfield Pl., Olathe, KS 66061
HAYES, ALVIN B. (R) 1121 Westerfield Pl., Olathe, KS 66061
◆HAYNES, CHARLES & MYRT. (C) P.O. Box 3563, Cleveland, TN 37311
HEATON, KENNETH. (R) 14 Martinsburg Rd., Mount Vernon, OH 43050
◆HEDGE, PAUL & SHIRLEY. (R) 919 W 1st St., Morehead, KY 40351
HICKE, S. F. (R) 6655 Hubbard Ln., Tinley Park, IL 60477
HILL, RON & CHARLENE. (R) 207 Lyndale Dr., Rome, NY 13440
HISE, RON. (R) 2035 Hancock, De Motte, IN 46310
HOOTS, BOB. (C) 309 Adair St., Columbia, KY 42728
◆HORNE, ROGER & BECKY. (R) P.O. Box 17496, Nashville, TN 37217
HOWARD, RICHARD. (C) 7901 N W 28th Terr., Bethany, OK 73008
HUBBART, LEONARD. (R) 6309 Salisbury Dr., Fort Wayne, IN 46816
HUFFMAN, W. D. (R) RR 1, North Point Estates, Bourbonnais, IL 60914
HUGHES, MRS. JOYCE. (C) Rte 1, Box 231, Dover, TN 37058

I

- INGALLS, JAMES. (C) P.O. Box 367, Spiceland, IN 47385
INGLAND, WILMA JEAN. (R) 322 Meadow Ave., Charleroi, PA 15022

J

- ◆JACKSON, CHUCK & MARY. (C) P.O. Box 100308, Nashville, IN 37210
◆JACKSON, PAUL & TRISH. (C) Box 739, Meade, KS 67864
◆JAHN, STEVE. (R) 716 10th Ave. S., Nampa, ID 83651
◆JAMES, RANDY & MARY JANE. (C) c/o NPH*
◆JANTZ, CALVIN & MARJORIE. (C) c/o NPH*
JAYMES, RICHARD W. (R) 617 W Gambier, Mount Vernon, OH 43050
◆JOHNSON, RON. (C) 3208 Eighth St E., Lewiston, ID 83501
JONES, FRED D. (R) 804 Elissa Dr., Nashville, TN 37217
◆JONES, TERRY. (R) 2002 Judy Ln., Pasadena, TX 77502
◆JUSTICE, MEL & DONNA. (R) 1618 Chapel St., Dayton, OH 45404

K

- KEENA, EARL. (C) 2160 D St., Oroville, CA 95965
KELLY, ARTHUR E. (R) 511 Dogwood St., Columbia, SC 29205

L

- LAING, GERALD D. (C) 11436 East St., Indian Lane, Vicksburg, MI 49097
◆LASSELL, RAY & JAN. (C) 4745 N 1000 E., Brownsburg, IN 46112
◆LAWHORN, MILES & FAMILY. (R) P.O. Box 17008, Nashville, TN 37217 (Full time)
LAWSON, WAYNE. (C) c/o NPH
◆LAXSON, WALLY & GINGER. (C) Rte 3, Box 118, Athens, AL 35611
◆LECKRONE, LARRY. (R) 403 E Main, Morenci, MI 49256
◆LECRONE, JON & BETH. (R) 472 W. San Gabriel, Clovis, CA 93612
LEE, RALPH & NELLIE. (R) 7825 176th St., Clearview, WA 98290
LEEPER, L. E. (C) 2128 Capps Rd., Lake Wales, FL 33853
LEIDY, ARNOLD. (R) P.O. Box 155, Moriarty, NM 87035
LEONARD, J. C. (C) 1410 Armory, Charlton, IA 50049
◆LESTER, FRED R. (R) 16601 W. 143rd Terr., Olathe, KS 66062
LIDDELL, P. L. (C) 3530 W. Allen Rd., Howell, MI 48843
◆LORENZEN, LINDA (BROWN). (R) St. Rte. 133 S., Box 231A, Blanchester, OH 45107
LOTHEMORE, BOB. (R) P.O. Box 1305, Conway, AR 72032
LYBARGER, EVERETT. (R) P.O. Box 1534, Conway, AR 72032

M

- MANLEY, STEPHEN. (C) c/o NPH*
MANN, EARL SCOTT. (R) P.O. Box 57, South Point, OH 45680
◆MANN, L. THURL & MARY KAY. (C) c/o NPH
MARTIN, LEON. (R) Box 146, Bonham, TX 75418
◆MARTIN, W. DALE. (R) P.O. Box 110235, Nashville, TN 37211 (Full-time)
MATTER, DAN & ANN. (R) 2617 Carew St., Fort Wayne, IN 46805
MAX, HOMER L. (C) Rte 3, Knoxville, IA 50138
MAYO, CLIFFORD. (C) Star Rte., Dumont, TX 79232
◆McCUISION, MARK AND PATRICIA. (R) c/o NPH* (Full time)
McDONALD, CHARLIE. (C) P.O. Box 1135, West Monroe, LA 71291
McKAY, WILLIAM D. (R) 754 Richard St., Vassar, MI 48768
MCKELLIPS, DALLAS, SR. (C) P.O. Box 921, Bethany, OK 73008
◆McKINNON, JUANITA. (C) Box 126, Institute, WV 25112
McWHIRTER, G. STUART. (C) Box 458, Corydon, IN 47112
MEEK, WESLEY, SR. (C) 5713 S. Shartel, Oklahoma City, OK 73109
MELVIN, DOLORES. (C) RR 1, Box 68, Greenup, KY 41144
◆MEREDITH, DWIGHT & NORMA JEAN. (C) c/o NPH*
MEYER, BOB & BARBARA. (R) (Dynamics of Spiritual Growth) 155 Longview Ct., St. Marys, OH 45885
◆MICKEY, BOB. (C) 504 N. Sixth, Lamar, CO 81052
MILLER, BERNARD. (R) P.O. Box 437, Botkins, OH 45306 (Full-time)
◆MILLER, HENRY & RUTH. (C) 111 W 46th St., Reading, PA 19606
MILLER, MRS. PAULINE. (R) 307 S. Delaware St., Mount Gilead, OH 43338
MILLHUFF, CHUCK. (C) Box 801, Olathe, KS 66061
MIRACLE, WALTER. (R) Rte. 2, Box 441, Bourbonnais, IL 60914
MITCHELL, GARNETT J. (C) P.O. Box 97-A, Jonesboro, IL 62952
MOORE, NORMAN. (C) P.O. Box 6203, San Bernardino, CA 92412
MORRIS, CLYDE H. (C) 101 Bryant Lake Rd., Cross Lanes, WV 25313
MORRIS, ROBERT. (R) 215 Green St., Bamberg, SC 29003
MOSS, UDELL. (R) 1357 N. Florissant, Ferguson, MO 63134
MOYER, BRANCE. (R) 7206 Glen Tr., San Antonio, TX 78239
◆MURPHY, MARK. (R) 889 Lindsay Ln., No. 3, Bourbonnais, IL 60914
MYERS, DAVID J. (R) 959 Old McArthur Rd., Logan, OH 43138
MYERS, HAROLD & MRS. (C) 575 Ferris N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504

N

- ◆NEFF, LARRY & PAT. (C) 625 N Water St., Owosso, MI 48867

O

- ◆ORNER MINISTRIES. (R) 2620 Pennington Bend Dr., Nashville, TN 37214
OVERTON, WILLIAM D. (C) Family Evangelist & Chalk Artist, 1750 Northridge Ln., Frederick, MD 21701
◆OYLER, CALVIN. (C) Drawer 7, University Park, IA 52595

P

- PALMER, JAMES E. (C) 8139 Madison Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46227
◆PARR, PAUL & DOROTHY. (R) RR 1, Box 168, Whites town, IN 46075
◆PASSMORE EVANGELISTIC PARTY, THE A. A. (C) c/o NPH*
PATTERSON, DORMAN. (C) Box 146, Hammondsville, OH 43930
PERDUE, NELSON. (C) 3732 E Rte 245, Cable, OH 43009

- PESTANA, GEORGE C. (R) Illustrated Sermons, 1020 Bradbourne Ave., Space 78, Duarte, CA 91010
PFEIFER, DON. (C) P.O. Box 165, Waverly, OH 45690
PHILLIPS, W. D. (C) 1372 Cardwell Square S., Columbus, OH 43229
PITTINGER, TWYLA. (R) 413 N Bowman St., Mansfield, OH 44903
◆PITTS, PAUL. (C) c/o Victory Files, Box 3630, Arcadia, CA 91006
POINTER, LLOYD B. (R) Rte. 2, 711 N First St., Fruitland, ID 83619
◆PORTER, JOHN & PATSY. (C) c/o NPH*

Q

- ◆QUALLS, PAUL M & MAE. (C) 5441 Lake Jessamine Dr., Orlando, FL 32809

R

- ◆REAZIN, L. V. & MRS. (C) RR 12, Box 280 01, Tyler, TX 75708
REED, DOROTHY. (C) Box 814, Hannibal, MO 63401
REESE, BRADLEY JOHN. (R) 240 S. Filbert, Exeter, CA 93221
RICHARDS, LARRY & PHYLLIS (COULTER). (C) 2479 Madison Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46225
RICHARDSON, PAUL E. (C) 6716 Sugar Grove Maple, Citrus Heights, CA 95610
RIST, LEONARD. (C) 3544 Brookgrove Dr., Grove City, OH 43123
RITCHIE, L. L. (R) c/o NPH*
ROBERTSON, JAMES H. (C) 2014 Green Apple Ln., Arlington, TX 76014
ROBINSON, TED L. (C) c/o NPH*
ROSS, MICHAEL B. (C) P.O. Box 1742, Bradenton, FL 33506
ROTH, RON. (C) 16625 W 144th, Olathe, KS 66062
RUNYON, DAVID. (R) 3316 Hillcrest, Altton, IL 62002

S

- SANDERS, DON. (C) 1905 Parkwood Dr., Olathe, KS 66062
SCARLETT, DON. (R) P.O. Box 549, Ravenna, OH 44266
SCHOONOVER, MODIE. (C) 1508 Glenview, Adrian, MI 49221
SCHRIBER, GEORGE. (R) P.O. Box 456, Alta Loma, CA 91701
◆SEMRAN, KIM. (R) 701 Rainbow Dr., Monroe, MI 48161
◆SEXTON, ARNOLD (DOC) & GARNETT. (R) 1114 Highland Ave., Ashland, KY 41101
SHALLEY, JAMES. (R) 3009 Home Ave., Marion, IN 46952
SHANK, JOHN. (C) c/o Southside Church of the Nazarene, W. 14th St. at Atwood, Danville, IL 61832
◆SHIREY, DWIGHT. (C) 38092 Butcher Rd., Leetonia, OH 44431
◆SHOMO, PHIL & MIRIAM. (C) 517 Pershing Dr., Anderson, IN 46011
SHOMO, RICHARD. (R) 75 Carlton St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801
SISK, IVAN. (C) 4327 Moraga Ave., San Diego, CA 92117
SMITH, CHARLES HASTINGS. (C) Box 937, Bethany, OK 73008
SMITH, DANIEL C. (R) 535 S. Spruce, Tulare, CA 93274 (Full-time)
SMITH, DENNIS C. (C) 1219 South Golden West No. 5, Arcadia, CA 91006
◆SMITH, DUANE. (C) c/o NPH*
◆SMITH, GENE & LANORA. (R) 205 Drayton St., Winnsboro, SC 29108
SMITH, HAROLD L. (C) 3711 Germania Rd., Snover, MI 48472
◆SMITH, LARRY. (R) 3000 Citrus Cir., No. 103, Walnut Creek, CA 94598
◆SMITH, OTTIS E., JR. & MARGUERITE. (C) 60 Grant St., Tidouite, PA 16351
◆SNIDER, VICTORIA. (C) Rte 2, Lawrenceville, IL 62439
SPROWLS, EARL. (C) c/o NPH
STAFFORD, DANIEL. (C) 5159 E Edgewood Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46227
◆STANTON, TED & DONNA. (R) 2795 Galleon Pl., Sarasota, FL 33580
STARINES, SAM LEE. (R) 448 S. Prairie, Bradley, IL 60915
STEGALL DAVID. (R) c/o NPH

STEVENS, GEORGE E. (C) 4021 Pebble Dr S.E. Roanoke, VA 24014

STOUT, PHILLIP. (R) 1424 Wilson Ave., Goshen, IN 46526

STREET, DAVID. (C) Rte 1, Ramsey, IN 47166

STRICKLAND, RICHARD L. (C) c/o NPH

◆SUTTON, VEL & ARLENE. (R) c/o NPH*

SWANSON, ROBERT L. (C) 1102 Glenwood Dr., Yukon OK 73099

◆SWEENEY, ROGER & EULETA. (R) Rte 1, Sharon Grove KY 42280

TUCKER, RALPH. (R) 1905 N. Council Rd., Oklahoma City, OK 73137

V

VANDERPOOL, WILFORD N. (C) 9204 N Olive Ln., Sun Lakes, AZ 85224

VARCE, PAUL. (R) 621 Second Ave. N.W. Waverly, IA 50677

VARIAN, BILL. (C) 502 N Forest Ave., Bradley, IL 60915

◆WHITE, JANIE & SON LIGHT. (C) P.O. Box 293, Duncanville, TX 75116

◆WHITLATCH, CRAIG. (C) 1215 Jones St., Sioux City, IA 51105

WILLIAMS, LARRY D. (C) Box 6287, Longview, TX 75604

WILLIAMS, LAWRENCE. (C) 6715 N.W. 30th Terr., Bethany, OK 73008

◆WISEHART, LENNY & JOY. (C) c/o NPH*

◆WOOD, AL, BEVERLY & STEPHANIE. (R) P.O. Box 823, Gallatin, TN 37066

WOODWARD, S. OREN & FAYE. (C) c/o NPH*

WRIGHT, AUSTIN H. (C) 4175 Parkman Rd. Nfld., Warren OH 44401

WYLIE, CHARLES. (C) Box 162, Winfield, KS 67156

WYRICK, DENNIS. (C) 603 Reed Dr., Frankfort, KY 40601

T

TAYLOR, CLIFF. (C) E. 619 32nd Ave., Spokane, WA 99203

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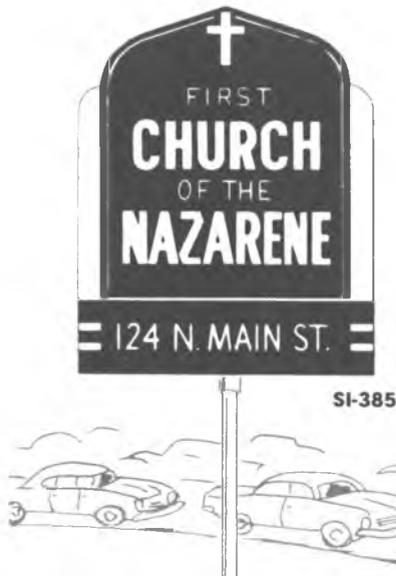
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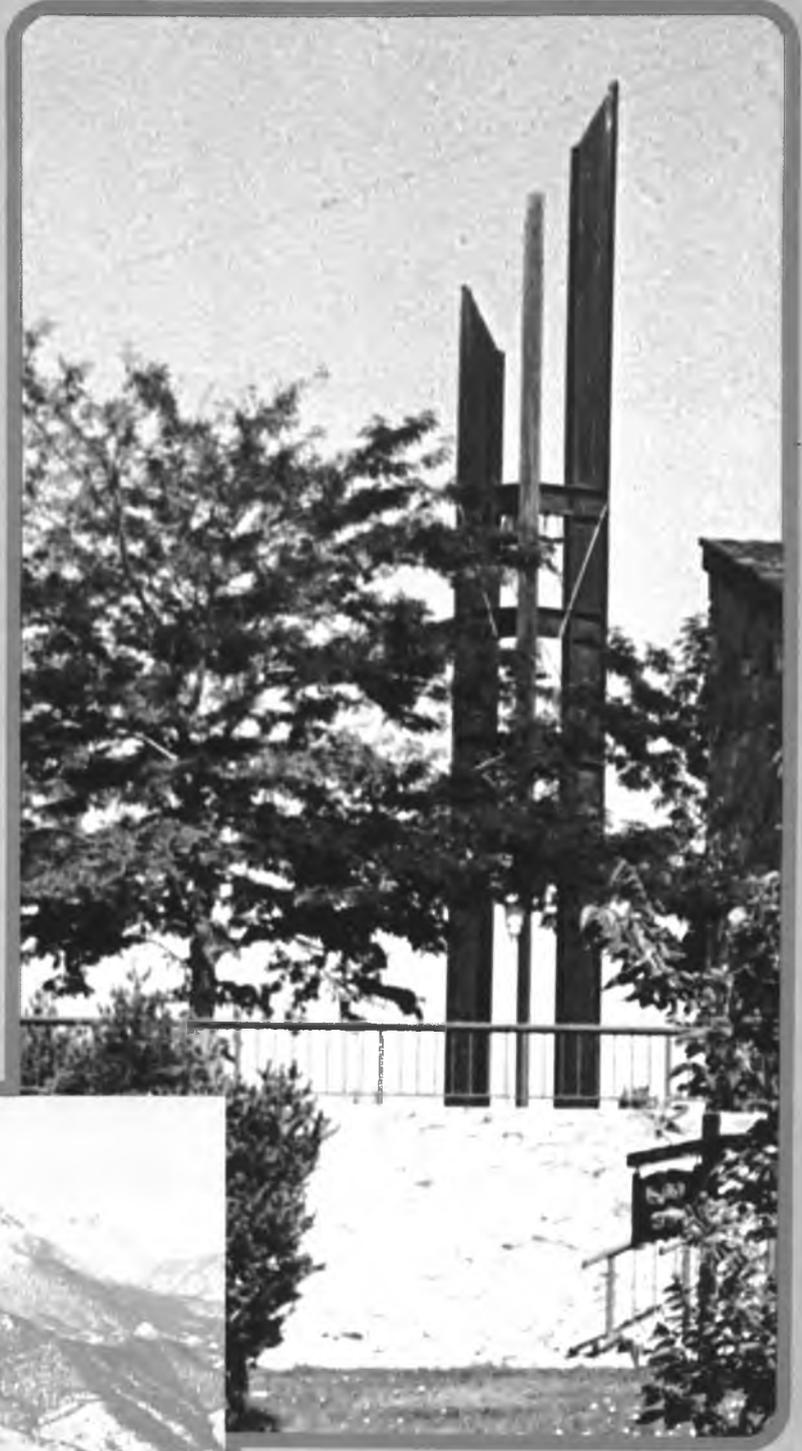


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HOW TO RUIN YOUR LIFE WITH "HOW TO" BOOKS

by Steve Perry

Assistant Pastor, First Baptist Church
Doylestown, Pa.

