

1977

## 1977: Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures - Full Text

Marvin Phillips

Marvin Bryant

Dan Coker

W. F. Washington

Carl Brecheen

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Marvin Phillips, Marvin Bryant, Dan Coker, W. F. Washington, Carl Brecheen, Jim McGuiggan, Charles Coil, James O. Casey Jr., Frank Pack, Garth W. Black, Gary Beauchamp, and Harold Taylor

Dearest Mother,

I know you will  
enjoy this book - this  
lectureship has been one of  
the best.

Happy birthday.

Love,

Bob  
&  
Garis



**Seeking  
The  
Lost**



# **Seeking The Lost**

being the

**Abilene Christian University  
Annual Bible Lectures**

**1977**

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# PREFACE

Jesus described His own mission in these words, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." Those who follow Him are committed to the same task. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation."

In this mission to the whole world, we must constantly recruit and send more families overseas. These families must be better trained for this task than the families who have been sent before them. We must seek more and better uses of mass media and must make the most of every possible avenue for reaching the lost with the gospel.

But let us never forget that the task of seeking the lost must begin in the heart of each Christian, and dedication to Jesus absolutely requires a deep and active concern for everyone in the world who is lost.

Jesus preached in Nazareth and throughout Galilee. He talked with the simple folk He met in His daily routine. He concentrated on those with whom he had most in common.

As Jesus expressed His concern for others everywhere He went, so we, if we are to be faithful disciples, must express our concern, and must reach out to meet the deepest needs of those with whom we come in contact every day.

The Abilene Christian University Annual Bible Lectureship is planned in order that members of the body of Christ may spend time together discussing the most vital issues facing the church in every generation. No issue can be more vital in any age than that of seeking the lost.

This book is dedicated to the countless thousands around the world who long for the salvation of every soul.

CARL BRECHEEN

*Lectureship Director*



## **MAIN SPEECHES**



# DEVELOPING A SOUL WINNING ATMOSPHERE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

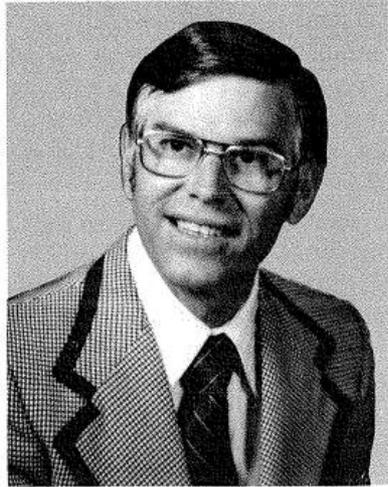
Marvin Phillips

**Born:** September 13, 1931.  
**Married to:** Dorothy (Dot).  
**Children:** Alan; Mark; Tammy.

**Preaching Background:** Began on Sundays: Cotulla, Texas, 1949. Served 4 years with United States Air Force. Established church in Taegu, Korea, among G.I.'s; Preached also for Koreans. Began full time preaching: 1955; Stockdale, Texas. Full time work: Stockdale, Texas—1955-56; Port Lavaca, Texas—1956-60; Siloam Springs, Ark.—1960-62.

**Mission Work:** Perth, Western Australia, 1962-70. Preached in campaigns in every state of Australia, and in seven countries.

**Currently:** Garnett Road Church of Christ, Tulsa, Oklahoma, since return to U.S.A. in May, 1970. Regular speaker on Soul Winning Workshops, and Bus Evangelism Seminars across the nation.



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Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15, 16).

It is estimated that the world population was only about 250 million when Jesus gave the great commission. It took approximately 1600 years for it to double. But from about 1650, it took only another 200 years for it to double again.

For about the year 1850 the world population came to be about one billion. But in only 80 years it doubled again (2 billion; 1930). Then newspapers reported on March 28, 1976, that our world had reached four billion souls. Taking this projection, we can see that shortly after the turn of the 21st century the population of the world will reach some eight billion people—all of whom Jesus died for; all of whom need the gospel of Christ for any kind of hope in Eternity.

The people of God (members of Christ's church) are the only ones equipped to take the saving gospel to the lost masses. If not us, who? And if this is not the time to do it, when? And, if this is not the place to start, where is that place?

I am firmly convinced that within this room (and sitting on the seats of our church buildings) are both the tool to accomplish this job, and the obstacles to keep us from doing it. We have too long blamed the outside world, economic conditions, and a thousand other things. We are the people to do it; or else we are the people who will keep it from getting done. Just how do you go about developing a soul winning atmosphere in the local church?

### **Teach Soul Winning As The Prime Mission Of The Church**

Jesus did not leave heaven to build buildings, pave parking lots and meet budgets. We do these things only as they relate to soul winning. The Bible says Jesus came to "seek and save the lost" (Lk. 19:10).

The early church caught this message and did their best to carry it out. So we read of 3,000 baptisms on the first day of the existence of the New Testament church (Acts 2:41). Then, that the "Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). By Acts 4:4 ". . . the number of men was about five thousand." And in Acts 5:14, "and the believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Acts 6:1 says, ". . . the number of the

disciples was multiplied,” and that “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (v 7). Lest one should think this fertile field was true only of Jerusalem, we further learn that Paul and Timothy travelled the regions around Derbe, Lystra and Iconium and “. . .so were the churches established in the faith, and *increased in number daily*” (Acts 16:5).

Now if anyone wonders just what these early Christians did to have such phenomenal success, perhaps the key is in these words: “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

We have not been successful in getting our brethren to work as though they believed soul winning was everything. The average church of Christ in Oklahoma has 160 members, an attendance on Sunday morning of only 150, and baptizes 8 people into Christ each year. And most shocking of all, many of us do not realize anything is wrong.

A new car dealer would not be content to build new buildings, open new agencies, decorate his used car lot and make an attractive show room. He sees his success in the number of cars he sells. Just so churches of Christ are going to have to measure our success by the number of folks we are able to snatch away from the devil, and lead into a saving relationship with the Lord.

We need to study ourselves. We need to re-examine all our efforts in an attempt to do the most effective things, and use the most effective methods in soul winning. We need to study others and copy *successes* rather than failures.

And again, we must *expect* souls to be saved. We get just about what we expect in church growth. Someone has said, “We aim at nothing, then achieve it with remarkable accuracy.”

These all died in faith, not having received the promises but *having seen them afar off* . . . (Heb. 11:13).

Early men of God clearly *expected* God's blessings on their efforts.

### **Teach Every Leader To Be A Soul Winner**

Brethren, churches have a habit of becoming like their leaders. If leaders are not soul winners, we can hardly expect the rest of the congregation to win souls.

Preachers, let's start with you. Forget, for the moment, how many respond publicly to the invitation. How many souls have you led to Christ, on a one-to-one basis this year? Do you *know*? And does that number represent real personal effort in soul-winning?

Preachers get bogged down in everything but soul winning. Their hands drip mimeograph ink. Their daily schedules are clogged with personal counselling. Their desks are piled high with enormous paper work. Now, many of these are good, and worth doing, but you'd better arrange your priorities to "go soul winning on purpose." I suggest you set aside a definite time to "go soul winning." Get definite people in mind, have something definite to say to them, don't get sidetracked, and back your efforts with prayer that you might see them saved before either of you sleep that night.

If the congregation knows you are a soul winner, they can be motivated to win souls themselves. But if you are not, all your charming personality, your great talents of oratory, and even your knowledge of the Book, will not move them to be what God wants them to be.

Now let's talk about elders. Many elders feel that because they spend long hours planning the program of the church, and in shepherding the flock, that they are excused from personal soul winning. Dear brother, listen carefully. You became a Christian and a soul winner before you became an elder. Where did you learn in the Bible that when you were ordained as an elder, you were to cease winning souls? Congregations are going to have to be led in soul winning the

same as in everything else. Every member of the church needs to know that the elders are soul winners. If you are not one, repent immediately, begin winning souls, and the church will respect and follow your leadership in everything else.

I do not believe you can delegate your soul winning. We have a bad trend in the church when the more scholarly we become, the less evangelistic. And when men are appointed to leadership as elders, professors, "Preacher-trainers," they cease to be personal soul winners. How can you teach soul winning if you are not a soul winner?

I believe that every preacher, every elder and every deacon, Bible class teacher, bus worker and staff member ought to be soul winners. And the whole church ought to know it, and be motivated by their example.

### **Teach Your People Good Soul Winning Methods**

I am convinced that many Christians would win souls if we took the time to show them how. Many are not yet "apt to teach," but as new converts are anxious to share their salvation with their friends. At Garnett Road we teach the following points in effective soul winning:

1. Allot a special time for soul winning. Mine is every Tuesday night. A group meets with me at the church building at 7:00 p.m. We talk it over, and pray about it, and go out to save the lost.

Some of you (especially ladies) might prefer one morning (or an afternoon) per week. I suggest you go in two's; go see someone you personally know, preferably; and go with a definite thing to say. Others might pick a night, but get a special time (best suited to you), and go soul winning on purpose.

2. Don't get sidetracked. The more effective you get at soul winning, the more conscious you will be of the work of Satan. He has no scruples, and will get you off the subject if

you don't keep it from happening. How many times have you gone to see a friend to show him the way of salvation, only to have the conversation turned around to some problem in the church, some church member who isn't living right, or some insignificant point of doctrine. Stick to your subject! Promise to deal with other matters later, but you've got to share this beautiful story of Jesus just now.

3. Ask him to respond NOW! If we were making our living selling, most of us would starve to death by the way we fail to ask our friends to "do it now."

You may remember the old story about Henry Ford. He had a close friend in the insurance business. But one day a complete stranger walked into his office and sold him an enormous policy. His friend was upset and asked, "Henry, I thought we were friends. Why didn't you buy that insurance from me?" To which Mr. Ford replied, "You didn't *ask* me."

When you've shown God's plan of salvation to that lost soul, suggest they respond now! Say something like, "Mary, I know you can see what I've shown you is the truth. And you're going to make a fine Christian. Let's go to the building right now, and let me baptize you into Christ."

4. Pray. Brethren, we have not been known as a praying people. We need to pray before we go. Pray positively and specifically. Ask God to guide you, to open the prospect's heart, and that he might be saved that very night. Pray with the one you're studying with. And certainly pray together after he is baptized into Christ. Some of the finest moments in prayer come when all of you gather around the newborn Christian and pour out your hearts in thankful prayer for the "new creature in Christ."

### **The Romans Method**

Here's a simple, scriptural and effective method we teach soul winners. It is all in the book of Romans, and uses only four verses. The advantage to this is that you are not jumping

all over the Bible, nor crushing your loved one with an exhaustive study which he can not understand nor retain.

1. **YOU ARE A SINNER** (Rom. 3:23). Make sure you read the verse together. The beauty of this method is that it teaches the truth, and also motivates the person to do something about it. The verse clearly shows that the universal problem of all mankind is sin.

2. **DEATH IS THE PENALTY** (Rom. 5:12). Your prospect may not think sin is so bad until he reads that “. . . death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” I constantly review. I might say, “All right, we’ve learned that we are all sinners, and that sin carries the death penalty. Now that’s the bad news; here’s the good news.” And on to the next point.

3. **CHRIST PAID THAT PENALTY FOR YOU** (Rom. 5:8). At this point, I want them to see the character of God. Too many people (in and out of the church) fail to see the love and longing in God’s heart for our salvation. Suddenly you see that your dilemma bothers God. God says, “Fred is a sinner; and he’s going to be lost because of it. But I can’t stand that. I don’t want him lost.” And so Jesus paid your death penalty for you on the cross.

4. **THE WAY OUT** (Rom. 6:3, 4). Most people won’t do anything about Jesus. He died for them, but they won’t ever respond to His love. But you have led your loved one to appreciate what Jesus did. He will want to respond to Jesus, so this verse shows him how. Read slowly how we are baptized “with him” into death. Explain that when you put him into the water of baptism you are putting *one* person in there, but there are *two* in the water. **JESUS IS THERE WITH HIM.** And that just like Jesus came out of his tomb, raised to life again, so God raises us up from the water grave of baptism in “newness of life.”

Now it is time for you to urgently, yet kindly, suggest that you go to the building, and baptize him into Christ.

This is a method most any Christian can use effectively to

win souls to Jesus. When taught successfully, you have helped another soul find Jesus, and brought untold joy to the soul winner.

### **Make Every Service Evangelistic**

Worship together ought to be the most exciting thing in the Christian's week. First of all, it is a "family reunion." And then, too, you are in hopes the Family will rejoice in others "born into the Family" that very hour. The very thought of this is enough to charge your spiritual batteries.

Instead of this, many times services are lifeless, ritualistic and downright boring. And brethren, no one has the right to make a worship service to God boring.

It is every leader's responsibility (starting with whoever makes announcements) to create an atmosphere of enjoyment and excitement. You are gathered for the greatest of reasons; you are engaging in the greatest of experiences. You have the greatest message, and the *Lord Jesus Christ is in your midst*. You simply must *act like it!*

No matter what the scriptural and spiritual context of the service, there are no doubt sinners in the audience that need to be brought to the Lord. Aim at making sure that every accountable person leaves the building saved! Gear your preaching so lost folks are taught and urged to obey Jesus NOW!

### **Make Something of Responses**

The greatest thing that ever happens in the world is when a sinner is baptized into Christ, or when an erring Christian returns to the Lord. Either way, a "soul is saved from death" (Jas. 5:19), and you just never see anything finer than that.

But the sad truth is that in many places, such responses are "taken for granted" or simply ignored.

Everyone loves a baby. When visiting in the maternity ward, we all thrill to those "lovely little bundles from heaven." When the new mother brings her baby to church for the first time, we all look and admire.

Our baptistry is situated where an entire audience can actually watch a "new birth." Before our very eyes a sinner becomes a "new creature in Christ"; they are forgiven of every sin, and are born into the Family of God. You have never seen a finer sight. The same goes when the erring brother returns in penitence to God. The Bible says "God runs" to such a sinner (Lk. 15:20). Heaven rejoices when "one sinner repents" (Lk. 15:7). But many church members witness these same events, wait for the last "Amen," and head for the door. Brethren, how can we be so callous?

I say again, make something of responses! Preachers, stay out of that foyer. Get where the good stuff is. Go immediately to those new Christians, those returned prodigals, and let them know how happy you are, along with the angels of Heaven. Urge all other members to do the same thing. If anyone needs you, they will know where to find you . . . "close to the delivery room" (baptistry). The biggest traffic jam in the church ought to be around the persons responding to Jesus for salvation.

### **Teach New Converts To Be Soul Winners**

Isn't it a shame that many times we let new members "cool off" before getting them involved? The truth is, they are the most excited about the work of Christ while they are still wet from the waters of baptism. Yet we wait about a month before we ask the new convert to "wait on the table," and then we assure him we won't make him lead a prayer.

We ought rather to have him praying as soon as he's saved. For all those baptized "outside regular services" we usually have a prayer session down front of the auditorium. We encourage all people there to pray, helping the new convert to express his own thanks to God for saving him. Then we also ask "who are you going to lead to Christ first?" He usually has someone on his mind. It heads him in the right direction. Our new converts at Garnett Road are among our most fruitful soul winners. In fact, new converts

on the whole win more souls than those who have been in the church for over ten years. We think this approach is the reason why.

### **Conclusion**

During World War II, a submarine went down with 72 persons on board. As it sank to the bottom, powerless, ships and divers frantically began to search for it before its oxygen was used up. Finally one diver found the sub and tapped in Morse code on the side, "Are you there?" The excited men on the inside returned with, "Yes." The diver responded with "**Help is on the way.**" To which those perishing men asked, "**How long will it be?**"

Dear Christian friend, we live in a world where most of the people we know are doomed and damned because of sin. I sincerely believe that help is on the way. I believe Christians are waking up to the urgency of the task, and beginning to believe that it can be done. But only you hold the answer. . .that makes the difference in Heaven and Hell for countless thousands. . .

**HOW LONG WILL IT BE?**

# WINNING OUR DENOMINATIONAL NEIGHBORS

Marvin F. Bryant

Marvin F. Bryant, a native of Stockton, Alabama, is a graduate of East Tennessee State University of Johnson City, Tennessee, Columbia Theological Seminary of Decatur, Georgia, and Alabama Christian School of Religion of Montgomery, Alabama. In 1959 he did special study in the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. While in Europe, he did extensive travel in Europe and visited the Holy Land in the Middle East. In 1972 he received the Doctor of Divinity degree from the National Christian University of Dallas, Texas.



Brother Bryant was ordained in the Presbyterian Ministry in 1952. He served pastorates in Foley, Alabama, Bristol, Tennessee, and Montgomery, Alabama.

While studying abroad, he became acquainted with the principles of restoring the New Testament church. Being convinced that the first century church of Christ is to be the church of all ages, he separated himself from his religious heritage and gave his life to the restoration of New Testament Christianity.

Since 1960, he has helped establish the Druid Hills church in Montgomery, Alabama, and the church in Gaffney, South Carolina, the church in Winder, Georgia, and the church in Spanish Fort, Alabama.

Beyond local work, Marvin Bryant has preached in more than 250 meetings in 31 states, Canada, and Great Britain. Two years, 1966-1968, were devoted to full time meeting (revival) work. Again, he has been invited to appear on lectureship programs at most of the colleges owned and operated by members of churches of Christ. Since 1971 he has

devoted full time to a ministry for Christian unity based upon Bible authority.

Brother Bryant is married to Johnnie Austin Bryant and they have five children. They now live in his home county in the town of Daphne, Alabama (Mobile suburb).

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Sometime ago I heard Brother Willard Collins, vice president of David Lipscomb College, say that when John F. Kennedy was killed in Dallas, the world knew it in fourteen and one-half minutes. But he reminded us that Jesus died for the sins of men nearly two thousand years ago, and most of the world does not yet know it.

Two years ago I heard Brother Charles Coil, president of International Bible College in Florence, Alabama, tell of having been recently in India. Near the hotel where he was staying, a theatre was exhibiting motion pictures featuring Elvis Presley and Pat Boone. After several days he decided to make a little survey. He stopped several people on the street and asked them if they had heard of Elvis Presley, Pat Boone, and Jesus Christ. Each one happily answered yes to having heard of Elvis Presley and Pat Boone, but after some thought each said no, they had not heard of Jesus Christ.

Back home in Florence, Brother Coil decided to make another survey. In the greater Florence area, one out of five of the total population in Lauderdale County are members of the church of Christ. Again Brother Coil stopped people on the street. This time he asked if they had ever been invited to attend the services of the church of Christ. Fifty percent answered in the negative. One man who answered yes said he remembered well that he was invited in 1937. He said the reason that he remembered so vividly was that it was the first and the last invitation he had received. If most have never been invited to attend a worship or special evangelistic service of the church, we can well believe that they have never been invited to a personal home study. From this survey made where the church is numerically strong, we are made

to wonder how few in our nation and English-speaking world are ever confronted with any evangelistic effort by those who call themselves New Testament Christians.

The chilling truth is that millions are being born each year and someday will die without knowing or having heard the truth as we know it. Many of these will not have lived behind the iron curtain or the bamboo curtain, but rather behind our church buildings and the homes of those who are members of the church of Christ.

Has Jesus not said to go teach all nations (Matt. 28:18) and every creature? (Mark 16:15) Then we have a right to ask why we have not done so, and why we still are not carrying out the marching orders of our Lord.

It is not because we lack intelligence, time, wealth, or study materials. Moreover, we have had training series all over the brotherhood on how to accomplish the work, but we are not yet doing it. Representative leaders among us who work especially in this field of service say that only three percent of our people are actually winning people to Christ. This means that ninety-seven percent are not.

For some time I have believed that our failure is not due to our lack of external advantages, but rather to a lack of certain essential internal qualities. These qualities include conviction, conversion, compassion and compulsion. Let us examine these four inward qualities to see how this lack has been our problem, and how with these qualities we can teach the world and, in the process, win our denominational neighbors to the truth as we know it.

First and foremost, before one can become a teacher of others he must have conviction. An atheist, agnostic, or theological liberal will not teach men about New Testament Christianity because he does not believe it or, at best, has very strong doubts.

There is another group whose lips are silent, and these the writer to the Hebrews speaks of, saying, "For when for the time you ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach

you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk; and not of strong meat. For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe” (Hebrews 5:12, 13).

Possibly our ninety-seven percent who are not actively teaching others can be identified with these Hebrew brethren of the first century. They are still babes when they should be full grown. To put it another way, they are so lacking in conviction that they themselves need to be taught, reassured, and further convinced. They have faith, to be sure, and conviction begins with belief, confidence, and trust in Almighty God. But their faith is shallow and feeble. They are weak, and not strong enough to do real service for the Master in the world he died to save. At best they can but come again and again to be fed the milk of the word. They cannot eat the real meat of the word. They lack certain needed convictions. They know God, but their concept is juvenile or, in the language of the Hebrew writer, that of a babe in the faith. They have not known or fathomed the depths of the glorious attributes of the God who, as the Bible declares is eternal, omnipotent, omiscient, omnipresent, righteous and holy, just, and most merciful, gracious, and loving.

Babes in Christ need greater conviction in the Bible as the inerrant word of God. Only then can they speak boldly as did Peter in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and as did Paul on Mars Hill, and before King Agrippa, and on the ship off the shore at Melita when he said, “Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Acts 27:25).

On regular occasions I am privileged, as an after dinner speaker, to speak to large groups which include many denominational preachers. I always state that I am not ashamed to say that I believe in the plenary verbal inspiration of the scriptures. Many think themselves too intellectual to believe in verbal plenary inspiration. But I remind my

hearers that since the Bible is a book made up of words, if the words are not inspired, we are at a loss to know just what is inspired. The revelation of God is written in words! If, therefore, the revelation, the will of God, the teaching of the faith once delivered is inspired, then it must be by and through the words in which the revelation of God is conveyed. Therefore, it is not intellectualism, but folly, to believe that the ideas are inspired, but not the words. Jesus affirmed the verbal inspiration of the scriptures when he said that man shall live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Conviction is needed concerning the nature and purpose of man. As a child in the Presbyterian Church, I had to learn and recite the Shorter Catechism at the age of six. THE FIRST QUESTION IS, "What is the chief aim of man?" The answer: "To know God and to enjoy Him forever." Without question this is the highest goal of man. But we might ask how many know God in such a way that they can enjoy Him? Truly, this is man's purpose, and we see it in the lives of the saints of the New Testament church.

We are not here in this world by chance, but by divine design and purpose. Man was made by God and *for* God (Col. 1:16). We are made in the very likeness of God, and as Christians we are to be like Christ and therefore like the God who made us. In the language of scripture, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). When we understand the real purpose of man on this earth, we will have convictions that will motivate us for the task before us.

Conviction is needed in one's attitude toward sin. In a hotel room in downtown San Francisco, I found a booklet on the dresser that bore the title "Where To Sin In San Francisco." The pages that followed gave pictures and descriptions of the nightspots and places of ill repute in the city. To the publishers of the booklet, sin is only "fun." Unfortu-

nately, this concept of sin may possibly be shared by some of the ninety-seven percent in our churches who are non-producers in the kingdom of God. Worldliness has always been a problem with God's people. It destroys the fruitfulness of the lives of countless Christians. Satan has tempted men to whitewash sin and view it as error, bad judgment, ignorance, or even innocent "fun." One may call it what he will, but the Bible says it is rebellion against a holy and just God.

One must have conviction about Jesus Christ as God's answer to sin. He is to be known as the second Adam, and through him men must experience a new birth (John 3:3-5) in order to have an abundant, eternal life with God. One cannot be casual toward sin and the nature and purpose of the Messiah and at the same time have strong conviction that will motivate him to work in the vineyard of the Lord to plant, water, or harvest the souls of men.

Again, one cannot be indifferent about the church of the New Testament, which was neither denominational nor sectarian. In New Testament times there was but "one body" (Eph. 4:4). Today, however, we live in a nation where there are said to be over three hundred different denominations. These are not all teaching the same thing, but rather are divided over doctrinal issues. We are on every side pressed by many in Christendom to accept the idea that one church is as good as another. Oftentimes we see and hear the expression, "Attend the church of your choice." None of us should want to be different from others just to be different. However, we must soberly look at the idea that one church is as good as another.

I have observed that churches (denominations) differ from others in what they believe, teach and practice. In effect, to say that one church is as good as another is to say that one belief, one teaching, or one practice is necessarily as good as another. No one who has any biblical conviction can accept this contention. Surely, the Bible does not teach hundreds of

doctrines, justifying the multiplicity of churches (denominations).

In contrast to what is commonly believed by many, God has but one way for all people. This is a universal law in creation, procreation, and redemption. Instead of the way being so broad that all are right, whatever they teach, Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14). Again he said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). And again, Jesus identifies himself with his word: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Therefore, to reject, discredit, or set aside the word of God is to reject, discredit, or set aside the Christ of God in whom is our only hope for the forgiveness of sins and life eternal with God.

This conviction should move us to seek to win our denominational neighbors. Denominationalism and/or sectarianism is wrong! No one can read the Bible and believe that God planned, wills, or endorses division among believers in Christ. Neither is God indifferent toward what we believe, teach or practice. Rather, he repeatedly warns us against false doctrine and of the need to ever contend for the faith (teaching) once delivered (Jude 3).

Once I heard an internationally known evangelist say that if he were Satan that he would not dress up in a red Devil suit equipped with horns, a long tail and a pitchfork. Rather, he said he would wear a tailored black suit and a clerical collar, and he would have a Bible under his arm and wear a big smile. Then he said he would start a church and make it very much like the original, and yet counterfeit.

This is exactly what the Bible said the Devil would do! In

writing his second letter to the church at Corinth Paul said, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers be also transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:13-15). Again the warning is sounded by Paul in his words to Timothy, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"(I Tim. 4:1). Many other verses could be cited from across the New Testament to show God's continuous warning against counterfeit Christianity. We have such in our world today, and men need to be saved from it.

Oftentimes when I meet with a denominational preacher to begin a study, I tell him of a statement that I heard years ago: "There is but a little bit of difference between people, but that little bit of difference makes all the difference in the world." I then make application of this statement and say that there are in many areas only a little bit of difference between the New Testament church and denominationalism, but that little bit of difference makes all the difference in the world. With many denominations this is true in the plan of salvation, in the worship service, and in church government. It is in these vital areas that Satan has worked the hardest, confused the most minds, and therefore turned multitudes away from the straight gate and narrow way that leads unto life everlasting.

Conviction here will move the Christian to actively seek to win his denominational neighbor. Rather than thinking of himself as a proselyter, he will see himself as snatching men out of the fire.

Moreover, he will see himself as God's man for the job of teaching those who know not the truth as he knows it and as it should be known. His conviction now demands this of him.

The Christian knows that he is a unique person, and that

there will occur again and again unique opportunities for teaching that he must not let pass. To let them pass may well mean that a soul will pass through life without God and without hope.

After conviction, the next inward quality that the Christian needs if he is to be a soul winner is conversion. Ordinarily the word *convert* has reference to the experience of the new birth, but it is not limited to this use. The word actually means a change of mind that ultimately produces a change of life.

Paul wrote to the church of Rome, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1, 2). Paul was writing to Christians concerning the need to be "transformed" or "converted" by the renewing of their minds. Only then can we "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Apparently a large portion of our brotherhood need this kind of conversion.

Speaking of this conversion in the secondary sense, Jesus said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Note that Jesus said that this is something we must do day by day. Paul said, "I die daily" (I Cor. 15:31). Again he said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Marvin Phillips preaches for the Garnett Road Church of Christ in Tulsa, Oklahoma. For several years they had baptized at least 150 each year. More than a year ago they began to baptize at least one a day. How did this sudden increase happen? I heard Brother Phillips tell the story. He, his

elders, and many from that great church were in Florence, Alabama, attending a Soul Saving Workshop. On Saturday night they heard David Powers from Williamstown, West Virginia, speak. The great church in Williamstown has been baptizing more than one a day for several years. Brother Powers told the secret of their success. He said it was because the church was filled with dead men. These men were not dead physically or spiritually, they were dead to the world. They had laid their lives on the altar of God. They were no longer conformed to the things of this world, but rather transformed by the renewing of their minds. They now live with a single eye, and that to serve and to glorify the living God.

At Florence, as the invitation hymn was sung, Brother Phillips was thinking of possible areas within his life that needed to be put to death, that his life might be more completely laid upon the altar of God. As he contemplated the possibility of going forward to make a new dedication, one of his elders standing by him gave him a little shove and said, "Let us go and together die." Others from the Garnett Road church, seeing them, went forward to make the same dedication.

The following Sunday in the church at home Brother Phillips told of their experience as he preached with enthusiasm on the need for Christians to die daily. He appealed to the entire congregation to completely and altogether become "dead men" for the Lord. Many from that wonderful church responded. The immediate result was that their teaching multiplied in their city, and the harvest of souls greatly increased.

What happened in Williamstown and Tulsa can and will happen in any congregation anywhere in the world where there is the conviction and conversion that cause men to die daily.

The third needed inward quality is compassion. If we are to be soul winners, we need and must have the compassion

that God has for the lost. Possibly the best loved verse in all of the Bible is one that shows God's great compassion for lost men: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

I have heard Brother Gus Nichols preach on this verse, and he had much to say about the little word "so." Brother Nichols labored to expound the fact that the verse does not simply say that God loved the world, but that he *so* loved the world. He sought to emphasize the words "so love" so that his audience might get a glimpse of the great compassion God has for the lost.

Speaking of the compassionate nature of God, Peter wrote that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). The word *any* in this reference is important, for it shows that God is concerned about every individual and does not want a single one to be lost. Moreover, he has done all that he can in order that salvation may be known and experienced by all men.

Great compassion was shown in the life and death of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of God. He came for the very purpose of giving his life a ransom for many because, as was evident in Gethsemane, there was no other way. When we speak words that are descriptive of the life of the Son of Man, one of them surely is *compassion*. On many occasions the gospel accounts tell us how Jesus, moved with compassion, performed certain beneficent deeds for the sake of those in need.

One of the many descriptions of the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in Matthew 23:37. Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Not only do we see great compassion in this verse; we also see great sorrow. He longed so much to help these, his people, but

they rejected him. Now, as the second Adam and the Lamb of God, he must submit himself to the hands of those that reject him, to be crucified for them and for all the world of men.

Compassion is seen in the apostle Paul, as disclosed in the New Testament. From the very time of his own conversion, he was filled with a burning passion for those outside of Christ. As he writes to the Romans, we see his compassionate heart: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:1-3). Paul is saying here that if it would accomplish the salvation of the Jews, he would be willing to die and be lost for their sake. What great compassion! Every time I read Paul's words, I am challenged to ask myself if I love my former brethren, the Presbyterians, this much. Paul's words must surely challenge us all to examine our love and compassion for the lost.

True compassion is ours when we sincerely love with the love of God. Indeed, it comes when we love as we are loved. Then do we see the lost as greatly loved of God, as those for whom Christ died, as included in the great commission, as in desperate need of help.

Jesus said, "Say not ye that there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). Repeatedly the Bible teaches us urgency in the work of the harvest of souls. Daily men are being swept away forever into infidelity, ungodliness, and religious error.

According to the Bureau of Statistics, in 1975 churches of Christ were surpassed numerically by both the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, dropping from the ninth largest church to the eleventh. It is much more difficult for these cults to make a convert than it is for us, because they

offer much more that must be believed in addition to the Bible, while we offer nothing but the Bible for men to believe.

It is an inevitable fact that men must believe something! If we do not reach men with the truth, then they will believe a lie. To reach men with the truth, we must have conviction, we must be truly converted in every sense of the word, and we must have compassion for the lost.

Compulsion is the last of the needed internal qualities that will make us fruitful laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. When we have the proper convictions, conversion, and compassion, we will have compulsion to take the message of Christ to those that know it not. Our conscience will demand this of us.

Again we turn to the apostle Paul for our example of one that illustrates this point. "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16). Paul was compelled to tell the story of the wonderful love of God and of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. This was true of him because he possessed these inward qualities of which today we speak. He could not stand idly by and see the world be swept into eternity without God and without hope. Neither can we if we truly possess these inward qualities.

The winning of souls is a matter of arithmetic. While in local work I made extensive use of all types of study material, but especially the Jule Miller film strip. Reports across the nation tell us that one family out of every four will be won through the use of the five lessons. This means that if we study with one family a month, we will win three families in a year. If we study with four families a month, we will win twelve families a year. Christians in the first century were zealous in teaching the gospel, "And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of priests were obedient unto

the faith” (Acts 6:7). Should we not be equally as zealous in our day?

Without question we are living in the greatest day of opportunity since the first century. This is true because in both Catholicism and Protestantism there have been many radical changes. Many of these have been away from the Bible rather than toward it. This has repulsed and angered many of their people. This has made them more open as prospects for something other than the religion of their heritage. Truly the fields are white unto the harvest as possibly never before.

We must not close until we answer a solemn question: If we do not have these inward qualities, how can they be acquired? Or again, if they are present within us, but weak, how can they be strengthened? Inasmuch as these inward qualities come in progressive order, we would best ask, How can I have sufficient conviction that I might be converted to have the compassion that will give me the compulsion that I need to do this work in the vineyard of the Lord? The answer is found in Romans 10:17: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Additional faith comes the very same way that our initial faith came—from a study of the word of God.

Surveys have shown that many in America where the church is numerically strong do not know much more about New Testament Christianity than people do in the pagan nations of the world. Authoritative sources tell us that only three percent of the membership in the churches of Christ are winning people to Christ. Ninety-seven percent are not. This tremendous difference between those that are and those that are not is not due to the lack of that which is external, but rather to the lack of things internal. We desperately need to enlist the ninety-seven percent now inactive in the Lord’s vineyard, that none may stand idly by, but all may be at work in sharing the gospel with a lost and dying world.

This we can and will do when these four inward qualities are found within us all.

# WORLD EVANGELISM

Dan C. Coker

Dan C. Coker was born in Jones County, Texas, in 1936. He is married to the former Elise Diane Hicks and has two daughters, Danise and Marla.

He has been a Christian for over twenty years, in which time he has been an active teacher and preacher of the Word of God. He holds the B.A. (Bible) and the M.A. (New Testament) from Abilene Christian University and the Ph.D. (Intercultural Education) from the University of Florida.



His professional career has carried him from Roaring Springs, Texas, where he taught high school and preached for two churches, to Guatemala where he served as a missionary, supported by the College Church, Abilene, Texas, then to Honduras, where he supported himself (3 years) as an educational advisor to the Ministry of Education and established the Spanish-speaking work in that country. He was a member of the faculty at the University of South Florida, Tampa, for five years. From 1973 to 1976 he served as director of *Instituto Baxter* in Mexico City. In September 1976 he began as Associate Professor of Bible (Missions) at Abilene Christian University.

Recognitions include: Alumni Citation, ACC, (1970); Personalities of the South (1970) and Outstanding Young Men of America (1971). He is also a member of Kappa Delta Pi and Phi Delta Kappa, honor and professional fraternities.

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Evangelism as a worldwide ministry is increasingly becoming one of the primary emphases of the Church of Christ in the United States of America today. Certainly

world evangelism is no gimmick of the twentieth century. It's simply the reaffirmation of the central mission of the Lord's church from the time it was first established in the city of Jerusalem.

However, the world revolution that Jesus intended to be spread rapidly over the face of the earth was soon stymied by provincialism. The Jerusalem church first grew and then stagnated. Turning its efforts inward, the church amassed to itself problems as well as members. It did become a recognized power with which to be dealt by local authorities, but not a threat to the stability of the political empire that ruled the nations at that time—Rome. It was not until the Lord caused the saints at Jerusalem to scatter themselves from that particular area that the intent of the commission given His apostles began to fulfill itself in the lifetime of those who first received it. From that time until now, man, even the Christian man who embraces the universal Christ, has demonstrated his provincial tendencies by culturally localizing the church of the Lord in whatever country he finds himself. But the message of the universal Christ and the universal Church cannot be held in a corner nor placed in obscurity for long. It is a joyful occasion to see that Churches of Christ today in the United States of America are looking out and reaching out for that vision that the Lord intended for them to have from the very beginning.

### **Historical Overview**

The Restoration Movement, while unique in its effort to restore that which was practiced in the first century, has to a great extent failed to convince a skeptical world and especially the evangelical world that it is serious in its plea for New Testament Restoration. It is the firm conviction of this writer that one primary reason for this credibility gap is the fact that the Churches of Christ in the Restoration plea have not spent themselves in any great effort to carry out the

primary mission of the church—*world evangelism*.

There are many reasons for the failure, but this paper will concern itself primarily with one—provincialism. This phenomenon is best defined by an incident that happened in El Paso, Texas. There, a colleague in the Spanish speaking work received a telephone call from a man who desired to instruct him in the best way to work among the Mexicans. He told the missionary in no uncertain terms that it was a waste of time to attempt preaching the Gospel to the people of Ciudad Juarez in their native tongue. His reasoning: "The Spanish language is so full of Roman Catholic thought that it is impossible for a person to learn New Testament truth in that language." The person who said that, of course, had never studied Spanish to any great degree and knew nothing of the foundations of Spanish philosophical thought. But that seemed to make no difference! His mind was made up! He had decided that since he could not understand the Gospel in that language, no one could. This is a gross and crass example of provincialism. But fortunately, not everyone has felt this way. Men such as Howard Schug and J. W. Treat, John Wolfe and others, against seemingly insurmountable odds, have begun works of lasting significance among the Spanish speaking peoples both here in the United States and south of the border.

Because of the vision demonstrated by men mentioned above and others like them, along with a series of events that have served to increase the world vision of Christians here in the United States, world missions has gradually become one of the most popular themes of our day. In fact, a sort of "band wagon effect" has been seen the last two decades in which group and individual mission efforts have found increasing acceptance in the activities of our brotherhood. This surge of activity has been extremely gratifying to all interested in foreign missions, especially those who have pioneered the way in which later generations are now walking. An array of personalities and methods have been un-

leashed from our brotherhood, producing a result-getting movement that for the first time in the history of this century has truly global proportions. But with increased activity comes also the increased awareness of inefficiency in the things that are being done. This inefficiency comes not from any widespread incompetence among those who have gone nor from a weak message proclaimed, but from ineffective approaches and a limited work force that is battling an ever-increasing population—one that absolutely staggers the imagination. Four billion souls represent a world so huge that its mind-boggling proportions would surely create a spirit of defeatism among God's elect if it were not for His call to faith. But faith gives victory and through faith even this task can be accomplished! In the following sections, some suggestions are made that will necessitate a clear demonstration of our faith; not faith in ourselves as a nation but faith in God as the Creator of all nations!

### **How Can We Demonstrate An Increased Faith?**

God's word is the all-sufficient guide in our every activity and experience. Therefore, it should teach us some of the "do's" and "don'ts" of extending the borders of God's Kingdom. That God has not dictated any standard pattern by which we should execute mission activities is a principle that is apparently understood by just about everyone involved in mission work. This is evidenced by the array of mission methods used on the various fields around the world. Scriptural silence on patterns for mission work gives a great deal of latitude to do those things which appear most conducive to the spread of the Kingdom. In turn, this liberty of choice brings a great deal of responsibility. Responsibility embraces at least two dimensions: (1) The absolute necessity of keeping whatever mission method used within the pale of Holy Writ; and (2) the burden of searching for improved methods in communicating the message entrusted.

These two considerations are the heart of the suggestions made in the following paragraphs.

### **Suggestion Number One**

Fulfilling one's role as citizen of the Kingdom and not primarily a citizen of any country of this world, involves a mature world conscientiousness that transcends any provincial ideas or traditions. This is an extremely difficult stance to assume because man is generally convinced that the way things are done in his particular neck of the woods is the best way for all men in every place. But, just ask any seasoned missionary what such ideas will do to stymie the work in the field in which he lives. Everyone who has lived abroad has had to go through the painful process of culture shock and adjustment to the local ways of thinking and doing things. The process is in some ways unavoidable but can be lessened both in impact and length of time through a better understanding of the world as a heterogeneous cultural patchwork instead of the familiar goings on found on Elm Street in Midtown, USA. The 1960s and 70s with all their turmoil has at least taught one very valuable lesson: even in United States society there is an array of cultures or subcultures that think differently, look differently, act differently, and have different aspirations than is seen in the dominant Anglo culture. The shock of minority group activity has been very disconcerting but at the same time extremely valuable if it has communicated successfully the differing patterns of thought. The Bible teaches that Christians have been born again into a kingdom and that kingdom is catholic, universal, worldwide; it must include people of every nation, tribe and tongue. When it is realized that this world belongs to Jesus Christ, and that Satan is only an interloper, to settle for citizenship that relegates man to a particular place on the face of this globe falls far short of the world vision to which Jesus has called His people.

**Suggestion Number Two**

One might logically ask "How does a person become more world conscious?" This rather sticky question, very relevant to the present theme, is a hard one to answer for several reasons, but mostly because of a limited world view. Even those who have lived in other cultures and have striven to cultivate a broad view have an extremely difficult time in breaking down the wall of separation between "them" and "us." Here is found a peculiar problem: those who use the indigenous idea as a mission philosophy have drawn a very sharp line of distinction between the foreigner and the U.S. citizen, especially where money is concerned. Moneys sent to the field are usually administered by the missionary and destined for his use or his working fund, but rarely for the direct consumption of the local people. The basic reasoning behind this approach is simply that those who receive from foreign sources are often slow to give of themselves and their resources for the promotion of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, funds are limited to special activities that will not directly benefit the economic situation of those who are native to the foreign country. As a result there will be less tendency for those people to become dependent upon the United States for their sustenance. It is not an effort to discriminate against the foreigner in such a way as to make him feel inferior or unloved. It is a plan in which the native should gain confidence in himself even as his confidence is placed not in the U.S. but in the Lord as the source of every good gift. However, no matter how noble the theory might sound there is still a very strong and sharp distinction between "them" and "us." Because of this distinction, many have criticized the indigenous approach, pointing out that there should be no distinction made between "them" and "us" and that the money given to the Kingdom of God for the extension of its borders should be distributed indiscriminately among all those who are working faithfully in that enterprise. These latter criticisms usually come from mis-

sionaries, but also have been communicated by nationals serving with them.

"Share the money" appears to be a laudable, egalitarian philosophy, but is *not* practiced even by those missionaries who espouse it. That a distinction between "them" and "us" is quite evident among those who send funds to the native churches is quite conclusively established through an examination of the salaries received by "them" and "us." In recent research conducted by this writer it was discovered that an overwhelming number of preachers in the Republic of Mexico feel they are the object of discrimination for the very thing just now mentioned; that is, lower salaries for doing a job that they often consider more demanding than the one performed by missionaries or by Stateside preachers. Responding to anonymous questionnaires, the Mexican preachers vented a frustration that anthropologists call "relative deprivation," a phenomenon that arises when a person receives much less than another although his performance might be equal to or better than that of the person receiving the greater salary. Deep resentments and even open hostilities are often the results.<sup>1</sup> The Mexican preachers almost unanimously invoked the Bible, Civil law and social justice to state categorically that there should be the same salary for the same work. An additional note observes that the Mexican thinks he is more capable than the North American. Still another adds that if the North American wants to work in Mexico, he should adapt to that pay scale.

It appears, then, that there is unhappiness in either system: (1) some missionaries are unhappy because others choose not to financially support nationals with U.S. funds and (2) some nationals are unhappy because the pay they receive is far inferior to that of their North American counterparts. There is a further unhappiness generated among those churches supported by U.S. funds, i.e., an unhappiness with self for depending so heavily on U.S. support. This

fact was strongly brought out in the previously mentioned study and also in a Mexican paper, *La Trompeta*, created in 1974 to "air" Mexican church problems. A cartoon from this paper will serve to illustrate the two-fold unhappiness of some of the Mexican preachers: Several Mexican brethren contemplating ways to get the U.S. brethren to build a meeting house for them. One says: "Wow, Brethren, what big carpets the U.S. churches have—they must cost much! With the money from one carpet we could pay an entire year's rent in San Ingrato (a fictitious place: "Ingrato" means "ingrate"). This candid article both chides the inequities existing between the two people and rebukes the lack of initiative of brethren who simply wait for someone up North to provide every need.

Generosity and sharing are both Biblical and humane principles that should never be ignored, but the word "sharing" suggests a twoway activity. Was this not the intent of Paul's arguments while he campaigned among the Gentile churches to raise support for a stricken Jewish community? The very Jews who had generously provided for others in Acts 2-6 were later the recipients of a helping hand. And some of this help came from the "deep poverty" of the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-5)! These poor were challenged to participate in this project, and who can doubt but what they benefitted more in giving than the Jewish Christians did in receiving?

But usually our well-meaning brethren, because of an abundance, desire to pay the entire way of the Latin missions simply because they can afford it. Their reasoning: "the Latin brethren need their money for personal uses and can better use their pesos in other ways." A question: What better way is there than sharing in the greater blessing of giving? It seems that our brethren have been instructed in how to receive, but have been robbed of that greater joy and thus kept from the promised prosperity (2 Cor. 9:6).

Any proud and industrious people (and such are the La-

tins) will soon tire of always being the recipients of the “dole.” They want to be equal in giving, receiving, and working—not inferior brothers, but full-fledged partners in the propagation of the Lord’s cause. This can hardly be accomplished when everyone knows who is paying the bills. This sounds simplistic, but it is just about that simple!

In order to further understand these phenomena, perhaps it would be good to look at a few considerations that often characterize U.S.A.—foreign mission endeavors. These will be grouped under two sub-headings, “U.S. sponsorship” and “minister control in local churches.” Again, Mexico will be used as an example.

### *United States Sponsorship*

A candid expression of the purposes of American-sponsored foreign activities comes not from Christian missionaries, but from a long-time director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), John Hannah, who says:

Foreign aid has often been construed as charity programs. In the popular image, we are providing loans or grants as a rich man gives to the poor. For this we expect, even demand the gratitude of the beneficiaries . . . But aid has never been solely or even primarily a charitable program . . . It is an investment in our own future.<sup>2</sup>

One might be tempted to deny the relevancy of the USAID experience for the mission endeavor, citing the fact that Christian missions are not conducted for the same purposes as foreign aid. While it is conceded that the contributors to foreign Christian missions usually have only “noble” motives, the same could be argued for those taxpayers who sincerely believe that America is the great benefactor of the world. Often, when the recipients of government or church-sponsored missions are less than enthusiastic about the programs of those missions, a tendency of the sponsors is to

assume that it is a result of ingratitude, ignorance, or both.

This assumption is common among United States church members who contribute to foreign missions. An instance of this was evident when a Mexican in the earlier-mentioned *La Trompeta* was censured by his sponsoring United States congregation for criticizing United States Church high-handedness in Mexican church affairs. The very sanctions, which included the threat of suspension of financial support, brought against him dramatically confirmed the point he was making. Other examples further illustrate the problem of North American dominance:

1. American sponsors insist on regular, systematic reporting from the Mexicans, a practice that is usually onerous to them, and an indication of who is in control.

2. The need for translation of reports means that the missionary is usually the intermediary for the foreign minister and the United States sponsoring congregation. The sponsoring church quite naturally listens to the impressions of the missionary, a practice which gives that man powers over the foreign minister or teacher.

3. Of the five Spanish-language religious journals specifically mentioned in a survey among Mexican preachers, only one is printed in Mexico and edited by a Mexican. Those published in the United States and edited by Americans enjoy widespread diffusion among Mexicans, but are more costly in format. *La Voz Eterna* of Houston, for example, is a beautifully printed monthly that averages about 30 pages. *MANA* of Torreon, the one journal printed in Mexico, is published just a few times a year (when funds are available) on about six pages of mimeograph stock.

4. Factional differences in the United States Church of Christ have brought journalistic, as well as personal, attempts to persuade Mexican churches to "line up" and therefore transfer United States factionalism to Mexico. "Along the Border" and *El Conservador* are two journals that represent one schismatic group; churches sponsored by

this faction must avoid the Baxter and Torreon schools of preaching group and vice versa. These particular divisions and sanctions would surely never have come about in the Mexican churches without United States sponsorship. Professor Gabino Rico of Torreon once said, for example, "We can't even invent our own church problems; we have to import them from the United States."

### *Minister Control in Local Churches*

American policy overseas could scarcely be operative without a cadre of foreign ministers to execute the programs. Duncan<sup>3</sup> claims that Mexicans have a compulsive attraction to strong personalist rule, and Torreon's director, Gabino Rico, says this tendency is a consequence of a *cacique* (chief) complex. Ministers become *caciques* and discourage any process that threatens their position, although this practice is inconsistent with the Church of Christ's teaching that from the regular membership must emerge congregational leaders (elders) to whom the minister is responsible.

Obviously, certain attitudes and practices both among supporting congregations and mission churches need to be corrected. How this might be done is proposed in the following section.

### **A Solution**

The two principal approaches thus far discussed are generally classified as "indigenous" and "paternalistic," terms that tend toward distinguishing the "centers of control" governing church activities; i.e., whether they are self-governing and self-financing or dependent on foreign financing. Unfortunately, self-government is very hard to achieve without self-financing; those who pay the bills also must be reported to and sometimes appeased. It is the experience of this writer that both missionaries and national preachers, no matter what "approach" is used, long for a national church that is self-governing, self-financing and self-propagating.

Since this is true and since there are objectionable connotations to both “indigenous” and “paternalistic” (the former because a church does not generally “sprout” of itself, but is generated by outside forces; the latter because it suggests a perpetual control by those outside forces), perhaps it would be good to look at the terminology and see if that might be one of the hindrances to better understanding among all missionaries. An alternate term is suggested that should be palatable to all concerned: not “indigenism” nor “paternalism” but *fraternalism*! Fraternalism simply means that the entire missionary project from start to finish is approached in a brotherly fashion. The missionary will have to serve as “big brother” for a while but he should let his brother grow until equal responsibilities are shared, and then more responsibility assumed by the national church, thus enabling the missionary to leave that work and seek another.

But what about financial inequities? Isn't that the root matter of the whole problem? Unfortunately, yes!! The only way this writer can see an equitable meeting of the minds and responsibilities between rich and poor parties involves two considerations: (1) Influence in the cooperative venture must not depend on the size of contribution, and (2) status in the brotherhood must not depend on level of income. These situations are admittedly idealistic and might be discounted as untenable by some. It is true that they are highly unlikely to develop if the parties involved are receiving salaries from the same source—in this case the U.S. church. One would naturally be upset with a situation in which another of lesser seniority, doing the same job (perhaps less effectively) received twice the salary from the same company. But, a wage earner in the church has no particular problem accepting the upper class professional or business man; he does not even object to his brother's additional influence as long as the latter accepts and appreciates him for what he is. Several know wealthy persons, but there is no barrier between “them” and “us.” Why? Because there is no comparative

source of income! There is acceptance and appreciation of the existing situation. This must happen in mission work, because there is no foreseeable "equalizing of the nations" in a financial sense.

Salary disparities based on nationality contribute to mistrust and hostility between foreigners and Americans. This situation is difficult to remedy, and the two extremes of (1) raising the Mexicans to the United States pay scale or (2) cutting-off American financial support altogether have undesirable consequences. The first would dramatically increase the already existent financial inequities between the minister and his congregation, as well as provide added financial attraction to opportunists. The latter might eliminate some who are now effectively serving the foreign churches. A possible resolution would be a cooperative fund-matching plan by which the Americans could supply the bulk of the financing at first and then gradually reduce their percentage until a more equitable balance was established. Each project would be considered separately and financing would come only after the foreign churches submitted both a formal request and a proposed plan of amortization. Such a plan would not necessarily demand the eventual *complete* withdrawal of United States financial support (although this would be ideal), it would simply transfer some fiscal responsibility to the foreign churches, hopefully creating a greater sense of achievement and autonomy among them.

Some foreign ministers appear to have a vested interest both in maintaining the lucrative United States support source and in preventing the congregations they serve from assuming control over their activities. The status quo also favors a *cacique* role for the minister who regards himself as the chief of his group. He is the key to foreign financial support and, therefore, the life of the congregation itself. This concept might change, however, by having the United States congregations cooperate directly with the foreign

churches instead of the minister. This would necessitate selection of certain regular members of the congregation to deal with the churches in the United States. The foreign church would receive an agreed percentage of the minister's salary, add their own percentage and then pass this amount to him. It is recognized that this process could not function in newly established church groups, but is very possible for the long-established ones. Such a plan, if carefully conceived and executed, should contribute toward a sense of sharing as partners in the church enterprise.

The fraternal approach, then, would allow those types of relationships characteristic of brotherly activity in any family. Mutual help and encouragement are part of the very heart of the family. In contrast, if certain brothers "lord over" others or if some refuse to develop themselves and remain perpetually dependent on the others, there is created a situation that is both embarrassing and frustrating for all concerned. Money should not be the issue, but usually is because it is so powerful—either to help promote or irreparably stymie the growth of the Kingdom. Let's make brotherhood, not money, the most essential ingredient in our cooperative mission efforts.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See David Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millerarian and Other Cult Movements" in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt (eds.), *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, Third Edition. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

<sup>2</sup>John Hannah, "Misconception and Outmoded Conception About Foreign Aid", *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 65, No. 1676, August 9, 1971, p. 157.

<sup>3</sup>W. Raymond Duncan, "Education and Political Development: The Latin American Case," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1968, pp. 187-210.

# THE CHURCH MUST BE EVANGELISTIC

W. F. Washington

*Teaching Credentials:* State of Florida, Department of Education Teachers Certificate; State of Texas, Department of Education Teachers Certificate.

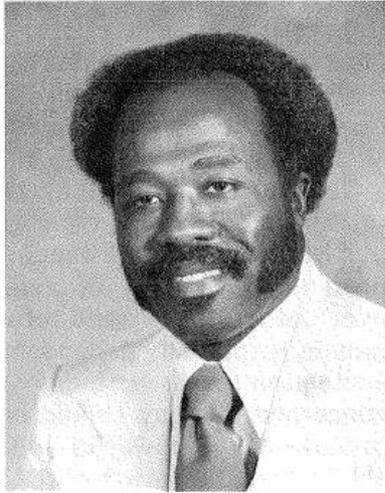
*Former Education:* Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas; Bishop College, Dallas, Texas; National Christian University, Garland, Texas; Sam Houston State University, Denton, Texas.

Dr. Washington has served as Dean of Students, Dean of Men, and Director of Student Employment at Bishop College, Dallas, Texas, and as Vice Principal of H. B. Pemberton

High School, Marshall, Texas. He has been employed as an instructor in the public schools of Marshall, Texas, and Miami, Florida. He served as minister of the Westside Church of Christ, Marshall, Texas, from 1958 to 1974, when he became minister for the Golden Heights Church of Christ, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he presently serves.

Dr. Washington holds memberships in several state and national organizations. He is author of unpublished works entitled "Modern Psychology and the Validity of the Black Construct," "Black Homicide and Black Suicide, A Relationship," "The Theology of the Soul," and "Did You Hear What I Said?".

He and his wife, Deloris, have two sons, Willie, Jr., Antonio, and two daughters, Marquite and Soncyerai. They reside in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.



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Today, I come with the hope that I might be able to

*provoke you, arouse you, agitate you* to the level of commitment to a real evangelistic thrust in your local congregation. I hope that I can, as it were, “. . . stir up your pure minds . . .” (2 Pet. 3:1).

The church today must awaken to a prevailing condition in our contemporary society. We are, in most metropolitan cities, helpless in our effect on the masses of the people. When we look at the saloons, clubs, and social orders, and how they move into the same area and hold forth in splendid array, with increasing patronage, often very close to our buildings, we respond to this challenge by yielding ground, moving to a more favorable situation and more sympathetic surroundings. Modern institutions of vice organize and sustain themselves; and the church stands in the face of these, more overcome than overcoming.

There is a great need for an evangelistic awakening. Many congregations across this nation are so situated or so constituted, or both, that they haven't the courage to undertake an evangelistic campaign; and yet are very greatly concerned, both because they do not want to be considered as not believing in such work, and because they believe that the church is drifting away from the heart of New Testament Christianity. Many elders and preachers across our brotherhood drop their heads and can be heard to say, “I do not know what we can do; it is useless to plan an old-time revival service; our people will not support it, and yet we want to do something!” Well, I've come here today to tell you what you can do!

### **The Outlook**

Those who watch for the souls of men (Heb. 13:17)—those in whose care souls have been entrusted (Phil. 2:19-20), I ask, “Watchman! What of the night? Does the morning dawn?” I am not a pessimist; I cannot be; my faith in God is too much wrapped up with the divine declaration that set forth the unailing mission of Jesus Christ upon earth

(Matt. 28:19-20, Phil. 4:13). Today, as always, I stand in the presence and under the judgment of the risen Lord, who, in the day of yesterday, issued the challenge, "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." My response will always be, "My Lord and my God" (Jno. 20:28). I must believe, and we must believe, in His triumph and dominion. Let us not conclude that our world is indifferent at heart when once it is aroused to the interest of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Beneath the strife, the rush, and rivalry of an apparently unbelieving and indifferent world, honest souls far removed from Centers, and also from the busy marts of trade, eagerly cry, "Watchman, what of the night?" Brethren, far beneath the burning, seething, selfish surface, this world is *still* concerned, and inaudibly asks, "Watchman, what of the night?"

There are signs of hope. But I pray you today, do not blind your vision, as so many heretofore have done, by demanding what kind of signs shall appear and what the coming revival shall mean. When your eyes are opened to the mountains filled with horses and chariots, if they are not such fiery visions as you had anticipated, it may be they are God's horses and God's chariots, and as surely His agency, the church, ordained for proclamation of the truth to a sin-cursed world (Eph. 3:10).

God is moving in a viable and meaningful way in New Testament evangelistic congregations. There may not be a Pentecostal result, but, brethren, in every new awakening there are fresh manifestations of God, new unfoldings of Biblical truths heretofore unrevealed, meeting the requirements of the Age. Christ is to be preached to changing men under constantly changing conditions. The substance of the gospel lasts (I Pet. 1:22-29), but methods change and means vary as conditions are altered. This universe of ours, so far as we know it, is subject to constant change. No two tides ever sweep up the beach in the same orderly ripple; no two springtimes dawn in the same form after winter's long night;

no two summer-tides blush toward the autumn in the same tints of beauty; but the great earth itself still swings to and fro, jarless and noiseless.

The great sun is still found in its appointed place at the proper hour, and the whole universe, moving through infinite space, keeps harmony with itself. So Jesus Christ is the same; the same yesterday, today, and forever; and brethren, so is the Gospel of Christ. It is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Likewise the church (Matt. 16:18), founded by Christ, is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. We may not be able to repeat in results the first century soul winning occasions, in terms of numbers, at one given time; but, brethren, in Spirit and effect, what God ever did, He can still do. What He can do, He will do, if we put our trust in Him (Heb. 13:8).

### **The Church and The Evangelist**

It is my contention that the evangelist is an integral part of any evangelistic church and the evangelistic method (Rom. 10:14, Eph. 4:11-12). No one will speak lightly of the evangelist if his position is properly defined and his work honorably pursued. Paul indicated that the evangelist had a place in the functions of the ministry of the early church in which "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some *evangelists*, and some pastors and teachers." While the role and function may not be clearly defined, yet it was a part of the divinely ordered ministry of the early church; and whatever may be said in reflection upon the Orders of Ministry worked out by brethren in later days, the simple forms of ministry instituted in the days of the apostles will ever hold their place of importance in the hierarchy of the local church, so long as an organized church and a formal leadership are necessary to the Kingdom of God.

In too many places the functioning of the evangelist has been completely minimized. Resultantly, we are now in an era of the church where we are seeing more and more self-

constituted evangelists. This has caused the biblically ordained office of the evangelist to be depreciated, and has greatly diminished the force of the office, as well as crippled the work of evangelism. It is my contention that evangelists should be men of gifts and graces, and provisions made for them in the economy of the local church (1 Cor. 9:14).

The church must be aware that evangelism is the right arm, as it were, of the church, and she must commit and consecrate herself to this great work of evangelization. I am happy to say, as I travel across this country, I get the impression that the church has not at any time through this period yielded the conviction that the world *must* be evangelized, and yet she has been willing, apparently, to commit this work to men whose methods, on the whole, she has not favored and has often criticized.

### **A Dangerous Man**

Not only is the function of the evangelist in an evangelistic church indispensable, he can, in my opinion, become a dangerous man by virtue of the very peculiar power which he has. The revolt against the evangelist, in the last decade or more, has been due, almost entirely, to the feeling which he has created by trying to make himself indispensable. I've seen cases where he has gone to a local church, and often left it with an effort to convey the impression that nothing of a truly evangelistic order can possibly be accomplished apart from him. This impression is developed when the evangelist assumes the entire leadership role, which in many instances makes him almost a dictator, while there. In some cases, he has become a menace to both the ministry and the church by assuming, if not asserting, that he preaches the gospel, while most of the preachers do not.

It would seem to me that the evangelist is made of the same clay as the rest of the members, that we are solidified by the one faith (1 Cor. 12:13-20, Eph. 4:1-5). The evangelist is "a man of like passions" and desires. He may be a man of

possibilities and responsibilities, but he must keep ever to the front a self-sacrificing spirit. Nothing more disqualifies a preacher than selfishness, and in no other class of the ministry is this so noticeable as among those sent especially to rescue the perishing. Each evangelist in the evangelistic situation must catch a spark from the fire set by Jesus in the long ago, that genuine evangelism that comes only by a real incarnation that involves sacrifice and risk: "Though rich, He became poor," "counting not even His life dear unto Himself," and went all the way to Calvary. The man who cannot impress a people with a heroic, self-denying spirit in his efforts to save them, will not be able to persuade them to a better life!

### **The Message**

The evangelistic church must have a message. That message is the Gospel of Jesus as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-14). If our churches are going to be evangelistic, we must not exclude the pulpit message (Matt. 28:19-20, II Tim. 4:1-8). The church must encourage the evangelist to set the pulpit on fire! If in our local situation we would set our pulpits on fire, the world will come if only to see it burn down! We must preach the message as if we believe it. We will never convert, convict, and convince the world by half-preaching the message (Acts 2:36-38). We must never compromise the message for emotionalism, but the right message coming from a dry pulpit is equally as bad, and a dry, spirit-less service does not, in and of itself, indicate *intellectualism!*

Brethren, not only must we have the message, we must be able to deliver the message. Sandy Koufax was paid \$100,000.00 for throwing a small, white, \$3.95 baseball across home plate. Down in Florida in the same Dodger organization, a minor leaguer throws that same \$3.95 ball, but makes only \$12,000.00 per year. Brethren, the difference is not in the ball; they are the same size! The difference is in the

*delivery*. The man of God, God's pulpiter, must put something in his message. He must be persuasive. Paul said, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, I persuade men" (II Cor. 5:11). When you have given that message, extend the invitation. Move smoothly into it. Make it part of your message. Let it not be an afterthought. Paul, in preaching to Agrippa, moved directly into his invitation. He left no doubt that he was after a conversion. He said, "King Agrippa . . . I know that thou believest" (Acts 26:27). We must move in on our hearers.

We must never make such statements as, "if you will come," but, rather, "as you come." It would seem to me a good method to eliminate the songbook during the invitation. Plead with people to come; persuade people to come! Do not get set on the two-verse invitation. Sing two songs, maybe three. Preach the message. Then invite people to come to Jesus!

### The Members

Members of the evangelistic church must also be on fire for Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 8:4, 28:22). Never let a visitor come to our worship without meeting them and sharing spiritual greetings with them. Ask them for their questions, inform them of your Bible Correspondence Courses, ask them if they are interested in your Cottage Meeting films; if they are from out of town, invite them to dinner. Members must show interest in those who come. Members must enliven their worship. When the time arrives to sing, let us "sing with the *Spirit* and with the understanding" (I Cor. 14:15). Let us put spirit in our worship (John 4:24). The mission of the church in the world is to save souls (Mark 16:15-16, I Tim. 1:15). Let us never forget or lose sight of the fact that while evangelistic preaching of the evangelistic message is a unique art, little is more important than a warm and lively service in which the power and presence of the Holy Spirit is manifest (Rom. 8:9, Matt. 18:20).

Finally, I would suggest that it is probably the height of presumption for one minister to suggest to another how to preach; yet, within the framework of the modern day ministry of evangelism, much can be learned by the sharing of ideas in this unique ministry. Strange as it may seem, any church can be an evangelistic church if that church creates a proper setting, a warm worship, a friendly atmosphere, has a preacher who each Lord's day sets the pulpit on fire, and a leadership that is convinced we can truly fulfill the everlasting mission of the New Testament Church. Let us therefore, go down from this place dedicated and consecrated to the idea that "through the thrust of the New Testament church, the kingdoms of this world can truly become the Kingdom of Christ." May God bless you in your work and your will to bring the hearts of men into direct confrontation with God!

# FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

Carl Brecheen

Carl Brecheen was born and reared in Hollis, Oklahoma.

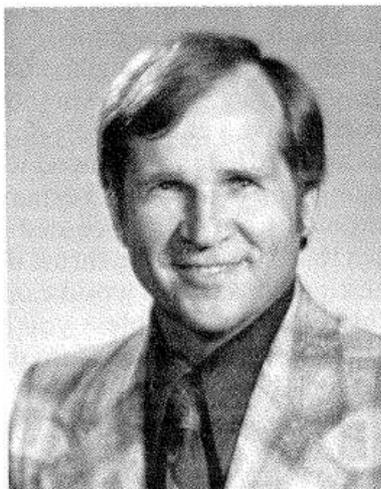
Education: B.S., Abilene Christian College, 1952. M.A., Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, 1955. M.R.E., Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, 1956. D.R.E., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1965.

Minister: Served as minister of the gospel in congregations in Arkansas and Texas. Served as Educational Director in two congregations in Texas. Serves as deacon in the College Church of Christ, Abilene, Texas.

Abilene Christian University: Joined the Bible Faculty of Abilene Christian in 1961. Director of Annual Bible Teachers' Workshop. Director of ACU Annual Bible Lectureship. Has taught the "Family Relations" course since 1961. "Teacher of the Year" at ACU in 1970.

Professional Relations: Member of the National Council on Family Relations. Listed in "Outstanding Educators of America." Serves as associate editor of Christian Bible Teacher magazine. Serves on the staff of *Power for Today*.