MEMO

TO: Everyone who knows how to run my church, life, finances, family, marriage, and future

FROM: Rev. I. M. Nogood, pastor, First Church of What-Hasn't-Happened-Yet, Improbable, Pa.

SUBJECT: My resignation

After consulting several books and articles on the preparation of a resignation letter and with little prayer (I had no time with all that reading), I have decided that I am no longer capable of doing anything right. Therefore, I hereby relinquish my position to another with greater ability and fewer problems.

When I began at this church, I felt that God had called me as a pastor, and I didn't think I had many problems. Then I began to read books on the pastoral ministry.

I realized that I didn't pray enough when I read *Twenty-four Hours in Prayer*, by Dr. U. Spendallday.

I found that my personal evangelistic methods were all wrong, a fact amply illustrated by Prof. Winthemall in *Brighter than Bright*, his book on evangelistic methodology.

My sermons were lackluster, based on information in a survey on preaching techniques published by the Whitefield Institute for Holier Homiletics.

My counseling abilities were also found inadequate at a seminar on "101 Counseling Methods for All Occasions."

Realizing my gross inability as a pastor (I was helped with this decision by the book *Learning to Accept Failure*), I turned to my family for help.

My wife was busy reading *The Total Pastor's Wife*, by Mrs. Honey Doitall. My children were filling in their workbooks on *How to Be a Preacher's Kid Without Being Religious*. Finding no solace in my family, I began reading *Isn't Fatherhood Fulfilling?* by Rev. K.I.D. No-canspank.

As you can see, I really can't function. I've read all the books you've given me on Church Growth, Church Death, Church Planting, Church Planning, Church Changing, Inductive Bible Study, Deductive Bible Study, Innovative Bible Study, Renovated Bible Study, Connotative Bible Study, Meaningful Worship, Meaningless Worship, Liturgical Worship, Nonliturgical Worship, Ali-



turgical Worship, Leadership Finding, Leadership Training, Leadership Leading, Man, Woman, Birth, Death, Infinity.

I QUIT!!!

I have accepted a call to Hisway Bible Church, Berea, Pa. I think I'm much more suited to the ministry there.

When I visited, their board gave me only one book—an obscure one called *The Acts of the Apostles*. In it, a group of nonorganization men decide to try a novel approach to the ministry. They give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Imagine! No how-to-do-it books, or what's-wrong-with-you books, or you-can-do-it-better-than books, or my-way-is-best books. I'm still reading it. I don't know how they'll do—they'll probably flop.

But in my state of desperation, I'm willing to try even such a radical approach to the ministry. Please pray that God can rehabilitate even such a wretch of a pastor as me.

Thanks for all you've done for (and to) me.

Desperate, yet hopeful in Him,
I. M. NOGOOD



CASE STUDIES FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

by James D. Glasse

Case No. 1

BACKGROUND: My church is located in a "bedroom community" of about 5,000 highly trained technicians and engineers in a population center of over 100,000. Most of the people who have joined our new church are young couples with small children. We had no young people beyond ninth grade, and only four in the ninth grade. My attempts to get acquainted with the young people in the community were met with suspicion and hostility at first, but we got a small group started. Youth meetings were structured largely by the group, my method being to get acquainted first, then begin to structure the group after they had confidence in me.

Chris is a 15-year-old ninth grader I have tried to involve in our church and youth group. His parents are sensitive, hard-working, intelligent people of culture and refinement. They enjoy their home and their work. They have no TV in their home—they can't be bothered with such trivia. Chris has two older brothers—one in the Peace Corps and the other in the university. Chris did not want to attend our biweekly meetings but came at the insistence of his parents.

At one of these meetings, the person with the program did not come at the last minute, and the group decided to talk about drugs. Without any advance preparation Chris gave what amounted to a lecture which covered such things as the origin of marijuana, heroin, and LSD, the chemical analysis of each, the physiological effects on the body, etc. He did this with the competence of a college professor explaining it to a group of laymen.

DESCRIPTION: One evening not long after this I called at Chris's home. His parents were away, and he was studying. He invited me in. He told me he was reading Dante's *Inferno* in research for an assigned composition which was "to select some historical character you believe has gone to hell and tell why you think so." In the conversation that followed, Chris told me he had read extensively in science, philosophy, and current literature—and that he did not believe in the existence of God. I tried to suggest he might not have all the evidence yet to make such a decision; that many scientists believe in God. I was inclined to accept his statements as evidence of one who had given considerable thought to them.

ANALYSIS: I was so overwhelmed with this boy's knowledge and his probing mind which was questioning the things I didn't until my college days that I "froze." I felt it was obvious to him I had little to offer to challenge him at his intellectual level. He is an exceptional boy, but I have discovered that many young people in this community are not far behind.

EVALUATION: 1. How do I minister to young people like this?
2. How can I prepare myself to handle situations where my incompetence in science and technology is so obvious?
3. How can I handle the "freeze" situations?

Case No. 2

BACKGROUND: As in most denominations, presently there is a great amount

of tension arising from different understandings of the nature and mission of the church. Within our denomination there is a divisive group, composed mainly of laymen who have been secularizing the church and seeking to sow seeds of ill will and dissension, particularly in setting laymen over against the ministers.

I heard of an organization meeting of this group in our city and decided to attend the meeting even though it was really intended for laymen only. Five of the members of our church were there. It upset me greatly that this divisive group might get a foothold in this church. In the weeks that followed, all the officers received information through the mail from this group, with attacks and insinuations about the subversion of the church. I determined that I would have to do something about this in a meeting of the officers.

EVENT: I chose to speak on this at the next monthly meeting of one of the boards. During the meeting some of the men who had obviously come from this dissident group made charges about the denomination. They alluded to the stand on social issues, control of church property, and the lack of value of the church magazine. Much to my surprise, some of the men who support the church wholeheartedly were mute that evening.

I felt very much alone as I tried to answer some of these unfounded attacks. At the end of the meeting it was customary for me to speak to the group about any matter that concerned me. I talked about this dissident group and their insinuations about the leadership of the church. I maintained that such a group in the church was more of a problem than a solution, and stated that if we

(Continued on page 36)

For Gracious' Sake!

by Catherine Lawton

I've got some chickens for you," the church member at our door announced.

"Well, Brother Wilson, how nice!" The radiant smile and sparkling eyes on my mother's face—so familiar to me—must have made this layman feel like the most thoughtful person in the world.

"Yeah, the Mrs. and I were going to eat them ourselves. Then we thought the pastor and his family might be able to use them."

"We can always find a use for chicken. That's one of our favorites."

"These birds were two of our best layers. But they haven't laid an egg in months." He stepped toward the pickup truck. He reached into the back, producing a gunnysack, heavy and bulging with something obviously alive.

"Here they are!"

For a moment I saw horror registered in my mother's eyes, but she never stopped smiling. In fact, her face brightened even more.

I watched my mother for 25 years in the parsonage. She never failed to be warm, outgoing, and accepting, no matter who came to our door, or why. I have often wondered how she did it. I can't ask her now, because she died a premature death four years ago. But just today I came across the text of a talk she gave—at the request of her district superintendent's wife—to the pastors'

wives at the annual pastors' conclave. The talk was titled "Parsonage Manners." Reading it gave me deeper insight into what made Mother a gracious pastor's wife. Here, in part, is what she said:

Good manners of any kind begin by seeking "the beauty of the Lord our God" and by letting His love and joy radiate in our faces with happy smiles.

Every person who comes into our homes should be made to feel comfortable and be given our complete attention. They may interrupt our schedules; but perhaps God sent them to us so that we can give them His love.

Several years ago a much-loved friend said to me, "Never apologize for that over which you have no control." This applies to your house. If you have done your best to make it clean and attractive, then why worry if you must entertain the district superintendent and his wife in that tiny kitchen?

Provide your overnight guests with a private room, made as clean and attractive as possible. Use fresh sheets, blankets, and other linens. Teach children never to enter this room unless invited.

Have a clear understanding with your guests of the timing of meals and other home activities to

save any awkwardness or embarrassment.

You may not have many lovely dishes, linens, and silver for gracious entertaining, but if you start now to save back that pretty tablecloth and those new towels just for company, you need not be embarrassed when guests arrive.

Be loving, warm, and friendly; above all be yourself. Then your guests will feel comfortable.

Telephone manners! Much can be said here. Discourtesy appears often over the telephone. I read of one pastor's wife who was hurriedly getting a small baby ready for a nap, the dishes washed, and herself prepared for a special afternoon meeting at church. Of course, the telephone began to ring. Each time she heard the same question: "Can you tell me what time the meeting is this afternoon?"

The first dozen calls she answered politely. But at last in exasperation she shouted, "I have told 50 people in the past hour! It's at three o'clock!!" and she banged down the receiver. A costly mistake she could not undo.

We must call upon God's special grace when the telephone rings constantly. . . .

No other woman in your community receives as many kind-

nesses as does the minister's wife. You need not establish yourself socially. You become "somebody" the moment you enter the parsonage.

As a result, you will find yourself the recipient of many and varied gifts. Remember, they are all gifts of love to you and your family. These love gifts come to us so often we must guard against taking them for granted and even expecting them—feeling bad if they don't come our way.

Be sure always to express your appreciation for gifts—no matter if you already have a dozen squashes or boxes of apples, or that your family doesn't care for gooseneck clams fresh from the beach. This is a secret you will

keep, and you will accept every gift with a thankful heart.

One widowed pastor's wife, when asked what she liked best about living in a parsonage, said, "I think I prize most the fact that everybody loved me."

Often kindnesses overwhelm us and we ask ourselves how we can repay these dear people. Perhaps the best payment is to be sweet, radiant, and loving—showing everyone how to make home more like heaven.

Reading this paper by my mother gave me new insight into her life as a pastor's wife. Growing up, I somehow came to the conclusion that she was an extra-special, superwoman type person. I knew so few like her,

and I knew I certainly was not the gracious person she was. I decided that it must come naturally for her; God must have made her that way, because He wanted her to be a pastor's wife.

I admit I noticed her hands tremble, I saw tears, I often sensed weariness and disappointment. But I never ceased to marvel at her outgoing sparkle and gentle ways. She really loved those church people.

Now I realize this was at least in part the result of a conscious effort she made. She had worked out a philosophy of life as a pastor's wife and had learned to put forth her best, whether it was easy or not. And, most importantly, she had learned to "call on God's special grace." As far as I know, He never let her down. 

CASE STUDIES

(Continued from page 34)

were more faithful in seeking guidance from God's Word we would have a better and more effective church. Finally I told them that I disagreed with them and disapproved of this group, and it was my responsibility as their pastor to tell them how I felt.

ANALYSIS: I am sure that my speech alienated some of the men at the meeting, at least for a time. I was really very threatened by the discussion that had taken place, and even though my personal security in the church was not threatened, I took it very personally. I was very defensive and later realized that I had manipulated them emotionally at the very time when I was denying any manipulation. My advice about more use of the Word of God was a smoke screen, because I had not used the Bible in the meeting any more than they.

EVALUATION: I was not very effective in combatting the attitudes of some of those officers because of my defensiveness. I do feel that I had to take some stand for the sake of those who did not understand it. The one good thing that emerged was that they expressed gratitude that I told them how I felt, even though they may have disagreed. I need to learn how to deal more effectively with hostility and opposition. How might I have handled the problem more effectively? 

From *Putting It Together in the Parish*, by James D. Glasse, Abingdon Press. Used by permission.

Pastors' Problems

The five most representative problems of those pastors who have sought help at the Menninger Foundation:

1. **Overextension**—the feeling of having too many commitments that vied for time and energy.
2. **Imprecise competence**—the feeling that they functioned primarily "by the seat of their pants," without being sure of why they did what they did.
3. **Inadequate resources**—the feeling that there was no adequate "backup system," . . . and that they had to be satisfied with leftover resources of time, talent, and substance.
4. **A desperate groping for relevant religious faith.** Pastors themselves are subject to so many demands from others that they begin to feel in need

of a pastor themselves. Many experienced this as a gradual sense of losing the reality of the faith that they proclaimed, . . . playing their roles with decreasing involvement, commitment, and integrity.

5. **Lack of accomplishment.** How does one measure the impact of preaching? How does one measure the impact of a midnight crisis in the home of a parishioner? How does one measure one's influence in a summer camp program over a period of years? While gratification is important to continued productive work, it is difficult to measure the intangible rewards and accomplishments that are so basic in the ministry.

—CHARLES ROSSIEUR
Stress Management for Ministers
(Westminster Press, 1982)

The World Is God's Parish

by George E. Failing
General Editor, *The Wesleyan Church*

One of John Wesley's often-printed sermons is titled "The Scripture Way of Salvation." The theme is repeatedly addressed in hundreds of sermons and is woven into a thousand letters.

Permit me to set forth, as best I can recall and construct, Wesley's "theology" of salvation without even trying to document the progressive stages through appropriate reference to his works. And the reader may judge if I have discerned Wesley's view of God at work in the saving of a soul.

The work of redemption, providing divine life for sinful men, is wholly God's. God's love impelled Him to exercise mercy, and Christ's love constrained Him to accept the mission of atonement on Calvary.

But how is that salvation brought to men?

Wesley should be remembered more strongly for his emphasis on free grace than on free will. Wesley assumes that man's will is bound by sin from birth, but Wesley affirms that God's grace freely flows to all men—from birth. While he believes in divine sovereignty and divine election, Wesley contends that God remains forever free to bestow grace.

God's nature is not in conflict. He neither sacrifices decrees to grace, nor does His exercise of grace make Him a capricious God. God is purposeful and free, within himself, however His actions may appear to us.

Since every person may trace his inheritance to the Second Adam as surely as he must to the first Adam, God makes sure that every soul is influenced by the divine grace. As exposure to life-giving sunlight differs drastically from the Arctic to the Tropics, so all men are not equally exposed to God's grace. But every responsible person who reaches the age of self-judgment is exposed to the "dawn of grace," as Wesley puts it. The optimist Wesley believed that each sensitive soul would sometime feel a drawing to goodness and/or a displeasure at some evil act or thought. The very awakening of conscience is an

eternally recurrent dawning of that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Awakened by light concerning what is bad or good, a person either welcomes or rejects that light, leading either to a yielding to perceived goodness or to a surrender to perceived badness. "No man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace he has," affirms Wesley.

Clear conviction (later, clear conversion) depends upon an understanding of what sin is, of God's grace to sinful man, and of man's willingness (or choice) to allow truth to correct conscience. Conviction by the Holy Spirit impels a person either to accept or to reject God's offer of salvation. Acceptance involves repentance, a turning from perceived sin, and faith, a commitment to truth and divine love. Man's acceptance of God's free grace leads to conversion, a radical change of heart and life.

Conversion is the proper beginning of the Christian walk. Man enjoys a good measure of deliverance from evil; he perceives and longs for growth in goodness. The grace that led him thus far is powerfully present to encourage him on. True, he labors under personal and cultural handicaps, but if he keeps true to the vision of truth and goodness, strength comes to resist evil and to aspire to higher levels of goodness.

That person who patiently and persistently "follows after love/holiness," as Paul phrases it, will certainly make deeper commitments and enjoy the fruit of inward love and peace. He will present himself and his members to God for total possession and service, and enjoy the Sabbath rest of heart purity that is the inheritance of every child of God. He will grow in sturdiness of character and be constrained to help others find and follow the way of salvation. This is called sanctification, the blessing of perfect love. The advancing Christian grows in grace and develops in godlikeness.