He and his wife, "Smitty," have three children: Patti (born 1958); Marcus (born 1961); Stacy (born 1963).



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When the Lectureship Committee was wrestling with the various emphases needed for this year's Lectureship theme, they felt very strongly that one lecture needed to be devoted to an emphasis on the family as it relates to our efforts to reach the lost with the gospel.

They felt that there were at least three points that needed special emphasis: one, as our children grow up in our homes, the power of the gospel message needs to be brought to bear on their lives in such a way that they will want to spend their lives in the service of the Master; two, as parents express their concern for the lost in active soul-winning efforts, they should recognize a responsibility for training their children to be active soul-winners, deeply committed to the task of taking the message of salvation to every creature under Heaven in our lifetime; three, in our deep concern for the millions of the world, we must not lose sight of the needs of our own families—husbands and wives, parents and children.

The committee asked that I accept this assignment, and I was happy to comply with the request.

### **Family Life Today**

I am sure we are all aware of the deterioration of family life today, but a few statistics may be in order at the outset of our lesson.

The staggering divorce rate speaks not only of broken homes but of the horrible, devastating tension and strife felt in millions of other homes which outsiders never see. The 1,050,000 divorces in 1975 represented a 16+% increase over 1974 figures and experts are pretty well agreed that the increase between 1975 and 1976 will be even larger when the figures are available.

Over ten percent—about 8 million—of the children in our country live in fatherless homes at any one time, and three times that many are fatherless for a significant part of their childhood.

In a report on the American family by *Better homes and Gardens*, of the more than 340,000 respondents, 71% felt that “American family life is in trouble”; 64% of them said that America is a worse place to raise children than 10-15

years ago; 85% felt that religion has lost its influence on family life today.

The majority of homicides committed in our nation are acts perpetrated against other family members. FBI statistics report that police across the nation receive more calls for family conflicts than for murders, aggravated batteries and all other serious crimes. The statistics also show that 22% of all police fatalities occur while investigating domestic disturbances.

“Throwaway marriages” have become a part of the fabric of American life.

### **Train Up a Child**

“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

Our first responsibility, beyond the stewardship of our own souls, is for the spiritual training of our children. To say “there is so little time” is no excuse. If a child needed a special operation, we would spare no expense, no effort, to get it. If a child were handicapped and in need of special training in order to lead as full and normal a life as possible, no stone would be left unturned to provide for those needs.

Yet, when it comes to the spiritual—the most important aspect of a child’s development—we have difficulty *making* time and opportunity.

It was a tragic day in Israel’s history when the writer of the book of Judges wrote

And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were round about them, and bowed down to them;

and they provoked the Lord to anger. Judges 2:10-13

Moses had given them the key and the warning two generations before.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Only one generation later, Joshua had spoken the famous words, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15), and the entire nation had voiced its approval and its pledge (Joshua 24:16). But following the death of these devoted servants of God, "There arose a generation that knew not the Lord" (Judges 2:10). Why? Why did that generation of young people have no knowledge of the Lord? Part of the responsibility for their failure must surely be borne by their parents and by the religious leaders who watched them grow up.

What of our families? Do our children "know the Lord?" Have we taken His word into our hearts? Have we "taught it diligently to our children?" Have we talked of that Word as we have sat in our homes and walked by the way, as we retired at night, and as our families have begun their day (Deut. 6:6-9)? If we have not, *who are we expecting to assume that responsibility?*

### **Training Soul-winners**

Have we made an effort to involve family members in active concern for the lost? This task must surely require great care to avoid embarrassment and rejection. But what

greater “power base” can there be for seeking the lost than the devoted Christian family? And what more beautiful sight can there be than seeing family members grow in their own faith and in their concern for the lost millions of the world?

### **Taking Time for the Family**

At the outset of this part of our study, we need to pause briefly to enunciate a basic biblical principle: “It is all right to remain single.” Paul articulates this principle clearly in I Corinthians 7 when he says,

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

I Corinthians 7:32-35

Surely there are many things which can be done as a single person in the service of the Lord that simply cannot be done by a married person. Jesus and Paul (to name but two) remained unmarried. I believe they chose the unmarried state in order that they might be free to move about more freely in their work for the Lord. Admittedly, they lived in a unique time and in very unique circumstances. Nevertheless, they were unmarried. And this must remain a viable alternative for Christians today.

The apostle also makes it clear, in his first letter to the Corinthians, that many are unable to receive that teaching, and that those should marry—“for it is better to marry than to burn with passion”(I Cor. 7:7).

### Those Who Marry

Let us now turn our attention to those who choose to marry. The responsibilities which we *create* by this choice are very unique.

We share with every other Christian in the world responsibility for taking the gospel to those who are lost. The extent of our responsibility is determined primarily by talent and opportunity. But it is a *shared* responsibility.

On the other hand, our responsibilities to our families are uniquely ours. No one else in all the world shares my responsibility for being a husband to my wife. No one else shares her responsibility for being "wife" to me. Those responsibilities are uniquely ours to each other.

Similarly, no one shares our responsibilities for being parents to our children. Others can and do contribute beyond measure to their training and development. We praise the Lord for that! But, no one else shares our unique responsibilities as "father" and "mother."

If I am married and live as though I am single, God will surely hold me responsible for failing to accept the responsibilities He has given me as a member of a family. **THERE ARE THINGS ONE CAN DO IN THE SINGLE STATE THAT HE SIMPLY CANNOT DO IF HE IS MARRIED**—good things, important things, urgent things!

If, as parents, we have children still living at home, our responsibility to those children must be dictated by their needs. To neglect them is surely a grievous sin—a flagrant violation of God's commands regarding their care. I am thinking specifically of such Old Testament passages as Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Proverbs 22:6, and of New Testament passages like Ephesians 6:1-4.

As children grow up, their needs change and the demands on parents' schedules change, but for parents to live by the same kind of priorities and schedules they would follow if they had no children is tragic and has tragic results.

For example, a man who loves to share his faith wherever

he goes, tells the story of sitting next to a young business executive on an airplane. When the time seemed right, this man brought up the subject of spiritual things. When he did, the young man bristled.

“Would you mind if we changed the subject?” he asked curtly.

“Not at all,” the man replied, “but I’d be interested to know why.”

“I’ll tell you why I’m not interested in Christianity,” he said. “Christianity robbed me of my parents, and I am not interested in anything that would do that.” Then he told a sordid story of a father who traveled rather extensively as a Christian businessman, speaking to various church-related groups, and of a mother who was busily engaged in teaching home Bible classes. Then he added with a touch of sarcasm and bitterness, “My parents were so busy leading everyone else to Christ that they lost their four boys, and there’s not one of us who is interested. Now would you mind if we changed the subject?”

How tragic to lose one’s children. No success in other endeavors is worth that price.

It is also possible to lose one’s marriage in the pursuit of otherwise noble goals. It is not just secular, selfish pursuits that destroy marriages. It is possible to be so deeply involved in religious pursuits outside the home that a spouse grows resentful and bitter.

Several weeks ago I received a letter from a friend of mine who almost lost his own marriage.

He wrote, “I was blind to the weaknesses of my own marriage. I excused my own failures and shortcomings on the ground that I was doing the Lord’s work. In the process, I came perilously close to losing the one human being who means more to me than any other person on God’s earth. I failed to realize that serving God also involves loving one’s wife as his own body and dwelling with her according to knowledge. I failed to provide for her needs and in the

process I sinned very greatly against her. I just thank God that she has enough love for the Lord to give me a chance to start all over.”

Let there be no misunderstanding about this very important fact: husbands and wives have emotional needs which cry out for fulfillment and which were designed to be filled in the marriage relationship. To neglect to fulfill those needs may create chronic dissatisfaction. And chronic dissatisfaction may lead to the complete breakdown of a home. All the divorce statistics are not outside the church—as we are all painfully aware.

A healthy balance in these matters is certainly not easy to maintain. It is easy to use the family as a “cop out” on other responsibilities. It is also easy to use these other responsibilities as a “cop out” on family responsibilities.

Nobody said it was going to be easy. But the Christian must be aware of the pressures and the temptations which come from both directions.

While we are taking the gospel to a waiting world, let us not neglect those who are, by our own choice, most important to us—our own families.

### **Establish Priorities**

In a mad, hectic world like ours where demands are made on our time and energy from so many different directions, surely some kind of “priority system” against which we can measure the relative importance of various kinds of demands is needed. I don’t know where these came from originally. I suppose it doesn’t matter a great deal, so long as they are accurate and helpful. Some months ago, I heard a friend talking about them in a little different form and he said that brother Charles Roberson used to share them with his students. I am sure that many thinking people, struggling with the pressures of their world and the demands of their own conscience with regard to their God-given stewardship, have come up with a similar approach. They are shared here

in the hope that they will be helpful to us as we struggle with similar pressures.

**GOD.** The Christian's first priority surely must be the maintaining of a rich, personal, vital relationship with God. Without that, he has nothing of real value to share with others and no valid base for his own life. The form which this priority takes will be a very personal thing, but it would seem obvious that this concern must express itself in some kind of daily study of the Bible and communion with the Father in prayer. This "Quiet Time" with God each day provides the center of the Christian's life, without which all the other pressures get out of "focus."

**SPOUSE.** The second most important thing in life for the Christian who is married, must be that one whom God has given to share most intimately in every aspect of his life. All of the needs of that person—physical, emotional, social, spiritual—must be as important to him as his own (Eph. 5:28, 33). Concern for those needs will be expressed in a wide variety of ways. Communication lines must be kept open and that takes *regular time alone* together. When a spouse expresses a need, the partner must respond appropriately. The two must realize, at this point, that their own relationship forms the basis for the relationship with their children.

**CHILDREN.** The next priority for Christians is their children—if they have children. Much of their relationship with children will be on an "emergency" level. Children's needs are urgent and must be responded to in immediate, decisive ways.

All the while, however, parents must remember that their own relationship is even more basic than that which they sustain to their children. *Children must never stand in the center of the family.* They are extremely important, but they must be allowed to grow up and away from parents in order that they may take their place in life as mature, independent adults.

If children have been in the center of the family, parents

are reluctant to allow them to grow up. And when they do grow up, it leaves a serious rupture in the family structure. The husband-wife relationship must be kept vital during the years when children are growing up. Otherwise, when children are gone, there is no life in the marriage.

**VOCATION.** For the Christian, conscientious service to an employer is an absolute must. Or, if one is self-employed, service to his customers is part of his commitment and absolutely essential as an expression of his integrity. If, however, his means of livelihood should violate his commitment to God or to his family, he will need to make drastic changes in order that those things which are more important to him may be given proper attention.

**MINISTRY BEYOND THE ABOVE.** Only when the considerations above have been taken into account, is the Christian ready to reach out to others about him.

There will be emergencies, of course, when other things will have to be momentarily pushed into the background in order that some urgent need may be met. But it is not fair to live in a constant state of emergency.

It is also highly possible that one may use the above priorities as an *excuse* for *never* reaching out beyond the first four elements of the list. This, too, is a serious violation of the will of God. We must, as children of the King, be deeply concerned about the needs of those about us. And our concern must be reflected in time and energy—and often also in money—spent in reaching out in various ministries to others.

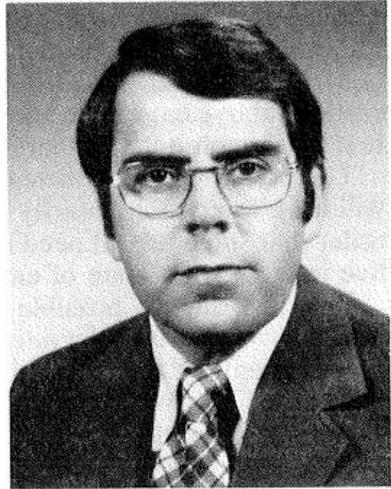
In all concerns, however, let us not forget the needs of our own families. God created us and put us together in family units. He has blessings for us which can only come through these precious relationships.

In a day when family life in general is deteriorating on every hand, Christians should be leading the return to a *focus on the family!*

# WHOM WE PREACH

Jim McGuigan

Jim McGuigan is a native of Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 1946 he and his family came to Lubbock, Texas and he attended Sunset School of Preaching. Upon the completion of his work, he returned to Northern Ireland and taught in the North Ireland Bible School for six years. Since 1973 he has been on the faculty of Sunset School of Preaching, teaching in both the graduate and undergraduate programs.



Jim is the author of a number of small commentaries. Among these are: *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *Romans*, *1 Corinthians*, *A Survey of Isaiah*, *An Approach to Christian Evidences* and his most recent one on *Revelation* which is now being printed. He also has in print, *The McGuigan-King Debate*, which concerns the establishment of the New Covenant and the Church.

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Of Jesus, Paul said, "We proclaim him." In another place he said, "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." This mes-

sage is for all of us and not least for those of us who, in the terms of Ephesians 4:11, are known as “evangelists.” What is preaching? It is the communication of God’s truth *to* people *by* people. What is a preacher (as we are here speaking)? Any herald of the gospel—man, woman, boy or girl!

*Preaching* is the “natural” response of the saved for “praise is comely in the saints.” *Preaching* is the voice of the Church of God delivering the message of Almighty God concerning His Son to the world. *Preaching* is the continuance of the redemptive work of God in the world, for while the historical activity of God in Christ is the meritorious foundation of redemption, preaching is the sole means by which those redeeming acts are conveyed to the world that they might respond in faith. Who has graced their lips with the name of Jesus who has never heard of Him? We are plainly told that God’s wisdom demands that the world be saved by a message (1 Corinthians 1:21). That message, for the very passage demands it, is a *proclaimed* message.

### How shall we preach?

1. *We should tell it in love, and tenderly.* How could we tell, otherwise, this love-story? (I’m not speaking of a sick sentimentalism, but of love—New Testament style!) We are speaking to the blind, the despairing, the deluded, the bitter and the slaves of a merciless master. We are told the servant of the Lord must “be gentle unto all men” and we are urged to “speak in love.”

2. *We should tell it plainly.* The issues are too crucial not to speak plainly. You know I’m not speaking of rudeness. That’s inexcusable. The world is lost! Our friends are lost! Our families (many of them) are LOST! Be misunderstood on other things if you must—but here, make it plain. Let neither our education nor a revered version get in the way of soul-saving truth.

3. *We should tell it patiently.* Winston Churchill delivered a speech at his alma mater before a packed house. Every-

one who was anyone was there. The press was there and so was the nobility. The man of the hour approached the microphone, stood silently for a little while and then said in a low-keyed voice: "Never!" He looked around in silence for many seconds and said again: "Never!" The place was like a tomb for silence and the atmosphere was electric. And then with defiance, challenge and command, he said: "NEVER GIVE UP!" That was the end of his speech—and the audience went wild.

"Success" is not a synonym for visible results. There are times in the Biblical record—many of them—when "success" involved great visible response to the Gospel or God's call to repentance. We read of a number of these in Acts. But that's not the whole story. Jeremiah was one of God's very successful preachers—we don't know that he had even a single convert. Noah was another tremendous success story but only seven out of a whole world full, accompanied him in a life of faith. The eminently successful Elijah didn't know of a single convert through *his* preaching. The Savior himself claimed Bethsaida, Chorazin and Capernaum were harder fields than Sodom and Gomorrah. What was it Isaiah 53:1 said? Who was it that told a nation: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life"? Who said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered your children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but ye would not"? Work hard! Pray fervently! Be patient and leave the increase to God!

4. *We should tell it confidently and with enthusiasm.* And why shouldn't we?! We are descendants of those who ate the fire that was to burn them and drank the water that was to drown them. Our faith has not come to us untested. Historically, the Bible is altogether sound. Textually, for an ancient book, the Bible's integrity is almost incredible. Its basic philosophy has the respect of the bulk of reasonable men. And, if a number of its doctrines are unacceptable to many, they must deal with the testimony of the Son of God. If He is

indeed declared to be God's Son by the resurrection, then the doctrines He marks with approval stand vindicated.

But won't we meet many who oppose the Bible? Of course. But that's nothing new. What will the newcomers have the ancients didn't? If it be of God, human intellect cannot overthrow it. If it is not of God, we welcome the exposure. Frank O. Morrison opposed it until he researched the resurrection and wrote: "Who Moved the Stone?" Lew Wallace was urged by Bob Ingersoll to expose the "divine" Jesus. Wallace ended up writing: "Ben Hur." Lord Lyttleton resisted until he examined the conversion of Saul, at which time he became a believer. One of Voltaire's prominent disciples followed his teacher until they threw him in prison for political agitation. While there, he found a crumpled old Bible and became a believer.

History is strewn with the wrecks of men and movements—Bible opponents. The Book is deathless. Where are the hanging gardens of Babylon? Psalm 23 still comforts after 3000 years! Where is Nineveh with its two hundred towers? We still read for assurance the prophets who told of her ruin. Peter, quoting a writer eight hundred years before himself, says the Word of God *is* deathless!

But more than that—it is relevant. So, speak confidently. Despite our education and staggering technological advances, we are a needy race. *We do* need more than the belly demands. We're guilt ridden, terribly bewildered and knotted with frustration. We need the Bible and what it has to offer. Beecher said this:

The Word of God is the book of the common people; it is the working-man's book; it is the child's book; it is the slave's book; it is the book of every creature that is downtrodden; it is the book that carries with it the leaven of God's soul; it is a book that tends to make men larger and better, and sweeter, and that succours them all through life; and do you suppose it is going to be lost out of the world? When the Bible is lost out of the world, it will be because there are no men in it who are in

trouble, and need succouring; no men who are oppressed and need release; no men who are in darkness and need light; no men who are hungry and need food; no men who are sinning and need mercy; no men who are lost and need the salvation of God.—HENRY WARD BEECHER

That's a quote from Fitchett's "Beliefs of Unbelief" (p. 228). Doesn't it just insist on being quoted? Let me be more specific on this issue later.

Speak confidently! If our story is true, there ought to be an enthusiasm pervading our telling of it. Let's really believe our message and the rest will take care of itself. Someone asked Spurgeon how to get and keep the attention of people. He said: "Pour a can of kerosene over yourself, set it on fire and people will come to watch you burn!" I *know* that's right. Emerson hotly protested:

I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more. A snowstorm was falling around us. The snowstorm was real; the preacher merely spectral, and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him, into the beautiful meteor of the snow, He had lived in vain. He had not one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived or had acted, we were none the wiser for it. The capital secret of his profession, namely, to convert life into truth, he had not learned.

5. *We should tell it consistently.* The mouth and the life both speak. Are you calling for people to trust God? Please then, trust Him yourself. Are you calling them to peace? Show it yourself. Are you offering assurance? Manifest it in your life. Are you promoting purity? Honestly toil in that direction. Would you raise them out of gloom? Be cheerful. Show the Message works!

6. *We should tell it humbly and naturally.* Paul said: "We preach not ourselves . . . as Lord . . . but servants . . ." And that's what we are—servants! No one deserves glory but the

Lord. The parading of scholarship preaches the man but not the Man. The quoting of too many scriptures preaches the preacher but not the Savior.

And yet, don't be *too* humble. Affect nothing you do not feel. There's nothing as revolting as "super-piety"; the sickening oversweetness; the Christian "look" or the "saint's tone." We're not plaster, nor are the people to whom we speak. But more, nor was Jesus! We are repulsed by a great number of the portraits drawn of our Lord. Some of them are absolutely effeminate and unreal. Shall we denounce these and then portray them in living flesh? Be yourself while praying for and working toward greater conformity to Jesus.

7. *We should tell it urgently and always.* "Press it home on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient." (NEB) "Never lose your sense of urgency, in season, or out of season." (Phillips) That's what Paul told Timothy. Be sensible about it—don't go getting your neighbor out of bed at 3 a.m. Nevertheless, be always on the lookout for the opportunities or opportunities to make opportunities. The issues are crucial and eternal.

### And why should we preach?

1. *We are to preach because God has laid the obligation on us.* "Duty" is no dirty word. Love and duty are not mutually exclusive. Love recognizes and willingly submits to obligation. So Jesus thought (John 14:15). We've read Matthew's record of the "Great Commission." "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

2. *We should preach because faith constrains us.* The Psalmist said it: Having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, therefore did I speak; we also believe, and, therefore also we speak. We *have* something to tell. And if it has affected our lives, we will tell it. You'll tell it to someone, somewhere, sometime. Your soul's solid convictions will prise open your mouth and

demand that your palsied tongue speak of it.

3. *We are to preach because the saints need maturing.* It's not only the unforgiven who need to hear this good news. We need to tell it to one another. The songwriter was expressing our hearts when he said: "Tell me the story often, for I forget so soon." Our Family needs to be stabilized in these great truths. They need to be cheered and comforted. Their flagging spirits need strength from the rehearsal of the soul-fortifying truths of God's love and adequacy. We need the firm and kindly rebukes the Message of reconciliation brings to us. We need to be taught to "say, NO, to ungodliness" (NIV on Titus 2:15).

4. *We are to preach because this is the way to the world's salvation.* One thing I know—he who calls on the Lord shall be saved. There can be no caller if none know of Jesus. There can be no knowing of Jesus unless there is a hearing of Jesus (Romans 10:13-17).

5. *We are to preach because love constrains us.* 2 Corinthians 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 11:1 speak clearly to each of us according to our ability. The birds fly the goodness of God, the fish swim it, the winds blow it, the seas surge it, the lightning flashes it, the thunder thunders it, the sun beams it, the flowers bloom it, the rivers flow it, the earth spins it, and the stars shine it. Are we to remain silent? We who are loved incredibly, blessed inestimably and with hope eternal? We alone of all God's creation—shall we keep silent? Won't His love for us provoke the same response in us? Won't we love Him because He first loved us?

6. *We are to preach because the world is lost in sin.* There is a god of this world who blinds and crushes—who seduces and defrauds. The mark of his curse is written in the eyes of millions and hidden from human gaze in the souls of millions more. The major issue in life is sin—unforgiven sin. The basic issue is not politics, slum clearance, civil rights. It's the cancer which produces these attendant ills we must primarily combat. The great creeping desert which suffo-

cates and chokes man is sin. Men have erected against it education, moral systems, philosophy, social reforms, and even religions, but the drift buried them all. We can spell the world's ills in three letters. We can spell "poverty," "perdition," "suffering," and any other such word in three letters: S-I-N. This disease is universal, for all have sinned. It is internal, for Jesus said its manifestations come out of the heart. The Savior came to save "sinners." The Cross says the fundamental problem is crime against God. Let's despise no one's work, but let's attack the central issue! "Who," said Guthrie, in his "Gospel in Ezekiel" (pp. 30-32):

Is the white haired sexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is the sorceress that first deceives and then damns his soul?—Sin. Who, with icy breath, blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Who, by a more hideous metamorphosis than Ovid ever fancied, changes sweet children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters, and their fathers into worse than Herods—the murderers of their own innocents?—Sin. Who casts the apple of discord on household hearths? Who lights the torch of war, and carries it blazing over happy lands? Who, by divisions in the Church, rends Christ's seamless robe?—Sin. Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazarite asleep, and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? What Siren is this, who, seated on a rock by the deadly pool, smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray, and flings her arms around our neck, to leap with us into perdition?—Sin. Who petrifies the soft and gentlest heart? Who hurls reason from her throne, and impels sinners, mad as Gadarene swine, down the precipice, into the lake of fire?—Sin. Who, having brought the criminal to the gallows, persuades him to refuse a pardon, and with his own insane hand to bar the door against the messenger of mercy? What witch of hell is it, that thus bewitches us?—Sin. Who nailed the Son of God to that bloody tree? and who, as if it were not a dove descending with the olive, but a vulture swooping down to devour the dying,

vexes, grieves, thwarts, repels, drives off the Spirit of God? Who is it that makes man in his heart and habits baser than a beast; and him, who was once but little lower than an angel, but little better than a devil?—Sin. Thou art a hateful and horrible thing; that “abominable thing which God hates.” And what wonder? Thou hast insulted his holy Majesty; thou hast bereaved him of beloved children; thou hast crucified the Son of his infinite love; thou hast vexed his gracious Spirit; thou hast defied his power; thou hast despised his grace; in the body and blood of Jesus, as if that were a common thing, thou hast trodden under foot his matchless mercy. Brethren, surely, the wonder of wonders is, that sin is not that abominable thing which *we* also hate.

### What shall we preach

1. *Preach an old Jesus.* Preach Him as one who was with God in the beginning. Preach Him as one whose goings forth are from everlasting to everlasting (Micah 5:2). Preach Him as the “Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). Preach Him as One old in victories so that His very name gives assurance to the fearful. Tell of Him as One old in forgiveness so the sinner will not think his crimes are new or unforgiveable. Tell of Him as One old in the art of loving so that the timid and lonely will find Him attractive. Tell of Him as One old in wrath against sin lest the rebel continue unaware of the seriousness of his crimes.

2. *Preach an Incarnate Jesus.* Tell the sinner of John 1:14. Tell him God is no spectator of poverty, but that His earthly pilgrimage began in a cattle shed. Tell how the Lord of Glory condescended to share our poverty and pain. Say that He knows from personal experience the pain of slander and the torment of forsakenness.

The Incarnation is not so much a doctrine as it is a deed! God didn’t just talk about our predicament—He did something. The Father, someone said, couldn’t come Himself so He sent His Son into the world. In this stupendous act of becoming man, the Lord became one with man. He is not

talking but doing. People are hurt by life—it doesn't walk up to them and ask their permission—it baffles and batters them; it overwhelms and often crushes them to silence. In the Incarnation we see, as J. B. Phillips put it (page 74): "God Himself coping with life on the very terms that He has imposed upon His creatures. They will be seeing God not seated high on a throne, but down in the battlefield of life." This gives us all courage to face life with all its challenges and problems.

Not only are we told by this supreme act of God of His willingness to share the burdens—we learn He is gracious in the sharing of our joys. He has sanctified daily living for us—the ordinary things are no longer ordinary since God Himself has touched them. "How would God act if He lived in this world of ours?" is answered in the record of the Incarnation. Life is not to be shunned *or* esteemed too highly—it is to be joyfully lived even in much affliction. It is not to be despised by a gross asceticism or perverted by sensualism. If it really *was* God in Christ living in our world—not playing *like* a man, but really man—then life on earth is not to be despised. Escapism is then foreign to Christianity. Tell the people to live their lives to the full unto the Lord.

3. *Preach a crucified Jesus.* Here is another *deed*! It is what Paul said he would major in. This event, ever coupled with the resurrection, is all that he said he would glory in. At no other time has the character of God been more clearly revealed than at the cross. For fifteen hundred years He had dwelled in a dark room in the tabernacle or temple and approached only by dripping blood in the hand of one man on one day of the year. Those in ancient times were not left altogether without light as to His nature, but there was no revelation then when we compare it with the revelation at the cross.

*The cross of Christ tells of a love (almost) incredible. How anxious is God to forgive us? What would He not give us*

having given His Son? It speaks of a love that “passeth knowledge.” It tells of a love universal in scope, for it was manifested for “the world.” Of a story of the cross, Dorothy Sayers somewhere said: “We may call it devastating; we may call it revelation or we may call it rubbish; but if we call it dull, then words have no meaning at all.”

*The cross of Christ tells of sin's gross ugliness.* In Romans 7:13 Paul says the Law did that too, but as in everything else related to Christ, the Law fell short here, too, in comparison with the cross. We must not believe that at the crucifixion of Jesus an especially evil brand of sin was let loose—that's far from the truth. Selfishness, ambition, fear, greed and envy slew the Lord. The drive to succeed and religious bigotry murdered the Prince. We know all about these—don't we! “Ordinary” sins attempted the assassination and annihilation of God!

*The cross of Christ tells of Christ's personal assessment of sin.* All His life He said “NO” to sin. As a child He rejected it. As a youth He resisted it. As a man He humiliated it. He would make no peace with it—not should He have to die in the process. This of course, is exactly what happened. Not only did the death of Jesus have atoning aspects, it was His final act in His earthly ministry of resistance to sin. He'd rather die than live at peace with sin. There was never any conference—only conflict; never any truce—only all out war. Tell that to our world and maybe then they'll see through that “twaddle” called humanism wherein the sin-ridden man is held as the measure of all things.

*The cross of Christ tells of man's victory over evil spirits.* Old-fashioned or not—Paul says our wrestling is against spirit beings. There are principalities and powers of wickedness confronting mankind and these are led by the Destroyer himself. “Did we in our own strength confide, the battle would be losing.” Hebrews 2:14ff makes clear to us that Jesus did not simply weaken the power of Satan but

“brought it to nought”. 1 John 3:7-10 discusses not simply the atonement but expressly deals with the intention of Christ to have us live a righteous life. 1 Peter 3:22 explicitly says that *all* the powers are under His Lordship. A man—our man—disarmed (NIV), triumphed over, the principalities and powers *for us*. See the debated Colossians 2:15.

If indeed he has done what these passages urge us to believe, then we *can* “resist the Devil” and cause him to flee. Temptation is really *not* too strong for us even in our weakness. 1 Corinthians 10:13 becomes a blessed literal truth—temptations are not above our ability in Christ. The power possessed by these seducing spirits *is that which we attribute to them*. They come at us whipped and beaten foes, conning us into believing they have power they don’t possess. Tell that to the despairing servant of lust, pride or ambition!

*The cross of Christ tells us that God is always Sovereign.* The earth, since Adam, has been a planet in rebellion. That rebellion reached its peak when man sought the extermination of God. At that moment, when the wicked powers were so much in control of the human race, God was completely in control. At *that* moment when evil was doing its worst, God was fulfilling His master-plan of redemption. Not only was He working in spite of the evil, He was using that ultimate expression of evil to win the world.

Tell this to a bewildered couple who have just lost their baby. Tell that to a lonely woman who has just lost her husband. Tell that to the young orphans, old enough to feel fully the desolation which follows desertion, and the loneliness of a “home” for orphan children. Tell everyone; if God was in control *then*; if God was turning that evil to eternal good; if God was wonderfully using suffering and sin at its most brutal and senseless level to bring us eternal redemption—what can’t he do with ours? What can we see that would prove God is not lovingly and adequately control-

ling things? If the cross does not deny His Sovereignty—what would?

4. *Preach a resurrected and glorified Jesus.* This always accompanied the preaching of the cross. “You slew him,” said Peter, “but God raised and glorified him as Lord.” “I preached only the cross among you,” says Paul, and then showed us (1 Corinthians 15) that the resurrection had indeed been central in his teaching.

*The resurrection proved the ultimate power of righteousness.* In the resurrection God stamped the “good” Jesus as the Victor. This deed—this event is historical proof that righteousness triumphs; that the universe is run on the principle of invincible right! This is no mere doctrine. It is history—solid, tangible, sentient deeds!

How evil can the world become? How strong can ungodliness become? However strong, its doom has been announced, once and for all, 1900 years ago. The resurrection of Jesus is the dynamic historical proof that all the righteous dreams, plans, hopes and longings will be fulfilled. Tell that to the righteous under oppression.

*The resurrection proved Jesus to be death’s destroyer.* A greater than Samson is here. Jesus ripped away the doors of Hades and led captivity captive. When Mary sought Jesus in the tomb and couldn’t find him, she wept. Thank God she didn’t find him—if she had, how we would weep today. When the apostles ran to the tomb, now empty, *they saw death lying dead!*

“Fear not, He said, I have overcome death!” That means He’s alive. That means He is able to fulfill that promise “Lo, I am with you always.” It means the promise though 1900 years old is still fresh today. It means He is able to be in the midst of two or three who are gathered in His name today.

It means too, that the righteous dead are sleeping. Just when the plausible atheist finishes his oration, just when the wail of an orphaned boy breaks our heart, just when the sob of a lonely widow boggles our mind—just then, someone

reads of the empty tomb and the cemetery becomes a park!

For thousands of years the conqueror stalked the earth gathering into his kingdom the countless dead and then one morning in the village of Bethlehem, his opponent was born. We know the rest of the story!

*The resurrection proved Jesus to be the living Lord.* John claimed Him to be Lord of Lords. Paul claimed He had a name above every name. Peter said all the principalities had been subjected to Him. *Jesus isn't just living—He's the living Lord!* And if He is Lord, He is now ruling and in control. More than ever we need to know that the world is being governed. Despite the war and plunder, the economic chaos and international world uneasiness—*Jesus is Lord and Ruler.*

And if He is indeed Lord, we are doing people no favors when we suppress that truth. Jesus calls for submission. Get a concordance and check how often the Lordship of Jesus is stressed in the preaching and teaching of the apostles. We need to take passages such as Matthew 16:21-24 out of mothballs. It was when He saw multitudes following Him that Jesus uttered the staggering words of Luke 14:25-33. We must never water down the commands of the Master till they meet human weakness, rather we are to raise the fallen to meet the claims of Jesus on their lives. (There is no room whatever in our preaching for a callous unconcern about the strength of the chains which bind the unforgiven. We need tenderness at all times.)

The Jesus who is Lord is "living." Everything we read about Him in His earthly ministry is reflected in His description in Revelation 1. In His earthly ministry we read of Him as fully alive. The sweep of His vision, the power of His teaching, the authority with which He spoke, the daring of His denunciations—all of these things tell us of a living Jesus. He is no less powerful now that He has been raised.