Everyone who responds to God's en-

abling grace makes two discoveries.

First, he makes the humbling and frustrating discovery that certain infirmities of mind and spirit still linger. In fact, they become particularly obvious and painful to those in sharpest pursuit of holiness. True, grace will "help" him in his disabilities (or inabilities). At times "sufficient grace" will help the Christian transcend his infirmities, even to thank God for them!

Second, God's grace holds out a firm hope to the believer. Someday he will enjoy the grace of consummation. He who trusts God pursues now the prize of "His likeness." Someday he will experience it. No more "partial" knowledge then; he shall know as he has been known. He shall see Christ, not through a glass darkly, but face-to-face. Then God's glorious presence will as fully satisfy and possess him as evil will finally disillusion and destroy the sinner.

Only by rejecting God's grace can a person be lost. One who dies in infancy can hardly be said to reject God's grace, so God freely saves him—as He saved the firstborn in Egypt. It is the same with those who never attain moral accountability, for whatever reason.

God does not will that any should perish. Through a hundred providences, chiefly through the witness of those who have responded to the gospel call and have been saved, God's grace pursues every man. That grace presently surrounds you and me, your family and friends and mine, and our enemies. Grace even surrounds those who have not heard the good news of God's grace.

God's parish is the world, the world of sinning, wayward men, and His method of reaching them is grace, grace that is patient and strong.

Jesus commanded all Christians, "Let your light . . . shine before men" (Matt. 5:16). Our lights simply reflect and project that one Light of the World. As we yield to God's grace, others will see that our "light" comes from Him, and seeing the results of His grace in us, they will glorify and seek Him. 

Bring the Staff with You?

by Kenneth Vogt

District Superintendent

Washington Pacific District, Church of the Nazarene

There is a growing sentiment in our church among senior pastors to bring all or least a part of an accumulated staff with them, in changing into a new pastorate. The reasons advanced for proposing to do this run generally into three categories.

I have found some people, after a great deal of searching, who fit in with me and my ministry and who complement my ministry.

I have found some people who are truly professional, qualified, trained, and experienced in their fields.

The new pastor at my former church may not want to keep them anyway, and thus they would be out of employment.

Let's discuss some other questions that are, at least, equally important.

1. What about leadership shock? What we should be interested in, especially in a denominational church, is a smooth transition from one type of leadership to another type. Generally, it is best not to follow one type of leadership with another leader of a similar type. In fact, every strong pastor, being called to the middle-size and larger churches, has his own individual leadership style. That is good.

However, to bring on a whole staff with its own leadership style many times produces leadership shock which may soon become counterproductive.

2. What about cultural adaptations? How can a new pastor, meeting a time or two with the local church board, have a deep and adequate understanding of the cultural adaptations needed to serve this congregation? What assurance does he have that "my staff" would fit into the new congregation, as in the previous one?

3. What about the ministry needs? Can a senior pastor adequately evaluate the ministry needs of a congregation before he lives with them for several months or a year? No doubt as he comes to interview the board, he will evaluate ministry needs with them. It is my observation that the local church is often not the best judge of their own ministry needs. Some churches think they need more staff members than they really need. It is rare that the ministry and staff needs of the old church will exactly match the ministry and staff needs of the new church.

4. What about the finances? This is not the most important question, but it needs to be realistically faced. How can a new pastor coming into a church evaluate adequately how the congregation will respond to his leadership financially? It would be much safer for him to come and find out through a period of several months of testing, so that he could make careful recommendations based on his ability to finance the program in the new congregation. A staff member who may be a financial asset in one situation could, in another situation, be a

We have an increasing number of capable, God-called staff ministers. Their job security is the lowest in the entire church.

financial liability through no fault of his own. The financial stress that some senior pastors assume is enormous. This can so easily result in frayed relationships between himself and his new congregation. The atmosphere of the services subtly changes from moments of joy and celebration and spontaneous altar services to an atmosphere of anxiety over meeting local and denominational financial goals.

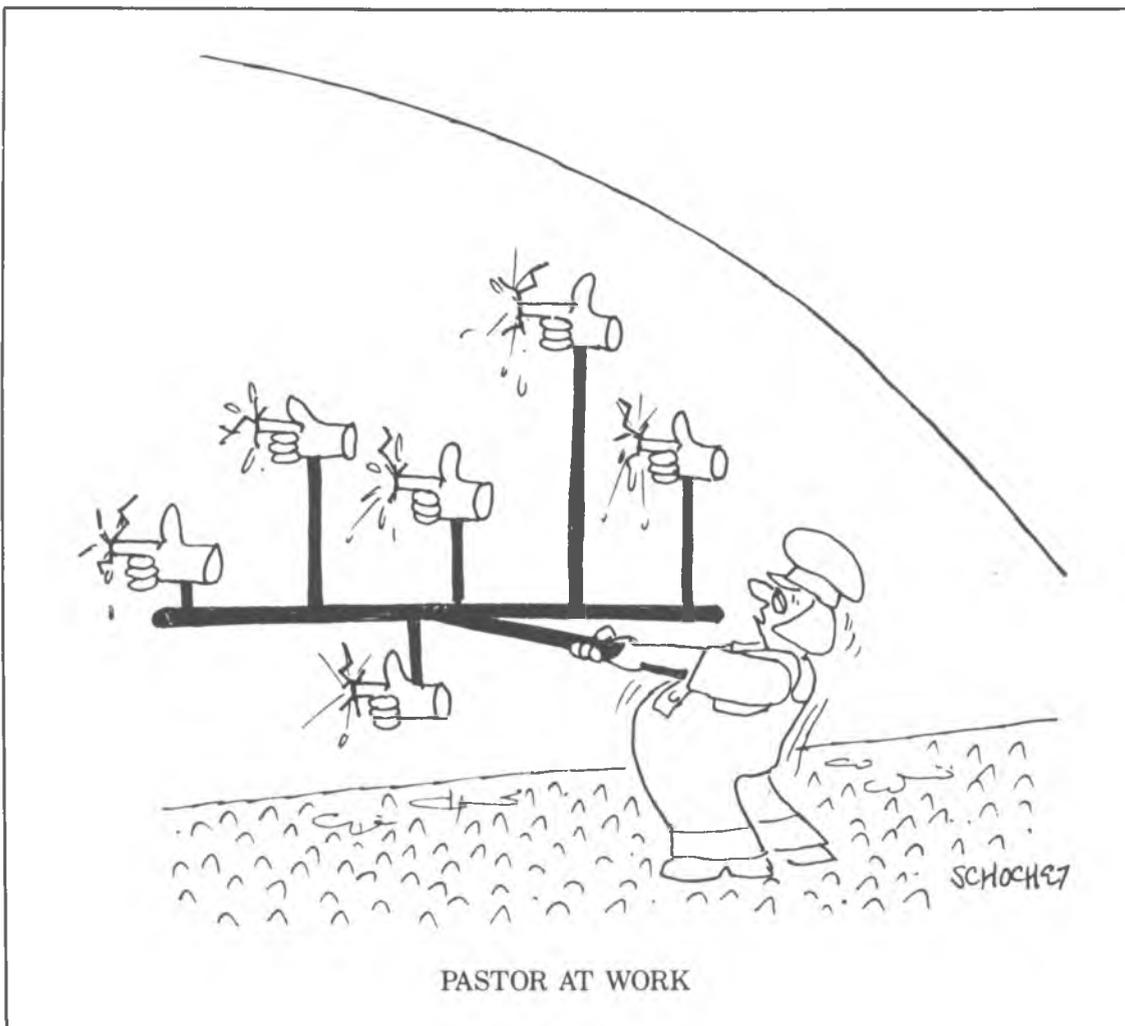
The wise and thoughtful senior pastor will accept both the assets and the liabilities of the new situation and work with those and through those to develop a new, long-range ministry in a new place.

The local board and the district superintendent have the awesome responsibility of selecting a senior pastor who will hopefully fit in, complement, and move forward the work and ministry of the local congregation. They have a right to expect that senior pastor to come and live with them a while, and then with them, make reasonable and thoughtful changes in staff. This can be done gradually and with a sense of compassion for the human needs of the suddenly unemployed staff members. The sympathies of some in the congregation run deep for the families of such persons. Sudden dismissal of the old staff often causes shock waves of resentment toward the incoming senior pastor. It is true that under the Nazarenes' present system, the staff members have to

resign with the change of pastors. I am raising the question of a senior pastor's insensitivity to the human dilemma caused by his coming.

District superintendents have the awesome burden of helping pastors, especially those who are on his district team, of finding a new place of service after a given pastorate has terminated. I believe that senior pastors, also, should accept a similarly awesome responsibility for staff members who will ultimately need to be replaced.

With the growth of the denomination and larger local churches, we have an increasing number of good staff personnel who are called of God. Their job security factor is the lowest in the entire church, depending as they do on annual renewal recommendation of the senior pastor. Add to that also the fact that they must resign when the pastor terminates his ministry for any reason. A staff member does not have the normal reward of security for a job well done. His only reward is to please the boss (the pastor). This can result in an unhealthy relationship, counterproductive to his own growth as a responsible Christian servant in the community of believers. At best, changes always create some unavoidable insecurities. Shouldn't we school ourselves to patience to make these necessary changes with the benefit of compassionate time-sequencing?



From the Pulpit to the Pew

Though at the time I had no idea why he told the story, I'm glad Dr. McGraw gave the seminary class one of his gentle and wise stories. It was about a younger pastor who had a retired minister in his congregation. One day the older man made a comment about something he used to include in his messages on the text the pastor had just selected. Dr. McGraw then added something like this, "The young pastor could take it as criticism, or he could take it as the veteran minister reminiscing about when he enjoyed the limelight." Then he added, "I hope the younger pastor could respond by saying, 'I'm sure you were a good preacher and enjoyed your pulpit work. Let's get together this week so you can tell me how God used you and your messages.'"

Later, in 1961 when I began pastoring, and in each succeeding church, I have had pastoral persons and their families as a part of my congregation. They were persons who were once in the pulpit and now for various reasons are in the pew. Some were still in ministry and some were in so-called secular positions. I especially enjoyed working with several seminary couples in one pastorate.

It took making a choice to go into chaplain's training for me to appreciate what it is like to go from the pulpit to the pew in a Church of the Nazarene. Even as I announced the decision, I met instant reactions. I was seeing the move as sideways from one kind of ministry to a compatible kind of ministry. Several friends and associates made com-

ments indicating that they thought of my decision as "leaving the ministry." When I reported this to others who had made the change and told them of my irritation, they shared similar stories. Many warned me to expect isolation and misunderstanding. I was too idealistic to believe it would happen.

I confess I hadn't thought through all the implications my decision would have for the whole family. My children were being forced into adjustments. My wife's role also would be quite different. And I would regularly be attending a church where I no longer was up front, giving out in every service.

In the providence of God we moved to an area we grew to love. We found a Nazarene church where we felt we belonged. Most of all we found a rare pastoral couple who recognized and appreciated our background and experience in ministry. We began relating as ministerial peers, as brothers in ministry. I am amazed and pleased that he could be so big about it. It made our transition so much easier. We shared quite freely and gave each other much support. God blessed the work we did in the church. We were the pastor's strongest supporters. When the year of training was up, it was most difficult to leave the area, the church, and especially our pastor friends.

I took another pastorate in a different part of the country before I felt led of God to go further in training for the chaplaincy. We selected a Nazarene church to attend. Again I made the trip from the pulpit to the

pew. I went with high hopes of establishing a relationship like the former one. That was unfair to our "new" pastor. The fact is that, though I wanted a peer relationship, and though I think he wanted one too, it never did materialize. In that we both are the poorer. My wife and I were faithful to the church and did all we could.

I am now in a full-time position as a chaplain in a new setting. I had some fears, but the pastor and wife of the one Nazarene church in town are responding much like the first pastor couple. We are relating as peers. We can share and feel support from each other. He knows I would never do anything to hurt him or his program. We are all finding our places of service in the congregation. It looks like a pleasant situation.

I often reflect and ask myself if I did for those who chose to attend where I pastored what others have done for me and my family. I wish for others in my situation a developing peer relationship of sharing and support with their pastor. I remember times when I was lonely in the pastorate. I think of the many opportunities I missed that were near. Perhaps I felt too threatened to open up and risk in interpersonal relationships. I wish I knew then what I know now.

I've heard some pastors gripe about "ex-pastors" in their congregations. Perhaps they are potentially their best workers and supporters. I've been on both sides and pray God to bring us all closer together.

How to live in a parsonage and receive a tax-free housing allowance too

TAX-FREE FURNISHINGS ALLOWANCE?

by Paul Fitzgerald*

By far, the majority of pastors have been and will continue to be provided with a parsonage and utilities by their local congregations. Certainly, congregations should recognize the need of the pastor to prepare for retirement by providing a "Retirement Housing Fund" through a tax-sheltered annuity account. At retirement, these funds can be used to provide a down payment for a home and provide a stream of anticipated income to meet mortgage payments. But congregations can do even more at no cost to themselves!

The tax provisions establish the maximum excludable housing allowance as "the fair market rental value of the home including furnishings and appurtenances, such as a garage, plus utilities." The "fair market rental value" must be judged from rent being paid on similar houses in the location of the parsonage. In the past, this has often been done by using the "1 percent rule" which when applied to the full value of the house was thought to yield the monthly rental value. In most cases, it would probably be better to determine this value through the help of local real estate agents. The value of the utilities can of course be determined from the average cost of utilities for the previous 12 months. These amounts are not reported for federal or state income taxes but must be reported for self-employment tax by a "minister of the gospel" as remuneration in the exercise of the ministry. However, a minister may be able to shift part of his taxable salary to a nontaxable furnishings allowance, since the parsonage and utility values do not actually include the "fair rental value" of furnishings.

Assuming your furnishings are valued at \$10,000 and you use the "1 percent rule" to determine a fair monthly rental value, you can have your church board take the necessary action to designate \$100 per month or \$1,200 per year of your cash salary as nontaxable furnishings allowance. As an alternate method, the fair rental value for furnishings could be determined by a real estate appraiser in your community.

This does not mean that you can automatically deduct the \$1,200 from your taxable income! Assuming the furnishings allowance is properly designated by church board action, you may only exclude that portion of the designated allowance that you actually spend to

provide the upkeep of the home (repairs, maintenance, cleaning), purchase furnishings (including drapes, carpets, etc.), and other *nonreimbursed* home costs. The only costs indicated by the tax provisions which cannot be used to support this allowance are "expenses for food and servants." Any amount designated as furnishings allowance, but not spent to provide the home or any amount designated above the "fair rental value" must be reported individually by the minister as miscellaneous income on the annual income tax return. Any amount spent before board action or any amount spent over the designated amount does not qualify as tax-free. No retroactive designation is allowed.

The local church assumes no responsibility in documenting your designation or substantiating the value of the housing allowance or furnishings allowance. If audited, you alone are required to document that the allowance was properly designated and used for appropriate expenses and that all amounts were reported properly. However, it does require church board action to designate the housing or furnishings allowance in the minutes *prior to the actual payment of the allowance*. The allowance can be paid as a part of the regular salary check, but should be reported in the minutes in exact dollar amounts and of course should *not* be reported on the annual W-2 issued to you.

At no cost to the congregation, a minister in a 20 percent tax bracket with a properly designated and spent furnishings allowance of \$1,200 per year, could save up to \$240 in income taxes. Care should be taken to consult your own legal or tax consultants to determine how these suggestions apply to you and your church employer.

While discussing this with the church board for yourself, be sure to encourage them to help your next evangelist by *asking him ahead of time* how much of his honorarium he would wish to have designated as housing allowance. He will thank you and your church for providing him with the same tax advantage that you have. 

*Rev. Paul Fitzgerald is the administrative assistant for Pensions and Benefits Services, Church of the Nazarene.

THE CHURCH AND COPYRIGHT ETHICS

by Thomas J. Purchase

Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Waterville, Vt.

The tape recorder and the photocopier have become useful tools to the contemporary church. However, both have created ethical questions which need to be examined by pastors.

The photocopying of copyrighted materials is commonplace. In the past the Hymn Society of America allowed material appearing in its magazine to be used by local churches. The local church was asked for donations in exchange for using the music. In the past when a Sunday School teacher saw a useful puzzle in a children's magazine, he/she made a copy of it for each student in the class. A pastor used to photocopy an article on church management for each member of his board.

In those days it was easy to rationalize the improper use of photocopiers. "It's not for resale," the pastor reasoned, "it's just information for my board." The Sunday School teacher said, "I can't afford to buy a copy of that magazine for everyone, just for one little quiz!" And the director of music announced, "It's a big company, they can afford the loss."

Could they? Over the last few years several religious publishing companies, such as Benson Company, Crescendo Company, and Tempo Records, have gone bankrupt or have been sold, partially because churches did not buy their sheet music. Yet the hymns they

published can be seen in homemade hymnals across the land.

Authors and composers lose their rightful avenues as a result of illegal photocopying. In some cases 50 percent of all royalties and permissions go to composers and authors. The Hymn Society of America says that royalties encourage the creativity of composers and help continue the channeling of those talents into the church.

Illegal use of photocopiers tarnishes our Christian witness. Dean C. Burtch of the Music Publishers Association was quoted in *Christianity Today* as declaring, "Those who continue to violate the copyright law can only be looked upon as willful and deliberate offenders who have knowingly engaged in unlawful activities."

The days of rationalization ended on January 1, 1978, when Public Law 94-553 went into effect. The new copyright law tried to cover everything which was copywritten and susceptible to misuse: print, music, drama, movies, television, etc.

Section 107 of the law is particularly important to church workers. It allows reprints to be made as long as all four of the following criteria are met:

1. *The purpose and character of the photocopying.* Is the purpose of a commercial nature or for nonprofit educational purposes? Photocopying the score of a cantata for performance and then charging a "donation" at the door of the church

might be considered commercial and therefore illegal.

2. *The nature of the original work.* This is the most vague of the four criteria. None of the experts consulted seemed to be able to explain this.

3. *The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole.* Photocopying more than 10 percent of a prose work and 250 words of a poem is prohibited.

4. *The effect such photocopying will have on potential sales of the original work.* If *Moody Monthly* has a special section devoted to cults, you are depriving *Moody* of sales when you buy one copy and photocopy 15 sets for your Sunday School class.

In order to allow fair use, all four criteria must be met. The majority does not rule here. If even one criteria is not met, photocopying is prohibited.

It can be argued that all four are very subjective. A church worker could "stretch the truth" and meet the criteria. That is right. This is why for the last three years I have made it a practice to write to the copyright holder and ask permission to photocopy. I use a standard format which can be adapted to a particular situation. I have successfully used this letter for both Sunday School and seminary classes.

The letter is directed to the permissions manager. Most magazines and publishing companies have

such positions. In the letter identify yourself and your situation. The manager needs to know why you want permission; are you a children's Sunday School teacher or chairman of the church board? The manager also needs to know that you are asking for copy permission for a single occasion. There will be little loss of sales for a one-time permission. If it is a magazine article you want, tell the manager the title of the article you want to copy, the date it appeared, who the author was, and which pages are involved. If it is an excerpt from a book, give its title, author, and pages to be copied.

Assure the manager that on the title page of each photocopy, the magazine's (book's) copyright will be acknowledged. Such an acknowledgment includes the date the article was copyrighted (usually the date of the magazine), the name and address of the publisher, and your statement that you are using it with permission.

Have a signed copy of the letter returned to you. It will prove that you have permission to photocopy. Usually the manager will only sign the letter and return it. At other times special conditions may be added to your letter.

Once I received a letter back with the copyrighted acknowledgment changed. I had the legal name of the magazine wrong. The permissions manager corrected it. On another occasion the publisher wrote and said that his company had contracted with a permissions agency to supply all that magazine's reprints. I contacted the agency and learned the cost of the article I wanted. It was expensive and I decided not to use the article.

There are two main advantages to using this permissions letter. First, it will help reestablish Christian credibility among both Christian and secular publishers. It shows them that there are some people around who are concerned about photocopy ethics.

Second, it will help you plan your activities better. If you know that the approved permission letter has to be in your hands before you can use the photocopier, it will encourage you to plan your lessons and meetings far in advance.

The tape recorder has also be-

come an abuser of copyright material. A popular denominational speaker recently appeared at a district preachers' meeting. On the last day of the meeting, the speaker heard the district superintendent say, "Now for all of you who didn't take adequate notes of these sessions, I have good news. All the sessions were taped, and they will be on sale in the foyer this afternoon." The speaker was stunned. Nobody had asked his permission to tape-record.

Is there anything wrong in tape recording conference speakers, camp meeting evangelists, or even the district superintendent? Yes, there can be. The denominational speaker was stunned partly because his permission had been presumed. Membership in the Body of Christ does not release us from simple courtesies. It is still proper to say, "Please," and "Thank you." Paul did not presume Philemon's permission to release Onesimus, but appealed to him as a "beloved . . . fellow-worker" (v. 1).

A contract to speak to a live congregation or audience does not include tape recording permission. The speaker may not want to be taped.

Tape-recording a speech without permission may also be a violation of the copyright law. If a speech is read from a manuscript, the manuscript is protected by the 1978 law. Registering the manuscript in Washington is not a condition for copyright protection. Thus, the recording of the speech is as illegal as the photocopying of the manuscript.

Resolving the problem of tape recording can be simple. If you want to tape-record a special speaker or evangelist, ask his permission and abide by his response. How do you stop individuals in the audience or congregation from using their own recorders if the speaker does not want to be tape-recorded? There is no absolute way without frisking people for tape recorders. However, you can discourage illegal tape recordings.

Douglas Linder, a professor at the Law School of the University of Missouri, suggests that the following sentence be printed in the bulletin or program: "The tape recording of the speaker's address [preacher's sermon] is expressly forbidden." A simi-

lar statement might also be made from the platform.

If the speaker agrees to be taped, taping rights should be added to the original speaking contract. Professor Linder says that a good contract is the key. If a speaker is concerned about his rights, write them into the contract.

If the tape is to be sold, the speaker receives royalty fees. One minister said to me, "If they make a profit, I want a cut." A good rule to follow is to give the speaker 10 percent of the retail price per tape sold. Also, the speaker should receive 10 free copies for his own use.

The new technology offers imposing challenges to men and women committed to a holiness lifestyle. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to give us insights on how to deal with these challenges.

October 14, 1980

Permissions Manager
Audio Visual Communications Review
Association for Educational Communications
and Technology
1126 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Manager:

I teach a graduate course in Educational Methods and Media at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo. I would like permission to photocopy 40 complete articles of Dr. Stephen B. Walter's article, "Multi-Image: Special Problems, Special Solutions," for the exclusive use of my students. The article appeared on pages 23-24, 26, and 30 of the January, 1979, issue of *Audio Visual Communications Review*.

On each photocopy would appear:

Copyright, 1979, Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1126 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Reprinted from *Audio Visual Communications Review*. Used with permission.

A signed copy of this letter will serve as documentation that we have received your permission. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,
THOMAS J. PURCHASE, M.S.
Graduate Assistant

Permission Granted _____
Signature _____

Date _____

Special Conditions (if any) _____

THE PASTOR'S CALL TO VANITY FAIR

by R. J. Gould

*District Superintendent, Canadian Midwest District
The Christian and Missionary Alliance*

In Bunyan's classic *Pilgrim's Progress* he records crucial events in Christian's journey toward the Celestial City. Along the way the city of Vanity presented its challenge with the "fair" where all sorts of enticements were offered, including "lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, etc."

Today, pastors are faced with the call to Vanity Fair with increasing fervor. I address this problem because of my experience with several pastors in the last few years who have fallen victim to the enticements and have been forced to leave the ministry. I would like to try to analyze why this happens and then suggest guidelines to pastors and their wives to assist them in building a strong relationship which will be one of the best defenses against this pitfall.

REASONS FOR THE PROBLEM

Why should a man ever be drawn into a situation where he would establish an intimate relationship with another woman, particularly when he has a lovely wife and family of his own? There are several reasons.

1. The Enemy's Tactic

At the root of all evil, our enemy, Satan, plays an important role. He will make sure that the Lord's servants are thoroughly tempted.

The "lust of the flesh" will be a primary area of attack. The enemy knows man's desire for love and sexual fulfillment. Satan will see to it that God's servants are beckoned to come and play the games of Vanity Fair.

The Sacred Record reveals that man probably struggles with sexual drives more than any other temptation. Even David, a man after God's own heart, fell victim to this powerful enticement (2 Samuel 11).

2. The Cultural Trend

Sex is the keynote of our day. Every aspect of our society seems to be permeated with sexual overtones. Hardly a program on television escapes its focus. The advertising field majors on the sex symbol to market merchandise. Traditional concepts of love and marriage are being replaced by new freedoms. Lacey Hall suggests that in our day of the "new morality" and "situation ethics" there is a definite changing of attitudes which multiply illicit sexual affairs.

One would have to be naive to suggest that we are not affected in some way by the environment and cultural trends of our day. The way sex is displayed can create a desire to experience that which a person appears to be missing. The media presentation makes the adulterous life-style seem normal.

3. The Marriage Breakdown

A third reason for the problem is marriage breakdowns. It has perhaps not been a fractured relationship that is evident to the public. It may not even be obvious to the partners involved. The fact is that the one partner may not be aware of the lack of fulfillment that is being experienced by the other.

At the root of the problem may be an inability to communicate, being too busy for each other, emotional prob-

lems, economic pressures, lack of maturity, or a host of other dysfunctions. Ultimately, tensions arise and this usually leads to a lack of involvement and fulfillment in the sexual relationship. This leaves some persons quite vulnerable.

4. The Counseling Dilemma

Psychiatrists, psychologists, marriage counselors, and pastors are being called upon by those distressed in unhappy marriages.

Recently I heard a discussion on the radio about the number of professional counselors that are becoming involved sexually with counselees. At first, this would seem to be very abnormal, but upon careful evaluation I think some of the reasons become evident.

A woman, disturbed by her marital problems, visits a pastor. She usually finds the man sitting across the desk from her to be a kind, gentle person who has sincere concern and compassion for her. Most important is the fact that he takes time to listen to her—without ridicule. She feels so good after the session because she has been able to unburden her heart and in turn receive some encouragement rather than scorn and criticism. When things get rough at home, she is back at the pastor's office because she really needs him. If a pastor is not wise, soon he can become a crutch. The woman can begin to idolize him and wish her husband were so understanding and kind. Subsequent visits bring expression of her appreciation—a prolonged handshake, a quick squeeze, a little kiss, and on it goes.

If a pastor is not being fulfilled in his own marriage, he can soon begin to treasure this type of expression, for it provides him with extra attention he may feel is lacking at home. Even if the pastor has a good marriage, he cannot afford to expose himself to this kind of "transference" because he is human, and he is making himself very vulnerable. The wise writer asks, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" (Prov. 6:27).

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

There are probably many reasons for a pastor's fall that I have not mentioned, but I must address myself to what I choose to call "solutions to the problem."

1. The Spiritual Principle

Scripture indicates that the temptation will come because it is common to man (1 Cor. 10:13). Certainly, pastors should not be blind to this fact. Of all people who find themselves in a natural setting for such a temptation, it is a pastor. I cannot agree that it is always possible to have his wife or another person available when he is counseling with someone of the opposite sex. The key is whether or not a pastor is able to daily walk in the Spirit of God and appropriate the provision of victory that there is in Christ.

When pastors succumb to sensual allurements, usually you find that they have left the fortress of being daily surrounded by a fresh encounter in the Scripture and a worship experience in prayer that has renewed the inner man. The result is a lack of spiritual sensitivity and evidence of carnal motivations.

We are not wrestling with flesh and blood. All the

forces of the enemy array themselves against us. The pastor who allows his relationship with the Lord to slip is in serious danger of slipping into a wrong relationship.

2. The Cultural Stance

We have often heard it said that we can be "in the world but not of the world." We do have to live in this day, even though we see our culture on a great slide of moral decline. Pastors must be careful not to allow their eyes and minds to feed on material that is in keeping with this degeneration. Too often I find that men have allowed their feet to wander to the bookstands or to the movie houses where they feast on sensuality and pornographic filth. The testimony is often, "I never thought it could happen to me," but what result can be expected if a person continually feeds his mind in this context. "As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

3. The Marriage Pattern

I would present a threefold suggestion for the marriage relationship. In the beginning God, in establishing this beautiful union, suggested that there should be "oneness." I think this oneness should apply to the spirit, soul, and body.

The spirit—a spiritual communion between husband and wife is of utmost importance. "Two are better than one," we read in Ecclesiastes, but the writer goes on to suggest that "a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccles. 4:9, 12). When husband and wife are in a regular pattern of daily devotion with God, communion and fellowship are established. I have discovered that those who pray together consistently also have better lines of communication with each other. Many pastors confess to the difficulty they have in experiencing a regular devotional life with their partner. For a man in leadership of the Lord's work, this is imperative.

The soul—a man and his wife need each other. They must have time for one another and opportunity to pursue activities of common interest that will cultivate their own relationship. The work ethic of today leaves few with ample time for this unless it is scheduled. Many couples lose the keen edge of their relationship because they fail to learn to enjoy one another in activities away from the daily routines. Pastors can be most guilty of this because of their motivation to serve God with all of their being. A pastor can become so busy in ministry to others he forgets ministry to his wife and family. It can be a very spiritual thing for a man to get off the merry-go-round and plan for a time of rest, relaxation, and the enjoyment of personal interests with his wife and children.

The physical—even though pastors have divine authorization, they still have human limitations and needs the same as other men. A normal sexual relationship is imperative for a pastor who is thrust into the life of heavy schedules and personal counseling that is often problem oriented.

It is not unusual to find men, working in this context, to have strong desires for sexual fulfillment. If his marriage is not providing this, a serious vulnerability is created when he is confronted with that young lady who desires to express her appreciation for all he has done in assisting her to cope with her marriage problems.

(Continued on page 60)

IDLE TIME: WHAT TO DO WITH IT

by A. Tired Brother

Pastor Lewis Brown of Salisbury, N.C., wanting to challenge his people during the Year of the Layman to be of "greater service to your church and a greater blessing to those around you," asked them to check the following list.

On one side they were to check the things they felt they could help with according to their spiritual gifts and personal desires. On the other they were to designate the time they felt their pastor should spend each week on each item.

THE YEAR OF THE LAYMAN PASTORAL DUTIES

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Visitation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer Time for Congregation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Prospect Visitation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meetings and Conferences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Class Meetings and Parties | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leading the 3 Worship Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counselling (all types) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Bible Study & Devotions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital Visitation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Sunday School Lesson | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sermon Preparation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Prayer Life | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Devotions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Bulletin/Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The results were rather startling.

Pastor Brown distributed this to the Wednesday night prayer meeting crowd. The key, of course, to the amount of time to spend on each is *necessity*. "Some of my congregation," says he, "had totals of 156 hours in any one week. Only four had less than 100. This gave me some apprehension."

Assuming this was my congregation, my first question to them would be, "Is it OK if I use the 12 remaining hours for sleep?"

I figure if I divide it up, I can get about 1¼ hours a night. I'm sure gonna need it! As for meals, never mind, I'll be too tired to eat anyway.

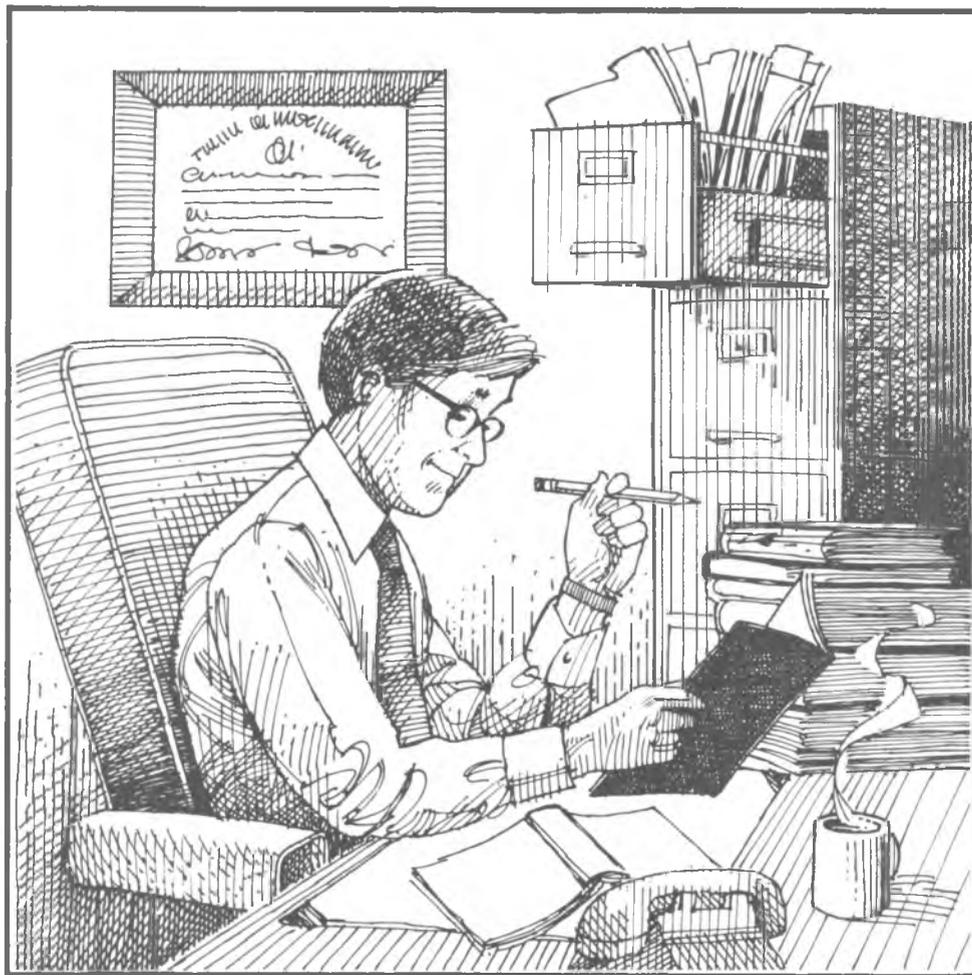
Taking the lesser figure of 100 hours comes nearer being a possibility. That leaves me 68 hours per week for eating, sleeping, and a multitude of other things that don't seem to fit into the above categories. Let's see . . . how shall I fritter away 9½ hours a day from my 100-hour workweek? It comes out looking something like this:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 6 hrs., 10 min. | —Sleep. (I'll need 10 minutes to get awake.) |
| 1½ hrs. | —Gulp (as opposed to eat). If I skip one meal, I may be able to relax a little at dinner. |
| 1-2 hrs. | —Personal hygiene
Run to cleaners
Fix the car (or shop for a new one)
Attend school functions with kids
Take kids to music lessons
Pick kids up from various activities
Take out garbage
Care for lawn and grounds
Haul family and constituency to doctor, dentist, optometrist, etc.
Kiss wife
Kick dog |

Why kick dog? Because his life is so easy. Makes me mad. Whoever originated "It's a dog's life" knew nothing about a clergyman's life.