Jesus deals in life—not ritual. Whatever He is—He's not dull. We are losing too many of our children to the world

because of the dullness of our view and our life. I recently asked a class of about 40 high school students if they thought (in all candor) Christianity was dull—the response was scary. Many think “Church” is for old women with fur stoles and siamese cats (who said that?). Many think that Christianity is mere “Church-going.” Many young people think the challenge of Christ is fulfilled in going to assembly three times a week and attending the ever present youth rallies. *We* ought to know better! This Christ is at home in the factory, the ditch, the cab, the school room, the kitchen, the pulpit, the sports arena or anywhere else where godliness can abide. But then, there are a number who don’t want a living Christ. Sir John Adcock had these in mind when he wrote the poem “The Divine Tragedy.” Here’s a piece of it slightly altered.

When an infant lying in careless joy,  
 Sports with a woolen lion, if the toy—  
 Should come to life, the child, so direly crossed,  
 Faced with this actuality, is lost . . .  
 Leave us our toys, then; happier we shall stay  
 While they remain but toys, and we can play  
 With them and do with them as suits us best;  
 Reality would add to our unrest . . .  
 We want no living Christ, whose truth intense  
 Will have no part in our pretence  
 And, flashing on all folly and deceit,  
 Would blast our world to ashes at our feet . . .  
 We do but ask to see  
 No more of Him below than is displayed  
 In the dead plaything our own hands have made  
 To lull our fears and comfort us in loss—  
 A wooden Christ on a wooden Cross.

We need to tell the world that only the cross was made of wood. Jesus is real! Alive! Another Jesus will do us no good. Another Jesus isn’t strong enough to meet our needs. If we can’t have the Biblical Jesus—we want none. If we can’t

preach the Biblical Jesus—Let's preach none!

What then do we have to offer the world? All they need. Our Message is based solidly on history. It is altogether relevant and adequate. Given good and honest hearts, its faithful proclamation cannot fail to produce fruit. Given sympathetic hearers, it cannot fail to comfort and sustain.

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# THE MISSING INGREDIENT

**Text: Matt. 9:36-38**

Charles Coil

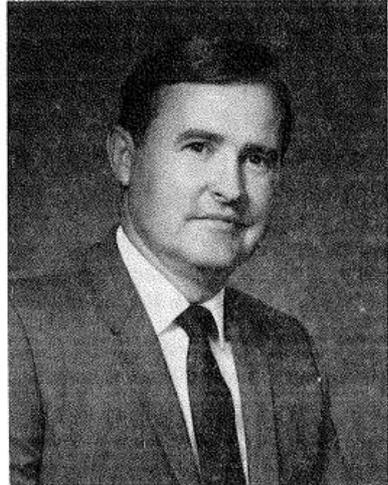
Charles Coil was born in Flint, Michigan, December 11, 1929. He grew up on a farm near Salem, Arkansas. He was baptized in 1948 by Leroy Miller.

Coil was educated at Oklahoma State University, Harding College, B.A., and Harding Graduate School, Memphis, Tennessee, where he obtained the M.R.E. degree.

The subject of this sketch began preaching at Bristow, Oklahoma, in 1950. He did local work for a number of years and left that ministry for full time gospel meeting work in 1965. Since that time he has preached in many of the cities and hamlets in America, as well as abroad.

Brother Coil became President of International Bible College in 1971 and continues to serve in that capacity along with his evangelistic work.

Coil is married to the former Maye White and they have two sons and two daughters. Charles, Jr., has a B.A. from Harding College in business administration and will soon complete the requirements for a B.A. in Bible and religion at International Bible College. Charlotte is a sophomore at Abilene Christian University and Christopher and Carole are still at home.



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*Introduction.* Since the days of the restoration pioneers in the early 19th century it has been the burden of every sincere Christian to make known the gospel of Jesus to every creature on earth in his or her generation. In every

case the race of life closed in the adventure of death and millions in each generation died without hearing. In the third quarter of the 20th century hundreds of millions of people died who had never heard the name of Jesus Christ. In the fourth and present quarter the number will surpass a billion souls unless the trend is reversed. In the long, whirling struggle to mount an evangelistic thrust many solutions have been put forth. Some "solutions," such as the missionary society, were unscriptural. All failed. In every case something was lacking. It is my task to name the missing ingredient so we may move on with the task of evangelizing the whole world.

### **I. The Preoccupation With Failure**

Barrels of ink have been used detailing the psychological "why" of failure. It is probably a mark of our society. Our government has spent hundreds of millions of dollars trying to discover the "why" of poverty and crime. Our educators have retained high priced psychologists to probe the reasons that children fail to achieve in school. Meanwhile, crime, poverty, and failure continue to rise.

The Bible does very little of this. Instead, Jesus tells us *what* to do and *why* we ought to do it but he says little about the why of failure. Apparently, rebels are left to explain why they failed to obey God at the Judgment (Matt. 25:24-46).<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, little time will be spent by this preacher looking at the reasons we fail.

### **II. What the Missing Ingredient Is Not**

Another dead end street is to become obsessed with incidentals that may or may not be useful. Very briefly, let us look at several matters that are *not* the missing ingredient.

First, the missing ingredient is not money. Money may be used but it is not the missing ingredient. The first century church evangelized the world and they had much less money than we have today.

Secondly, it is not numbers. Only a handful remained together after the trauma of crucifixion and the ascension (Acts 1:15). Even so, Paul could declare that they had “preached to every creature” (Col. 1:23).

Thirdly, it is not an educated leadership. The first century church had few formally educated leaders but they evangelized the world. Furthermore, we have educated more leaders in the past fifteen years than ever before. As “education” went up our soul winning came down.

Perhaps it is in order that we ask ourselves certain questions. It is obvious that education is not at fault. God wants men to be trained. Perhaps we ought inquire as to the *kind* of education we are giving. Have we educated men to be church workers and evangelists or have we educated them for scholarship and a place of prominence in academia?

Fourthly, the missing ingredient is not technical skills. The world will never be evangelized by our tools, such as printing presses, radio, television or any other tool.

Fifthly, the missing ingredient is not buildings. It almost seems that soul winning is inversely proportionate to our building construction. At least the first century church built no buildings, but they did evangelize the world.

Sixthly, the missing ingredient is not the absence of a powerful message. Many readers of this message have seen the gospel operate with awesome power on every level of society. In our generation it has been challenged in the market place of ideas by every “ism” in the world. It has proved its power again and again to regenerate men to new life. Originating in Asia, it flourishes in the West and will flourish in every culture on earth if given exposure to the masses.

Seventhly, the missing ingredient is not people to be moved by gospel power. Jesus said: “The harvest truly is plenteous” (Matt. 9:37). The souls are out there. Our missionaries have found no nation where all refuse the gospel.

The problem is that they have no opportunity to hear the gospel.

Now survey the above list and note that at some time or another we have been sold on the idea that one of these was the missing ingredient. Just a quick comparison with the early church will assure you that such is not the case.

### **III. The Missing Ingredient Is the Laborer or Harvester (Matt. 9:37)**

All great movements depend on people. There is no exception to this rule. Analyze any great movement or institution in the history of the world and always its greatness will be traceable to a man or group of men. God made the world that way because He made us in His image.

Years ago I asked Dr. George Benson, President of Harding College, what was the greatest need in Christian education. I expected him to say that the greatest need was money. Brother Benson replied that the greatest need in Christian education was dedicated people.

This is true in every endeavor of life. Regarding evangelism, Jesus put His finger on the need when He said, "the laborers are few."

The failure of the church to evangelize the world in each generation has been a human failure!

### **IV. What Can Be Done?**

Jesus said, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38). The solution to our problem begins with a prayer meeting for soul winners. Now let me point out three astonishing facts.

First, very rarely have we ever prayed for evangelists, or soul winners. I seriously doubt that the average church, eldership, or local prayer meeting ever prays the prayer commanded by Jesus in our text.

Secondly, this brings me to the second astonishing fact. The established leadership of our brotherhood, the leader-

ship in the average local church and the average member of the church subconsciously does not want an evangelist in the pulpit! An evangelist brings in new people. New people cause more work for church leaders. They threaten the status quo. They unwittingly sit in the favorite seat of old, satisfied members. Their presence and enthusiasm may disrupt our familiar habits of fellowship and procedure. This is exactly the reason that our most effective young evangelists are so often in trouble. It is easier to fire the evangelist and rid the congregation of his soul winning contagion than to deal with the complaints of the "old" members and the growth needs of the new.

For once, we are not behind our denominational neighbors. W. W. Sweet, in his book called *Revivalism in America*,<sup>2</sup> points out that the religious establishment of the old line churches in Colonial America fought revivalism in their churches for the above mentioned reasons. The two churches that welcomed evangelistic leadership (the Methodists and Baptists) were the only ones that really prospered in America.

This brings me to astonishing fact number three. As evidence of our lack of desire for evangelistic leadership we have set educated technologists and academicians over the task of ministerial training. Many of these men are not soul winners. Now it is obvious that something cannot come from nothing. In like manner, non soul winners *cannot* beget soul winners. Therefore, we have an impossible situation.

—But what can be done?—

First, we must begin to pray to God for laborers.

Secondly, we must set soul winners to the task of training evangelists. If our educated scholars are also evangelistic soul winners, then fine. If they are not they should be converted or terminated. We will not do the job with men whose number one goal is scholarship.

Thirdly, we must insist that our preachers win souls. If

they cannot learn to win souls they should seek other employment.

Fourthly, we need many new congregations. Very few old congregations will tolerate a strong pulpit and a rapidly growing church. We are so far removed from Acts, chapter two, that we look with suspicion on the few churches among us that baptize more than two or three hundred souls per year. (In fact, the average, rich, satisfied, old church in a good town with two or three paid workers is not averaging fifty baptisms per year.)

Fifthly, we must encourage preachers to recruit young men to preach.

Sixthly, we must teach our homes to encourage their children to preach and win souls. According to a graduate survey conducted privately by this writer in 1963 the home and the local preacher are the greatest influence combining together to cause men to preach.

### **V. The Kind of Reaper Needed**

Two things are essential at this point.

First, we must train reapers that are determined to reap the harvest. Churches and preachers abound who refuse to launch soul winning programs or who refuse to support a soul winning preacher for the most trivial reasons. When faced with the opportunity to teach hundreds of new people we are often met with the excuse that "our classes will not hold them," or "we do not have enough teachers," or "our building is full."

Brethren, suppose Jesus or the apostles had limited their teaching to the size of their buildings or the number of trained teachers? Suppose the restoration pioneers had reasoned this way? If our laborers are so structured that they can only teach in our buildings then millions are foredoomed to face the judgment never having heard of Jesus.

Good farmers never give up so easily. Can you imagine a cotton farmer with 1,000 acres of fine cotton, and the price

very favorable, who would let little petty matters frustrate his efforts to harvest? Suppose that a farmer has a million dollar harvest in the field and the banker comes to collect a small payment on his farm. Can you visualize the farmer refusing to harvest his crop because his tractor has a flat?

A few years ago a friend of mine had 900 acres of cotton that promised to make two bales to every acre. It was a very rainy fall and a friend expressed sympathy. "Don't feel sorry for me," was the reply. "I have ordered special tires for my cotton picker. If that doesn't work I'll try a helicopter with a big vacuum line on it." He didn't use the helicopter but he did harvest much of it by night while the ground was frozen. The point is, he was *determined* to reap the harvest.

A better illustration can be found if we suppose Jesus and the apostles busily teaching in a home when Peter rushes in to report that 5,000 people have come from nearby towns and villages to hear the Master. Jesus does a quick computation as follows. "Now, let me see. . .5,000 people in classes of 20 each. . .that would be 250 classes. With teacher and co-teacher that comes to 500 teachers. Now—that will require quality Sunday School material, time to train, and a building with at least 125,000 square feet. . .Peter, tell them to come back fifty years from now and we will be ready."

Jesus didn't reason that way. Instead, He taught all 5,000 at once. In like manner, the apostles, the restoration pioneers and the leaders of every other successful movement on earth found ways to meet the opportunities at hand.

By contrast, we see churches across the land—and even around the world—faced with unbelievable opportunities to teach the lost. Instead of gladly seizing the opportunity, brethren get bogged down and bicker over procedures. In northern England eighteen children came nightly to hear me preach. They rode with a brother who drove a hearse. Others stopped us on the street to ask about our work. I pointed out to a local brother that they could teach 10,000 children and young people any time they wanted to. He

replied, "We have no place to put them." I suggested a field across from the building or a rented hall. He replied that they had no teachers. The brother objecting to the idea is one of the finest teachers of children I have ever seen. He lacked the determination of Jesus and the apostles.

In bus ministry churches falter because untrained, unsupervised children disturb the assembly and are difficult to teach. If we were determined to teach them we could easily arrange to teach them at another time. The problem is not bus ministry, nor lack of space and teachers. The problem is lack of determined reapers and hostility toward evangelism and growth.

Secondly, and finally, we must train laborers who can lead the work on the local level and set an example for the whole world.

One of the great struggles of the ancient world was the 118 year struggle of Carthage and Rome. Rome was the aggressor and outnumbered Carthage about six to one. How did Carthage survive so long? One reason was the leadership of a family named Barca. The most famous son of that family was Hannibal. When Rome declared war (218 B.C.) in the second conflict Hannibal was twenty-five years old and was the Carthaginian commander in the colony of Spain. He mustered an army, marched over the "impossible" barrier of the Alps and for the next sixteen years marched at the head of an army in Italy itself. Hannibal has gone down in history as a man of high morality, unwavering fidelity, and perhaps the greatest soldier who ever lived. Because of his leadership Carthage survived the onslaught of Rome for another fifty years.

The sad tragedy is how very close Hannibal came to victory.

Had there been one other Carthaginian who could have challenged Rome on the sea then Carthage would have survived. Was there no such man? Or, was the "missing ingredient" safely and comfortably at home in Carthage

pursuing a brilliant career in law, commerce, or medicine? Hannibal could have ignored the struggle and lived in wealth and luxury. He chose, instead, (from the age of twenty-five to forty-one) the comforts of an army camp and a bed on the ground near his night sentries!

The missing ingredient in world evangelism is the laborer. Where is the man who will do for souls what Hannibal did for Carthage? When the church failed to evangelize the world in preceding generations, was the "missing ingredient" in Abilene teaching school or practicing law? Was he in Memphis or Nashville in medicine or banking?

You see, the missing ingredient for world evangelism in the last quarter of the 20th century may be now reading this message!

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>It is worth noting that modern psychology is rapidly moving to a more practical (and a more Biblical) viewpoint. According to Ronald Brotherton, PhD, Director of Psychological Services at International Bible College, Florence, Alabama, October, 1976: "Modern clinical psychology is becoming less interested in proving there is no God and becoming more interested in helping people adjust to their environment. Thus, the why of poor adjustment is giving way to the practical concept of what can be done to assist human beings toward adequate adjustment." (See also the works of Ellis, Williamson & others.)

<sup>2</sup>W. W. Sweet, *Revivalism in America* (Gloucester, Maryland: Peter Smith, 1944).

# **EXEGESIS OF DIFFICULT PASSAGES**



# GIRLS PRAYING

**In the Light of 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35,  
1 Timothy 2:8-12 and Other Passages**

James O. Casey, Jr.

James Casey was born May 1, 1922, in Roswell, New Mexico. Most of his early life was spent on his grandmother's farm near Dunn, Texas, where he graduated from high school in 1940. He was baptized in 1936 by R. P. Drennon while living at Dunn. He later attended Lee College in Baytown and Rice University in Houston. After spending four years in the United States Air Force during World War II as a weather observer and forecaster, with one year in the Yukon Territory of Canada, Brother Casey was employed by Exxon Chemical Company USA in Baytown, Texas, where he now has over thirty years of service.



Brother Casey has served as an elder of the Missouri Street Church of Christ in Baytown since 1966, where he has taught Bible classes regularly for thirty years. He is a firm believer in training teenage Christians for youth campaign work, and frequently participates with them on such campaigns. He assisted in the establishment of the Christian Child Help Foundation in Houston, and served three years on its board of directors. He has written and published one book, *In Defense of Girls Praying*, and is presently writing two other books, *The Spirit of Youth Evangelism*, and *Divorce and Your Child*. Brother Casey owns and helps operate Casey Publications as a dealer in Bibles, religious books, and Bible class literature.

He was married to June Baker in 1946, and they have two daughters,

Deborah (Mrs. Mark McCoy), a 1973 graduate of Abilene Christian University, and Brenda, a sophomore at Abilene Christian University. They also have one grandson, Marcus James McCoy.

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Our assignment today is to examine the growing practice among us of encouraging our teenage Christian girls to participate with the boys in expressing their prayers to God in the chain prayers of the youth devotionals, family devotionals, and other informal gatherings, in the light of such passages as 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35, 1 Timothy 2:8-12, and others.

I realize that we are dealing with an emotion-packed and highly explosive issue. Many are observing the trend and fearing the worst. Some think the final shot is being fired that will sink the ship of Zion, while others view it as the rocket which will soar us to new heights. Some think we are granting the young people a form of indulgence just to appease them, while others consider it an opportunity to teach more people the beauty and value of prayer. Some fear it is a break with orthodoxy, while others look upon it simply as a break with tradition which is enhancing their spiritual growth. Whatever your point of view may be at this time, I'm sure you can appreciate our need to look into the matter.

There are some principles we need to keep in mind as we seek to learn whether any given practice is right or wrong. (1) Has God legislated on it? (2) If so, has He given us *specific* legislation? (3) Or, has He given only *general* instructions in the matter? (4) If He has given *specific* instruction then it should not be too difficult to find such in His Word. (5) If, however, He has given only *general* instructions, then for the sake of peace and harmony let's not require the brethren to furnish *specifics* in such cases. The legalist of twenty years ago tried such, and we all lost, including the Lord. (6) If the Lord has left a given practice in the realm of expedience, then no man, teacher, preacher, or eldership has the

right to legislate on it. (7) If God has limited some of His teachings to the church of the first century, then we should not try to resurrect such in the twentieth century.

Perhaps we should make it clear in the beginning that we are not advocating women preachers, women elders, women teachers over men, women exercising dominion over men, or women conductors of public worship.<sup>1</sup>

The Lord has not made any provisions to have women elders in the church . . . The Lord has not made any provisions for women preachers in the sense of publicly proclaiming the gospel as did the apostles, or Timothy, or Titus—although all Christians are to spread the Word . . . Women can hardly meet the qualifications laid down for elders in 1 Timothy 3, and we don't find any charge being given to them to appoint elders (as was Titus, Titus 1:5), nor do we find them being given the charge to rebuke, before all, the elder who sins (as was Timothy, 1 Timothy 5:19, 20), nor was any woman ever charged with the responsibility to preach the word, to reprove, to rebuke, or to do the work of an evangelist (as was Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:2, 5).<sup>2</sup>

God has given men the authority to reprove, rebuke, exhort, take care of the church, convince the gainsayers, and stop the mouths of the unruly, the vain talkers, and the deceivers. When a woman begins to operate in these spheres, she has usurped man's authority—she has exercised authority on her own account. This she cannot do. But simply uttering a prayer in her meek and quiet spirit, even though a man is present, hardly constitutes dominance.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Silence-Obedience of 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35**

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

I realize that Paul meant exactly what he said here, but he did not say what a lot of people are making him say. The

restrictions placed upon women in this passage should not be interpreted in a way that would make void everything else God has said on the subject. The silence here must not be understood to mean that women are not to sing aloud in the assemblies. Likewise, we must not understand this to mean that she could not exercise her gift of prophecy, when such existed in the church. In fact, Paul told her in 1 Corinthians 11 how she was to dress when exercising this gift. Surely the *silence* of this passage did not mean she could not confess her faults before the church, else she could not obey James 5:16. Yet, the silence under consideration in our text is a *total* silence, and not the silence of a meek and quiet spirit mentioned in 1 Peter 3:4.

When Paul said, "And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home," did he mean they were not allowed to learn *anything* in such an assembly? No, for he had just said in verse 31 that the prophesying was to be done in such a way that *all* may learn. Surely he included the woman in this kind of learning. However, her learning was not to come through her questioning the speaking prophet. This privilege was reserved for the judging prophets mentioned in verse 29, ("Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge"). The fact that someone appeared to be speaking by inspiration did not mean his message could not be questioned and disputed. However, Paul said the women were to keep silent in that situation. She was not allowed to pit her judgment against that of the speaking or judging prophet. But, where do we have such meetings as this today? If they don't exist now, then neither does the injunction governing them.

When we use this passage to forbid women from expressing their prayers in the mixed assembly we are faced with a dilemma. Paul said that she was not to speak or raise her questions in that assembly, but that she could do so at home, *and*, in the presence of her husband! Do we get the import of that statement? Whatever this passage *forbad* her to do *in*

*that assembly, it allowed her to do at home!* If we say it prohibited her from speaking a prayer in the assembly, then we must accept the position that she was allowed to do it at home, and in mixed company. Now we have her praying at home in the presence of her husband, and that's progress. I don't claim to have all the right answers for your particular situation, but isn't it strange that some think we are rejecting a law of God to the church today when we say the prohibition of 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 does not apply now, yet, those same brethren will agree that much of the instruction immediately preceding this passage is not applicable today. For example: (1) *To the church*, Paul issued another prohibition just six verses prior to this one. To the tongue speaker he said, "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church . . ." (vr. 28). Does this still apply? (2) *To the church*, Paul said, (1 Corinthians 12:31), "But covet earnestly the best gifts. . . ." Do we still obey this command? No! (3) *To the church*, Paul said, (1 Corinthians 13:9), "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." Do we still do this? No! (4) *To the church*, Paul said, (1 Corinthians 14:13), "Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret." Are we ready for this? No! Yet, when we get to verses 34 and 35 we suddenly forget that the context dealt with the regulation of spiritual gifts. With the context so clearly before us, why do we try to apply *any* of these verses to *any* of our assemblies today? We don't have miraculous gifts today to be regulated, yet, that's what these passages were written to control.

Many seem to think we will have no scriptural restraints of woman's activities if we say this passage does not apply to our assemblies. Not so! We still have 1 Timothy 2:11, 12, which forbids her to be in authority over the man. One of our greatest problems is in determining what constitutes usurping of authority or having dominion over someone. When we learn this, then God's people will be at peace on the prayer question. But we will always face confusion and disagree-

ment if we try to apply, to our assemblies today, those passages which were given to control the use of spiritual gifts.

### The "Aner" of 1 Timothy 2:8

We now come to the passage most used by those who object to the practice of girls expressing their prayers in the devotionals. We need to look at it closely. Paul said, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." The primary argument on this verse is that the word "men" in the Greek is "aner," which usually means male as opposed to female. Besides its usual meaning of male, or husband, or mature man as opposed to a boy, Thayer says it also applies "when persons of either sex are included, but named after the more important."<sup>4</sup> Even though its basic meaning is "male," we cannot afford to take the position that the spiritual application of every verse which uses it is limited to *men only*. The meaning must be determined from the context.

There are several examples in the New Testament where *aner* is used when both men and women are obviously included in the application. For example, in James 1:8 we read, "A double-minded man (aner) is unstable in all his ways." Surely, we would also say that a double-minded woman is unstable in her ways, but we know it because of this verse which uses the masculine gender. We read in James 1:12, "Blessed is the man (aner) that endureth temptation." But this is also true of the woman. In Romans 4:8 we read, "Blessed is the man (aner) to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Surely the same applies to women. In 1 Corinthians 13:11 Paul said, ". . . when I became a man (aner), I put away childish things." He obviously had reference to maturity in the faith; so it is with our women. Surely these verses apply with equal force to both men and women, yet, the male form (aner) is used in each case. We need to be careful about building a doctrine on only one use of a word

when the Scriptures also use it in other ways.

Let's look at 1 Timothy 2:8 from another point of view. Which of the two following statements would we say represents the teaching of Paul in this verse? 1) "I will therefore that men pray everywhere," or, 2) "I will therefore that men only lead every *audible prayer* that is prayed in *mixed assemblies*." Since the first statement is a direct quotation from Paul, how then can we say the verse teaches what the second statement says? Does it not have much more information in it than the first one? A mixed assembly is neither stated nor necessarily inferred in the verse. Neither is audible prayer. Paul's admonition could be obeyed even if there was no mixed assembly or audible prayer involved. Yet, both of these conditions would have to be inherent in the verse if it teaches that men must lead all audible prayers in mixed assemblies. We should also note that when Paul said, "I will therefore that men pray every where . . . ," he was talking about *places* rather than *composition of the audiences*. There is a great difference between saying that men should pray *everywhere*, and that men should *lead all prayer in mixed groups*.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps this would be a good time to clear up a point of apparent misunderstanding. Some seem to think that those who believe in encouraging the girls to express their prayers in the youth devotionals, also believe that *aner* can include women almost every time it appears in the Scriptures. Not so! We are not even saying it must include women in 1 Timothy 2:8. But we are saying that the mere presence of *aner* in a given passage does not within itself eliminate women from its application, as we have already seen. Our only purpose in dealing with this passage is to show that the arguments usually made on it, by those who oppose the practice, do not hold water. Some think that the verse prohibits girls from expressing their prayers in any mixed group (because, to them, *aner* always means men as opposed to women), so we must point out that *aner* sometimes includes women. Since that is true, then the argument is not valid

which says that verse 8 must apply to *men only* simply because it contains *aner*.

But, some will say, when the Scriptures use both men (*aner*) and women (*gune*) in contrast within the same passage, then we must accept the theory that everything said about the men is limited in application to *men only*; and they are quick to point out that 1 Timothy 2:8-12 is such a passage. Let's see if we can accept such reasoning.

First, if verse 8, which says, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," applies only to men, then women would never be allowed to "lift holy hands" in prayer, even in situations where we all would agree that she could pray. Why? Because that's part of a verse which some brethren say cannot possibly apply to women. Also, if only men are allowed to do everything mentioned in verse 8, because of *aner*, then women could never pray anywhere. Why? Because the command to pray is a part of that verse which some say applies only to men.

Second, if verse 8 is limited to *men only*, then verses 9 and 11 must be limited to *women only*, since they read, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel . . . Let the women learn in silence . . ." Do these verses mean, because they are addressed to women, that it would be wrong for men to dress modestly, and that it would be wrong for men to ever learn in silence? Surely not! Yet, if what is said in verse 8 is limited to men only, then what is said about women in verses 9 and 11 would of necessity be limited to women only.<sup>6</sup>

Brethren, we can respect the principle of women's subjection without reading into a verse things that are not there. Let's be careful lest we make *man* the mediator between God and woman. If 1 Timothy 2:8 teaches that *only men* may utter prayers everywhere then why does it not also teach that if there is an audible prayer in the ladies' Bible class that some man must lead it, and then leave if a woman is teaching

the class? Remember, now, the verse says nothing about mixed or unmixed assemblies, but since it does say that *men* are to pray everywhere, then why not in the ladies' class? Isn't that a part of *everywhere*?

Why should we think that the contrast between men and women in our text is a contrast between *his audible prayer* and *her silent prayer*, since neither is mentioned? When Paul said that men were to pray everywhere, does that mean that women are not to pray anywhere? Is it possible for us to decide what a woman is *not* to do simply by reading what a man is to do? Any contrasts between men and women in our text must be found in the fact that woman is not to be in authority over man. The idea of who is to lead whom in prayer is not under consideration.

Isn't it possible that the men of 1 Timothy 2:8 can obey the injunction for them to pray everywhere, without our necessarily drawing any conclusions about when, where, or under what circumstances women may pray? Does the fact that men are to lift up holy hands in prayer mean that women are forbidden to do so, even in situations where we would all agree that she could verbalize a prayer, such as in the ladies' class? If we agree that it would be scriptural for her to do that, then we are admitting that she is also governed by a verse which addresses itself to *men*, because there is no other passage in your New Testament which teaches that she is to lift up holy hands in prayer. So we see, she gets her authority from a passage that instructs *men* what to do.

Many people believe that she is at liberty to verbalize a prayer in a group of women, but that this passage is talking about who is to *lead* the prayer when a *mixed group* is assembled. Where did we learn that? How inconsistent of us. We tell our faith only neighbors that Romans 5:1 does not say we are justified by *faith only*, but we turn right around and make Paul say, "I will therefore that *men only* pray everywhere." We also compound our error by insisting that the verse must include *audible prayer* and a *mixed*

*assembly*, when in fact, the passage can be obeyed by praying *silently* in the privacy of our homes (which is a part of *everywhere*), even when *no one* else is present.

We find a parallel passage in Titus which illustrates our point. After addressing this letter to Titus, Paul tells him to “. . . speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Although this verse is addressed to a man, does it mean that woman sins when she speaks sound doctrine? Paul is now drawing his contrast. In verses 1 and 2 he tells the *men* what to do, then in verse 3 he tells the aged *women* what to do. But, in spite of this contrast of addressees, does anyone really believe it is wrong for the *women* to do what was commanded of the *men*? I don’t think so, but consider what that does to the “contrast theory.” Let’s also notice that verses 4 and 5 say that aged *women* are to “. . . teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands . . . .” Does this mean that it is a sin for the *men* to teach the young women these things? Certainly not! Some would say that a man could teach them these things as a part of his responsibility to declare the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:27. But we must ask where else (besides this passage) does the counsel of God specifically say that man is to teach the young women to be discreet? If it can’t be found anywhere else, then the only authority a *man* has to teach them such is found in this passage which tells *aged women* to do it. If we can justify the man doing this on basis of *general* authority to declare the whole counsel of God, then we can also justify the girls praying because of the *general* commands for all Christians to pray without ceasing.

### The Silence-Subjection-Dominion of 1 Timothy 2:11, 12

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the

man, but to be in silence.” Many use this passage to teach that women must be quiet during the prayer part of the family devotional. Some feel that it is proper for the mother and daughters to verbally participate with the father and brothers as long as they are discussing the Bible and reading from it, but that the father and brothers must leave the room when it comes time for the mother and daughters to express themselves in prayer. Lord help us! If there is anything this world needs it is a good crop of praying mothers—the kind who are not ashamed to express their hearts’ desire to God in the presence of their husbands and sons.

The word “silence” of this passage does not mean absolute silence, as did the one in 1 Corinthians 14:34. It simply means, according to Thayer, “Quietness: descriptive of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle in the affairs of others.<sup>7</sup> It is the noun form of the same word translated “peaceable” in verse 2, where Paul said that we are to pray for those in authority, “. . . that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. . . .” It is the same word he used in 2 Thessalonians 3:12, where he said, concerning the busybodies who would not work, “Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

Let us also notice that the *subjection* mentioned in verse 11 of our text, where Paul said, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection,” is the same word as used in 1 Timothy 3:4, where he said concerning the qualifications of elders, “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection. . . .” Does this mean that the elder’s son violates his role of subjection to his father when he prays audibly in his presence? That’s what some are saying about the women. Does subjection really demand silence in prayer when in the presence of the one to whom subject?

Since Paul says that women are not to usurp authority or exercise dominion over the men, then we need to know just

what constitutes such action. Thayer says the one who does so is one “. . . who acts on his own authority. . . autocratic. . . an absolute master. . . to govern one, exercise dominion over one.”<sup>8</sup> Perhaps a Bible example of one who had authority to exercise authority over others would be in order here. A centurion came to Jesus and asked him to heal his servant. As he explained to Jesus the authority he had over others, he said, “For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” (Matthew 8:9). This is a good example of one who had authority to exercise authority, and he did it by commanding those under him to do his bidding. If some unauthorized person had come along and started giving orders to this centurion’s troops, he would have been usurping the authority of the centurion. But in what way does the girls’ participation in chain prayer parallel this forbidden action? We can’t say she is usurping man’s authority until we prove that *only men* have the right to express themselves in such prayers. The mere fact that girls pray aloud in the presence of boys does not mean they have forced their way into a position of preeminence over man; nor does it mean they have domineered over man; nor have they been autocratic; nor have they become the absolute master of the situation. Yet, that’s what it takes to usurp authority over someone.

If you want to see a good example of woman usurping man’s authority, and not being in subjection to her husband, then consider those who literally dominate every conversation, or who control in great detail the lives of their henpecked husbands. And don’t forget the “she elder” who works in the background making the decisions that her husband will carry out in the elders’ meeting. This, brethren, is the real usurper in action. But the woman of a meek and quiet spirit who simply participates with her husband in praying for their mutual needs and concerns doesn’t even come close to being guilty.

Does the mere fact that woman is to be in subjection mean that she cannot speak a prayer in the presence of her husband? Must we believe that she is in subjection as long as she listens to his prayer, but that she suddenly ceases to be in subjection when she expresses her thoughts to God in his presence? Peter knew the value of husband and wife praying together. In 1 Peter 3:7 he said that husbands should give honor to their wives, “. . .that your prayers be not hindered.” Thayer says, “that ye be not hindered from praying (together).”<sup>9</sup> Now, we ask, how did they conduct this part of their prayer life? Before we begin ruling out certain ways which we may not like, let’s notice that it does not say, “That the prayers of *the husband* be not hindered.” Neither does it say, “That *his verbal* prayers and *her silent* prayers be not hindered.” Yet, that is the position of some, because to them she automatically violates 1 Timothy 2:8 when she voices her prayer in his presence. Peter was trying to get the husband to cultivate an atmosphere for their praying together, rather than treating her in such a way that would discourage their prayers.