THE SERMON WORKSHOP



14 SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

11 SERMON OUTLINES

1 SERMON CRAFT ARTICLE

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS



On Forgiving Yourself

You may be familiar with Harriette Arnow's book, *The Dollmaker*. Gertie, the main character, is a tragic, suffering, brave, heroic figure. Born and reared in Kentucky, she always wanted to have a farm and stay there. Her husband, during World War II, went to Detroit to work and made her bring the children and move to a ghetto in the city. Her life became one miserable, trying experience after another.

Much of her misery revolved around her constant memory of pasts she could not forget and forgive: her mother who talked her out of staying in Kentucky and persuaded her to "keep her family together" and move to Detroit; her husband who never knew her and never understood her yearning for the country and thus forced her to come and live with him in the city. Gertie can't forgive her mamma; she can't forgive Clovis, her husband.

But, most tragically, she can't forgive herself: for not being strong and buying some land and staying in Kentucky; for not keeping her children in Kentucky on the farm; for embarrassing them with "country" outbursts in the city schools and getting them in trouble there; for humiliating Reuben, the oldest child, until he ran away from Detroit and went back home; for letting her daydreaming daughter Cassie wander off to the railroad tracks where she gets hit by a train and is killed. Gertie never recovers. Her past haunts her, painfully and unceasingly. She can never forgive herself her past, and life is miserable for her and all those around her.

—Robert T. Young, *A Sprig of Hope* (Abingdon, 1980)

Teach

It is an authentic anecdote of the late Dr. Nathaniel Bowditch that when, at the age of 21 years, he sailed on an East Indian voyage, he took pains to instruct the crew of the ship in the art of navigation. Every sailor on board, during that voyage, became afterwards a captain of a ship. Such are the natural consequences of associating with a man whose mind is intent upon useful knowledge and whose actions are born of benevolence.

—Horace Mann

Self-centered

The valet of the last German kaiser said, "I cannot deny that my master was vain. He had to be the central figure in everything. If he went to a christening, he wanted to be the baby. If he went to a wedding, he wanted to be the bride. If he went to a funeral, he wanted to be the corpse."

—James R. Bjorge, *The Love Road to Calvary* (Abingdon, 1982)

Evangelizing

In one visitation evangelism campaign, a young couple, who had been Christians for only six months, won 26 people in one week. One man was visited seven times. On the seventh visit he caved in, saying: "Well, it if means so much to you, I'll try it."

—E. Stanley Jones, *Christian Maturity* (Abingdon, 1980)

A Parable for Ministry

A flock of crows disputed possession of a cornfield with a farmer and his sons. Again and again they returned to the attack. But at last a shower of buckshot sent them flying in terror. Assembling gloomily on the edge of the woods, they held a council of war.

One young and vigorous crow rose and thrust out his chest. "As far as I can see," he said, "there are more crows than men, and we can fly which men cannot. So why do we not assemble and destroy these creatures who presume to govern us and drive us from our food? Then we could eat all the corn we want, and there would be no one to stop us."

An older crow at the edge of the flock interrupted. "That is all very well," he said, "but in my lifetime I have observed this one thing. Where there are no men, there are also no cornfields."

—John H. Townsend

Who's Who

If you teach people that they are inferior, sooner or later they come to believe it. Some believe Cecil Frances Alexander's infamous 1849 hymn:

*The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly,
And ordered their estate.*

In 1963 the hymn was officially removed from the Anglican hymnal. Fifty years earlier it was different. The second-class passengers on the *Titanic* stood calmly by while the first-class passengers filled the lifeboats. Rather than break the sanctions of class distinction, they accepted certain death in the icy Atlantic. Let us remember that the ground is level at the foot of the Cross.

—David Knaile

The Mighty Must

If God is God, then ultimately truth must prevail. In his opera *Princess Ida*, W. S. Gilbert wrote some lines which are sung by Lady Blanche. Lady Blanche's dreams and ambitions have never been fulfilled, but she is sure they will be:

*Come, mighty Must!
Inevitable Shall!
In thee I trust.
Time weaves my coronal!
Go, mocking Is!
Go, disappointing Was!
Away! The Mighty Must
Shall be!*

What a Way to Die

In William Makepeace Thackeray's 19th-century novel *The Newcomes*, Thomas Newcome lies on his deathbed. "As the last bell struck, a peculiar, sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little and quickly said, 'Adsum!' (Latin for 'present') and fell back. It was the word we used at school, when names were called; and lo, he, whose heart was as that of a little child, had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of the Master."

Media Morality

Robert Lichter of George Washington University and Stanley Rothman of Smith College interviewed 240 editors and reporters of top newspapers and

electronic media to determine their religious habits and views.

The individuals studied were described by the researchers as "predominantly white males in their 30s and 40s," over half of whom have graduate degrees.

Of these most influential media decision makers, exactly half have no religious affiliation, and 86 percent "seldom or never attend religious services." Only 8 percent attend church or synagogue weekly. One in five claims to be Protestant and one in eight Catholic. One in four was "raised in a Jewish household."

Ideologically liberal, 90 percent of the group agree that "a woman has the right to decide for herself whether to have an abortion," and 79 percent identify with the "pro-choice" position on abortion. Three-quarters disagree that homosexuality is wrong, compared to 9 percent who feel it is. Fifty-four percent do not regard adultery as wrong (versus 15 percent who do).

Eternity, April, 1982

A Dance of Joy

In the poignant, stirring play *Shadowbox*, all the characters know they have incurable diseases; they are all going to die. They are all taken to the Pocono Mountains to die. Brian, one of those who knows he is soon to die, in a very moving and memorable line, as he thinks of his own life and the lives of the others and the world they have all known, says: "The universe is not a syllogism. It is a miracle. The universe is a miracle. If you can believe a part of it. It is cause for dancing."

—Robert T. Young, *A Sprig of Hope* (Abingdon, 1980)

On Sharing Pits and Rescues

Rags, an Airedale, missing for three days, was found when a faint barking was heard from a 50-foot dry well on abandoned property. A man was lowered into the well, and Rags was found uninjured but weak from hunger. The man put Rags into a sack, and in doing so he felt something hit his leg. He found that a large rabbit had fallen into the well too. The rabbit was put into the sack, but in coming up the sack hit a

crosspiece, and the rabbit fell back into the well.

With frantic eagerness Rags consumed the food and water brought to him; but when the owners wanted Rags to go home with them, he would not budge from the mouth of the well. He kept looking down. So someone went down again and brought up the rabbit, the friend who had shared a truce of comradeship with him in their mutual disaster. When the rabbit was brought up safely, Rags sniffed him eagerly and then willingly headed for home.

That same impulse is in the heart of every person who has really tasted Christ—he cannot be content to be rescued alone; he can be content only when those who have shared his pit have been rescued.

—E. Stanley Jones, *Christian Maturity* (Abingdon, 1980)

Unselfish Act

The grandest expression of love is to forgive. It is our most unselfish act and therefore the most difficult and most rewarding.

Forgiving is like a railroad track that presses onward across the prairie. It will not be pushed aside by weeds of rationalization that grow up around it, and will not be crushed by fear of vulnerability. Straight and purposeful, it moves forward toward completion even though it may be a journey of great length.

The true forgiver does not wait until "feeling like it," but forgives immediately. Then the good feelings come: warmth created out of a willful intention to love others, and a sense of security arising from deliberate faithfulness to God's commands.

As we forgive, resentment is displaced by joy; barriers between people turn to bonds of trust; the blight of dislike heals, and friendship flowers; and sounds of suspicion turn to sounds of celebration.

—Richard P. Walters, *Anger: Yours and Mine and What to Do About It* (Zondervan, 1981)

Garbage In; Garbage Out

Aesthetically, as well as morally, we become the sum of our indulgences. What we habitually take into our minds and imaginations becomes a permanent part of us. If we consistently immerse

ourselves in mediocre literature or painting or music, we become, in that sphere of our lives, mediocre people.

Perhaps the threat of mediocrity is greater in music than in any other art. The ease with which a flip of the switch fills the room with music, combined with the syndrome of mindlessly absorbing "background music," has conspired against good musical taste.

But Christians are obligated to excellence because of who God is. The doctrine of stewardship, moreover, teaches us that there is an obligation to develop every talent or capacity that we possess.

How, then, does one develop good musical taste? Music is the art of the ear. Good listening requires concentrated attention. It also requires listening to excellent rather than mediocre artistic form. The way to develop excellence in musical taste is simple: It requires only that we keep listening to music that is excellent.

—Leland Ryken, *The Christian Imagination* (Baker, 1981)

A Dr. Spock Rerun

For decades I was an uncompromising civil libertarian and scorned the hypocrisy involved in the enforcement of obscenity laws; but recent trends in movies, literature, and art toward that which I think of as shock obscenity, and the courts' acceptance of it, have made me change my position . . . particularly in view of other brutalizing trends. . . . In our so-called emancipation from our Puritan past I think we've lost our bearings. Many enlightened parents still have inner convictions but are afraid that they don't have a sure basis for teaching them to their children. Some of their children are quite bewildered, as child psychiatrists and school counsellors report.

Guilt Feelings

Some of us feel guilty because we are guilty. No amount of pastoral reassurance that guilt is outmoded or that I am, after all, basically nice should prematurely relieve me of my legitimate burdens.

—William H. Willimon, *Christian Century*, April 14, 1982



SERMON OUTLINES



by Frank W. Morley

Community Church of the Nazarene, Torrance, Calif.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST TRAGEDY

Gen. 3:6-7

INTRODUCTION: Examples of great tragedies. None of these can be called the world's greatest tragedy, so what can be so-called? The entrance of sin into the world.

I. The Origin of Sin

Sin came through a clash of wills. God said, "You shall not." Man said, "We shall be as gods."

II. The Nature of Sin: Disobedience

A. They broke a known law of God.
B. Sin is more than an act. They were so changed they had to be driven from the garden.

III. The Consequences of Sin

A. Self-deception—they tried to hide from God.
B. Guilt—that made them want to hide.
C. Separation from God—driven from the garden.

IV. The Remedy for Sin (v. 15)

Sin is to be crushed, not just forgiven. Its power is to be broken by the seed of woman—Jesus. (Compare: Rom. 5:12, 17; 6:17-18, 22)

CONCLUSION: The message of the gospel is found in the first pages of the Bible. The world's greatest tragedy is overcome by the Cross. Sin shall not have dominion.

THE ABCs OF CLEANSING

Mark 1:40-45

INTRODUCTION: The miracles of Jesus were more than incidents to reveal His power. They are events designed to reveal His will and purpose. So then the cleansing of this leper shows His will for us.

I. Acknowledge the Need (v. 40)

"You can make me *clean*" (NIV); i.e., I am in need of cleaning.

II. Believe in His Power to Cleanse (v. 40)

"You can make me clean"; i.e., You have the power to do it.

III. Consecrate and Trust (v. 40)

"If you are willing" (NIV); i.e., I want only what You want. "I would rather be in this wheelchair with Him than able to walk without Him" (Joni Eareckson).

IV. Devotion Through Obedience (vv. 43-44)

The fact of this man's disobedience doesn't change Jesus' demand. (Compare Acts 5:32.)

V. Experience Cleansing (v. 42)

"Immediately the leprosy left him" (NIV). All the leprosy; not just the outer signs, but the inward source.

CONCLUSION: Follow the simple ABCs and God will cleanse you as He cleansed the leper.

THE FINE PRINT IN GOD'S GUARANTEE

Luke 8:4-8

INTRODUCTION: If you ever have wondered why the promises in the Word do not always seem to work as you expected, maybe you need to see if you are claiming them in line with the fine print in the guarantee—*promise*.

I. The Word Must Be Accepted (v. 5)

The hard heart will not receive the Word, so it will not work and produce that contained in the Word.

II. The Word Must Be Accepted into the Heart (v. 6)

Superficial acceptance is no good; shallow soil reception will not produce.

III. The Word Must Be Accepted as Supreme in the Heart (v. 7)

The Word will not produce when it has to share the heart with thorns.

IV. The Word Brings Only God's Best to the Life (v. 8)

The Word will bring what God intends to the heart and life, not always what we want. He wants fruitfulness and growth. Often our desires would limit both.

CONCLUSION: This guarantee has no time limits. It does not run out after one year or five years. It does have use conditions. If we want the Word to work, we must accept it into our lives as supreme and allow God to produce His desires within us.

THE PARABLE OF PENTECOST

Luke 11:5-13

INTRODUCTION: Jesus is speaking about prayer and links it directly with Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He gives us a parable of supply and demand.

I. The Nature of the Supply (v. 13)

Of all reasons to pray, of all things to pray for, we should pray for the Holy Spirit.

A. He is necessary—like bread, fish, and eggs (v. 11). Not luxuries but necessities.

B. He is of value—not useless like a stone (v. 11); not dangerous like a scorpion (v. 12).

C. He is our Resource for living—He meets the emergencies of life (v. 5).

II. The Pattern for the Demand (v. 9)

But how do we obtain this supply?

A. We ask persistently (v. 8). "Keep on asking."

B. We ask desperately (vv. 5-6). You have to be desperate to awaken your neighbor and then knock again after he has said no.

C. We ask in need (v. 6). "I have nothing."

CONCLUSION: If you follow the pattern in asking, recognizing the nature of the gift of God, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give . . . ?"

THE FAITH OF A DONKEY

Luke 19:28-35

INTRODUCTION: God used a donkey to speak to an Old Testament prophet, and He uses another one to speak to us about our service.

I. Known to Jesus (v. 30)

He knew where the donkey was, its age, and experience. He knows us at least as well.

II. Available to Jesus (vv. 31-33)

"The Lord needs it" (NIV) was all that had to be said for the donkey to be available. Do we need more persuasion than a donkey?

III. Used by Jesus (v. 35)

Used as never before (v. 30). No experience necessary to work for Jesus when under His control. If God only used those with prior experience, He would never use anyone. We all have to do everything for the first time.

IV. Set Aside by Jesus

After the entrance the donkey is ignored. We are not told what happened to it. It was set aside—without complaint since it was only a beast of burden. Jesus was Lord and Master. We should be as wise and humble.

Ready to go, ready to stay.

V. Ignored by the Crowd

No one exalted the donkey but that didn't matter, it was not even expected. He had his hour of service and that was glory enough. Our service may not always be recognized by man, but that is not why we serve. It will always be recognized by God.

CONCLUSION: He wants us to serve Him. The service will be fitted to us and our ability WITH HIM. Are we available?

JESUS—THE BRANCH MANAGER

John 15:1-9

INTRODUCTION: The relationship we have with Jesus is dependent upon the relationship He has with the Father and is similar to it.

I. The Vine and the Gardener (vv. 1-8)

A. The special relationship (v. 1).

B. The specialized task the vine submits to (v. 2).

1. Cut off (v. 2). The Father cuts off the fruitless.

2. Cut back (v. 2). The Father prunes away the deadwood. No one else has that right.

C. The significance results.

1. Fruit bearing (vv. 2, 4).

2. Father glorified (v. 8).

II. The Vine and the Branches (vv. 3-9)

The relationship of abiding surrender as Jesus has with the Father

A. Abiding means cleansing (v. 3).

B. Abiding means indwelling (v. 4).

C. Abiding means fruitfulness (v. 5).

D. Abiding means answered prayer (v. 7).

E. Separation means destruction (v. 6).

F. Abiding means love (v. 9).

CONCLUSION: The parable is not directed to the few who want to be "saints," but to all who want to be Christians. Abiding in Christ has only one alternative and that is a separation from Christ. Be sure that you abide.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF JESUS CHRIST

John 20:19-22

INTRODUCTION: A will is a record of what the deceased leaves for the living. THIS will is a record of what the Living One leaves to those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

I. The Bequest of an Assurance of Salvation (vv. 19-20)

He did not just appear to show that He was alive. He came showing His wounds; not to prove who He was, but to prove what He had done—gained our salvation.

II. The Bequest of Peace (vv. 19, 21)

He says it twice so that we really understand it. If He can overcome death, which is the final enemy, no one else can defeat. His peace can keep our hearts and minds.

III. The Bequest of Service (v. 21)

Isn't a will supposed to bring gifts rather than burdens? Yes, but service is a gifted privilege to Christians, not an onerous duty. Think of it, the same commission Christ himself receives, we sinners receive. That is a privilege.

IV. The Bequest of an Equipping (v. 22)

At the commencement of His ministry He received the Spirit. If we are going to accept the bequest of service we are to do the same. This was not their Spirit baptism, rather it was an earnest. Just as they had to wait for Pentecost before beginning their service, so they had to wait for Pentecost for their full equipping.

CONCLUSION: Most people wait in anticipation for the will of a rich relative so they can obtain the bequests. Let us not reject the bequests of the King of Kings.

THE GIFT OF GOD

Acts 15:8-9

INTRODUCTION: The phrase "The Gift of God" might make us think of Christmas, or Easter and the Gift of Jesus to our world. It ought to make us think of Pentecost and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The text is Peter's testimony of what

SERMON CRAFT

THE PREACHER AS ARTIST

by C. S. Cowles



happened on the Day of Pentecost and what that meant to him personally.

I. How God Gives

A. With equality—to them as He gave to us—the disciples.

B. With assurance—He bare them witness, giving.

II. What God Gives

A. Purity—purified their hearts.

B. Power—Peter does not mention this because he had the right priorities. People want power without purity, but Peter knows, as life teaches, that purity always brings with it the right kind of power.

III. When God Gives

A. In response to an acknowledged need—God knew their hearts.

B. In response to a vital faith—He purified by faith.

CONCLUSION: He will give the Holy Spirit, who brings purity. He will give the gift now, when in your heart he sees the recognition of your need, and the faith that will accept.

THE 11TH COMMANDMENT

Eph. 5:18-21

INTRODUCTION: People have spoken very humorously of "the 11th commandment"—"Don't get caught" or something like that. Today I have a serious "11th commandment." It is "Be filled with the Spirit."

I. It Is a Command Rather than a Request (v. 18)

"Be filled" is the language of command, not of suggestion or option.

II. It Is the Rule Rather than the Exception (v. 18)

"Do not get drunk . . . Instead, be filled" (NIV). Not getting drunk must apply to all Christians; therefore, "be filled with the Spirit" must equally apply to all Christians.

III. It Is a Filling Rather than an Emptying (vv. 19-21)

The coming of the Spirit cleanses from sin, but it does not leave the heart empty.

A. It is a filling with joy (v. 19). Music is the evidence of joy.

B. It is a filling with thanksgiving (v. 20). The Spirit enables the one filled to see God's great goodness, and this leads to thanksgiving.

C. It is a filling with humility (v. 21). Submission between the brethren should be the order of life. All we are, God has made us; all my brother is, God has made him. We should honor God at work in our brother, as he honors God at work in us.

D. It is a filling with love (v. 19). "Speak to one another" (NIV) portrays fellowship, encouragement, support; in a word—love.

CONCLUSION: This 11th commandment is as binding as the other 10. It brings joy, thanksgiving, humility, love. Why would any Christian, seeking to grow, not want to obey?

IN CHRIST'S STEPS

1 Pet. 2:21

INTRODUCTION: We use the saying "Like father, like son" when we see the characteristics of one in the other. As children of our Father we are to show the same characteristics by following in the steps of Christ, steps that lead to:

I. A Holy Life (v. 22)

"He committed no sin" (NIV). We are to live a holy life. Compare 1 Pet. 4:1. Same word, "ceased," used of Christ in calming the sea. It was not impossible for the sea ever to become stormy again. It would remain calm while under the control of Christ. So with our ceasing from sin.

II. A Loving Life (v. 23)

Those who opposed and insulted Him, He loved and prayed for. We are to do the same. Too often we are quick to jump to our own defense.

III. An Obedient Life (v. 24)

We can live as He did, the way which led Him to die for others, i.e. obediently. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

CONCLUSION: This is how we are to live—following in His steps. But that is impossible. It is like asking a cripple to match the stride of an athlete running the marathon. True, but Peter writes (v. 24), "by his wounds you [the helpless cripple faced with the marathon] have been healed" (NIV). The healing enables us to die to sin and live to Him.

LOVELY HOLINESS

Text: 1 Corinthians 13

LONG-SUFFERING (v. 4)

LIKABLE ("kind") (v. 4)

LEANS for others (no envy) (v. 4)

LOWLY ("not puffed up") (v. 4)

LEVELHEADED ("not . . . unseemly") (v. 5)

LOW PRESSURE POINTS ("not easily provoked") (v. 5)

LOVELY ("no evil") (v. 5)

LOOKS for truth (v. 6)

LOFTY ("believeth [and] hopeth all things") (v. 7)

LIKE Christ ("beareth all things") (v. 7)

—J. GRANT SWANK



Matisse, the expressionist artist, loved to tell how as a 12-year-old boy he happened upon a Bohemian painter at work beside a busy harbor. As he watched a seascape take shape on the canvas under the quiet movements of the artist's brush, he says, "I felt as if my eyes had been skinned. All of a sudden, I came alive to the wonderful world of color."

Something like that must have happened on the Day of Pentecost. Peter was drawn to the ancient prophecy of Joel which anticipated the age of the Spirit: "And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17, NASB). The apostles' inner eyes were "skinned" to where they were released to proclaim Christ with clarity and power.

Paul's eyes were literally skinned upon being filled with the Holy Spirit, for "there fell from his eyes something like scales" (Acts 9:18, NASB). With that illuminating vision of Jesus came his Great Commission "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light" (26:18, NASB). Whatever else artistry is all about, it has to do with a new kind of seeing, a fresh perspective, a dawning flash of illumination. "Whereas I was blind," said the man touched by Jesus' healing artistry, "now I see" (John 9:25, NASB).

To think of preaching as an art form is not a familiar model of ministry. Yet it is implied in the biblical images of priest, prophet, apostle, evangelist, pastor, teacher, shepherd, and servant. The ministry of the Word, in all its dimensions, has to do with the opening of inner eyes until Christ becomes dynamically alive in the spiritual consciousness.

Art in the Scriptures

The Bible itself is the most imaginative, diverse, and fascinating compendium of literary art in the world. There are, to be sure, many straightforward propositional statements which make a direct appeal to the understanding.

The overwhelming mass of biblical materials, however, sings and soars and sobs and cries aloud and claps its hands and does cartwheels for joy. It celebrates God's greatness by bringing into play virtually every art form known to man. Not only is narrative prose to be found in the Scriptures, but poetry, music, drama, storytelling, parables, and hymns. Its language is heavy with metaphor, simile, hyperbole, allegory, apocalypse, personification, symbols, and all sorts of figures of speech. Architecture, sculpture, and craftsmanship are to be found in its pages. And so is singing, festivity, and dancing ("aerobics"?). When the biblical artists take pen in hand, creation sings, eternity invades time, and heaven bends low. The Bible not only employs art forms—it is, in and of itself, a superlative work of art.

The artistic style of the Bible reveals an insight about human nature that tends to escape us in our flat, cerebral, and technological age. Man is a creature who not only thinks but feels, dreams, prays, weeps, laughs, and celebrates. The truth communicated in the Scriptures is not only singular in its point but multidimensional in its impact. It appeals not only to the understanding but to the heart. It is more intuitive than cognitive, more caught than taught. It makes its appeal to the total person in all of the wondrously diverse and richly sensitive dimensions of his being.

A danger lurks in the reductionistic trend so popular among biblical preachers in our day. Great effort is devoted to distilling the Bible's basic truths, discovering its fundamental principles, and synthesizing its timeless verities. Often, however, what is gained in simplicity is lost in vitality. A skeleton may instruct the student regarding the structure of the human body, but it is a poor substitute for a real, live human being. I recall my high school biology class where we set out to dissect a frog in order to isolate and analyze its constituent parts. The exercise was informative—but, alas, the frog died!

Understanding ministry in terms of art means that the preacher will not only engage in careful exegesis but in expansive exposition. He will paint with a broad brush. He will deal with large passages, great ideas, and whole people. He will seek to let the Bible speak through its own inherent art forms and richly emotive style.

Art and the Heart

The preacher-artist is interested in more than informing the mind and moving the will; he seeks to sculpture the image of Jesus upon the soul. More than making a convert is at stake; he seeks by the skillful application of the mallet of God's Word and the chisel of the Spirit to fashion a saint. While the crises of conversion and entire sanctification are the great acts of God accomplished in a moment's time of obedient faith, cultivating Christian character is the work of a lifetime.

The heart responds to art far more readily and profoundly than to flat, simplistic, propositional statements. Many have been helped to understand the basic rudiments of the gospel through the use of the *Four Spiritual Laws*. Yet they are to the rich drama of a biblical story of redemption what a cartoon drawing is to a Michelangelo or a Raphael. Even the Johannine statement "God is love" (1 John 4:7) does not begin to move the heart, fire the imagination, and excite the spirit like the parable of the prodigal son with its gripping portrait of the waiting, yearning, accepting, and rejoicing Father.

The mind can grasp abstract truth only with difficulty, but it readily responds to pictures. Jesus understood this far better than most of us who preach: "And He said, 'How shall we *picture* the kingdom of God, or by

what parable shall we present it?' . . . And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them" (Mark 4:30, 33, NASB).

I read Hal Lindsey's *Late, Great Planet Earth* several years ago. He reduces the complex world of biblical eschatology with its vivid apocalyptic language and its striking imagery to a series of clear-cut propositional statements, neatly systematized, and with dates attached. I read it with some interest—once. For some reason I have never felt impelled to go back to it again.

Since then, however, I have read the Book of Revelation over and over again. Recently I read it through in one sitting. When I immerse myself in this piece of striking literary art, I find myself on a roller coaster. I am carried to the skies in one chapter and abruptly plunged to the edge of horror in the next. A kaleidoscope of images flash through my mind. Emotions of wonder, excitement, fear, joy, dread, stark terror, and soaring exhilaration cascade over my spirit. By the time I move beyond the Great White Throne Judgment into the exalted beauty and magnificent splendor of the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, I am on the crest of the wave, wafted far beyond myself—which is the mark of true art.

When I have reached the end of Revelation, I find that I have no appetite for speculating about dates or signs of the end. Rather, I find myself joining those 4 and 20 elders who prostrate themselves before the throne, crying out with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." . . . "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." . . . "Amen" (Rev. 5:12-13, NASB).

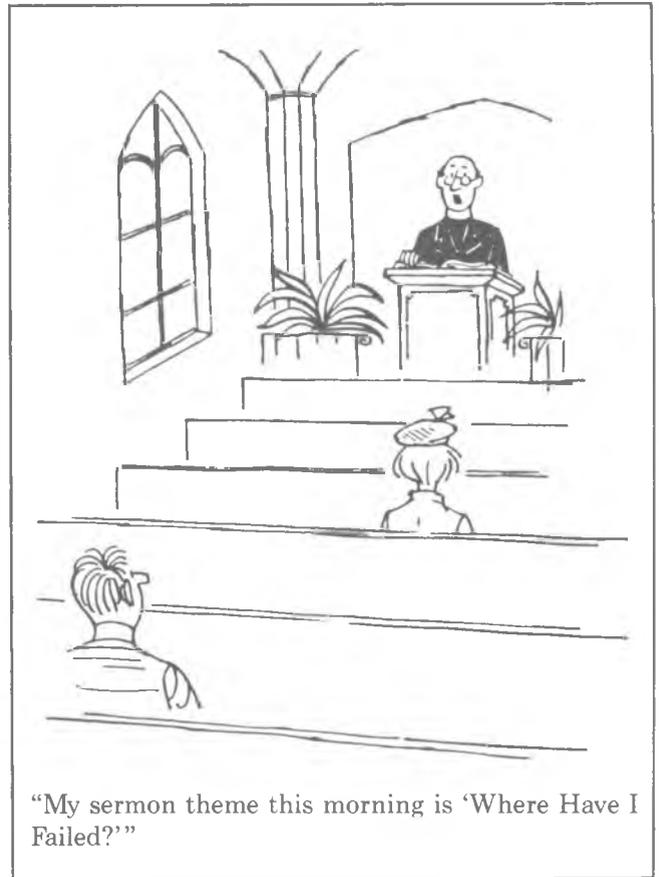
The Preacher-Artist's Task

The preacher takes the pallet of biblical revelation, the brush of his own interpretive insight, and paints the glory of God upon believers' hearts. He composes music that sets the spirit to singing and soaring into heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Artists dream. Joseph's brothers spoke more than they knew when they said of him, "Here comes this dreamer!" (Gen. 37:19, NASB). He dreamed dreams and saw visions which enabled him to divert a great disaster from overtaking the great ancient Egyptian civilization, and contributed significantly to the preservation and welfare of the people of God.

The preacher-artist will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to dream of possibilities and envision potentialities which lie beyond the imagination of most people. He will see his congregation from the perspective of eternity. With an artist's sure instinct, he will perceive them not as they are, but as they can become by the grace of God. And he will exercise his preaching art toward the end of awakening his people to their spiritual destiny and actualizing their creative gifts.

Artists interpret. They see things not as they seem, but as they really are. This requires a gift of penetration, perception, and understanding. A camera freezes an



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image in time. But a portraiture artist is able to blend together many images with varying depth of hues in such a way that the painting conveys a three-dimensional depth and a timeless quality. It communicates life, warmth, vitality.

Life, for most of the people who gather before the preacher on Sunday, appears to be a series of more or less unrelated snapshots. They have lived through a series of miscellaneous experiences. Their emotions have been stirred. For the most part, however, they cannot see any underlying purpose, any unifying pattern, any cosmic meaning in what has happened to them.

Along comes the pastoral-artist. He has dipped deep into the Word of God, immersed himself in the wisdom of the ages, and listened long to the cry of his people's hearts. With the aid of the Spirit he stands in the pulpit, takes the brush of the preached Word in hand, and begins to weave the pigments of his people's raw experiences into a unified, coherent, and meaningful portrait. Here and there, someone will say "Oh, I see," and will take heart. The impression that life is a roulette wheel is replaced by the conviction that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28, NASB).

A little girl stopped in mid-sentence interrupting her bedtime prayer with this exclamation: "Mommy, I sure wish God had skin on His face!" What is it that the preacher-artist does? He puts skin on God's face, flesh and blood on God's truth, and music into God's sphere until his people feel their hearts strangely warmed. ❧

SEEN & NOTED



"Man learns more readily and remembers more willingly what excites his ridicule than what deserves his esteem and respect."

—Horace

"A man who has the gift of ridicule is apt to find fault with anything that gives him an opportunity of exerting his beloved talent."

—Joseph Addison

"Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much. Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."

—William Cowper, *The Task*

**Of all the horrid, hideous notes of woe,
Sadder than owl-songs or the midnight blast,
Is that portentous phrase, "I told you so."**

—Lord Byron

"I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

—Thomas Jefferson

Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,

**And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swellst thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.**

—John Donne, *Holy Sonnets*

"No man pleases by silence; many please by speaking briefly."

—Ausonius

"When the heart is afire, some sparks will fly out of the mouth."

—Thomas Fuller, *Gnomologia*

"Neither scientific observation nor common sense allows us to think that human beings are really searching for liberty. They usually have several other goals—security, comfort, quiet, personal ambition, collective dreams, and so on."

—Jose Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State*

Television is "chewing gum for the eyes."

—John Mason Brown

"I can resist everything except temptation."

—Oscar Wilde

"Half-doing is the undoing of many a worthy cause."

—J. D. Abbott

"No: a glimpse is not a vision, but to a man on a mountain road by night, a glimpse of the next three feet of

road may matter more than a vision of the horizon."

—C. S. Lewis

"You cannot live on skim milk during the days of the week and preach cream on Sundays."

—Robert E. Lee

"When some people say a thing, they are apt to imagine they have *done* it."

—W. B. J. Martin

"In the average community today there are more lonely persons and troubled homes than at any time in our history. Such persons and families need a pastor, in the older sense of the term. In the opinion of many thoughtful laymen, this is where the 'average minister of today fails most often.'"

—Andrew W. Blackwood

"That which is good or great makes itself known, no matter how loud the clamor of denial. That which deserves to live—lives."

—1915, Cadillac Motor Car Ad,
Saturday Evening Post

"The commonest of all methods of bringing a dead church back to life is to form an inner prayer circle."

—Frank C. Laubach

"Lord, make us worthy of the high esteem in which we hold ourselves."

—Unknown

**"If it takes a fifty-thousand-dollar man to
Guide a client**

Develop a coal mine,

Put a corporation on its feet,

What is the teacher worth who

takes the boy of yours and

Guides him,

Develops him,

Puts him on his feet, and

Makes a man of him?"

—From the *Georgia Parent-Teacher*

"Teach us, good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest:

to give and not to count the cost;

to fight and not to heed the wounds;

to toil and not to seek for rest;

to labor and not ask for any reward,

save that of knowing that we do Thy will. Amen."

—Ignatius Loyola

"So what's a preacher?

He is one who stands alongside the road and keeps shouting to the people—some burdened with the most agonizing loads—"Keep walking. Keep walking. You can make it home."