Paul told husbands and wives in Corinth not to deprive themselves of each other, except by mutual consent, “. . .that ye may give yourselves unto prayer. . .” (1 Corinthians 7:5). If they had waited until Paul told them how to conduct this part of their prayer life, they never would have gotten around to it. This, however, was not a problem in Paul’s mind, because he knew the marriage relationship would be enhanced by their praying together. How many marital ills would be cured if we had more of such!

### “Leading” in Prayer

We hear much today about how wrong it is for women to “lead” men in prayer, yet, we hear nothing about how “wrong” it is for them to “lead” men when they read from the Scriptures in a Bible class, or when they participate in discussion of the lesson at a devotional, or when they ask or

answer questions in such assemblies. When she thus reads from the Bible or comments about the lesson she is “leading” the thoughts of the whole class. Yet, who would say she is exercising a forbidden leadership over the men? How, then, can we believe she is exercising a forbidden leadership over man when she prays aloud in such situations? Is it because we do not usually associate the word “lead” with reading, or with commenting? Yet, such “leading” is just as real as in the case of prayer.

I hesitate to mention this next point for fear someone will take me seriously and start the practice, but, why doesn't someone start a campaign against our women asking questions at the devotionals or in any other type Bible class? Those who think she has violated 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 when she prays audibly in the presence of men must of necessity forbid them to speak or ask questions in that same assembly. Actually, we would have a more plausible argument if we did that, because these verses do plainly say, “Let your women keep silence. . .” for it is not permitted unto them to speak . . . if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. . .” Of course, we would be misapplying the passage if we did so, but so are we when we use it to forbid them from speaking their prayers at such times.

We seem to have no difficulty differentiating between *leaders* and *joint participators* in the discussions and scripture readings of our Bible classes and devotionals, but for some reason we don't seem to be able to make that same distinction regarding prayer. It is one thing for the man in authority to stand before the general assembly and speak to God on behalf of all others present, but it can be quite another thing when Christian men and women meet upon other occasions to share ideas and mutually edify each other, where each speaks to God for himself (or herself), without suggesting that they have taken the leading role in conducting that period of joint participation. Why would we say she is exercising a forbidden leadership over man when she

simply utters a prayer from the same insignificant position she occupied when she read the Scriptures and discussed the lesson, even though there is no hint of self-assertion, or that she is occupying the leading role, or acting as intercessor or mediator for the group? Her position in this situation suggests anything but preeminence. What is there about this kind of prayer that makes it so different (regarding the principle of subjection) from the Bible class situation where she is encouraged to jointly participate? Has God said, "Woman, you may speak in man's presence about my word, you may read my word in his presence, yea, you may even read the prayers contained in my word; but don't you dare speak your own prayer to me in his presence"? Who can believe it? Are we suggesting that it is right for woman to confess her sins *to man*, in the presence of men, but that it would be wrong for her to confess her sins *to God* in the presence of men? Surely not!

### Benefits of Mixed Prayer

It is difficult to completely define and illustrate the principle of subjection, that is, to the point where we can list on one side of the ledger every possible action that is to be considered in the realm of subjection, and at the same time list on the other side every possible manifestation of a lack of subjection. Some principles simply defy complete human definition. For example, who among us is able to list all the good works mentioned in Galatians 6:10? ("As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men. . ."). Could we be sure we had not overlooked some? If someone made such a list would the rest of us agree with every point on it? Not likely. How could we then resolve the matter, since the Bible does not list every possible illustration of the principle? It can be resolved only if both will agree that we should not demand *specifics* when the Lord leaves something in the realm of *generics*.

It is in this grey area of *general* instruction that we must

rely heavily on the “fruit test.” We are to prove all things (even those in the realm of generics) and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). If one group can show the positive evidence of good from the practice, then the rest of us should be slow to nit-pick. It is in this area that we must apply the principle stated in Romans 14:3, “Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.” You see, this giving and taking is a two-way street.

Since the Bible does not tell us how to conduct every kind of prayer in mixed groups, then we must apply the fruit test. What are the fruits of chain prayer in mixed groups? (1) It helps us to understand and appreciate each other more when we know what the other is praying about. (2) Experience indicates that we may expect to see much spiritual growth from the practice. (3) We are made stronger when we hear others pray specifically for us, including the women. (4) We will try harder to do what is right when we hear others praying for us. (5) Greater peace and harmony between brethren will be the result when we pray openly for each other. It is difficult to stay mad at someone who is praying for you. (6) We will be obeying James 5:16 if we confess our faults to each other and pray for one another, even in mixed company.

Jesus said we could know a tree by its fruits, and that a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit, but that a good tree brings forth good fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). He further states that a corrupt tree *cannot* bring forth good fruit. But what are the fruits of mixed prayer? Paul said the fruit of the Spirit is, “. . . love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). We may, with all confidence, affirm that the fruit of mixed prayer includes every one of these things. If you have ever been involved in such, you will immediately recognize that it does create more love for one another; that it brings about joy; that it fosters peace between the participants; that it

aids in developing long-suffering and gentleness; that much good results from it; that it increases one's faith; and, that it makes one more meek and temperate. Brother, when you can get this kind of fruit from a practice, you had better encourage it. Paul said, "...against such there is no law." If there is no law against reaping this kind of fruit, then it necessarily follows that there is no law against doing that which produces such fruit. Remember, Jesus said a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; but the fruit we have examined is good. Therefore, the tree that produced it is not corrupt.<sup>10</sup>

Some brethren shy away from encouraging the girls to participate in the chain prayer because they know that some in the church object. I wonder if these same brethren refrain from dividing the members by age and grade for Bible study since they know there are some in the church who think such is wrong? No! We continue to use the grouping method because we know it will enhance the spiritual growth of the students. Why do some of us strongly believe in encouraging our girls to participate in chain prayer with the boys? **BECAUSE WE KNOW IT WILL ENHANCE THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF THE GROUP!**

### Conclusions

Let's not be guilty of requiring those who disagree with us to prove their position without our being willing to also prove our position by the same type reasoning. If we are not willing to test our own position by the same standard we require of others, then we have no right to question another's position. If you ask me by what authority I occupy my position, then let me ask you the same question about your position. If you expect me to have a Scripture that teaches the *specific* action I advocate, then how about you producing the same kind of proof for your position. If your position is that only men may speak audible prayers in mixed groups, then brother, you need to show us the Scripture which teaches that *specific* practice. The spiritual development of your daughter's

prayer life is worth more than your legalistic pride in demanding a *specific* Scripture of her showing how she is to obey a *general* command.

Brethren, how we handle this issue is going to tell the world a lot about us. If we let it divide us, then the world will have one more reason not to listen to our plea. However, if we can coexist peacefully, with neither side drawing lines of fellowship, then the world will be able to see our love for each other, which Jesus said would be the mark of true discipleship.

Young ladies, and older ones alike, accept the quieter role which God has made you for, and never be guilty of seeking the position of preeminence over man. Your quiet submissive role in life is too beautiful and too delicate to sacrifice on the altar of supremacy. God made you to be the perfect companion and helpmeet for your husband. He never did intend that you should rule over him. However, in your desire to be of the meek and quiet spirit, don't let the forces of negativism so invade your being that you fail to give him the encouragement and edification which you are so capable of providing. Don't let the smoke screens and scarecrows of sophistry frighten you into doing nothing. Study hard and be sure of your ground, then you will have nothing to fear from the opposition.<sup>11</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Casey, James, *In Defense of Girls Praying*, (Casey Publications, P. O. Box 4232, Baytown, Texas 77520, 1975), p. iv.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 44, 45.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 23, 24.

<sup>4</sup>Thayer, Joseph Henry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, Fourteenth Printing, June 1974), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Casey, James, *In Defense of Girls Praying*, (Casey Publications, P. O. Box 4232, Baytown, Texas 77520, 1975), p. 25, 26.

<sup>6</sup>Casey, James, *In Defense of Girls Praying*, (Casey Publications, P. O. Box 4232, Baytown, Texas 77520, 1975), p. 26, 27.

<sup>7</sup>Thayer, Joseph Henry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, Fourteenth Printing, June 1974) p. 281.

<sup>8</sup>Thayer, Joseph Henry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, Fourteenth Printing, June 1974) p. 84.

<sup>9</sup>Thayer, Joseph Henry, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506, Fourteenth Printing, June 1974) p. 166.

<sup>10</sup>Casey, James *In Defense of Girls Praying*, (Casey Publications, P.O. Box 4232, Baytown, Texas 77520, 1975), pg. 79.

<sup>11</sup>Casey, James, *In Defense of Girls Praying*, (Casey Publications, P.O. Box 4232, Baytown, Texas 77520, 1975), p. 94, 95.

# BE YE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED

## II CORINTHIANS 6:14ff

Frank Pack

Frank Pack was born March 27, 1916, in Memphis, Tennessee. He attended David Lipscomb College and received the B.A. degree from the University of Chattanooga and the M.A. degree from Vanderbilt University. The Ph.D. was awarded to him by the University of Southern California. He has taught in David Lipscomb College, in the University of Southern California, and at Abilene Christian University. He was professor of religion at Pepperdine University of Los Angeles from 1947-1949, and now serves as Professor of



Religion and Dean of the Graduate School at Pepperdine University.

Brother Pack holds membership in the following honor societies: Phi Beta Kappa; Pi Gamma Mu; Alpha Chi, and served for several years as the sponsor of the ACU chapter of Alpha Chi. He holds membership in the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, the American Academy of Religion, and the American Society of Church History.

He serves on the staff of the *Gospel Advocate* and the *20th Century Christian*. He is editor of *Our Bible*, a book of essays written as a Festschrift for six retiring faculty and staff members of Abilene Christian University. He is author of *Preaching To Modern Man*, in collaboration with Prentice A. Meador, Jr.; *Tongues and The Holy Spirit*, and *Sermons in Great Preachers of Today Series*, and a commentary in two parts on the Gospel According to John.

Among Brother Pack's honors are the trustees citation as an outstanding teacher in Abilene Christian University for 1958, the annual McGarvey award for the outstanding article in the *Restoration Quarterly*, "A Study of Papyrus Bodmer II," and the *20th Century Christian*

1974 Journalism Award. His dissertation study on the methodology of Origen in New Testament Textual Criticism received special mention in an article on textual criticism written by Dr. M. M. Parvis in the *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. He is listed in *Who's Who in America*.

Brother Pack has served as minister since 1964 of the Culver-Palms congregation in Los Angeles, California. He is married to the former Della Carlton, who now serves as Director of Teacher Education, Seaver College, Pepperdine University.

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No church Paul established caused him so much anxiety as the Corinthian church. Located in a large cosmopolitan city where a number of cultures and nationalities intermingled, it seemed to have been subjected to pressures and to have had problems that are unique among the Gentile churches. II Corinthians gives us added insights into the difficulties Paul had with this church. In this deeply personal letter Paul shares with the church his conception of his ministry and apostleship because he is being challenged at Corinth by "false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ" (II Cor. 11:13). These intruders are attacking Paul, and have tried to fasten themselves on the church and subject it to their authority. Against these persons and those they are influencing Paul uses some strong language. Much of the book is taken up with this controversy. But he is also waging a fight on another front against the invasion of the church by pagan influences from the surrounding culture. Corinth surrounded the Christians with an unfriendly heathen culture that constantly challenged them. It is particularly against this second background that the passage we are studying together must be seen.

### **The Context of the Passage**

Scholars have noticed an abrupt change of thought between 6:13 and 6:14. Paul has been making an appeal in

6:11-13 to the Corinthians to reciprocate the warm affection and love he has for them by opening their hearts to him with a kindred feeling. He continues this appeal in 7:2ff. It is possible to read from 6:13 to 7:2 omitting our passage and see no break in the thought. 6:14-7:1 seems to intervene with its special warning and commands. Modern scholars have been so impressed by this abruptness that they have tried to account for it by supposing that a fragment from another source somehow got into this letter here, perhaps through an editor. A number of scholars have denied that Pául wrote this section. Some have seen it as a fragment originally from Qumran due to the similar ideas found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although some similarities between this passage and Qumran materials can be seen, they are not confined to Qumran. Similar concepts can be found elsewhere in the Old Testament and Judaistic writings. Others who acknowledge that Paul wrote it have connected it with the "epistle" mentioned in I Cor. 5:9-11. In that letter Paul had warned them "to have no company with fornicators" but the Corinthians had misunderstood him. Paul clarified his meaning in I Cor. 5:9-11 by referring the warning to the company of immoral Christians. According to this theory a fragment of that early letter was inserted somehow here. But there seems no reason for such a fragment to be inserted in this place by an editor. II Cor. 6:14-7-1 makes no mention of fornicators, but deals with "unbelievers" and the problems of idolatry and a pagan culture. In addition, there is no manuscript evidence that any such fragment was ever inserted into the letter.

Paul particularly in this letter makes abrupt changes in his thought. A number of such breaks in continuity occur as a careful reading of the letter will show. One reason for these breaks may be that he did not dictate the letter all at one time. It may also be that what looks like an abrupt change of thought to us is not so abrupt, since the Corinthians' failure to be as warm toward Paul as they might have been may have come about because of their continued involvement with

idolatrous associations which he had urged them to break (I Cor. 10:14ff.). In view of this it is interesting to note that the Jerusalem Bible connects the preceding verses with this passage and makes 6:11-7:4 into one division in the text. Some scholars also see a connection with Paul's earlier appeal in chapter 6:1, 2 where he pleads with the Corinthians "that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" by allowing pagan influences to turn them away from God's grace in Christ.

### The Exegesis of the Passage

With these considerations in mind concerning the context of our passage we turn our attention to the exegesis of the text.

VERSE 14. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" (ASV). The negative present imperative of the verb *ginomai* taken with the following present participle forms a periphrastic tense (cf. B.D.F. *Grammar*, sec. 354). "Unequally yoked" translates the participle *heterozugountes* from the verb *heterozugeo*, used here in a figurative sense. The present imperative negative usually means "stop doing what you are doing" and is translated by A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, *ad. loc.*, "Stop becoming equally yoked." C. B. Williams' *New Testament* translates, "Stop forming intimate and inconsistent relations." Robertson comments that "some were already guilty." But the grammarians do not agree on this because Blass, Debrunner, Funk, *Grammar*, states that *ginesthai* with a present participle sometimes is used to denote the beginning of a state or condition and cite this passage as an illustration (sec. 354). Paul's warning would then be against beginning such relationships. Unequal yoking applies the principle expressed in Deut. 22:10, "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together" to human relations. As the Law forbade the unequal yoking of animals that did not belong together, so Paul forbade the Christians to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. The

word “yoke” was used in New Testament times to express a relationship of dependence and subjection. Jesus contrasted his yoke which his followers were to take with the “burden” carried by others (Matt. 11:29, 30). Peter spoke of the yoke of keeping the Law which some Jewish Christians were trying to fasten on the necks of all Gentiles (Acts 15:10). Paul called such a yoke for Gentile Christians “a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). He also spoke of slaves being under a yoke in serving their masters (I Tim. 6:1). The adjective *heterozugos*, cognate with the verb in this verse, is found in Lev. 19:19 in the LXX which reads, “Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind,” prohibiting mating of cattle of different breeds. The verb *heterozugeo* occurs only here in the Greek New Testament and its meaning is given by Rengstorf in TDNT II, 901 “In II Cor. 6:14 the word describes figur. the abnormal situation which results when Christians in their conduct follow the rules of the world, which knows nothing of what is given to the community.” What God has separated is not to be joined together.

“Unbelievers” (*apistoi*) occurs 16 times in Paul’s writings, with 14 of those being in I and II Corinthians. Paul perhaps always applies it to pagans, and certainly so in this passage. To enter into relationships in which the pagan partner sets the standards and the thinking and the action of the believer is forbidden by this passage. Does this set down a pattern more strict and stern than Paul’s former teaching to the Corinthians? I do not think so. Paul did not require them to leave the world in the fashion of the Qumran community (cf. I Cor. 5:10). He did not ask them to give up all invitations from their pagan neighbors to eat with them (I Cor. 10:25, 27). But he did warn them of the consequences of attending the feasts held in the pagan shrines in honor of pagan gods which he regarded as the worship of demons (I Cor. 8:10; 10:14-21). He laid down guidelines for those married to unbelievers so that the family might not be disrupted because of the Christian (I Cor. 7:12-16). He also realized the

possibility of serving the unbelieving partner in the marriage. Paul is also aware that the only way one can evangelize people is through having social relations with them. To the Jew he had been willing to be a Jew to convert the Jew and to the Gentile outside the law he had been willing to be like the Gentile, while still recognizing that he was under the law of Christ, to convert the Gentile (1 Cor. 9:19-23). But he is most concerned, as the series of rhetorical questions which follow will show, that Christians break with idolatry and the immorality connected with it which was so pervasive in Corinthian life.

Calvin says here, "Many think that here Paul is speaking of marriage, but the context shows clearly that they are mistaken." He goes on to say,

My point is that Paul's teaching here is too general to be restricted just to marriage; his subject here is the avoidance of idolatry and to make sure that we do avoid it, we are also forbidden to marry the ungodly.<sup>1</sup>

Most commentators agree with Calvin on this. They do not see this passage limited to marriage with the unbeliever, but concerned with the broader issue of the relationship between the church and the world. Closely related in thought to this passage is Ephesians 5:7-12, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth) proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of."

In the latter part of verse 14 Paul begins a series of five rhetorical questions, all intended to make the contrast between Christianity and paganism more striking. Each of the questions is in the form in Greek which expects the answer, "No." The fifth question forms a climax which then be-

comes the premise for what follows. In this series of questions Paul uses some words which are only found here in the New Testament. Because of this unusual vocabulary some have denied his authorship, but there are other portions of his writings where he makes use of unusual words. Meyer points out that this shows Paul's command of the Greek language. The first question is, "What fellowship (Gr. *metoche*) have righteousness and iniquity?" Christians have been justified through the grace of God and made righteous before him through their obedience to the gospel in faith. The line which separates righteousness and iniquity is shown in the contrast. The second question uses a synonym of "fellowship," "communion" (*koinonia*), "What communion hath light and darkness?" The New Testament refers to the contrast between Christ and his followers and the kingdom of evil as light contrasted with darkness. Note the use of light and darkness in the Gospel of John (John 1:4, 5, 7-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 36). Elsewhere this contrast occurs in Paul's writings in Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:7; Col. 1:12, 13; I Thess. 5:2-8. Other references in I John carry out this same contrast (I John 1:5-7; 2:8-11). I am citing these references to this contrast in order to point out that while this pair of opposites is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, they also occur often in the New Testament. One need not see the influence from Qumran in II Cor. 6:14-7:1 because of this contrast. The sharp distinction of light and darkness in the moral and spiritual realms is used by Paul to illustrate the incompatibility of Christianity and the world.

VERSE 15. Here two more rhetorical questions present the contrast. "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" "Concord" translates the Greek word *sumphonesis*, from which our word "symphony" comes. It occurs only here in the New Testament and has the meaning of "harmony." The unusual term "Belial" or more accurately *Beliar* in the Greek Testament is also found only here in the New Testament. It transliterates a Hebrew word used in the Old Tes-

tament meaning "worthlessness." In the Jewish intertestamental literature as well as in the Qumran writings it is used as a name for Satan. There is no harmony between Christ and Satan and one cannot expect to find peace and harmony between Christ's followers and Satan's followers. "What portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" "Portion" translates *meris* meaning "share" or "part." We meet this same word in Jesus' commending Mary for choosing the "good part" (Luke 10:42); in Peter's rebuke of Simon's request by saying he had no "part" in this matter (Acts 8:21), and in Paul's thankfulness for God's gracious provision in making us partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). Once more the contrast between the believer and the unbeliever comes out distinctly.

VERSE 16. The fifth question in this series of contrasts climaxes the group and lays the basis for the further argument and the collection of Old Testament quotations which follow. "What agreement hath a temple of God with idols?" God's temple was not some physical structure such as Solomon's or later Herod's temple in Jerusalem. Stephen had pointed out that "the Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands" (Acts 7:48) and Paul had made that same point at Athens (Acts 17:24). "We are a temple of the living God," Paul reminds the Corinthians. For Paul the basis of regarding the church as the true sanctuary of God is in the Old Testament. He had used the figure of the church as the temple of God twice in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. Collectively the church at Corinth is a temple of God in which the Spirit of God dwells (I Cor. 3:16, 17) and in dividing the church a man was destroying the temple of God. Further, he had taught that the body of each Christian was "a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you, which ye have from God" (I Cor. 6:19). For this reason he must not defile it through fornication. Here he thinks of the church collectively as the temple of "the living God" in contrast to dead idols. God dwells in the church as he lives in the Christians

who are devoted to him. There were no images in God's temple in the Old Testament. When Manasseh had installed idols in the temple at Jerusalem, he brought God's curse on his people. Later Josiah purged the temple of the idolatrous images and furnishings (II Kings 21:7; 23:6, 7). In no way can the temple of God have agreement with idols. Paul's strong reaction to idolatry is well known to Bible readers.

Scholars have noted that Paul put together here a number of passages from the Old Testament after the fashion of a string of pearls. He betrays the influence of his rabbinic background, since it was good Pharisaic practice to support an argument by drawing portions of passages from various parts of the Old Testament. The first quotation combines Exodus 25:8 and Lev. 26:11, 12 with Jer. 32:38 and Ezek. 11:20; 36:28; 37:27. "I will be their God and they shall be my people" is the basic language of God's covenant in the Old Testament, which carried with it the principle that his people must separate themselves from everything unclean and unholy. To emphasize God's promises of dwelling in his people and being their God Paul uses the emphatic expression "God said" as an introductory formula to these quotations from the Old Testament. In form the quotations do not follow either the Hebrew text as we know it or the LXX. Jesus had promised his followers in the upper room, "If a man love me he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). The true temple in which God dwells is not made with human hands, but is the people of God both collectively and individually.

VERSES 17, 18. Paul uses Isa. 52:11, in which the prophet promises God's deliverance for his people from Babylonian captivity, to make his appeal to the Corinthian Christians to separate themselves from all defilement spiritually and morally. There must be separation from that which is unclean, and what can be more unclean than idolatry with all its defilements. Paul makes this appeal for separation from

moral and spiritual defilement in Rom. 13:14 and in Eph. 5:7-14 with which this passage has a number of relationships, as we have seen. God's command to the people of Israel regarding Babylon is now applied by Paul to Christians in their relationship with unbelievers.

Paul follows this call for separation in the language of the Old Testament by three promises of God drawn from the Old Testament and applied to Christians. The first is "I will receive you" (cf. Ezek. 20:34, 41) expressing God's welcome and acceptance of them. The second promise, "I will be to you a Father," recalls God's promise to David in II Sam. 7:14 concerning his son, Solomon, fulfilled in his greater son Jesus Christ, and also Jer. 31:9. The third promise is "And you shall be to me sons and daughters" quoting Hos. 1:10, which Paul more extensively quoted in Rom. 9:25, 26. He adds to "sons" the expression "and daughters" perhaps from Isa. 43:6. The promise given Israel in the Old Testament personified in Solomon (*auto . . . autos*) is through Jesus Christ fulfilled in the heirs of Abraham and David, the true Israel, the church (*humin . . . humeis*). Note that these promises are confirmed by "the Lord Almighty." The only time outside the book of Revelation that God is called *Pantokrator*, "Almighty" in the New Testament is in this passage. This term is always used in the Old Testament to testify to God's supreme power.

In the concluding verse of this passage Paul addressed the Corinthian Christians as *agapetoi*, "beloved," a favorite term used by him and other New Testament writers. When one considers the treatment he had received at the hands of some of these brethren, this certainly shows his largeness of heart. He focused their attention as the true temple of God on the promises he had mentioned from the Old Testament in 6:16b-18, using these as an encouragement to purity of life. Including himself humbly in this admonition he appealed to them, "Let us cleanse ourselves." This translates a verb associated commonly with ceremonial defilements, here

used in a spiritual and moral sense. This obviously does not refer to the cleansing they had received when they were baptized into Christ (I Cor. 6:11). The cleansing of the Christian comes through repentance and confession of sins, asking the Lord's forgiveness as outlined in I John 1:9. "Defilement" (*molusmos*) found only here in the new Testament, is used in the LXX to refer to idolatrous defilements. "Flesh" (*sarx*) and "spirit" (*pneuma*) refer to outward as well as inward defilement. Sanctification refers not only to what God has done for us when we became obedient to the gospel (I Cor. 6:11), but is a continuing process of "perfecting holiness" (II Cor. 3:18). This positive process is the work of the Holy Spirit (I Pet. 1:2; II Thess. 2:3). James refers to the same process in his definition of "pure religion and undefiled" calling on each Christian to keep himself "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). If God's people are not separate from the world in moral and spiritual holiness of life, they lose their identity as God's people.

### **Application of the Passage**

This passage is not difficult to understand, but the difficulty lies in its application. As we have already noted, the tendency has been to restrict the meaning of the call for separation to marriage and leave out the broad areas to which this call applies. While in its original setting the passage calls for separation from idolatry and its defilements, the principle applies to every culture. The society we live in has many similarities to pagan culture, but we do not struggle with overt idolatry. The tug of the world comes to us in more subtle ways.

In obeying this command, early Christians in practice did not carry it to an extreme of leaving the world and isolating themselves. There would have been no evangelism if this had happened. Fortunately for the world, the pattern of Qumran was not followed by the Christians. Following Christ's admonition, they acted as lights in a dark world so

that others might see their good works and give glory to God (Matt. 5:16). New Testament writers stress the importance of living before non-Christians the kind of life that will gain a good reputation for them (Rom. 12:17; 14:16-18; II Cor. 3:2; 8:21; Phil. 4:5; I Thess. 4:12). Prominent among qualifications of bishops is that they have good testimony from them that are without (I Tim. 3:7). The best means of overcoming suspicion and slander from non-Christians is by a godly life (I Peter 2:12, 15). In addition, Christians are commanded to "do good to all men" (Gal. 6:10; I Thess. 5:15). Paul claims to strive to have a good conscience before God and men (Acts 24:16). Through the influence of doing good to all, some may be saved, Paul reminded the Corinthians (I Cor. 10:32, 33). Obviously this is not the only reason for doing good. Paul in an extended passage from the famous twelfth chapter of Romans emphasizes how we should live before all men, especially our enemies, following the example of our Lord (Rom. 12:17-21). Peter exhorts Christians to always be ready "to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ" (1 Pet. 3:15, 16). The power of the godly Christian life was felt in the ancient world and is still one of the strongest arguments for Christ today. Difficulties have often occurred in trying to find how far one should go in relating to the non-Christian culture, and where are the compromising influences that left unchecked will destroy Christian faith and the church, and condemn individuals to eternal condemnation.

## FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup>Calvin, John, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) pp. 89, 90.

# THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INTERCESSION

ROMANS 8:26

Garth W. Black

Born November 4, 1929, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Married Doris M. Griggs in July 1950. They have four children: Candace (1952), Bruce (1955), Shari (1960), Adam (1964).

*Educational Background.* Graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1951 with a B.S. Degree—major in zoology.

Graduated from Abilene Christian University in 1957 with M.A. Degree—major in Bible (doctrinal field). Subject of Master's Thesis, "The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Christian."

*Military Service.* Served on active duty in U.S. Army 1951-53; in the Army Reserve 1954-1962. Graduated from Officers' Candidate School 1951 and completed several courses in the Army Chemical Corps School. Discharged with rank of Captain.

*Publications.* Author of book "The Holy Spirit," published by Biblical Research Press. Has written articles for *Minister's Monthly*, *North American Christian*, *20th Century Christian*. Author of a chapter in the book *What Lack We Yet?* entitled "The Benefit of the Doubt."

*Churches Served as Minister.* Swans Chapel, Texas—1954-1956; Kingfisher, Oklahoma—1956-1958; Rome, New York—1959-1968; Silver Spring, Maryland—1968-Present.

*Speaking Experiences.* Has presented lectures on the subject of the Holy Spirit at churches in Albany, New York; Syracuse, New York; Stillwater, Oklahoma; Norfolk, Virginia; Barrie, Ontario; Springfield, Virginia; Aberdeen, Maryland; New Egypt, New Jersey. Has also



spoken on this topic in lectureships at Great Lakes Christian College, Oklahoma Christian College, Abilene Christian University, North-eastern Christian College, and Camp Hunt, New York.

Has held gospel meetings at Beamsville, Ontario; Niagara Falls, New York; Rochester, New York; Kingfisher, Oklahoma; Jamestown, New York; Waldorf, Maryland; Herndon, Virginia; Frederick, Maryland; Dale City, Virginia; Warrenton, Virginia.

*Other Activities.* Served on the Board of Camp Hunt, Inc., in Upstate New York for nine years, two years as president of the Board. Served on the Board of Directors of Camp Wamava, Inc., near Front Royal, Virginia, for seven years, two years as president of the Board. Served on the Board of Directors of the Rome, New York Optimist Club for six years, one year as president of the Board.

Served on the faculty of Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, New York, for several years, teaching speech and world history.

Served 10 years as a baseball coach with boys' clubs in Rome, New York, and Silver Spring, Maryland.

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The passage for our consideration reads as follows in the American Standard Version: "And in like manner the Spirit also helps our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought: but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27). These verses are found in the heart of one of the great chapters of the Bible. The richness and eloquence of Paul's remarks in the eighth chapter of Romans are virtually without comparison in God's Holy Word. They serve as a source of comfort and assurance to all who believe in the power and might of God's love.

The author's primary concern in the first eight chapters of Romans is man and his relationship to sin. In chapters 1-3 the apostle Paul affirms, and clearly illustrates, that all men, both Gentiles and Jews, are guilty of sin. In Romans 3:23 we read: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Sinful man stands before God without hope. "For the wages

of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Man is in a most pitiful condition in that he cannot justify himself by any manner of law-keeping or works of merit. “. . .because by the work of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). Then, to the man without hope, Paul presents the solution to mankind’s dilemma in the person of Jesus Christ. We are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ” (Romans 3:24). In order for man to overcome the guilt of sin, he is dependent on the grace of God as expressed in the blood of Christ. “But God commends his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him” (Romans 5:8-9). To become the beneficiary of Christ’s great sacrifice, Paul teaches that man must respond to God in accordance with the principle of faith. In Romans 5:1 we read: “Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This faith principle encompasses not only a belief in Jesus Christ, but a trusting in the power of his blood (Romans 3:25) and a yielding in humble obedience to the Lord’s command that we be baptized (Romans 6:3-4).

Paul is not only concerned with sin from the standpoint of man’s guilt, he is equally concerned with the problem of man overcoming the domination or control of sin in his daily life. It is to this point that Paul addresses himself in Romans, chapters six and seven. His remarks in these two chapters lead us into the great treasure-house of Romans 8 and the text under consideration in this study.

To those Christians who might surmise that they could continue to live in sin, since freedom from the guilt of sin is now available through the blood of Christ, Paul says, “God forbid” (Romans 6:2). This new relationship with Christ, a relationship that begins with our being united with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:3-5), demands that we seek to live our lives without sin. In Romans 6:12-14 we read: “Let not sin

therefore reign in your mortal body that you should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under law, but under grace." Without explaining at this point how he can make such a positive statement as "sin shall not have dominion (or control) over you," Paul proceeds to tell us why we should seek to commit our lives to Christ as servants of righteousness and forsake forever our allegiance to sin. We are in debt to Christ. He has given us the free gift of eternal life. We are his servants. To continue in sin means death, eternal separation from God. We cannot be servants of Christ and continue as servants of unrighteousness. We have crucified the old man that allowed sin to rule our lives. ". . . knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin" (Romans 6:6). Now under the system of grace we commit our lives to the doing of right and refusing to allow sin to control us.

But the question still lingers. How is this possible? How can we keep sin from having dominion over us?

As Paul begins chapter 7, we begin the journey towards the answer to our question. First, it is because we are no longer under the law, but now live under grace. "For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:5-6). The law taught man that he was a sinner (" . . . for through the law comes the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:20; also 7:7-8), but the law could not provide the means for his overcoming either the guilt or the domination of sin in his life. However, God in his system of grace provides the way

for the fleshly or carnal side of man to be overcome and thus to allow man's spiritual, regenerate nature to be free to serve God in righteousness.

In chapter 7:13-23, Paul presents a picture of the struggle that goes on between the flesh and the spirit of man, to rule the life of the man who is attempting to serve God. Under law, any system of law, sin has dominion over man. The law, which his mind approves, is not capable of overcoming the principle of sin (or the tendency to sin) which rules in his members. (Note verses 15-23). The spiritual nature wishes to obey the spiritual law, but it is not able, because it is incarnate and consequently weakened by the flesh. Sin excites and influences the fleshly nature and thus prompts man to break the law. Man has the will to do good, but with the flesh in the mastery, he can find no way to accomplish it. Man is hindered by the flesh and unable, because of it, to perform the right which he desires to do (v. 19). The law of sin (or the tendency to sin) ruling in the flesh prevents him from doing good. Because man's spirit is unable to overcome this weakness of the flesh, he is a captive of sin and sin has dominion over him (v. 23). Neither the law of Moses nor any other legislative system can make us free from the law of sin and death which rules our bodies (Romans 8:3).

All of this is changed when Christ and the system of grace enter the picture. The principle of sin and death (the tendency to sin) is now vanquished by a new and stronger principle: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ." This principle enables the child of God to be free from the mastery of the flesh and its propensity to sin (Romans 8:2). This "law of the Spirit of life in Christ" encompasses the power of the Spirit of Christ, which leads and strengthens the Christian as He dwells within him. Now the spirit of man no longer resists the impulses of the flesh unaided, suffering hopeless defeat. He is reinforced by the Holy Spirit which leads him to victory. The Christian, under grace, is now able to do that which the man under the law could not do (v. 8:3)—and that

is to walk after the inward spiritual nature which desires to do right, rather than to walk according to the outward, fleshly nature which lusts to do wrong. Now we understand how Paul could say so forcefully: "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace" (6:14).

Romans 8:2 is sometimes interpreted to mean that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ" is the gospel which frees us from our past sins, doing that which the law of Moses could not do. However, in this context Paul is concerned with the control of sin in our daily lives rather than the guilt of sin. He is seeking to show us how we can be successful in becoming servants of righteousness.

As Paul continues to speak about the Spirit in Romans 8, he affirms that the Christian is one in whom the Spirit dwells (v. 11). In fact, if one does not have the Spirit, he does not belong to Christ (v. 9). With the Spirit, man is now able to live in accordance with the ways of the Spirit (v. 5-6). In 8:13 Paul seems to sum up all that he has been saying since chapter 6, when he writes: ". . .for if you live after the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live." The putting to death the deeds of the body was that which the man under the law and without the Spirit could not do, but is now able to do because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells within him. A similar thought is expressed by Paul in Ephesians 3:16 where we read: ". . .that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." Also note Philippians 4:13 where Paul writes: "I can do all things in him that strengthens me." If we are led by the Spirit (v. 14), then we are indeed the sons of God. The Spirit certainly leads us into all truth by his word, but it is by the Spirit's dwelling within us that we are so strengthened as to overcome the flesh and become servants of righteousness. Indeed, as the fruits of righteousness (the fruit of the Spirit) are evident in our lives, it is as if the Spirit bears witness to

the fact that we are being led by Him and are in truth children of God, joint heirs with Christ (vs. 16-17).

Again in chapter 8:18, Paul seeks to motivate us to faithfulness even as he did in chapter 6:15-23. He reminds us that the sufferings of this life can in no way be compared to the glory which one day will be ours. Even as the whole creation anxiously awaits that day of glory, we are comforted by the hope and assurance that our bodies will be redeemed. To emphasize this assurance, Paul says that our possession of the Holy Spirit is as the first fruits of the harvest. Stated another way in Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul says the promised gift of the Spirit is an earnest or pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory. Our hope is not yet a reality, but we have every confidence that it will become so. God has promised us the full harvest and has guaranteed it by giving us even now the gift of his Spirit, the first fruits, to dwell within us. We might also note Romans 5:5 where Paul has said: ". . . and hope puts us not to shame; because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us." Such is the basis for our hope.

With these thoughts providing a background, we now turn our attention to verse 26 which is the key verse in our study. Paul begins by connecting verse 26 with the previous paragraph by stating "and in like manner." Just as the possession of the Spirit gives substance to our hope for eternal redemption, so the same Spirit provides help for our weakness. Some have suggested that the word Spirit in this verse refers to man's own spirit. However, the context will not allow such an interpretation. Since the second verse of this chapter Paul has been speaking of the Holy Spirit. In fact, this is the sixteenth reference in this passage to the Spirit. The activity of the Spirit here mentioned in verses 26 and 27 is not only in harmony with Paul's remarks throughout chapter 8, but readily complements what has already been said. The Spirit is identified as the Spirit himself." "Himself" here is an

intensive pronoun. He, himself, not through some means, but he, himself, does the interceding.

What is the weakness or infirmity that Paul speaks of here? Is it the weakness of the flesh discussed in chapter 7? Is it our weakness in not knowing how to pray? Possibly the two thoughts cannot be distinguished from one another. The sphere where we lack the knowledge in knowing what to pray for is in the area of our own weaknesses and frailties. Certainly there are many passages of scripture that instruct us as to those things for which we should pray. We are taught to pray for our daily bread, for those who rule over us, for doors of opportunity to be opened, for the sick, for the lost, and on ad infinitum. However, with respect to our own weaknesses, we are particularly in need of help. Help, not only in conquering these weaknesses, as Paul has already so vividly described in chapters 7 and 8, but also help in praying for that which is truly best for us. The example of the apostle Paul is a case in point. In II Corinthians 12, Paul states that he prayed three times for the removal of the thorn in the flesh that had been given to him. While we cannot identify the "thorn" with which Paul was afflicted, we do know that he asked for the wrong thing in his prayers. Instead of removing the affliction, as he had requested, God gave him the strength to bear it and be the stronger for it. While the "thorn in the flesh" was given to Paul to keep him humble, without God's strength to sustain him, he may well have yielded to the temptation to wallow in self pity, possibly becoming both unfaithful and unfruitful. However, God supplied both the physical and spiritual strength that he needed. In all this Paul came to realize his dependency upon God. For he wrote: "Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:10). And again, "Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20). Just as with

Paul, we are weak and may not have the wisdom to pray as we should, but help is available to us.

The Greek word for help in 8:26 is interesting. It is found only here and in Luke 10:40 where Martha urges the Lord to tell her sister to help her. It literally means "to take hold with one." It is as if two men were carrying a log, one on each end, thus helping one another with the load. The Holy Spirit takes hold of our burden and helps us to carry it. He provides the strength that we lack in our weakness. He not only provides us with the spiritual strength we need to resist temptation (8:2, 13), but he also helps us in our petitions to God. This he does by making intercession for us.

To intercede implies intervention on another's behalf. An intercessor is an advocate, one who pleads another's case. This word should not be confused with the word "mediator." A mediator is one who represents two estranged parties and works to bring about a reconciliation of those two parties. Christ is a mediator; in fact, he is our only mediator (I Timothy 2:5). Christ is an apostle, one sent from God and representing God. He is also a High Priest and in this role represents man. (Note Hebrews 3:1.) He seeks to bring about a reconciliation between God and man. This he has accomplished through the cross. ". . .and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Ephesians 2:16). Christ alone then qualifies as our mediator. However, we have a number of intercessors. We are taught to intercede for one another before the throne of God (I Timothy 2:1). Christ, who even now is at the right hand of God, makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25). He is an advocate, taking our petitions before the Father (I John 2:1). The Holy Spirit is also an advocate. ". . .and I will pray the Father and he shall give you another advocate, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholds him not, neither knows him: you know him; for he abides with you, and shall be in you" (John

14:16-17). And the Holy Spirit, even as Christ, makes intercession for us. This the Spirit accomplishes in connection with groanings or sighs that cannot be uttered.

The word "groanings" in verse 26 seems to have reference to "the yearning of the human soul after something as yet unrealized." This is how the word is used in verses 22 and 23. Just as the woman groans in the giving of birth, so all creation agonizes, anticipating the birth of a new heaven and new earth. In like manner, we also groan within ourselves, anxiously yearning for the redemption of our bodies (v. 23). The groanings of verse 26 would appear to mean our yearning for deliverance from the weaknesses of the flesh. While absolute deliverance cannot be a reality until the coming of death or until we receive our spiritual bodies, we nevertheless are given now the strength and help that we need in order to present ourselves as instruments of righteousness unto God. Note again the case of the apostle Paul in II Corinthians 12 as he yearned for the removal of the "thorn in his flesh." Instead he was given the strength to endure and to serve. It is the Spirit that takes our inarticulate longings, forming and directing them so as to give them intelligibility and to make them express our own true wants and needs. Then God, who searches and examines our hearts knows the content and the intent of the intercession. It has been made clear by the Spirit who dwells within us. Who would better know our deepest longings and yearnings than the one sent from God to abide and dwell within our hearts (Romans 5:5; I Corinthians 6:19). Not only does the Spirit make our needs known, but he does so in accordance with God's will. As in the case of Paul, we may not know God's will, but the Spirit does. We can be assured that his intercessions, though stemming from our own longings, will always be in harmony with God's will for us. For the Spirit knows not only our hearts, but he knows the mind of God as well. ". . .so the things of God, none knows, except the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:11).

In all of this, we perceive of God's being active in behalf of man in order that man might be victorious over both the guilt and domination of sin. Such a victory means not only everlasting life, but a life that even now reflects the power and might of God, as seen in the fruit of holy and righteous service. We see God in Christ as our redeemer and justifier and as one who makes intercession for us at the right hand of God. We see God in the Spirit as one who leads and guides us into all truth through his word and who strengthens us by his power in the inward man so that we are able to overcome the weakness of the flesh. It is this last point that is particularly punctuated by Romans 8:26-27. The Spirit helps us in our weakness. He conveys to the mind of God our deepest needs and longings, and always in accordance with his will. The end result of such divine aid is a life expressed by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control—the glorious fruit of the Spirit.

## **FEATURED CLASSES**



# THE CHURCH LEADER'S WIFE

## “. . . A Helper Fit for Him”

Deanna Beauchamp

Deanna Kirk Beauchamp was reared in Topeka, Kansas. She graduated from Abilene Christian University in 1964. She is married to Gary Beauchamp, minister for the Westbury Church of Christ in Houston, Texas. Gary and Deanna are parents of three children: Greg, Betsy and Katie.



Deanna has been a teacher in several college lectureships. She teaches a ladies' Bible class and is an active interpreter for the deaf at the Westbury congregation. She appears on the "In-sight to Life" TV program in Houston, and teaches a sign language class.

She is author of Bible school materials and has written a book for church leaders' wives entitled, *Helper Fit For Him*.

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She is author of Bible school materials and has written a book for church leaders' wives entitled, *Helper Fit For Him*.

I am married, I am married, and my heart is glad. I will give thanks unto the Lord for the love and protection of my husband. I will give thanks for the blessed protection and satisfaction of my home. I will give thanks that I have someone of my own to help and comfort and even to worry about, someone to encourage and to love.

. . . Whatever our differences, whatever our trials, I will give thanks unto the Lord for my husband and my marriage. For so long as I have both my husband and my God I am a woman complete, I am not alone.<sup>1</sup>

The inspired Word says "Male and female created He them," and in that passage He packed 1,000 words into one

picture phrase. The very fact of our creation is significant. My hope is that through this class we will view our creation as a foundation through which we can understand our role as a wife and become better “helpers” for the church leaders of today. I also hope we can deal with some very real and specific problems which each of us face in our ministry to our husbands. My goal is to challenge you to accept your role as a wife with joy and fulfillment.

In fear of sounding redundant, I still must affirm that I believe the most important role for a married woman is her place as a Christian wife. I believe that all other roles in her life are secondary to this one. The reason I believe that is the Scripture says:

Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for him’ . . . And then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. She will be called woman because she was taken from the man.’ Gen. 2:18, 23

A man should not cover his head since he was made in the image and glory of God. But woman is glory of man. For the man was not taken from woman, but the woman from the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. II Cor. 11:7

I was made for Gary. The significance of that fact is that all my responsibilities in life center upon what I can do to be a helpmate for him. It is assumed that I will be a good Christian mother, daughter, teacher,—whatever my talents lead me to be. But I was made for a specific purpose. I was made to be a helpmeet for my husband. You were made to be a helpmeet for your husband.

How do you accept your role?

“As our sins are washed away in the blood of the Lamb, we see the red flow of that blood reaching all the way back to a tent where a woman loved her man and called him Lord.”<sup>2</sup> I Peter 3:6: “Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.”

This statement revealed the fact of Sarah's recognition of the position of Abraham in their relationship and how completely she accepted and loved that position. He was head of her home, and first in her heart. "God never made anything so beautiful as a woman who is proud to be a woman and finds fulfillment in being the wife of the man she loves."<sup>3</sup>

### **Understand My Husband**

To be a proper helpmeet for my husband it is imperative that I learn to understand that man who is the counterpart of my marriage. He also was created in a specific way; for the Scripture says,

He was fashioned by the hand of God. Psa. 119:73

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; . . . God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female He created them.'  
Gen. 1:26-27

I think He was trying to give me, the wife, a message. That man, my husband, was created in the image of God, and because of that he has some unique traits in his life. These ought to be obvious when we realize what God tells us about Himself. The same needs are found in our husbands.

My husband was created with a great ego and pride. God created the world, and in Job we find Him not being able to contain His satisfaction for that job wondrously done:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Where? Tell me if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb; when I made clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far will you come, and no farther'. . .<sup>2</sup> Job 38

My husband has created a home, a position on his job, children who are achieving, projects in the church for which he takes tremendous pride—and rightfully so.

Along with the pride comes weighty burdens for the sole support of my entire life and our livelihood. He takes on his shoulders the responsibility for my sole security in many ways. He takes on his shoulders the responsibility for the congregation to which he ministers. In order to function under that pressure, God built into his psyche a strength of character and ability to reason different from my own, which will sustain the weight of those responsibilities.

Like as God has an omnipotent spirit that is able to control the universe; so my husband was made with an extra measure of size and strength in order to protect me from damaging forces. “Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex. . .” (I Peter 3:7).

Our God is a jealous God. “. . .for I the Lord your God am a jealous God. . .showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:5, 6). So is my husband. My God wants my devotion for Him. My husband also wants my devotion exclusively, second only to God. My God needs my love, wants my love, because He loved me first. He showers steadfast love on those who love Him enough to keep His commandments. My husband also needs my undivided love and affection. Our relationship of peace, harmony, and love is deeply dependent upon my willingness to submit my heart to him.

My God wants me to worship Him, and my husband wants me to admire him above all others in exactly the same way. You see, when the Scriptures say that I as a woman was created to be a helpmeet for my man, that I was made for his glory, it said an infinitely significant statement of the kind of position I fill.

When the Scripture says that my husband was created in the image of God, it gave me a great clue as to how I can best

please that man; how I can serve him in the best way to enable him to perform at the highest level of ability of which he is capable. Our husbands being made in the image of God tells me that the one thing I must do in my life is bound in this statement:

I should gather up my skirt and run to take my rightful place of honor in his *Amen Corner*.

Do you know what an "Amen Corner" is? The Negro Brethren really have outclassed us on this. They have in their churches an "Amen Corner." It is a front pew where all those who want to encourage the minister sit together and say, "Amen," "That's Right, Brother" "Come on." And sometimes they say it all at the same time, "Amenthat'srightcomeonbrother." And that's where we need to be in our homes—in our husband's "Amen Corner."

The first prerequisite for being a good wife is to understand that my husband's deepest need is for my admiration of him. I am his booster. His need for that acceptance and admiration has got to be a priority in my life if he is going to function properly. Cleon Lyles, in *God Knew He Needed Her*, says, "A man cannot be the kind of elder or deacon God wants him to be unless his wife is everything she ought to be."<sup>4</sup>

That knowledge is basic to my role. It is basic to my husband as a church leader because of his special position. Above all other men, his responsibilities are special, and they are unique in four ways.

### **My Husband's Unique Roles**

I. *My husband has a unique responsibility.* He is responsible for the reputation of the church in your area. That is true. All it takes is one man who is in a key leadership position to have his name slandered in some way, or to rearrange his thinking to an erroneous interpretation of the Scripture, to ruin the reputation of your entire congregation in your community. He has the unique responsibility that all your associates see your church in a good light. If the com-

munity sees your congregation as a group of cold, insensitive, or "odd-ball" fanatics, they can receive that impression from only one man. Because of that he has a unique responsibility for the reputation of the church.

He also is uniquely responsible for the souls in your community. Those souls bear largely on the shoulders of your husband as a church leader. Can you imagine the feeling of awakening each morning with the knowledge that "I am responsible for the souls of this community in a special way because of my role as a church leader"? Now, I know that all Christians assume this responsibility, but a church leader has a unique priority on that feeling.

II. *My husband has a unique role of desirability.* Your husband as a church leader is needed in ways that few men are needed. He is admired in special ways. When there is a lady in your congregation who is having problems: her husband is tearing her down without understanding or listening to anything she says, she goes first to the minister or an elder. He is so patient, so good and kind. He gives her the first understanding she's had in a long time. Perhaps he is giving her the first ear that is interested in what she has to say. Because of that he is very vulnerable to her transferring a lot of feeling of love and admiration to him. He has a unique desirability.

He is a hero image to people. It is a human tendency to admire someone who stands in an authoritative position and assume he must be a model husband. "I'm sure he never yells at his wife. He never says tacky things. He always takes out the garbage the minute he arrives home from a long day at the office; hangs up his clothes, and sits in rapt attention at the feet of his wife. He's got to be the perfect man." This kind of hero-worship that is common to mankind makes him unique in his desirability.

III. *He is unique in his availability.* Elders and preachers are supposed to be on 24-hour call. In our society there are very few positions that retain a 24-hour call service.

Whenever someone in your congregation has a need, they can always call the preacher, because "they own a piece of him." And they can always call the elder because he is responsible for each sheep in his flock. This can become a source of irritation to both the man's family when they are deprived of his presence for some important function; and occasionally to the man himself.

*IV. He has a unique sensitivity.* He would not be in the position of a church leader, minister, elder, or deacon, if he didn't have the kind of tender heart that allowed him to be able to relate to people, to be touched by the needs of men. Because of this he is not a cold, callous man who cannot be touched. He is reached in ways that other men are not because he sees the problems, the heartbreak of people. He sees them when they are on rock bottom, and it is difficult for him to walk away. The members of your congregation are not clients, nor patients; they are friends, co-workers, and when they are involved in a deeply emotional problem, he is involved. Your husband has a unique sensitivity which is touched constantly by the heartbreak, the needs, the tears, the lostness of the souls of flesh-and-blood people.

When the wolves break into your congregation and try to steal his sheep, by false teaching, by compromising measures, by slandering his name, and they will—

When the seductive sisters peck away at his conviction and strength, and give way for wagging tongues that could destroy him, and they will—

When the brethren come home in the evenings, and with nothing to do but discuss several major problems of interest to them, taking hours of time away from his family, and they will—

When his heart is broken by the miserable state of those over whom he has worked and prayed, and is disappointed and rejected, criticized, and scorned both within and without the body, and he will—

WOMEN, you were created for that moment. That is why God made you, and you must, at that moment, gather up your skirt, and run take your rightful place in his "Amen Corner." He needs you.

He needs you in four ways and the purpose of this class is to establish these in your life.

(I am a practical, "get to the point" sort of person, and these lessons are designed to get to the bedrock situations and problems we all face as wives. To more effectively accomplish this I passed out a questionnaire at places where I spoke this past year, the goal of which was to get the response to the following questions:

What is the greatest joy for you as a church leader's wife?

What is the greatest problem you have faced as a church leader's wife?

How have you dealt with that problem?

I was amazed at how unified were most of the responses. I will try to incorporate your problems and solutions in these three days' lessons.)

### **A Companion**

My husband needs me first as a companion.

In the *Woman's Guide for Better Living 52 Weeks a Year*, Dr. John Schindler Wright wrote, "Love is a combination of sex and deep friendship. the trouble with a lot of marriages is that it is mostly sex and very little friendship."<sup>5</sup> In many ways that is true. You can love someone a lot, but not like them very much. That is all too true in many marriages.

Virginia Graham once offered five suggestions on how to stay happily married. I liked her fifth one best, "Try to look forward to the day when someone will ask you, 'How did you stay happily married for so long?' and you can say, 'It

was easy, I married my best friend.” Do you know what a best friend is: someone who knows the very worst about you as well as the very best, and loves you anyway. That’s what my husband needs from me.

It is a fickle world. How many of you are living in the same city that you lived in five, ten, or fifteen years ago? How many of you have the same close set of friends? How many of you are in the very same business with the same business associates, or the same office? How many people are in your congregation who were with you when you first began attending? In our transient world, there are not many constant things in our lives.

But you have remained, when the business changes, when the congregation changes, when your friends change, when your children grow up and leave home, you two may be the only thing you have that is constant. You are continually together, and how important it is, then, that I be his very best friend.

Speaking in a married sense, it is almost trite to say, “I am his companion” or “I am his friend.” I am more than that. He is more than that to me. He is part of me. Marriage is not sharing the life of another; marriage is entering the life of another. A modern missionary once said to his wife when he was asked the age-old question, “Do you love me?” “Love you? I am you.” Our sexual experience symbolizes every bit of this. Here the yearning of the heart for the oneness of another is absolutely complete. I not only say it. I do it.

I would not spite my husband. I have no reason to. It would be like cutting off my right arm to spite Gary. Why would I go and tell someone about Gary’s faults? It would be like betraying my own body. Imagine a person saying, “You stupid arm. Do you know what this stupid arm did the other day? This stupid arm threw its dirty underwear on the floor instead of in the clothes hamper, isn’t that dumb?” I don’t spite my own body that way, and Gary is my own body. When we have that concept of the oneness of marriage, it

puts many things in a new perspective.

Church leaders' wives have a special opportunity to experience oneness with their husbands. I love being a preacher's wife. If I had the choice of being the Queen of England or of the entire world, I would still choose to be a preacher's wife, because I can share in a unique way every element of Gary's life. Not many women can say that. If Gary were an electrical engineer, I would be out in the cold. I'm not able to understand the tedium of electrical systems. But my husband is involved with a spiritual element of life in which I can share.

I can go to his office and help with the work there. I am his very personal secretary when I can help him in preparation for a presentation by typing his thoughts into a form he can use and save him that time. I am his assistant minister when I do some of the research he needs to prepare his lessons. I am his personal relations agent when I have to screen the many trivial calls that come in to him at home. I am his traveling advisor when I make the arrangements for his trip. I am his favorite critic (sometimes) when I sit in his audience and can rationally assess his lesson for content, length, and style. I am his partner in the Lord's work, and it is the most satisfying life in the world.

Elders' wives, your husband needs you in the exact way. Being an elder consumes the totality of his interest outside his vocation, and you can make him or break him. When a man has a wife who is not what she should be, one of two things is true: either he does not occupy the proper place at home, or his wife will not allow him to do it. Either way, he is not qualified to be an elder in that circumstance. "He must manage his own household well . . . for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?" (I Tim. 3:4, 5).

I have heard Christian women say, "My husband will never be an elder because of me." That is one of the most tragic statements I've ever heard. Imagine a wife in full

knowledge standing in the way of her husband's receiving the highest calling God can offer—to be an earthly bishop of the Church of Christ. She has drastically failed to find the meaning of her creation.

As his companion, I can learn much from the description of the Ideal Wife found in Proverbs 31.

“The heart of her husband trusts in her.” Not just that I will never become involved in an adulterous relationship, but that I can keep within my heart the intimacies of our life. I will not seek sympathy from others at the expense of my husband. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). When my heart is consumed by love and admiration for my husband, then my speech will present that portrait of him to all.

“She worketh with willing hands.” In Solomon's day that meant “seeking wool and flax”; today it means I will keep our home a haven, handle the nit-picking problems, leaving him free for his work. I will care for the children and their well-being, and do it all willingly with joy.

“A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones” (Prov. 17:22). This verse seems especially applicable when he comes home in the evening. If he is met with a cheerful heart, his aching soul seems soothed, but if he is met with a gripy, resentful, downcast spirit, the air indeed becomes brittle as dried bones.

“Not afraid of snow, for all her household is clothed with scarlet.” I should be prepared, both for emotional blizzards as well as physical ones. How wonderful, if we had more wives who would be prepared to offer encouragement, sympathy, and a full measure of faith when any in the household seeks the warmth of home.

“Her clothing is fine linen and purple.” She is beautiful and well-dressed, not necessarily with beauty as the world sees it, but with a graciousness of the soul that surpasses all beauty. A little boy came home raving of his beautiful Sunday School teacher. His father made a bee-line for the Sun-

day School class the next week to see this gorgeous creature. How disappointed he was to find one of the least-endowed sisters in the congregation. But he learned from his son of the beauty of her character, her love for the Lord, and her kind eyes and words that placed a spell on her little student, and inspired his praise for her “beauty.”

All these familiar verses from Proverbs reveal ways in which we can be a true companion to our husbands, but the summation of it all is found in the 12th verse, “She doeth him good and not harm all the days of her life.”

### A Confidante

I am his confidante. There is nothing so vital in a marriage as communication. Most wives are great communicators—they talk all the time! However, when our husbands come in and all they have done is listen to people all day, they want us to remember that old-time proverb, “Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff, and nudge me when I’ve said enough.”

There are some important *Dos and Don'ts* when it comes to communication:

1. First is *Do be understanding* when there are some things, because of professional privilege, that he cannot share with you. There are usually good reasons for it. You may not be able to handle the emotions involved in some situations. You might be placed in a compromising or embarrassing position if you know what is going on with some members of your fold. All it would take is for one key word to slip for you to be a severe deterrent to an entire congregation or to one person’s reputation or spiritual future. There are some things he must keep within himself, and we must love and appreciate him for that strength in being able to do so.

There is another side to this coin of “not telling.” There are some things which I may not tell my husband as a favor to him. Oftentimes I make rash, wrong observations about

people. I may feel I am being “snubbed” or treated unfairly by another member in the congregation, and sharing that with my husband could taint his opinion of that person also, causing a strain in that relationship, whether purposefully or not.

Elders' wives particularly hear or overhear some criticism of their husbands which, if allowed to permeate his personality could seriously restrict his ability to perform as an elder, or damage his personal interactions with the congregation. It is a heavy task to withhold some information which the very knowing burns within your breast. But for the overall good of the work of the Lord, you may have to stifle such temptations, and bury the knowledge.

2. *Do be a willing listener.* To illustrate his need in this area I want to call to your minds this experience with which we can all relate:

Have you ever had an experience of picking up all the laundry, (all the towels, sheets, jeans, etc.)—you have an armful. You go to the washing machine, and are ready to dump them in only to find that you have forgotten to take out the clothes you washed before. You have to drop the load in your arms, take the things out of the washer. You now have another big armful and you open the dryer. (You're way ahead of me, aren't you?) The dryer is still full of a load you had forgotten to fold.

That is how our husbands feel when they come home all filled up with hearing the brethren talk all day. They have heard about everyone's dirty linens, and they come home with a need to unload. Where? To you! But if you are filled up with more talk, more dirty linens of your own, so that he can't get in a word edgewise—. Have you ever heard your husband say, “I'm too tired of listening.” Sometimes he doesn't say it that nice, but that's what he means.

We should never greet our husbands at the door with the garbage. And that means our verbal garbage as well. He

doesn't need to know about the neighbor's broken window right then (even if it was your son who broke it), or the flat tire, or the Jones' divorce, or the leaky faucet. Not yet—give him a chance to unload first.

Young wives of preachers, how very important this is to you. The first few years your husband will be doing a lot of testing of you, whether he's aware of it or not. He will tell you many things, and (like our children) watch for your reaction. "Can she handle this? Can I trust her with this?" If you respond in panic and hysteria, or worse, with a loose tongue, he will learn from that experience and not turn to you when you are older. Many older wives wonder, "Why won't my husband talk to me? We never really communicate." It is because we have conditioned him throughout the years by saying, "Oh no! Is that right? Is that the truth? Oh, I can't stand it. Let's move." He'll say to himself, "Oh, my, I'm so sorry I told her that. I must be more selective in the future what I share with her." It is vital that young wives learn and give their husbands a good strong base on which they can build a trustful relationship which is imperative for full communication.

3. *Don't ever break his confidence.* How tragic it is for the church when wives break the confidence. There are very few things that could ever be told out of elders' meetings at all—even to wives. And there are none that should ever come out of an elder's wife to anyone. I know of an elder's wife who used her knowledge of the elders' meetings to run off preachers, split congregations, and ruin the reputation of good men. Few women are that brazen, but unfortunately, some come close.

A church leader's wife cannot afford the luxury of a friend so close she will tell her "everything." "Trust in a faithless man [or woman] in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips" (Prov. 25:19); but, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver." "He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious will have the king as his

friend." I don't know about you, but I'd much rather be as a sweet luscious apple of gold to my Lord, and my husband, than a festering tooth.

"And God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone. I'll make a helpmeet for him.'" For whom were you created? In whose "Amen Corner" do you sit? My prayer is that you are experiencing the joy of being his "Best Companion"; and the sacredness of being his "Confidante."

## **“. . . A Helper Fit for Him”**

### **(Part 2)**

“And God said, it is not good for man to be alone, I’ll make a helpmeet for him” (Gen. 2:18). I love Cleon Lyles’ interpretation of that passage, “God knew he needed her.” Gary needs me in many ways, because I was created for that purpose. Hallelujah! Your husband needs you. We should all join in a chorus of Hallelujah! Yesterday we discussed our husbands’ needs for us as first, a Companion, and second, as a Confidante.

There is a third area in which my husband needs me, a role which only I can fill, and one on which his future and my happiness totally depend.

### **A Creative Climate Controller**

I must be his creative climate controller.

It is unfortunate that when men go looking for wives they look first at their beauty, their body, and then at their brains. If most men had it to do over, they would look for someone with a good positive attitude, and this is what he needs from you: someone who can give him a good mental climate in which to work. You, as a wife, can be your husband’s biggest booster, or the thing which destroys him. It has been said that women control the world. “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” Familiar sayings! Have you ever wondered why? Because you control the emotional overtones of your home. If your home is quiet, calm, organized, and efficient, then your family probably will be also. However, if you are chaotic, confused, upset, overwrought, the same will be true of your home and your family. George

Bailey says the "Home is either the harbor in the tempest or the tempest in the harbor." He needs you—to create a climate that is comfortable for him.

Recently, Gary and I went on a trip during which we discussed our home. There was an anxiousness about it that was disturbing to us. We did some inward reassessment. Gary decided he must spend more time, more quality time, with his family; and I knew what I must do also.

I wasn't providing a calm homefront. I was too busy. I was too rushed. I got up in the morning probably a half-hour before the children had to be at school, and you know what that means, "Go brush your teeth! Go make your beds. Go get in the car. Do you have lunch money? Where is your homework? Hurry up." The poor children were gun-shy all day, starting out in that kind of atmosphere, and I'm sure Gary was, also. I decided for myself the answer had to begin by arising earlier than my family, spending some quiet moments alone with God, organizing myself (starting with my face), and preparing for the morning's activities. It has been marvelous. It enables me to be happy and calm when I face my family for the first time in the morning, and lets them leave home on a happy, peaceful note. I think that is important to them.

How difficult it is for husbands who must face monumental tasks all day, to begin with the biggest hurdle just to get out of the house with a degree of sanity in the morning.

Too many wives are over-hobbied instead of over-hubbied. We are so busy, doing so many good projects. But when those "good projects" cut into the quality of the time I spend with my spouse, then I need to cut down on my projects. I am a firm believer in "causes." I am also a firm believer in a woman being fulfilled. I have no higher cause in this life, nor will I ever be so fulfilled as I am by the partnership I share with one man, and the three lives I am preparing for independence, marriage, and service to God. If I fail at either of these callings, nothing good that I ever accomplish

will be worth the paper these words are printed on.

Having just said how important I believe the first hour in the morning is to the climate of your life, I must say that the second most important hour in every couple's day is the hour he arrives home in the evening. This is the time when the wife should be the freshest, the house its straightest, a promising aroma emitting from the kitchen, and soothing sounds to greet his weary ears. I realize this is not possible or practical every day; but it can be done the majority of the time, and for your marriage, and his peace of mind, it should be. Plan ahead for this time. Give yourself thirty minutes just before his arrival to redo make-up and hair. Make a quick swatch through the house, and remind the kids that "Daddy's coming home soon." Then plan to be available to sit quietly at his side, long enough for him to unwind; and unload—whichever is his need. The dividends will pay 1,000 fold, I promise.

Not only, however, must we create a good climate at home, but we must create a good climate about our husband's work.

How do you feel about being a church leader's wife? Do you like it? If you don't, your husband's future is doomed. There are too many husbands leaving the ministry because their wives don't like being a preacher's wife. There are too many men that we desperately need in the Lord's work, who can't deal with the problems of the brethren because their wives give them so many problems at home. You must like your role. You say, "Well, that is easy for you to say, but you don't understand me." It has not always been easy for me to say, but it is when you realize how and for what you were created. Woman was made for the glory of man. Don't stand in his way. If you are, you need to take a serious reassessment of yourself and your life, because your husband's future in the Lord's work depends on you. If you have emotional instability; if you are always uptight and concerned; if you are a problem; if you are gossipy, if you are

not friendly; and if you are not kind and thoughtful of the other sisters and brothers in your congregation, it will reflect on your husband seriously, whatever role he fills as a church leader.

One of the best examples for us to remember is the wife of Job. When Job was going through all his problems and heartache, when all his world had collapsed, and discouragement was near, do you remember what she said to him? "Curse God and die." Wasn't she a wretched excuse for non-encouragement? When he came to her, he had such a burden on his heart. He needed someone to give him that pickup, just a word of faith and trust would fill his empty cup; but all he got was "Curse God and die." Perhaps one of the greatest needs in our brotherhood today is for more wives who have learned the art of listening to their husbands, evaluating what they say rationally, squelching their emotional outbursts, and offering encouragement instead of falling into the depths of despair with him.