—J. Grant Swank, Jr. 🐾

THE IDEA MART

CHURCH BOARD MODELS CARING MINISTRY

For two years the church board has participated in setting the pace for the caring ministry of the church by making monthly contacts with regular attenders, absentees, and new prospects. A 5 x 8 card is prepared for each family or single adult which includes their name, address, telephone number, birthday and anniversary dates, as well as columns in which board members can indicate who made the contact, when and what type of contact (whether visit, phone call, card, or letter). At the close of each board meeting the cards are distributed (about four or five to each family represented on the board), and prayer is held for the people to be contacted. Board members are urged to make the contacts family projects by having the people in their homes for a meal or Sunday evening snack, remembering their birthdays or anniversaries, sending a card or letter of encouragement or appreciation, etc. We emphasize that this should be done with regular attenders as well as the sporadic and absentees. Our goal is for the church as a whole to develop a ministering life-style.

—Richard G. Diffenderfer
State College, Pa.

THOUGHTS ON MOVING BOOKS

One of the benefits about moving is the attention that the average minister is forced to give to his library whether it be modest or large. The whole process of boxing books and then reshelving them in the new location has a sentimental side somewhat similar to leafing through the pages of a diary of another era of one's life. When you think of it, the buying of a book is a very personal act.

Books that once compelled me strongly now seem very ordinary. Books that I once felt were immortal have died a quiet death on my shelves. Many have expired through the process of being partially read. Some of my old college textbooks were completely read because they were required reading.

(Perhaps our federal government could subsidize literacy by giving us ministers a tax rebate for 10 new books read each year plus a thoughtful essay on how they have enriched our lives and ministries. Such a plan would have the added benefit of employing some of the oversupply of Ph.D.'s that we keep hearing about. After all, someone besides the income tax collectors would have to grade our essays. An A could rate a 12 percent rebate, while a C might only get an 8 percent kickback. That should provide a healthy stimulus to the religious book market.)

Perhaps the worst experience of shuffling books is what might be called bibliophilic guilt, the well-intentioned purchases that have remained totally unread. Some theological essays purchased with noble intentions just recently acquired, but already on the top shelf safely out of reach, a book of sermons 99 percent unread, make me squirm and feel very guilty. Sometimes the voice of conscience asks me in dread tones if this category of books is not increasing.

Old books, looking like faded soldiers in worn uniforms, provide a terrible dilemma. Shall I get rid of them or shall I keep them? I tend to keep them if I cannot find a good home for them in the library of some unsuspecting novice in the early stages of his ministry.

Books are a little like pets, in that it is difficult to get rid of them after their useful life span is finished. I

have the feeling that institutions such as Goodwill Industries perform the same function to books as the Humane Society does to old dogs and cats.

The best part of this whole experience is to rediscover that some old loves still quicken the heart, and to find new paths to pursue and new thoughts to explore in the rereading of the books that have been with us for a long, long time. The preacher who builds and keeps a library is an eternal optimist. He believes that the string called the past is tied to the string called the future, and that the knots are stacked side by side on his library shelves.

—Ross W. Hayslip
Tucson, Ariz.

SACRAMENTS AND RITES FOR SHUT-INS

On one occasion it was my responsibility to minister to a woman in her 70s. All her days she had been a skeptic, but late in life, while a shut-in, she had been led to the Lord. She asked to be baptized. It was my privilege to administer this sacrament to her.

We who are privileged to join with others in public worship treasure the sacraments and rites of our church. True, none of them alone is the means of our salvation. But each of them enhances our worship.

What about the shut-ins who love the Lord? Must they miss out on the privilege of the sacraments and rites? Jesus not only *waited* for those who were able to come to Him, often He *went* himself to the disabled. We read of Peter's mother-in-law, burning with high fever. It was no accident that Jesus went to Peter's home to heal that mother. Nor was it an accident that the Lord went to the pool of Bethesda where He found the 38-year-old cripple

who had been disappointed so often when he sought to move into the pool for healing.

Again and again our Lord sought out the lonely and the confined, to touch them with His healing ministry right where they were. He commissioned His disciples to go to the ill, often to anoint them with oil (Mark 6:13).

As the minister seeks out the sick shut-in, surely it cannot be amiss to carry with him a vial of oil. Nor would we be amiss in educating God's people that when they are sick, the Bible instructs them to call on the minister to pray for them and to anoint them with oil.

Each time we administer the Lord's Supper publicly, we should remember the shut-ins. We should arrange to go to them and serve them this blessed sacrament. (Most Christian bookstores have mini-kits of Communion vessels the minister can carry with him.)

Then there is the privilege of publicly taking church membership vows. It can be a real ministry to go to the converted shut-in and offer him the privileges and duties of church membership and, when he requests it, to administer the same to him.

Every community has its population of shut-ins. Therefore, like Jesus, let us search for them, and as they become eligible, let us gladly let them know that all the sacraments and rites of the church are available to them as well as to regular church attenders.

—Duane Springer
Bethany, Okla.

A FRESH APPROACH TO THE MIDWEEK SERVICE

Our midweek services are designed to be an uplifting time of enrichment in which the major focus is

on the interacting of members with each other, sharing what God is doing in their lives, as opposed to a lengthy devotional from the pastor.

In keeping with that purpose, on a recent Sunday evening I gave out a 3 x 5 index card to each person present. On each card, I had written a particular item that the card holder was to bring with him to the upcoming Wednesday evening service. Cards contained one of the following items:

- Come with a favorite *chorus*.
- Come with a favorite *hymn*.
- Come with your *favorite verse* of scripture and *why* it is your favorite.
- Come with a verse of scripture that has taken on new meaning in your *recent devotions*.
- Come with a testimony of how God *saved* you.
- Come with a testimony of how God is working in your life *right now*.
- Come with a testimony of a recent *opportunity to witness* . . . and *how* you handled it.
- Come with a *prayer request* for a need in your own personal life.

As the cards were passed out that Sunday, I reminded everyone that the success of our service would depend on "each part of the Body doing its part." Instead of coming to church to see what the pastor had "up his sleeve," or expecting the pastor to "make church happen," they would each bring a part of the service with them!

As Wednesday night rolled around, my faith was a bit shaky, and I wondered whether or not everything would fall into place. My opening statement was, "Greetings! Who has come with a favorite chorus for us to sing?" Someone popped up, we all sang the suggested chorus, moved on to a hymn

that someone else had brought, and then on to another who shared a favorite scripture. We continued smoothly through the list.

When eight people had shared eight different ingredients, we opened the floor for people to share at random. I feared the flow of the service would slow down, and we would have those awful 15-second lulls between testimonies. On the contrary, the people had come with their testimonies ready and were anxious to share. They didn't have to sit and think. The cards had given them the little bit of direction they needed to come with an exciting testimony that was alive, vibrant, and to the point!

Two of our older members had received cards asking them to share how they were saved. Hearing how God had saved them many years ago and kept them until now was inspiring for our younger members. Some good preaching came from those who share passages of scripture. We heard how God had been answering prayers just that week for some, and how others were needing to receive strength in their daily witnessing. Much in-depth Body sharing went on during that fast hour. We laughed with some and cried with others. We closed in prayer around the altar.

We are not quite sure how the Lord is going to use this same format in the days ahead. Maybe it was meant to be just a one-shot deal. If so, that's okay. However, our plans are to print up new cards each week and pass them out again for the next few Sunday nights. We'll be waiting to see what God has planned for us.

Perhaps God will bring a new breath of freshness to your midweek service by this method, as He so graciously did for us!

—R. Douglas Samples
Fresno, Calif. 



NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

by Ralph Earle

Hebrews

Let Them Slip (2:1)

The verb (only here in NT) is *pararreo* (in the second aorist passive subjunctive), which means “drift away” (NASB, NIV), as all good commentators and versions agree. The KJV rendering is based on the early use of the verb (as in Plutarch) for a ring slipping away from a finger. It was also used in the sense of “be careless, neglect” (Liddell Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1322). B. F. Westcott comments: “The idea is not that of simple forgetfulness, but of being swept along past the sure anchorage which is within reach. . . . We are all continuously exposed to the action of currents of opinion, habit, action, which tend to carry us away insensibly from the position which we ought to maintain” (*Hebrews*, p. 37).

Recompence of Reward (2:2)

This is one word in the Greek: *mis-thapodosia*, which is found only in Hebrews (here; 10:35; 11:26). It literally means “payment of wages.” In the other two passages it means “reward.” But here, as Arndt and Gingrich note, it has the unfavorable sense of “punishment” (NIV).

And Didst Set . . . Thy Hands (2:7)

This clause is not in our oldest Greek manuscript, Papyrus 46 (about A.D. 200), or in the great fourth century manuscript, B (Vaticanus), as well as a number of later manuscripts (cf. NIV).

Captain (2:10)

The Greek word is *archegos*, which comes from *arche*, “beginning.” So it properly means “originator,” “founder,” or “author” (NASB, NIV). By His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus

Christ originated our salvation. Moulton and Milligan show that the sense of “author” or “source” is strong in the papyrus (VGT, p. 81).

Church (2:12)

The Greek word is *ecclesia*, which is used mostly in the New Testament for the Christian “church.” But it is also used for a Greek “assembly” (Acts 19:32, 39, 41) and is so translated (KJV, NASB, NIV, etc.). Here we find it in a quotation from the Septuagint, which constantly uses it for the congregation of Israel. So the proper translation here is “congregation” (NASB, NIV).

Him the Nature Of (2:16)

It will be noted that in the KJV these words are in italics, which means that they are not in the original. The Greek simply has: “For surely it is not angels he helps” (NIV, cf. NASB).

Make Reconciliation (2:17)

The verb is *hilaskomai*. It occurs only here and in Luke 18:13, where it is translated “be merciful”—the prayer of the tax collector in the temple: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” In Hebrews it is rendered “make propitiation” (NASB) and “make atonement” (NIV).

The exact form here is *hilaskesthai* (present passive infinitive). Cremer says that this means “to be reconciled, to be gracious” (*Biblico Theological Lexicon*, p. 301). He goes on to say: “In Homer always, and in later Greek in the majority of cases, *hilaskesthai* denotes a religious procedure: to make the gods propitious, to cause them to be reconciled . . .” (p. 301). But Cremer insists that “the idea lying at the foundation of heathen expiations is rejected by the Bible. The heathen believed the Deity to be naturally alienated in feeling from

man . . .” (pp. 302-03). Then he adds: “In the Bible the relation is a different one. God is not of Himself already alienated from man” (p. 303). But for righteousness’ sake, “an expiation of sin is necessary (a substitutionary suffering of the punishment . . .); and, indeed, an expiation which He Himself and His love institute and give . . .” (p. 303). In further pursuit of this thought, Cremer says: “Nothing happens to God, as is the case in the heathen view; therefore we never read in the Bible *hilaskesthai ton theon*. Rather something happens to man, who escapes the wrath to come . . .” (p. 303).

Westcott puts it this way: “The essential conception is that of altering that in the character of an object which necessarily excludes the action of the grace of God, so that God, being what He is, cannot (as we speak) look on it with favour. The ‘propitiation’ acts on that which alienates God and not on God whose love is unchanged throughout” (*Hebrews*, p. 57).

In Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Buechsel says of *hilaskomai* and its compound, *exilaskomai*: “The most striking thing about the development of the terms, however, is that words which were originally used to denote man's action in relation to God cease to be used in this way in the NT and are used instead of God's action in relation to man” (3:317).

This is shown clearly by our passage here in Hebrews: It is not man but God—in the person of His Son, the “merciful and faithful high priest”—who makes reconciliation, propitiation, or atonement. This is the glorious gospel message of the New Testament. (For further discussion of “Propitiation” see *Word Meanings*, 3:80-83.)

OLD TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES



by Harvey E. Finley

Yahveh Elohe Yisrael, "Yahveh, the God of Israel" (cont.)

The name *Yahveh* is used frequently in nearly all the Old Testament writings, particularly from the Book of Exodus and following. The frequency of the occurrence of this name is verification of the fact that it did indeed become and remain the most significant divine name for ancient Israel. Since a number of the main points concerning *Yahveh* of the Book of Exodus were included in the previous study, this one will give attention to revelation concerning *Yahveh, the God of Israel* as disclosed in the Book of Isaiah.

A listing of the passages with the divine name *Yahveh* in the Book of Isaiah includes approximately 300 such references. While these references cover the entire Book of Isaiah, the particular aspects of revelation or affirmations concerning *Yahveh* to which this study gives attention are found in chapters 40—55.

Yahveh, the God of Israel is the only God of the world; this truth God himself affirmed several times (Isaiah 43:10; 44:8; 45:5, 18, 21). This served in Isaiah's time as a polemic against the belief in many gods by Israelites and other peoples around them and as an expression of disdain for the practice of making idols of wood and stone (see 40:18-20 and 43:8-13). It also affirms indirectly but forcefully that *Yahveh*, the only God, is the only one worthy of

man's devotion. Further, this is a crystal-clear affirmation of monotheism.

Yahveh, the God of Israel is the God who has affirmed His existence from the first to the last, for He has declared: "I am the first and I am the last, and besides Me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6, author's trans.). This is in essence an affirmation of the eternal self-existence of *Yahveh*. This same affirmation is repeated with the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet in the Book of the Revelation: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (1:8, author's trans.; cf. 21:6; 22:13). An affirmation complementary to this is that *Yahveh* is the everlasting God (40:28), which in effect incorporates the patriarchal understanding of God Everlasting (*Ei Olam*) into the understanding or concept of *Yahveh*.

Yahveh, the God of Israel is the One who affirms and who is affirmed as Creator of this world and all that is in it (40:25-28; 42:5; 44:24). This truth is affirmed as apologetic to establish the understanding that the God who had revealed himself to Israel is the Creator of the world, not a Babylonian, Egyptian, or other deity which was in effect a nonentity.

Yahveh, the God of Israel is the One whose greatness, majesty, and power are beyond human comparison and comprehension. He challenged the people in exile in Babylon to make an adequate or

reasonable comparison (see 40:12-26, especially vv. 25 and 26). This, of course, was impossible for them to do, and it remains an impossibility for anyone to do in our day.

Yahveh, the God of Israel is the One who should be praised throughout the whole world. He is the One for whom praise should be sounded in new song from the ends of the earth (42:10). Worldwide praise is due Him for who He is and for His redemptive, delivering acts in behalf not only of sinful Israel but in behalf of all mankind.

These several aspects of revelation concerning *Yahveh* set forth in Isaiah 40—55 which have been singled out for this study served to call the shattered, disenchanted people of Judah back to their moorings. They also served to give new direction and a new hope to them as a people sorrowing in Babylonia, a foreign land. They served to draw them away from the temptations and enticements of the Babylonian gods. These aspects of revelation or affirmations ever remain important in providing perspective concerning the gods versus God.

Other aspects of revelation concerning *Yahveh* will be presented in subsequent study on the titles *Yahveh Sebaoth*—Lord of Hosts; *Yahveh Qedosh Yisrael*—Yahveh, the Holy One of Israel; *Yahveh Moshia' Yisrael*—Yahveh, Redeemer of Israel; and *Adonai Yahveh*—Lord LORD.

Study Habits

(Continued from page 32)

How to Study

I will simply list some ideas.

1. Have a specific time. For most people morning seems to be the best.
2. Have a plan. Allot a certain amount of time for the study of theology.
3. Learn to evaluate. It is a good practice to write book reviews and evaluations.
4. Be disciplined. Do not let other things trifle away your study time.
5. Take notes on what you are reading.
6. Have a goal. Read a minimum number of books per year.
7. Do a major paper. Use your best academic skills. Let your colleagues respond to it.
8. Sermons should reflect scholarly exercise. William Barclay makes the statement, "A church will not follow a man spiritually whom it does not respect intellectually."
9. Underline the important thoughts in the books that you read.
10. Make use of a good filing system. This will help you to preserve the fruits of your study.
11. Avoid shortcuts.
12. Have a place to study.
13. Augment your library.
14. Learn to concentrate.

15. Learn to memorize.
16. Keep a list of books you have read during the year.
17. Use local library.
18. Make use of denominational continuing education programs.
19. Read quality books, e.g., devotional literature as contrasted to critical studies.

Study has never been a burden or an unpleasant task for me. It has been a labor of love. Exploring the minds that have established themselves as the best in history has been and is stimulating, inspiring, and challenging. Grinding my axe of thinking against the whetstones of these spiritual giants has sharpened my own thinking. The intellectual as well as the spiritual blessings can never be repaid.

We are told: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15). Let us submit to the authority of Scripture.

Notes

1. William Barclay, *The Promise of the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 120.
2. Ibid.
3. W. A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), p. 70.
4. Ibid., p. 71.
5. Leander E. Keck, *A Future for the Historical Jesus* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 10.
6. G. C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 51.
7. Ibid., p. 112.

VANITY FAIR

(Continued from page 45)

As "chauvinistic" as it may sound today, there is a place for a pastor's wife to have a real ministry to her husband in the physical area of their relationship. It is not abnormal to find wives blaming themselves when their husbands fall to temptation even though they do not excuse his act. They recognize the deficiency in their own sexual relationship with him. This is not to say that such men have paid adequate attention to the wife's need for fulfillment in this area.

4. The Counseling Procedures

I do not believe it is possible for a pastor to escape counseling situations or visitation settings where he is alone with another woman. Some guidelines, however, can help in this situation.