"It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious woman" (Prov. 21:9). Many men decide that it would be better to go into a secular business than to have to put up with the constant complaining and griping of a contentious preacher's wife. As pitiful a sight as it would be to see a man who had moved all his belongings to the attic, taking his shelter and food in the rooftop, so it is pitiful when a good Christian man has to leave the ministry in order to have peace in a house shared with his wife.

In Luke 14:20 Jesus is telling the parable of a man who gave a great banquet and invited many. God is the host and He has extended His invitation to many men. However, one man dejectedly told the host, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Jesus said of him, "None of these will taste of my banquet." If you are hearing these very words knowing in your heart that you are a detriment to your husband's work for the Lord, the answer is not to forbid him

the banquet, but to make your heart right. Remember the reason for your creation—to be a helpmeet, not a hindrance to his work.

Marge Green, in her book *Martha, Martha!* addresses a complete chapter to the preacher's wife, citing many of the frustrations faced by all wives of church leaders.

### **We Face Common Frustrations**

1. The first of these frustrations is the inordinate sharing of our husbands.

It is only human, or perhaps we should say, only "femaleish," to desire to be the sole object of his attention and affection. Certainly preachers' wives are no different from any other wife on earth in this desire. I said yesterday, and I mean it with all my heart—I wouldn't trade places with any woman on earth. I love being a preacher's wife, because within it I feel that I truly know the meaning of the Scripture: "Being heirs together of the grace of life" (I Peter 3:7). Sharing Gary with many other women, men, boys, and girls may be the greatest contribution I can give to the church of my Lord. In my heart I try to accept it this way. It is vitally important that we keep the perspective on this.

In speaking to a group of ministers' wives, a psychiatrist said, "You must exercise caution and not blame your role for qualities that do not rightfully belong to it. Don't place the accusation on 'being a preacher's wife' for it is the ordinary complaint of wives whose husbands love their work and devote their time and energy in seeing it prosper. Learn to accept this limitation together, and certainly make sure that the time you do have is spent in peace and harmony, not nagging over what might have been."<sup>6</sup>

I understand only too well the disconcertion of your husband being late while counseling another woman about her problems when you need him to help you with yours. We all share the pain of Daddy being gone when Junior hits the winning home-run of the All-Star series; or when Sister's

boyfriend drops her in weeping despair for another girl. We all have sat alone during inspiring worship services when we yearn to reach out and interlock an arm with the one with whom we share life. We all attend church picnics and fellowships only to stand unescorted most of the evening, introducing ourselves to newcomers alone while he is seeing to the needs of the event.

All this calls to mind Paul's personal opinion that:

The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please the wife, and his interests are divided. (I Cor. 7:32-33)

Paul's argument is justified if the woman doesn't fully realize the nature of her role. In my mind's eye, a wife who has the proper attitude of heart, and whose goals are single-minded with her husband in the Lord, will be able to help him to such an extent that he is freed to work even more efficiently for the Lord than if he had to bother with the mundane particulars of housekeeping, shopping, cooking, typing, filing, and working alone on projects which could be more effectively done in a co-adventure between the two of them.

It also occurs to me that wives of church leaders who are left alone a great deal of the time must heed the words in Ephesians 5:15, 16, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time. . . ." I have more time. What will I do with it? I have two options: I can waste it, and feel sorry for myself; or I can use it to enrich my life and those around me.

What golden moments of study and reading, when the demands of a husband are quietened for a period when he is away. I have wallpapered our entire house by using the time Gary was away at meetings. I could stay up till 3:00 A.M. if I wanted to, leave the T.V. on for company, pop corn, or just read in bed without disturbing anyone. Do not misunder-

stand. In every way I would rather have his presence than papered-walls, a good book, or popcorn—but when he is gone, my time will be filled. The only question is, how?

2. The second and somewhat more severe frustration is criticism. Criticism is a big factor with you. It hurts you worse than it hurts your husband. You know, someone can say all they want about me, but they'd better not say anything about Gary. I mean that. I've heard many elders' wives say the same thing. It hurts way deep inside, when you alone know the hours he spends on church matters, his deep concern, the many tears he sheds, and the heartache he endures from time to time—and then hear him criticized.

I, as his helpmeet, must learn to face this inevitable situation headon, or it will destroy our ministry. I have two suggestions concerning this:

The first suggestion comes from a personal conclusion: when Gary started preaching, we knew this was one of the biggest problems preachers face. He would be criticized, I would be criticized, and our children would be criticized. We decided when we very first started that as long as I am right with myself, with Gary, and right with God, there's not anyone else that matters. Now I know you're saying, "Now wait a minute. There's a congregation there, looking at your example, and you must be aware of them." What I said was, "as long as I am right with myself, and Gary, and right *with God*," that is the key statement. It doesn't matter what everyone else says. I'll never please everyone else no matter how hard I try. I'm not pleasing everyone here today. You'll never please everyone in your lifetime. So you must assume the attitude that as long as I am right with myself, and right with my husband, and right with God,—I won't care what anyone else says about me or my children.

I'm not going to tell my children you can't do this because of what the congregation will think about you. If I haven't taught my children the right way to live the Christian life, I have missed the boat in their training. That is why too many

preachers' children are leaving the church, because they have been given the wrong kind of motivation. "You can't do that because of what the brethren will say." So they grow up resenting the brethren, and resenting the church. My child must learn to be a good Christian like every other child, but not because he is a "preacher's kid." He may do some things that will be questionable, and other people may not like. I have a three-year-old who is very wiggly, squiggly, especially in church. There is no telling what the brethren are saying about her. But she is just going to be a regular child, if we can help her to be one.

My second suggestion comes from the Word of God: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:28). There is no other way you can meet criticism favorably than with prayer. This is a problem with them. It is their problem. If I am right with myself, and right with my husband, and right with God, then the problem is theirs. They need prayers for understanding, forgiveness, and love—my prayers.

The Inspired Word has given me many verses of help in this matter of criticism:

I Cor. 9:12—" . . . we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the Gospel of Christ." This supports our first proposition, "be pleasing to God."

I must not purposely live in a reproachful manner. II Tim. 3:16, 17—"All Scripture is inspired of God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."

When anyone comes to me with Spiritual correction, my spirit should be one of desire for it. Any person who loves me enough and desires my best interest to the extent of "teaching me the way more perfectly" should be heard with gratefulness. My eternal destiny could depend on it.

James 1:2-4—"Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith

produces steadfastness, and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Although being undeservedly criticized cuts very deeply and truly tries my faith strenuously, it can be used as an excellent vessel to teach me patience, and with the help of God, that patience will have its full effect in my life. Paul wrote that “this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory” (Rom. 8:18). Criticism—a blessing? I think Paul means even that!

3. The third most pressing frustration of the church leader and his wife is that of “glass-bowl” living. I imagine this applies to the preacher’s family to the greatest extent, followed at a close second by the elder’s family.

The preacher receives this privilege because many members of his local congregation feel an ownership sensation. They pay for his services (I Cor. 9:14), allow him to live in their “parsonage,” and expect to exercise the license usual from an employer to an employee.

By the very nature of a preacher’s role in the congregation he assimilates Paul’s role as described in I Cor. 9:19—“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.” It is unfortunate that some congregations take that as a literal statement. How refreshing to find that we are becoming educated in this area to realize that Paul meant, “I am your willing co-servant in Christ that I might win souls for Him.” The analogy of the human body in I Corinthians 12 is a perfect description of a coordinated working organism depending upon and appreciating each member. So we are in the church. We must have a preacher just as we must have elders, deacons, church secretaries, custodians, and “God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the interior part that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members have the same care for one another” (vs. 24-25).

I know that your life and mine are open books, and I can

appreciate the interest shown in this area. I want to know that the people who directly affect my spiritual life live godly lives, also. My prayer is that God gives us the strength and the ability to keep this in proper perspective, and not allow us to be overcome by resentment and self-consciousness to the extent that we lose our effectiveness in His cause.

### **Co-workers**

A vital part of your role as Creative Climate Controller is with your co-workers: (ministers, assistant ministers, bus ministers, education ministers, youth ministers, personal-evangelism ministers, secretaries, elders, deacons, teachers, co-teachers, etc.)

There is no place for jealousy in the Lord's work. There is no place for one minister's wife to be envious, or resentful of another minister's wife on the staff. "Let there be no strife between me and thee because we be brethren." Strife between me and thee can only hinder our influence, and the effectiveness of our husbands' work. If you are experiencing this existing in your congregation, you must "leave your gift at the altar, go and be reconciled to your brother." There is nothing so contagious as strife. If you have a negative vibe toward someone, before you know it, your husband will develop negative vibes toward them also. A critical and complaining spirit nearly always duplicates itself in those around us. This often seriously affects working relationships.

There are many broken churches because of a rift between ministers, and/or elders. The tragic effects of such a split are felt not for months, or even years, but for generations to come. We can't afford to encourage such feelings, but must do our part to create a pleasing working relationship with our congregation.

### **Elders' and Preachers' Wives**

This is a unique area. The preacher's wife nearly always

feels that the elders' wives are keeping her under scrutiny. "Do I dress right? Is my attitude right? Am I doing all I should? Does she feel I am just a transient member of this congregation?"

Let me say a word to elders' wives from a preacher's wife:

I desire a home, complete with roots, love and affection exactly the way you do. I need your strength, your teaching, the wisdom of your years, but kindly, please. As a sister, please. I may not have the close friends that years of neighborly loving can create; and I have probably left the very friends and family members I love in other places. I need you to understand this and seek to fill that void as an harmonious ally.

Now, of course, there is another side to this coin. The elders' wives have similar questions about the preacher's wife? "Is she afraid of me? Why does she always talk so stilted around me? Am I qualified to be an elder's wife? Am I the right kind of example?"

John Gipson penned these words about elders which are so thought-provoking I want to summarize them for you:

I have a great love for elders and for the most part, I think they are the hardest working and least appreciated of any group of men.

. . . Elders are not perfect. They have faults and weaknesses like the rest of us. . . But the ones I know are humble, dedicated men earnestly striving to do the will of God and praying constantly for wisdom from above.

. . . Countless hours are spent in conference and consultation, in planning and pleading. And most of it is done without so much as a 'thank you.'

. . . They are the first to be criticized and the last to be praised. When things are going well, elders praise the preacher and the people and during the decline, they suffer the slings and arrows of the critics in silence.

. . . Actions which often seem mystifying could be readily explained if they were willing to break a confidence and tell it like it is. But rather than see any member suffer, elders frequently take abuse without offering any defense. If any men in the world are deserving of our support and love and appreciation and cooperation the elders should have it.<sup>7</sup>

The only part omitted in this article is that the same is generally true also of the elder's wife. Therefore, I would make the following plea to preachers' wives from an elder's wife:

I have given many years of service to this church and I love it with the care of time. I have given in many ways for its Cause and now in my "golden years" I have given my husband. When we could be spending relaxing days and evenings alone doing the many things we desired to do through the years, he is involved with church affairs. My heart aches often from the rebuffs of the people, and the wanting of this precious time with him. So please be understanding of my concern, my interest in the facets of your life and work. Please realize that I, too, have narrowed my exposure to friends because of the care which my life and example must emulate. I welcome your needs, your prayers, your acceptance, and most of all your love and willingness to serve harmoniously with us in the Lord's work here.

The stories that could be told here to illustrate the tragedy seen in churches where co-workers agreed only to disagree and ruin the Lord's work at that place are unfortunately innumerable. I couldn't tell one that would top one that you know of personally. It is, however, not a problem in which only our husbands are concerned. You and I, as wives, play a key role in this by the very climate which we create about the wives of our co-workers. My prayer is that we will strive to work as a family in love toward one common goal—of uplifting Christ in our community. With that goal in our

minds, and His love in our hearts, there will be no room for divisive spirits.

In your role as a church leader's wife, you are faced with many frustrating circumstances: you take the responsibilities no one else will shoulder, share your husband's time with those who impose upon him, assume much of the behind the scenes congregational duties unrecognized, often unsung, unloved by the critical, and unpaid. But yours is the reward of the "good wife" of Proverbs 31:

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her. Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

## **“. . . A Helper Fit for Him”**

**(Part 3)**

In Jerusalem there is an area called the “Wailing Wall.” It is a part of Old Jerusalem where the foundation stones of the Temple were found during excavation and this section of the wall has been rebuilt. I saw an amazing phenomenon there this summer. The religious men entered the area designated as being “holy” and read the Scriptures, prayed, held religious services. The women stood on the other side of a partition in a section which was “not holy” and cried, throwing food over the partition whenever the men became hungry. The men were the worshippers, the women were the observers.

It suddenly dawned on me how very similar much of our modern religion is to this ancient order of worship. These women understood that the men worshipped for the family and, in a sense, assumed salvation for them. These women, not being able to participate, accepted a minor role of assistance. Have we, because of God’s plan for men to take the leadership positions in the church today, assumed a minor, assistant’s level of commitment? Are we guilty of expecting our husbands to perform all the religious acts, and assume salvation for us also? Don’t we, by the very nature of that (perhaps subconscious) reasoning become a spiritual drain on him? But I am to be his helpmeet, not his hindrance.

### **Committed Christian**

The fourth area of need that my husband has for me is that I be a committed Christian. In this one area, more than any

other we have discussed, I can be of immeasurable service to him.

Dealing with the faithless and weak members of the congregation is probably one of the most discouraging segments of a church leader's life. The building and edifying of the flock is unquestionably the primary function of his life. How vital it is, therefore, that I am his mainstay, his greatest booster in this area above all other responsibilities of mine as his helpmeet.

When our babies were young, and I felt like a fulltime nurse, baby-sitter, bottle-warmer, and diaper-washer, Gary and I had a problem. You see, during this time when I was being fed to the overflow with baby-blessings; he was studying, and absorbing spiritual blessings. He was growing fast, and becoming a scholar of the Word of God; while I was growing all right, but physically, and becoming a scholar only of Dr. Spock. The schism of our minds was serious. He would come home in the evening excited about a new concept he had read that day, and want to share it with me. He couldn't understand why I wouldn't be thrilled by it too, when I was busy washing lipstick off the bedroom walls. I envied his enthusiasm, but certainly didn't have the time to share it. Our conversation was likened to that of two foreign people trying to communicate—seeing the impossibility of meaningful dialogue, sticking to the simple basics of necessity. His frustration certainly matched mine, but how could I become as interested in Romans as I was in Good House-keeping? This is a difficult confession for me, but I know I speak the frustration of many wives here today, because it has been expressed to me countless times.

He needed my spiritual strength to share with him as "joint heirs of the grace of life" in order that our marriage not be hindered, that his work not be stymied.

But far more than his need of my spiritual enlightenment, I needed a commitment. I was hungry for nourishment I didn't know I needed; I thirsted to be filled with meaning,

but I didn't know with what I needed to be filled. I felt a void in my spirit, but I couldn't find a way to fill it. It was all the more terrible because I knew Gary had found his peace, and was trying to help me; but until I accepted it, it lay there folded, closed, not a part of me. I once wrote of these feelings to Gary, trying to help him understand and I share them with you only because I hope to help you if you too are searching for a deeper commitment to God.

With the rest of my life I have aims to go after. The first is that I want to live for God and feel the same love for Him that I feel for you. I want this because I feel guilt and inadequacy. It is a very strange predicament. I wonder if I am alone in it. I feel frustrated at not knowing how to go about it. I am so consumed by you, I don't feel I have more room.

I love God, and pray to Him, even about this. I feel saved in my condition, unless my love for you makes you a God to me. I know He has done His part, and I am the one who has moved away.

This has burned within me for a long time, and I haven't told you, for fear you'd think I was silly, but it is very real, perhaps you have to be a woman to know. I want to live to know a richer place with God. I want to commune personally with Him.

Perhaps it was finally admitting to myself the real problem, coupled with Gary's wise counsel and understanding, that enabled me to find a life lived in love with my husband, and in love with my Lord.

I don't know what problems you personally encounter with commitment. I do know that church leaders' wives receive the greatest spiritual drain of anyone in the congregation. You are supposed to stay on a high all the time. You're not allowed to go into a slump like everyone else. You're supposed to be a spiritual giant all the time. You are to be feeding, feeding, and who feeds you? There are moments of depression, disappointment, disenchantment, because you're only human.

The wife of one of our elders is a woman who has faced many problems and tragedies in her lifetime, but always with strength and faith. She told me the two scriptures that are the greatest help in her spiritual life are these:

Phil. 3:14—"I press on for the goal, the prize of the high calling of God." "I just press on. I just keep on keeping on," she told me. And the example she always keeps in front of her when she needs an additional measure of faith is the memory of Jesus in the garden. He faced there many problems I have.

Jesus prayed for things and was told "No, I have a better way," as when He prayed that this cup be removed if it be God's will.

Jesus' friends deserted Him when He was experiencing His deepest pain and need of them, as when they slept when He prayed, and ran away when the soldiers approached.

Jesus even asked "Why," when He was on the cross. Yet, He received all the strength He needed for this, His most difficult task—when He yielded up His spirit to God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

I had to learn that prayer personally, and we, as Christian women, need to repeat that prayer as a banner for the theme of our lives. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Take me. Use me as thy will. Let my life be wholly consecrated, committed to thy service.

As a wife of a church leader, of a Christian man, there are four primary areas wherein I need to exercise this commitment. I will list these in a reverse order of their importance.

### **The Work of the Church**

1. I have a keen responsibility for using my example and influence in a proper way for the church. My neighbors and friends all know of my religious standing, so how I conduct myself in all areas of my community is important. How can I be pious on Sunday and rude to the salesgirl at the grocery store on Monday? It is incongruous with the Christian life.

The church is me—wherever I go. It may be the only expression of the Truth some people will ever see—they must see a loving, warm, kind, interested and concerned church, through my life.

I have a vital responsibility for using my talent for the church. Peter wrote, “As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” We have each one been given a gift. What are you doing with your gift? You may not be able to stand up and teach, but you may be the best cook in town. Use it for the Lord. You may not be able to write a bulletin article, or teach a Sunday School lesson, but if you can sew, you need to be using it for the Lord. There is no “little” gift in the Lord’s Kingdom. I Corinthians 12 gives us a perfect description of the necessity for every member, and every member’s gift, in the Body of Christ.

On the other hand, you may have a gift that you have buried, like the one-talent man, or are afraid to cultivate. When Gary told me I would be teaching Ladies’ Bible Class at the Westbury Church in Houston, on our way home to Waco before we moved there, I told him to stop the car and let me out. I would never have known the blessings of in-depth Bible study, the stimulation of teaching mature minds; the enjoyment of sharing speaking engagements with him, if I hadn’t been “gently forced” into a teaching role. To imagine myself teaching a class such as this was beyond unspeakable for me six years ago. I feel like the Agriculture teacher who said, “Six years ago I couldn’t even spell ‘Professor’ and now I am one.”

Some of you in this very room today know that you have a gift, or you are yearning to try one out. God doesn’t expect from you more than you can give, but He does expect you to do your very best with what you have. More important than that, He’ll never leave you out on a limb, or comfortless. Imagine the dismay the apostles must have felt realizing that Jesus would not always be with them, and they alone would

be left with the responsibility of spreading the Gospel to every creature. Yet the same promise Jesus gave to them, He gives to you—"And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

We have a saying at Westbury, "Don't complain about something unless you're ready to be on the committee that does something about it." If you see a need in your congregation, make it your Cause. Do something about it. There is nothing I admire more than a woman who is deeply committed about a Cause and goes after it. There is nothing your husband will admire more in you than to see you tackle a project of interest and use your gift to the glory of God.

### To My Children

II. My next commitment is to my children. My work in the church is important, but in it I will gain nothing if I let my children go in the process.

My children have a right to expect some gifts from me. They need to have the *gift of my belief in God*. Where on earth will they learn of a loving Father in Heaven, and a Lord like Jesus if I'm too busy to show them? All the causes and projects in town are worthless unless I have as a primary goal to teach my children about God. Deut. 6:7 had the right idea, "You shall teach them [Words which God commands] to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up." That may sound a little unrealistic, but the point is well taken. My children need to know that the Words of God are on our hearts all day long.

They need the *gift of the Bible*. They need to see me reading it, studying it, respecting its pages. If all they ever see in my hands is a magazine or a novel, they soon get the message that the Bible isn't as interesting as secular literature. They are exposed to worldly writings six hours a day at school, or thirty hours a week; and T.V. at least 35 hours a week, and Bible study (if Sunday A.M. and Wednesday night

only) two hours a week. And we wonder why we're losing 50% of our kids from the church. How much time they spend with the Word of God will largely construct their future life.

They need a *gift of authority*. It must come from me, so they can understand how to appreciate and obey loving concern about their actions. They must see in me an appreciation for authority in my life. They will never learn that lesson if I flaunt the authorities; or if I always take their side against the teachers at school.

They need the *gift of time*. My time on their terms. Ever so often I decide to spend some time alone with one of the children. And, unfortunately, I often decide to take them with me shopping. You all know that scene, "Don't touch that. No, you can't have that." I may be spending time with them, but not on their terms. They deserve to see their mother sit down with them on the floor and talk about their wants, their likes, to see the world from their perspective. To do things they like to do. How soon will come the day when we will want them just to sit with us and talk, but they'll be too busy.

### **To My Husband**

III. One of the greatest gifts I can give my children is to see the love and affection that exists between me and my husband. If they can see a husband-wife relationship full of joy and love in our home, that is the greatest incentive for them to choose a good Christian mate when their time comes. My responsibilities to my children are great, but if I let those overshadow my place with my husband, I am robbing us all of a home as God intended it to be.

I firmly believe that my role as a wife comes before that of mother to my children. Many couples live so entangled with their kids, that when the children have grown and established homes of their own, there is nothing left for the parents. Their lives are empty, because they have built all their hopes and dreams on the little ones. One day Gary and I will

be alone; I want to be married to a husband, not a stranger. I owe it to him and to my children, to establish that kind of a relationship now; not to try to salvage one later.

One of the saddest commentaries on many couples is that they never go any place without the children. I love my children with all my heart, and I love to go places with them. But my husband and I deserve some time alone, to absorb only each other. An evening, a week-end, a week—whatever it takes for you to recreate your vows of love and devotion—it is your due. You will be stronger for it, and so will your children be when they learn to love and appreciate your married union.

#### To The Lord

IV. "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet loses his soul." What good am I to the church, my children, or to my husband, if I am not committed to the Lord. I am as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Of all the inspiring words of the Holy Scriptures, I find the greatest comfort and strength in the 23rd Psalm; for it embodies every action of the interaction between my Lord and me.

"The Lord is my shepherd." Think of it. The Lord—He made the Heavens and the Earth—is *my* shepherd. He who placed in the sky 250,000,000 x 250,000,000 stars, each one bigger than the sun—is *MY* shepherd. Even if I scoop up a handful of soil and could examine it under an electronic microscope, I would be astounded to discover the billions of billions of micro-organisms, not a fraction of which is even understood today, and He made this tiny world too. He is *MY* shepherd. Yet from the gigantic galaxy to the microscopic world of dust, He holds all things in a perfect balance, flawlessly, in a beautiful law of order. And He is *MY* Lord.

He knows me individually. He loves me individually. He bought me individually. He claims me as His very own child. "See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he

allows us to be called his children." think of it. We really are individually important to him.

More incredible than that is that He bought my soul and paid for it with an incredible price, the blood of His only Son. As much as I would ever learn to know and love you—I could never give up my son for you—but God did. Because He loves you that much.

It seems that Psalm 27 was written for church leaders' wives, for it says,

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? . . .  
. . .When evildoers assail me, uttering slanders against me, my adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall. . .yet I will be confident. . .Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me. Thou hast said, 'Seek ye my face,' My heart says to Thee, 'Thy face, Lord, do I seek. Hide not thy face from me.'

This Lord who turns His face in love on me, to Him be the honor and glory forever, because He loves even me.

Beyond His love for me is this blessed promise:

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life"  
(Psalms 23:6).

"Surely goodness and mercy"—that is easy to remember and believe when all is going well. but the time for your commitment is when your faith is tested, when your confidence is frail.

As I sit here writing this message, one of our Christian young teen-age boys lies in the hospital in critical condition from a car accident last night. Are we to believe that "goodness and mercy" are a part of even this? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes. God is giving us a message of the greatest comfort in this. He says no difficulty can arise, no dilemma emerge, no seeming disaster descend on your life without eventual good coming out of the chaos. This is the "goodness and mercy" of my Lord in my life. I have seen it every day of my life. I have seen teen-agers nearly destroyed

by a thoughtless action who have used their experience to build a life dedicated to the service of God. I have seen illness to be a stronger faith-builder than health could ever have produced. I have seen heartbreak lead many souls to the salvation of Jesus Christ. God's promises are sure, "All things work together for good to those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). That has been the great foundation of faith and confidence in Him.

However, in those words, is couched a powerful little message. "Surely goodness and mercy *shall follow me* all the days of my life."

After I am gone, what will follow me? What legacy will I leave for those who will follow in my footsteps? Will it be said of me that goodness and mercy were left in her wake? It all depends on how I live today.

The story is told of two friends who were visiting in a home. Upon arriving at their next destination they realized that a hat had been left somewhere. They wrote back to inquire if it had been left in that home. The host was heard to say, "The only thing those two people left here was a great blessing." I like that story. It should be one that we strive to live every day of our lives.

I am not vain enough to think that I will ever leave anything of eternal value here for which my name will be revered for generations to come. But I believe that within every woman is the potential to influence her children and her children's children for generations by the life that she lives today. If I leave my children with a love for their Lord, for the church, and an example of a Christian wife and mother as my prayer is to do someday—a part of me will be incorporated in the lives of my son and two daughters, and that part may be sent from them down the line. How important that my faith and commitment today be strong enough to make that kind of impact on impressionable lives of tomorrow. Will I leave behind

Peace in their lives or turmoil?  
Contentment or conflict?  
Flowers of joy or frustration?  
Love or hatred?

Some impression of me will follow—how I pray for God's goodness and mercy. The greatest measure of my appreciation of God's goodness and mercy will be seen in the extent I return it to others.

"One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" (Psa. 27:4). As a wife, I would change only two words of that prayer: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that *WE* may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of *OUR* lives."

Inscribed inside our wedding bands are the words, "These years with you, and HEAVEN." That is the prayer of every wife here. That we may enjoy years of service together here on earth, and then be taken to Heaven to serve in the Heavenly band eternally.

Yours, wives, is a heavenly lot. You were created for it. You were made and given to this man, because God knew of all the beauties on earth, you were the best suited to meet his needs. To be his "joint heir of the grace of life," to be his helpmeet on your journeys to eternity. Run, and take your place in his "Amen Corner."

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Marjorie Holmes, *I've Got to Talk to Somebody, God*, pp. 50, 51.

<sup>2</sup>Cleon Lyles, *God Knew He Needed Her*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Woman's Guide For Better Living*

<sup>6</sup>Marge Green, *Martha, Martha!* p. 63.

<sup>7</sup>John Gipson, "The Garland Roadmarks."

# INVOLVING THE CHURCH IN EVANGELISM

Harold G. Taylor

Harold G. Taylor was born and reared in Salem, Indiana. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from David Lipscomb College in 1954. He won the Prather Greek Medal while a freshman at Lipscomb.

He has been engaged in local work for twenty years as he has worked in Indiana, Ohio, and Texas. He was minister of the Sunset church in Lubbock for five years. He also taught personal work in the Sunset School of Preaching. He came to Walnut Hill from the Sunset church here in Dallas.

He was personal director for the Campaign for Christ in Berlin, Germany, in 1967. He has authored a book on personal work that is now in its fifth printing. He has conducted gospel meetings and workshops in fifteen states as well as preached in several foreign countries. He has also spoken on several of our college campuses and has been the keynote speaker on a number of city-wide training for service series.

He also writes for the Gospel Advocate Quarterly and is a staff member of the new Family Magazine.

Harold is married and he and his wife, Betty, have three children. Two of his children are married.



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The church must be called back to God!

The greatest need among God's people today is for revival. David said it best: "Wilt Thou not Thyself revive us again, That Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" (Ps. 85:6)

The Bible is replete with calls for renewal. In the days of Habakkuk, the Israelites had deserted their hours of prayer and had lost their initial spark. The prophet climbed the ladder of faith, looked God in the face and prayed, "O Lord, revive Thy work. . ." (Hab. 3:2).

There is no call for revival in the book of Acts, these early saints were alive! Enthusiasm drips from these sacred pages that tell the exhilarating history of the early church. However, there is a new tone exuding from the epistles. We begin to hear Paul say, ". . . Stir up the gift of God within you. . .;" (II Tim. 1:6) ". . . Awake, thou that sleepest. . ." (Eph. 5:14).

Laodicea had heart trouble! Jesus pleaded for these Christians to get off the fence when He implored, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him and he with Me." (Rev. 3:20) Jesus was not exhorting reprobates down on the Bowry, but those slipping saints who had lost their grip on heaven.

The call of Revelation must be heard by the 20th century church. We desperately need a real crusade for Christ. Our most critical need is for a dynamic, wide-awake revival. A spiritual renaissance must sweep our great brotherhood. We must have a revival—a rebirth!

### **Revival of Evangelism**

One frontier to which we must look for revival is the vista of evangelism.

As we look to our great brotherhood, we do not see many wise men! It's true we have more earthly savvy, sophistication, and affluence in the pew today than ever before; however, real wisdom has escaped us! The wise man set forth the salient hallmark for wisdom when he opined, ". . . He that winneth souls is wise." (Prov. 11:30) Daniel chimed in to agree by declaring, ". . . They that turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

Think souls! This was the challenging charge Jesus hurled at his disciples when he said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk. 16:15). The response? Luke observes, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4). The Master's mandate did not go unanswered (Col. 1:23; Col. 1:28, Eph. 3:10-11; I Tim. 3:15).

What is our mission today? Hospitals exist to care for the sick; funeral homes operate to bury the dead. But, saints assemble at the local level to rescue perishing souls: "We proclaim Him, counseling and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:28). Here is the oxygen for the spiritual body of Christ. The evangelized must become the evangelists, any other emphasis is to lose the right to exist. We must bathe this old earth with the tidal-wave of the gospel.

### **What A Difference!**

What a difference twenty centuries have made!

How different were the early disciples who started a real revolution. They shook the Judean and Pagan world from center to circumference. They turned the world of their day upside down because it was wrong side up. Acts of the Apostles beams with success, drips with enthusiasm, and shouts salvation for teeming thousands. Pentecost was a spiritual bonanza with three thousand people reeling beneath the impact of Calvary (Acts 2). Five thousand were counted later (Acts 4:4); multitudes were added to the Lord (Acts 5:14). The whole earth trembled at the awesome gospel and every creature heard the sweet story of Jesus (Col. 1:23).

What a difference twenty centuries have made! Somehow we feel little kinship with the flaming band of saints that fertilized the kingdom of God with their own blood.

The now church places its trust in budgets, buildings, and banquets. Recent years have witnessed large, palatial

edifices erected; preaching staffs hired; and large secretarial forces assembled to manipulate the latest equipment. Our budgets often center around cement, asphalt, brick, mortar, and allocations for programs. Yet—the world remains lost! We do well to baptize the children of our members and perhaps a dozen adults a year who force us to teach them.

Most churches are not growing—they are swelling. The white flight to the suburbs have caused instant “growth” to our delight. However, what we have considered growth is more often simply playing “musical chairs” from one church to another. Most buildings are filling by migration rather than conversion! The Lord has instructed us to be fishers of men (Matt. 4:19), but we have become satisfied with being keepers of the aquarium, as we steal a few fish out of someone else’s bowl. Several such churches with a thousand members baptized a handful of souls in 1976.

### **Cobwebs in the Baptistry**

The least expected place to find evangelistic apathy is in a mission field. Yet, I’m here to testify that during a Campaign for Christ on foreign soil I was taken aback by the total disregard for evangelism.

A symptom of a dying church was quickly detected when we brought a person to the meeting house to be immersed. Of course we expected the building to be unlocked, clothing ready, and warm water standing in the baptistry. Our idealism was somewhat shattered when we discovered that the baptistry was not only empty, but was blanketed with cobwebs. This church had not only closed its baptistry, but had padlocked its heart to the cries of the lost.

I have often wondered what baptistries might say if they could talk. The daily diary of a baptistry might read:

“I am called a baptistry. The members of this church speak of me in hallowed tones.

My mission is a spiritual one. The waters I embrace have no magical nor medicinal properties, yet fantastic things

occur in my bosom, by the grace of God. Waters like mine have always played a vital role in God's plan to bless man. Water saved Noah in the ark, destroyed Israel's opponents at the Red Sea; cleansed Naaman of his leprosy at Jordan; and opened blind eyes at the pool of Siloam. Yet, H<sub>2</sub>O had no special quality to bless man; it was simply man's obedience to God that wrought the wonders. There has always been water in the plan!