(1) If a pastor cannot involve a husband in counseling, then at best he can use one or two sessions to set guidelines and principles before the woman to help her cope with her situation and to do her part to restore the marriage. After this he should refuse regular meetings with her to avoid being a "crutch." He can refer her to women in the church or to his wife for regular encour-

agement. It is far too easy for an emotional relationship to be established through continual meetings. It is doubtful that much help will be forthcoming to the woman through prolonged counseling unless her husband can be involved with a desire to see a solution to his marriage conflict.

(2) A pastor should keep a "professional" stance when counseling. I do not mean the cold, impersonal approach. You can be compassionate and concerned without becoming too friendly. It is not necessary to sit and hold the hand of someone you counsel or to put your arm around someone who is overwhelmed with emotion and tears.

(3) Be sure to prohibit a woman from giving physical expressions of appreciation that would be beyond a brief handshake.

(4) In visitation it would be helpful to call ahead to make an appointment. Ask if the husband can be there. If he cannot, adjust the appointment to a time he can be there.

To a district superintendent, it is a very traumatic experience to deal with a situation where a pastor has had an affair. I know that "Vanity Fair" will continue to make its appeal to ministers as long as Satan is alive and well. Let each of us consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted (cf. Gal. 6:1).

Christ the Lord

(Continued from page 6)

his questions. What are the limits of friendship? . . . Would you borrow money for a friend? . . . Would you lay down your life for a friend?

Early on Sunday morning—Easter day—Harry and Edna emerge from the seclusion of their room and come downstairs. They have decided to go back home, but Tobias has worked through his struggle and urges them to stay.

"Do you want us here, Tobias?" Harry asks.

Tobias begins to lose control of his emotions, and on the edge of hysteria, he shouts, "Of course I want you here. I built this house and you are welcome here even though you've got this plague. You're our friends, our very best friends in the world, and you don't have to ask. We love each other, don't we? Doesn't friendship grow to that . . . to love? Doesn't 40 years amount to anything?"

In this remarkable play Albee probes our friendships, our loves, our ethics, and tells us that unless we act out our love for family and friends, our love is empty and phony.

Who are *our* friends? Who are those imposing on us, calling to us, "Do you love me?" I believe they are the voices and the faces of our friends . . . and those other "sheep."

There is the voice and face of a poor little rich girl who lives in a big house where there is little love . . . the poor little rich girl who cries, "Do you love me?"

There are the voices and faces of the poor . . . the hopeless man who is hard-core unemployable . . . the gaunt face of a child in India who is marked for death by malnutrition . . . the multicolored faces of all the have-nots of the world looking to us—the haves—with the eyes of Jesus, and asking, "Do you love me?"

There is the voice and face of the old woman in a hospital, so graciously silent and patient, so alone and unwanted and unneeded—so forgotten. And her silent eyes are asking, "Do you love me?"

Easter is commitment—the commitment to feed the Lord's sheep, to reach out with feeling love and action to people everywhere. The power of the Resurrection is to see Jesus, to know Him, and to care deeply. May it not be said of me that Jesus stood on the beach and I didn't know it was He.

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ABIMELECH . . .

(Continued from page 19)

trembling fingers onto too many sensitive buttons. The Abimelech horror illustrates that.

B. Cure

There is no cure but in the gospel of the love and patience of God whose long-suffering *is* our salvation. Nothing less than His *love* poured into our hearts by the residence there of the Holy Spirit is the active, effective, dynamic answer to *blind ambition*.

Conclusion:

Christian love alone sees clearly. Love is not blind; it sees more through a cobwebbed keyhole than jealousy, or envy, or hatred can see through a plate-glass window (Matt. 5:8).

It is carnal ambition that is blind and therefore treacherously flammable.

A Call to Talented People

Reading: Judg. 9:8-13
Rom. 12:1-2, 21
Matt. 5:44

Text: "Come you—and lead us!"
(paraphrasing Judg. 9:8, 10, 12).

Introduction:

When the talented will not serve the Lord, the Church, or the country, then ungifted, often unwise, and frequently evil forces rush into the vacuum created by the failure of the talented people to serve. Bramble-bushes like Voltaire and Robespierre will assume leadership in France when the church and the lords fail; but a Wesley, an Edwards, a Lincoln will overcome evil with good. Under God, "The best people for the leading offices" is solid advice.

Proposition:

The God-gifted people are challenged to serve by reminding them that they have nothing that they did not freely receive; nothing that is their own while they have it; and nothing that they will not lose if they do not use it for the glory of the Lord and the good of mankind.

I. The talented people have nothing they were not freely given. Like the oil of the olive, the sweetness of the fig, the nectar of the vine, "Every good and perfect gift is from above" (Jas. 1:17, NIV); they are gifts of grace, whether or not we appear to have been born with them; grace enriches every so-called natural talent.

II. They have nothing that is their own even while they have it. "Ye are not your own . . . ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The Blood that ransomed and released you also *bought* you; the Lord's freeman is the Lord's property.

III. They have nothing that they may not lose through nonuse . . . like the penguin's wings. The Lord says, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13)! Talents are not for burying, nor are they merely for self-enrichment. Try to store the manna and it will rot.

IV. "Come—lead us when we call you," and we will seek wisdom from above to recognize your God-given talents. For:

V. Reasonable service is active gratitude in response to the gracious mercies of God! And gratitude is a grace—ingratitude a disgrace!

Notes

1. A. E. Candall, "Judges," *Tyndale Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968), p. 122.
2. Adam Clarke, *Commentary*, 2:141.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1875), 4:563 ff.
5. "An Essay on Criticism," as quoted in *Interpreter's Bible*, 752.

GIDEON . . .

(Continued from page 15)

could see only his personal, social, and spiritual limitations, the Lord perceived his potential for service. By faith, Gideon placed those possibilities, and his fears, at God's disposal and laid hold upon God's provision for a crusade he felt inadequate to lead.

The promise of divine companionship was unqualified: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour . . . Go in this thy might" (6:12, 14). Might and valour were the last two qualities Gideon felt he possessed, but God saw the underlying potential. The heart and mind that could bear questioning in private could do so in public. The one who threshed wheat amidst danger would thresh the Midianites against desperate odds.

A direct commission allowed no final shrinking: "Have not I sent thee?" God asked and assured. Though faith still faltered, the die was cast. Gideon began his conflict with idolatry in his own home, though secretly, by night; and he was saved from family wrath by the shamed, logical intervention of his father, who remembered his better days in the pure faith of Israel. Faith still required further tokens of divine favour and guidance, and these were not lacking.

There is a category of faith, Abraham's for instance, that asks neither question nor token in the first steps of obedience—the initial exodus from Ur of the Chaldees: "Abraham . . . went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8). In contrast, a shallow, superficial faith verging upon unbelief majors upon tokens, often miraculous tokens: except it sees proof to its own specification, it will not believe. Sincere faith, however weak, nervous, hesitant, even fearful, also needs tokens: not for the creation of faith, but for its confirmation in a needful moment. The average faith is more akin to this third category of "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

When faith does respond to God's call, encouragement and confirmation are not lacking; for, heartened by the signs of wet and dry fleeces, Gideon was able to bear a devastating sifting of his volunteer force. Only 1/100 of his original army remained, a selected 300 ready for strategy or sacrifice. Gideon's faith did not decline with decreasing numbers; his confidence inspired him to be . . .

Indwelt and Innovative

Indwelt by the Spirit of God, Gideon formed a plan that Lawrence of Arabia and Wingate of Burma followed with overwhelming success in two fighting areas in two world wars. A minority force was strategically placed to give the impression of a surrounding army of greater proportions. The first, nervous minutes of a new watch were chosen for a swift, concerted attack upon a sleeping enemy; this involved shouting, trumpets, flaming torches, and the unusual sound effects of broken pitchers, giving the impression of an irresistible host attacking from all sides.

The Spirit of the Lord "clothed himself" with every facet of Gideon's unorthodox mind and methods, using the gifts God had perceived in a farmer's son before the constraining call was given. The sword of the Lord and the sword of Gideon were unsheathed in faith's partnership and victory. It was a costly victory indeed, evidenced in the description "faint, yet pursuing" (8:4), as Gideon and his victorious guerrillas followed the fleeing Midianites.

Faith does not rest upon its laurels; it must endure to the end of a task or trial. Faith summons strength to overcome flagging energies as it first overcame natural fears. And it courageously faces its critics; for after the magnificent minority had put to flight an army of aliens, the men of Ephraim complained they had neither been consulted nor co-opted, implying a criticism of Gideon and his unorthodox methods. The believing general did not take offense or accept the criticism. His answer (a compliment to Ephraim's fighting reputation, with the unspoken suggestion that Ephraim also could have accomplished the task) displayed the diplomacy that marked his term as judge of Israel.

God is still seeking and finding hidden men—unlikely, hesitant men—who by faith will fulfill God's call and lead His people to conquest. 

From *Portraits of Faith*, by Albert J. Lown, published by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1982. Used by permission.

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TODAY'S BOOKS for TODAY'S PREACHER

The Second American Revolution

By John W. Whitehead, David C. Cook, hardback, \$10.95

Once in a while a book comes along that demands the close scrutiny of the Christian community. Such is the case with the book under consideration. John W. Whitehead, a Virginia lawyer, has written a thought-provoking book about the transition of political power from a Constitutional Congress to our court system. He gives us a comprehensive understanding of the Judeo-Christian foundation we once had, then explains how we have departed from that base, and then gives us documented cases of the role the courts have played.

As early as 1907, the Supreme Court ruled that "the Constitution is what the judges say it is." In other words, rather than interpreting the law, the Supreme Court has begun to make law. Law is now being based on what the judge making the pronouncement believes. The biblical basis for our laws is slowly, but surely, being chipped away. The change is quite subtle and is happening at a rather rapid pace.

Part of the dilemma as Whitehead sees it is that while these subtle changes have been taking place, Christians have been devoting themselves to the inward life. And while that is good and necessary, it has been happening to the neglect of being salt in a decaying society. A study of the religious revivals of the 19th century bears out the truth of his belief, in that they resulted in redeeming the physical aspects of society (slavery, child labor, etc.). "The inward redemption must flow outward and affect the temporal world" (p. 34). So the enemy, as Pogo would say, "is us," and the secularism of our day.

The church has falsely separated the secular world from their Christianity. Whitehead's call for another revolution is a call for Christians to break their silence and lethargy and begin to speak out *and be active* in social issues that affect our Judeo-Christian tradition. "Much too often the modern church has sought peace and compromise with the world . . . laboring under the naive impression that this is how we can 'reach more people.' As a consequence, the

church has allowed . . . humanism to roll over society" (p. 146).

Again, "The silent church can no longer hide under the cloak of non-involvement . . . noninvolvement is choice. It is choosing to allow humanism to proceed unrestrained. If the church continues its silence, the only option will be to capitulate and be dominated by a humanistic culture that will not tolerate Christianity" (p. 42). Martin Luther King once said, "I fear the silence of the churches more than the shouts of the angry multitudes."

Following the lead of Francis Schaeffer, Whitehead gives us a call to civil disobedience when the laws of society contradict God's laws. His chapter on "The Christian Response" is excellent in this area. Alexander Solzhenitsyn has said that if people give away the absolutes of right and wrong as found in the laws of God, there is nothing left but to manipulate one another. We have already seen that happen in many areas of our society.

Schaeffer says, "This is certainly the most important book I have read in a long, long time." If you are concerned about the eroding of our biblical base, read *The Second American Revolution*.

—Gary Skagerberg

Reason to Believe

By R. C. Sproul, Zondervan, 1982, paperback, 160 pp., \$5.95

This little book, written especially for laymen, is easy and interesting reading. It makes an excellent reference book because the subject matter is relevant and the author presents it in such a concise manner. It is a usable book, one to be readily shared with new Christians or those whose faith is being challenged. It is also a good tool for those involved in visitation or witnessing programs.

Every Christian will readily relate to this book, for often we are called upon to give reasons for our beliefs. Dr. Sproul deals with some of the most common objections to the truth of the Christian faith, which range from some practical, everyday issues to the philosophical. He deals with such subjects as the validity of the Bible, the existence of God, evil in the world, life after death, the science vs. Scripture conflict, hypocrisy, and suffering. For each he presents an intellectual approach that builds in a logical sequence, each giving strength and credence to the other. Us-

ing the laws of logic, he pursues his answers and at the same time shows the weaknesses of the opposing arguments. He often closes his reasoning process with an affirmation of his faith and a challenge to the critic to accept the Christian message. He shows the Christian how the defense of his faith can be turned into opportunity.

This book is also designed to challenge the Christian to become involved in diligent Bible study of the issues discussed therein. The author believes that with an in-depth study of the Word the reader too will be "overwhelmed by the profundity, coherency, and intricate internal consistency of Christianity."

—Earl L. Roustio

Christian Perspectives on Sociology

Edited by Stephen A. Grunlan and Milton K. Reimer, Zondervan, 1982, paperback, 457 pp., \$10.95

The purpose of Grunlan and Reimer was to produce a reader that would give a Christian perspective to the discipline of sociology. As with many edited volumes, the results are uneven.

Virtually all areas of sociological endeavor are included in this paperback, with each subject area being discussed in about 20 pages. Some of the topics are: socialization, status and role, deviance, marriage, economics, politics, education, minorities, collective behavior, demography, communities, and social change. A helpful list of discussion questions on each topic should assist church groups in relating sociological findings to faith.

At the end of each chapter there is a list of books for further "suggested reading." Some of these lists are rather thin (as few as four sources, mostly written by nonsociologists). In other cases, as in Richard Stellway's chapter on religion, there is a good list of basic readings.

The chapter by Dawn Ward equates social stratification with social class. Social classes are, however, only one form of the phenomenon of stratification. The social evolutionary model (p. 19) had its source in Herbert Spencer, not Darwin, as Reimer states.

The sociological perspectives of this volume are not of uniformly high quality. The book, however, may be helpful for those who seek to relate their faith to societal topics on a nonprofessional level.

—Charles R. Gailey





THE ARK ROCKER

Block That Illustration!

You should have heard us laugh when our homiletics prof told us that the first characteristic of a good illustration is that it illustrates. But he wasn't laughing and now I know why.

We preachers do weird things with illustrations. Sometimes we even use them to illustrate. They seem to be the ecclesiastical mutation of the Swiss Army knife.

Perhaps the strangest of all uses of an illustration is that of proving a point with one, though I think we all would agree in principle that the best illustration in the world cannot prove a thing. It can only illustrate. Yet, let us get to the critical moment in the sermon, to the point needing most to be made, and there's this obsessive rush "to illustrate."

I've heard the secondness of the second blessing "proved" *ad nauseum* by illustrations. And some have been wowzers. Try this one on: "Just as a bicycle needs two wheels to give it stability, so we need two works of grace for spiritual stability." (Actually, when I heard this "illustration," I nearly lost my spiritual stability!)

Were I a Pentecostal, I would love that one, for a tricycle is even more stable than a bicycle, so . . . And just think what spiritual wonders are intimated by that most stable and durable of over-the-road vehicles—the 18-wheeler. Why, there's enough religion there to work what many consider to be almost the miracle of miracles—one solid work of grace for every member of the church softball team, or *two* works for every member of the two rival quartets in the congregation, with a work left over for one of the accompanists! I say, "Keep on truckin'!"

Now, I don't think I would have brought this matter up if it had only to do with a technical problem in homiletics. The really sad thing is that the misuse of illustrations in

this way is all too often not just misuse of an illustration. There's a sick view of preaching lurking behind it. Misuse of illustrations is but a symptom.

Using an illustration to prove a point may come across as a declaration that once we enter the kingdom of heaven the normal rules and conventions of discourse no longer apply. It may be saying that for this preacher rationality no longer counts, or at least it doesn't count until he says it does.

What effect do you suppose this has on the desire of your people to study the Bible? And, how much credibility does a doctrine have when its truth has been made to *depend* upon a statistic, a figure of speech, or some sort of narrative?

Of course, there is the matter of keeping sermons simple. In fact, that's very much my point here. An illustration meant to prove does *not* simplify. It confuses, or at least it complicates. It moves away from the point rather than illuminating it. "Bicycle" is an abstraction for entire sanctification even though bicycles are indeed more concrete than entire sanctification in "real life."

Now, you may have to give up some of your reputation for being "deep, but clear" if you lay off proving by illustration. And that means that the old halo might slip a bit, for homiletical "depth" is taken to indicate spiritual depth, making the good illustrator not only a good, deep preacher but obviously saintly as well. (How else than by special inspiration could he have come to see so deeply into the nature of bicycles?)

But maybe there's hope somewhere! We may find ourselves setting aside *Reader's Digest* for *The Book*, and the eye for illustration—so very useful in its proper place—may see that there is value in solid exegetical study after all.

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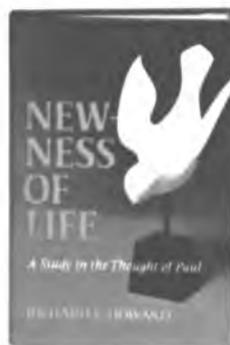
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