Though I'm grateful for the past performance of water, I can testify that those who have been immersed in my depths, in the Christian age, have experienced blessings that defy description. Men who are brought to my waters are stripped of their filthy rags (Acts 2:38); incorporated into the church (Acts 2:47); endowed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38); and ushered into communion with Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). No wonder I have witnessed the tears of grown men! (Acts 8:39)

I can assure you that local churches attempt to give me a good self-image. I have become an object of pride to the members. I feel important when I think of the time spent by the building committee in discussing my features. I tower majestically over the preacher each Sunday as he tells of salvation's plan, I am well adorned by lovely curtains that yield to Jordan's scenes. My interior is periodically scrubbed and the liquid in my embrace is maintained at the proper height and temperature. Men are set in motion to plug my slightest leak. Soul winners wade my waters and small children peer curiously into my depths.

You would think I'm the happiest expedient in town! But, I confess that I must be paranoid; I feel almost totally rejected.

Even though I remain open 365 days a year, I admit that few men part my waters. The auditorium and classrooms are full of life several times a week. The offices are daily a bullpen of activity—with secretaries, preachers, deacons, elders and Bible teachers at work. However, the only activ-

ity that baptistries ever seem to get is in the preacher's sermons.

This church may have an eloquent preacher, a palatial building, a large budget and a menagerie of filmstrips—but I'm here to tell you it also has a disgruntled baptistry.

Promises. . . promises—I'm tired of promises. I want action! Next year's crop of young people are not enough to fulfill my mission when 5,000 souls die daily outside of Christ in the U.S.

I'm tired of being a play-toy! The gaze of the crowd no longer satisfies. I have become more of the symbol of a dying church than the grave of alien sinners. My sterile womb cries out for fruit of which I have so long been barren.

After due consideration I must confess to one and all alike that I'm tired of the sham. I really had rather cobwebs grow on my floor than unemployed waters to stand in my midst. At least I will have dropped the pretense!"

What would your baptistry say?

### **The Local Church**

The revival of evangelism begins at the local level.

Many are deserting the church today. Jesus "freaks" are screaming, "Jesus yes, the church, no"; moralists are declaring that established religion is *passé* and out of touch with the contemporary needs of our time; some brethren are pleading for a restructured church. Thank God, Jesus stood by His church in these words, ". . . the gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

While many are knocking the church—we must build it! The place to begin is at the local level. The local church is the best thing to which a person can give his life. We must join partnership with Christ in building a congregation of God.

The local church is the gathered people of God. (I Cor. 1:2) By their own volition saints are to associate themselves together for worship, fellowship, proclamation, and ministry to the unfortunate. All Christianity gravitates to the local

church. We can never love the church *universal* until we love it *local* (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; I Pet. 5:1-3).

The local church is to be a dynamic force for God in a sin-ridden world. Within a new climate of love, fellowship, and unity, renewed people are to bless God, others and their own lives. The local base is a *lighthouse* to illuminate the path of the lost (Isa. 2:4); it is a *hospital* for broken and sinful men (Lk. 19:10); it is a *rehabilitation center* for those made invalid by iniquity (Acts 20:32); it is an *intensive-care unit* for those fighting for their lives (Rom. 15:1-2); and it is a *fraternity house* for those seeking an incendiary fellowship (Acts 4:32). The church: our life; our love; our all. No wonder Jesus threw his protective wings over her: "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it."

While many criticize her, some despise her and others have abandoned her—I want to stand by her. I owe her my life and my love. While it would be a place of distinction to serve as the head of a school, an editor of a paper, or president of a board—I would rather be a local preacher. It's the greatest place to serve in all the world. If I had a thousand lives to live, I would want to be a local preacher in every one of them. I had rather be a speaker in the house of God, than a speaker in the house of representatives; I had rather be a foot-soldier of the cross than Commander-in-Chief of all our U.S. forces.

I am standing *by* the church because I want to stand *with* Jesus!

### A Call to Revival

How can a spiritual resurrection occur in a local church? How can God be brought back to life in the local setting? How can we once again accept the recurring assignment of world evangelism?

Please step with me into the visionary room of Ezekiel. In the 37th chapter we share Ezekiel's vision:

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me

out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

And He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry.

And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, Thou knowest."

Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'

"Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.

'And I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord'"

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew, and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'"

So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life, and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'

"Therefore prophecy, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.

"Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people.

"And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will

know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it," declares the Lord.'" (Ez. 37:1-14)

Ezekiel, with telescopic lens, reveals the fantastic future of Israel: *she would be raised from her grave of national calamity and returned to her beloved land.*

We can pour our lesson into this celebrated prophetic mold of Ezekiel. There is a striking parallel between the revival of fleshly and spiritual Israel. This splendid scene contains the marvelous ingredients for evangelistic revival!

### **Shall These Bones Live?**

Many churches are in the valley of dry bones!

Fleshly Israel is depicted as in a deep valley of dry bones. This scene symbolized Israel's spiritual failure, as she languished in foreign captivity. She had lost faith in God and thus had made a national cemetery of her life. What a pathetic scene of God's nation whose sins had plummeted her to the swamps of national shame and degradation.

Churches, too, can live in death valley! While there are many wonderful churches that are aflame with the love of Jesus' name—there are legions floundering in death valley. Oh, how many local churches need to be brought to life; how many need to become evangelistic!

Ezekiel 37 is a marvelous scene. This vision embraces priceless principles for evangelistic revival. Please note that a resurrection occurs when there is: (1) *organization*, (2) *flesh on the bones* (work), and (3) *a spirit to animate*.

### **Organize to Evangelize**

Ezekiel beheld a strange phenomenon in the valley of dry bones. He declared, "So as I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone" (Ez. 37:7).

Bones must form skeletons to live! There was organiza-

tion of the bones of Israel that preceded the emergence of a mighty army from the valley.

The moral for our generation is: *We must organize to grow.* The Lord's people must be systematically at work! Paul set forth this maxim when he penned, "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. . . . But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner" (I Cor. 14:34; 40).

### **The Challenge for Leadership**

What the world needs now is men—real men. Every generation yearns for special men with unique character, wisdom, and charisma to lead them. Israel of old was no exception: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, *if ye can find a man*" (Jeremiah 5:1).

Wanted: a man! This was the sweeping search of Jeremiah for Israel. It was a critical time for God's people. The most pressing need of the hour was for leadership. As always, real men—God's men—were in great demand but in short supply.

Times have not changed. The crises of our times cry for bold, decisive, and creative leadership.

The world is Christ's for the asking. Jesus urges his disciples to remove the cataracts from their eyes and to view opportunities for conversion that are legion. Our Lord challenges our apathy when He charged, ". . . . Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest." (Jn. 4:35)

The leadership of God's church so desperately needs to lift up its eyes to the population explosion, mobility, and the current disillusionment. Men are sin sick and world weary. The populace is drinking from beckoning fountains of education, pleasure, wealth, and power, only to find them unfulfilling. Mundane pursuits are like cotton candy in the mouths of men. (Ecc. 1:8) Emptiness is the scourge of our day in spite of pools on our patios, Cadillacs in our driveways and cabins

in the mountains. Material objects, scientific advancement and all creature comforts have not become the promised Moses, to lead man out of the wilderness and into the promised land. Human wisdom can not provide a satisfying Shangri-la or a permanent paradise (Ecc. 1:14).

The most critical need of the hour is faith in and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. Man must discover the spiritual level. There is a room in every human heart that can only be filled by Christ; all else is husks (Lk. 15). Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on *every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*" (Matt. 4:4).

### **Sacrificial Shepherds**

**Strong churches are not born of weak leadership!**

As the eldership goes, so goes the church. No congregation of the Lord's people can rise above its leadership; every church is but the extended shadow of its leaders (Phil. 1:1). "Bigger men for better churches" must be more than a motto—it must be a fact!

Elders must lead in evangelism! It has been said that there are three kinds of leadership: (1) those who make things happen; (2) those who let things happen; and (3) those who ask, "what happened?" We desperately need the former, not the latter. When preachers do the work of elders; elders do the work of deacons; and the deacons don't know what to do—the world will remain lost. Soul-winning cannot become just the pet project of the preacher. Elders in local churches must support soul-winning by their priorities, teaching, and example. The soul winning spirit must be caught as well as taught; more is taught by infection than instruction. Leaderships will grow great soul-winning churches only when they "lead out."

### **Dynamic Deacons**

Deacons can and must be a mighty force for God in the fields of evangelism. We have relegated deacons to the back

burner and assigned them menial tasks of a mundane nature. We think they need not be “apt to teach.”

Let us recognize that we must have dynamic deacons who are evangelistic! They must be like Stephen who stood on the street corner and preached Christ (Acts 7). So bold and militant was his message that Luke says it cost him his life. So moved was Jesus that he stood out of deference to receive this bloody martyr. Here was a deacon who died preaching! (Acts 7:54-60)

What a message for modern deacons! The lesson comes through loud and clear: *deacons are ministers of the word*. God’s deacons make or break a church in evangelism. Churches that have dead, unevangelistic deacons usually long past have blown out evangelistic fires. On the other hand, soul-winning deacons become the leavening influence as they permeate the entire church. Dead deacons do not make for live churches!

### **Powerful Preachers**

The church needs powerful preachers like Paul. We do not remember Paul so much for his *logic* as his *life*. Paul was nailed to the cross of self-denial—Paul was dead to Paul (Gal. 2:20). The peerless apostle did not identify with Christians who were worshipping behind stained glass windows—where it was popular to go to church. Rather, he linked himself to saints who lived in catacombs—to the discards and the rejects. Yet, Paul stood by the cross! From a damp, dark dungeon this foot-soldier of the cross penned his final farewell to all preachers of the age, when he exulted, “Preach the word!” (II Tim. 4:2-5) Christ lived when Paul died!

Every local preacher must be a champion soul-winner. This begins with a militant, evangelistic message from the pulpit. Dead, half-hearted, flat-footed preaching will snuff out evangelistic fires from off the altar. Too many mild-mannered men are preaching mild-mannered sermons to

mild-mannered members—making them more mild-mannered. Many preach so unconvincingly you would think they are selling boiled okra! Sinful is this perfumed preaching, trite teaching and thoughtless theology that doesn't make sin stink. Our task is not just to hold a service but to herald a savior!

Preachers must not only be walking Bibles but living epistles. We must not only proclaim publicly, but from house to house. (Acts 20:20) It's what is in-between Sunday's that counts! Proclaimers who never look into the faces of the damned all week can not preach with convicting and healing power on Sunday. Too many of us "hole up" all week in our stuffy offices. We know Peter, James and John but not Tom, Dick and Harry. Preachers seldom relate to the man in the pew because he seldom knows his problems, feels his pain, or cries with him over his sorrows. God's preachers must get over the blahs, as professor preachers, by smelling the smoke of human battles. Too many preachers never see a real live prospect all week; we fail to visit the marketplace!

In the birth and history of every great church is an evangelist who is consumed with compassion for the lost, believes in the worthwhileness of his endeavors, and is assured the gospel is the answer for every man.

Brethren, when elders "eld," deacons "deac" and preachers preach we will take this old world for Christ by a storm.

### **Every Member a Minister**

What's everybody's business is nobody's business! The local church must be systematically at work under the eldership. We will win souls on purpose or not at all. Therefore, there must be a place for every man and every man in his place.

Evangelism must begin where we are! Evangelism is the out-rush of the human soul who must tell others all around him. World evangelism begins where you are standing. The

early church took dead aim on Jerusalem before they trained their sites on the “uttermost parts of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Too many are leap-frogging over millions in their own back yard in an attempt to save the lost on the other side of the world. When we fail to teach those in our world, then our impersonal, missionary dollars become suspect. The real fuel for sustaining world evangelism is persistent involvement in local evangelism in our own habitat. We can never envision the faces of the damned in Europe, Africa or Asia if we have never viewed them on our own block! The light that shines the farthest is the light that shines the brightest at home. So, let’s go into all the world—beginning where we are standing. We must evangelize or fossilize!

Evangelism must be organized in a local church—“bone to bone.” What’s everybody’s business is nobody’s business. The old saying, “Let George do it,” is only passing the buck to a fictitious character who doesn’t exist. There must be a place for every man and every man in his place. God’s army must not remain in disarray.

Elders must be willing to farm out responsibility in the area of evangelism. Moses placed captains over thousands and hundreds. The apostles distributed the work and gave specific assignments to saints to resolve the crisis at Jerusalem (Acts 6). Elders, to be effective leaders in evangelism, must delegate responsibility and authority to others in the prosecution of effective soul-winning. Elders cannot play solitaire, nor fly solo. Bishops must know what members will do and what they are doing. A church systematically at work will run as smooth as silk.

Elders must show confidence in the membership. Too many leaders display distrust of the membership and fear loss of authority. Many leaders frustrate willing workers by extending responsibility but limiting authority in carrying out the assignments. We need fearless leaders, who exude confidence in the members. Elders must remember that it’s

not who rules the roost, but who rules the rooster that counts!

Too many men are jealous of their position and authority. This inept attitude frustrates militant evangelism in a church. When little men cast long shadows, it's almost sundown. Authority is like money in the bank—the less you use, the more you have. Every shepherd must remember this attitude as he demonstrates faith in the flock.

We must organize to grow! When we organize our evangelistic efforts at the local level: (1) It makes God its author (I Cor. 14:33). (2) It distributes work among the members. This does away with the “pastor system.” Every joint will supply its part (Eph. 4:11-13). We become workers together with God (I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 6:1). (3) It stabilizes the soul winning efforts. Soul-winning will not just revolve around the preacher. Evangelism will continue when the preacher moves. (4) It accelerates progress. When any effort is organized more is accomplished in a shorter period of time.

### **A Master Plan for Evangelism**

**Soldiers must be regimented!**

Ideally, the church should win souls spontaneously and through self-motivation. However most folks are not self-starters. There needs to be a certain degree of organization—with built in flexibility. We must teach, convert, teach again, train, enlist and send out fishers of men.

Local preachers who wish to resurrect a dead church must set the example. Jesus began to “do and teach” (Acts 1:1). So must we! Our doing must precede the teaching.

Our task as preachers is to sell the membership on the effectiveness of personal evangelism. We must put soul-winning in our lives, before a church, before we can put much of it in our sermons. Let men say of us, “He may not be the best preacher I ever heard, but he is the best one I have ever seen.” There is no way to measure the far-reaching

effects of a local preacher who is not only a "live wire" in the pulpit, but a fruit-bearer through the week. We must demonstrate successful fishing before we can successfully implore others to wet their lines. There is power in demonstration!

Men must be taught and trained to win souls. Paul said, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). Evangelists are to pass the torch of truth!

An evangelist has the God-given task of: (1) preaching publicly; (2) from house to house (Acts 20:20); (3) train others to win (II Tim. 2:2), and (4) set in order things that are lacking (Tit. 1:5). Christ has given preachers their job description; no man is authorized to change the assignment.

Training soul winners is a priority matter. Classes in personal evangelism must not be given the "neck of the chicken" in local churches. We must not apologetically offer training sessions on a Sunday afternoon or on an inopportune week-night. Let's offer soul winning courses as a vital part of the Sunday morning or Wednesday evening curriculum. You should invite students on an invitation only basis. We must train these workers in prospecting, interviewing, methods and techniques of study, and questions to anticipate. Many churches are using this writer's personal work kit, entitled, "Person To Person." This kit, containing 35 charts and a manual, presents principles of Bible study, proper attitudes toward the scriptures, the good news of salvation, and the salient features of undenominational Christianity. Members who are schooled in such material not only become more proficient teachers, but gain a more mature grasp on the fundamentals of the faith. Thousands are using this method. There are many other effective methods that can be shared with willing workers.

### **Send Them Out**

Trained workers must be "sent out!" (Matt. 10)

Graduates of the training class need to band themselves together as the “green-beret” to form a soul-winning nucleus. The trained fishermen can meet as a class on Sunday or Wednesday while other classes are meeting; this will aid in sustaining the personal work program. During this class session the personal work director can make assignments of prospects, receive returned assignments, discuss problems faced in teaching home studies, keep proper records, and motivate workers to fish faithfully. We must avoid too many classes and meetings on other nights of the week. Let’s use what is already structured on Sunday or Wednesday. You will find this to be a most successful program. Let’s win on purpose!

### **Flesh on the Bones (Work)**

A second basic principle in involving a local church in evangelism is work. There must not only be organization, but “flesh on the bones.” Ezekiel said,

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and *flesh* grew, and *skin* covered them; but there was no breath in them. (Ezekiel 37:1-8)

There were not only bones (organization) but *skin*. Every effective organization must be functional. We must plan the work and work the plan. The machinery must be set in motion!

You spell success WORK. The fuel that operates the organization is effort. We must be an energetic, dynamic, fruit-bearing people (I Cor. 15:58; Jn. 15). Successful fruit on our part in the kingdom is 2% genius and 98% perspiration. The Lord’s church is not a dormitory where men sleep, but a vineyard where men work (Matt. 20:1; I Thess. 2:9). We are not to just preserve the church, but to enliven it; let it be spent!

Brethren, we need to get our hands out of our pockets. I once heard of a trade journal who advertised on behalf of a railroad company. The advertisement read: "Wanted—300 sleepers." The first response was from a preacher who offered them his entire congregation! Humorous, you say; maybe so, but too often heartbreakingly true concerning the church.

The Lord wants participants rather than spectators in His kingdom. But Wilkerson, the famous and highly successful former football coach of the Oklahoma Sooners, recently observed that football was where you have 22 players on the field in desperate need of rest and 60,000 spectators in the stands in desperate need of exercise; it's always the few who carry the load!

Too often we fill our buildings with empty people—devoid of good works (Tit. 2:14). Too often the clock strikes 12 noon on Sundays and church buildings across the land give up their dead. (Rev. 3:1-2) Too many who fill our pews have been vaccinated with such a mild case of Christianity that they have become immune to the real thing. The Lord charges us to be busy bees, but it's the drones that are thwarting Christianity's advance.

Busy Christians not only save the world, but the church. When a local church's membership flexes its muscle, the results are phenomenal. Churches are purified and strengthened in faith by total mobilization. The idle life is not only the devil's workshop but the Christian's grave. A local family of God's people at work produces peace and unity. (Eph. 4:1-2; Ps. 133:1) Grumblers never work and workers never grumble. A mule can't kick and work at the same time. Therefore, let's heed the admonition of the Hebrew writer who said, "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be out of joint, but rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12-13).

The enemies of the church are not cosmic forces, cultural

changes nor sociological factors. What destroys churches are the insidious internal forces in the hearts and the lives of the members; it is indifference, lack of spiritual commitment; loss of vision, unconcern for a lost world on the part of preachers and people. It's not the woodpeckers without, but the termites within that do the extensive damage—and mostly go undetected.

So, let's repent and repeat our first works. Let's work like the Devil! He never gives up on us. Satan probes our every weakness, feels for our Achilles' heel, exploits our vulnerability, and attacks from every vantage point (Matt. 3 & 4). Must God's people not be as persistent as Satan? Shall we leave the playing field to the accuser of the brethren? Shall we forfeit the game to this enemy because of so many Christian "no shows"? God forbid!

Let the word go forth that we are at war! (Eph. 6:11-12) The church is no peacetime army and detente with Satan is heresy in God's book (Matt. 6:24). So, brethren, let's go on the offensive; let's land on the beaches of spiritual tyranny as we carry the battle to our dreaded foe. (I Pet. 5:8) Let our actions say to Satan: "We will bury you!"

### **The Mission of the Church**

The flesh on the bones of New Testament churches is *saving the lost*. Whether by benevolence, soul-winning in the world, or edifying the saved it all adds up to one mission: *saving the lost*. The goal of history is the goal of the church: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:25-27). Yes, Christ's goal in human affairs is that through redemption, justification and sanctification (I Cor. 6:11), He would take a people out of the world whom He would bring to glorifica-

tion at the consummation of the present age. Christ's goal must become our goal!

### **Benevolence**

First century Christianity practiced heart religion! James penned,

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (Ja. 1:27)

While doctrine was critical and purity was to be unimpeachable—it was loving hearts that took the world for Christ. Compassion on the poor and downtrodden did more to capture the attention of men than any other single quality. (Acts 4:32)

The Lord's church in our day must recapture that spirit of love, pity, and sympathy for unfortunate men if we are to move for the Master.

Benevolence, the church's mission of mercy, must be practiced to firstly capture the heart of Christ. The spirit of Christ was one of tender compassion. He was the Jeremiah of His day (Matt. 16:13-19); He had a heart as big as all outdoors. When our Lord saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 15:32), the bereft widow of Nain (Luke 7:13) and rebellious Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37), it broke His heart. Our Jesus bled for and with others; He handled their sores; He stood in their shoes until He became the other person. Sadness in Jesus' heart and tears in His eyes were always His response to the cries of needy men. God's wife, the church, (II Cor. 11:2) is to possess that same heart. (Phil. 2:5) This heart transplant will cause us to see the plight of others through Jesus' eyes and to feel for them through the Master's heart. The church that is the very fulness of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) must be composed of cool heads and warm hearts.

Secondly, we must be men of mercy that we might prac-

tice the golden rule. Jesus declared, "In everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets." (Matt. 7:12) We must treat others as if we were the others.

Remember, we were once orphans! (Jn. 14:18) By the grace of God we received adoption. (Gal. 4:5-6) In this newly acquired Heavenly family our Father provides us with food for our hunger (Matt. 5:6), clothing for our nakedness (Rev. 19:8), shoes for our feet (Rom. 10:15-17), and love for our hearts (I Jn. 4:19). Hence, that destitute widow or orphaned child is you in miniature! Let us do to orphans as God has done to us.

Thirdly, let's practice "pure and undefiled" religion to capture men for Christ; let's get their attention!

Who knows us? With confidence we can declare that the bankers, bakers, and builders know us. But, how about the poor, the needy and the disinherited? What is our image in most communities? Is it, "They are that self-righteous bunch who thinks everyone else is going to hell?" While we must stand for truth, yet the world must believe we have found the Lord as well as the baptistry. We must do more than tell youth to take a bath and to get a haircut. We must challenge our young with an exciting, first-century spirit of beneficence; we must bring our practice up to our preaching! While we can out-preach and out-debate most folks in town, we must begin to out-live them. Most civic clubs out-practice us when it comes to helping the needy. You see, the early church "was praising God and enjoying the favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47) because they "gave to anyone as he had need" (Acts 2:45). Need we say more?

### **Strategy of Penetration**

The Lord's church has penetrating power; it transforms the society it touches. Jesus described Christians as salt, light, and leaven (Matt. 5:13-16; 13:33). All these metaphors contain the same power: *penetration*.

So, the church of Christ must illuminate darkness, preserve society, and leaven the lump with *service*. Let us be known as a church with a heart and not simply with a sign. Let the community say of the local church, "Thank God they are among us. Maybe we don't always agree with their doctrine, but we respect them for caring about others. We hope they will always be in our midst." Brethren, this is what will begin to woo the world, shatter denominational barriers, and win souls to undenominational Christianity.

There are many wonderful services we can render to the members and the community. We can care for men's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs with such efforts as: (1) home for needy children and the aged; (2) serving the deaf and blind of the community; (3) offering day-care service to children of working mothers; (4) assist those who have a "burn out" with food, clothing and shelter; (5) maintain a "we care center" where old furniture is repaired and distributed; (6) offer counselling service to the community; (7) set up a distribution center to provide food, clothing, transportation and medical needs for the poor; and (8) provide a Thursday School—a "Mother's Day Out." Mothers can leave their preschool children one day a week. The children are taught God's word while mothers recuperate from the rigors of motherhood. (9) Offer a "Dial a Devotional" program that the community might receive encouraging messages from God's word. (10) Provide a "Meals on Wheels" service. This involves members preparing food at the building 7 days a week and distributing hot meals to "shut-ins" and to bereft families during the period before and the day of the funeral. What marvelous inroads into the hearts of men this service makes. (11) Mail encouraging letters and tracts to people of the community when there has been a death, marriage, birth or a stay in the hospital. Remembering people at their emotional lows and highs in life will never be forgotten by them. When we begin to penetrate people's hearts and lives with our Christian service they will begin

penetrating our buildings with their presence.

### **Mobilize to Evangelize**

Think souls! This was the challenging charge Jesus hurled at His disciples when He said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mk. 16:15). The response? Luke observes, "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4).

The ground rules of evangelism for the twentieth-century church are well stated in the above passage.

Firstly, Luke states that every member was a minister of the word: "Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (Acts 8:4). It was *everyone*, teaching *everybody*, *everywhere*. No other strategy will succeed!

Every member must be a soul winner. Our goal must be the total mobilization of the total church for the total ministry of the word. If our goal is the total penetration of the whole world then we must aim at nothing less than the total mobilization of the whole church.

Tragically, today we have limited our efforts. For too long we have limited the place of evangelism: our *buildings*. We have erected commodious buildings, put out our shingle and implied, "Come and get it or go to torment." Our style has been cafeteria when it needs to be catering that will take the bread of life right to the doors of the lost.

We have also limited our evangelism by leaving it to the *specialists*. We hire preachers, personal workers, missionaries and associates to do the major portion of teaching the lost. The early church repudiated our trend. Without buildings, staffs of preachers and secretaries, speaker systems, radio or television, the early church effectively registered its protest against Satan and won a world (Col. 1:23); they did it by total evangelism. Every faithful member was aflame with the love of Jesus' name and told others so. A church which bottlenecks its outreach by depending on

specialists to do its soul-winning has missed the New Testament pattern.

Evangelism is a daily activity. The concept of evangelism must be lifted into the daily life of mothers, factory workers, clerks, soldiers, farmers and students. Every vocation must become a means of service and every location a place of teaching and winning.

How many ministers does your church have? Traditionally, the answer is one, two or four—depending on how large the paid staff. The true answer is 700 or 1,000—depending on the size of the membership.

Where is your church? The traditional reply is, "It's on the corner of Broad and Main." The correct reply is, "What time is it?" If 10:00 A.M. on Sunday then the church is on the corner of Broad and Main. If it's 10:00 A.M. Tuesday then the church is in Room 511 in the Professional Building where Joe Doe, a Christian attorney, is practicing law, it's at 3109 Melody Lane where Jane Dokes, a Christian housewife is making a home; it's at Normal High School where Johnny White, a Christian student, is studying to the glory of God. On the golf course, in the restaurant, or on the farm the church is in action. The meeting house is simply the drill hall for the Christian task force. It is the place where the troops are trained, disciplined, and briefed in the art of spiritual warfare. (II Tim. 2:2)

Secondly, Luke states in Acts 8:4 that evangelism begins where you are: "They . . . .preached. . . .wherever they went." Soul winning is not a theory that first must be tried in Timbuktu. Evangelism is the out-rush of the human soul who must tell others all around him. The early church took dead aim on Jerusalem (Lk. 24:47) before they trained their sites on the "uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Too many have missed the real punch line. Folks today are leap-frogging over millions in their own back yards as they send the gospel to the "uttermost." Brethren, the real fuel for sustaining world evangelism is to win in our own

habitat. Let's go into all the world—beginning where we are standing!

### **The Harvest is Plentiful**

Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." (Matt. 9:37-38)

We say, "We just don't have many prospects." Jesus says, "Open your eyes" (Jn. 4:35-36); we say, "It's so hard in this town." Jesus rebukes by declaring, "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). Who is right? I believe we all must vote with the Lord.

Prospects for conversion abound all around us. There are many "ready made" prospects that can be won for the asking. They are: (1) mates of members; (2) visitors at services, (3) children on the Bible School roll; (4) Vacation Bible School contacts; (5) Parents of the children who are brought in buses; (6) newcomers to town; (7) benevolent contacts; (8) radio and T.V. contacts; (9) those ferreted out during a religious census of the community; (10) those who indicate an interest from the local jail; (11) the youth taught at summer camp; and (12) those contacted through hospitals and nursing homes.

Another avenue that is worthy to explore for prospects is the friends of members. Each church can develop an Andrews Class. This simply means the calling together of 25 or 30 families and commit them to win 2 families in "their world" over a 12 month span. The class meets monthly to give progress reports. Each soul-winning family cultivates the prospect's friendship and spiritual interest each month. The members can share in social activities with the prospects initially. Later there can be invitations into the members homes as well as to church services and activities; the ultimate goal is to set up a home Bible study with the prospect. The soul winner may teach the prospects or secure the

service of another Christian. I have witnessed many souls won through such a long-range program. One brother won his neighbors, parents, sister and brother-in-law and a host of others while in such a class. We must win on purpose or not at all!

### **Gospel Meetings Produce Results**

The day of great gospel meetings is just beginning! Never before have we been so blessed with facilities, finances, and folks as we are today. Our approach must be different than it was even a few years ago. Competition for the public mind is truly intense, but the potential of having a great harvest in a local church meeting is still tremendous.

### **A Winning Strategy**

No one has all the answers as to what makes a meeting great. However, there are some basics that are absolutely essential. Some basic questions to be answered:

1. *What do you wish to accomplish?* Any concerted soul-winning effort should attempt to: (1) convert many new adults from the community; (2) develop many new friends for the church for future conversion; (3) bring the youth in our attendance to obedience; (4) restore erring brethren; (5) build up every member of the local church; (6) encourage fellowship among congregations of the Lord's people and (7) put the church on the map in the community.

2. *When do you wish to accomplish your goals?* A target date needs to be set, then the membership needs to move with concerted action toward those dates. The success of a gospel meeting is determined months before the event. At least six months of intensive planning needs to be made to guarantee the success of the effort. The six weeks before the meeting must be the most intense in every phase of the preparation. The momentum must not "peak" too soon; everything must come together at the right time.

3. *How will we accomplish our goals?* There are several

keys to successful meetings. These golden keys are: (1) A profound faith that you will succeed; (2) Select the right man. The evangelist must be carefully selected. He must be one that you can sell to the members and the public. He must not be selected because of "connections," popularity or a fine local work. Especially, he must have a spark of evangelistic fire. The key question: "Can he get results?"; (3) Budget sufficient funds. Those who are not willing to budget sufficient funds are not willing to be spent; where our treasure is there our heart will be also. Yet, money is not the real object. If you cannot have a good meeting in a small congregation on a limited budget, you are likely to have only a bigger failure in a large congregation on an unlimited budget. Money is important to do the job right, but it is not the most critical thing; (4) Use the best advertising approach. One of the priorities in advertising is to sell the man. For all he is worth—sell the man. It is his business to sell Christ during the meeting. We must convince the public that they should hear him; (5) Treat the evangelist right. Support him well; treat his time right; respect his ability. Do everything possible to assure that he is well rested and unruffled; (6) Bring in trained workers to aid in soul winning. This will multiply the opportunities and the results. These brethren who stay in the homes of the members will serve as a leavening influence in the entire congregation. These workers will leave a part of themselves behind; (7) Involve the membership. Advertising is great, but involvement of the members is the most important ingredient. We must challenge the members to give their best to the Master. The members must be made to feel it is *our* meeting. They must work to win their friends and strangers from the community. The real keys are the shoe leather, knuckles, knee caps and lips; (8) Conserve the results. There must always be ample follow-up to preserve our fruit. We must always evaluate past efforts and discard that which doesn't work; (9) Invite the fellowship of other churches. Encourage other congregations—especially in

your area—to share in the success and the worship of the meeting. Our example in soul-winning can ignite the fires in other churches. The attendance of other churches swells the attendance and encourages the local brethren; and (10) Place prayer at the center of all our endeavors. We must “work as if it all depends on us and pray as if it all depends on God.” Prayer is a mighty sickle in the harvest field. The disciples must pray collectively and individually for the prospects, speaker, and efforts of the workers. We must talk to God about men before we talk to men about God.

4. *Who will lead?* There must be a place for every man and every man in his place. Gospel meetings will only succeed when led by the elders. The local church is but the extended shadow of its leadership. No church will rise higher than its leadership. The pulpit and all the ministers must be evangelistic and push the meeting, but the real outcome lies with the eldership. The elders must be out in front in every stage of final preparation. If the congregation thinks it’s all just “the preachers idea,” then the effort is destined to fail. The elders must be the real pastors and not the preacher.

5. *How much does it cost?* This must be determined long before the undertaking is approved. Only those who first count the cost can succeed (Lk. 14:25-33). The cost not only involves dollars, but talent, numbers, blood, sweat, and tears. We must never begin a gigantic evangelistic effort without the resources, commitment and willpower to finish the task. Whatever the cost—it’s cheap in comparison to the returns (Lk. 6:38).

### **Sound Doctrine**

Healthy flesh for spiritual bones must consist of *sound doctrine*.

Archimedes said, “Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth.” He understood the power of the fulcrum.

Many in our day have relinquished their stand. Preaching today has fallen on hard times. Preaching is now in the

doldrums—if not in the dog-house. Our day has become the day of dialogue rather than declaration.

Young men today are often discouraged from preaching as they witness disciples' disdain for the pulpit. Many members with an eye on the clock and a foot in the aisle are saying to the messenger, "Son, don't preach past noontime. We must beat our denominational friends to the cafeteria. Just hold us a service and don't be so serious in heralding a Saviour." So, old time oratory is passe. Many feel the church can do without a coarse-voiced, Bible-thumping preacher in the pulpit making a lot of dogmatic statements to a captive audience.

Brethren, a church cannot grow on chaff! Only "back to the Bible preaching" will grow an evangelistic church. We must return to distinctive preaching that rings with Biblical clarity; once again we must give the "sense of the scripture." A church conservative in doctrine, Biblical in preaching, militant in action, evangelistic in spirit, strict in morals, and undenominational in posture will grow. Stake the word out in the hearts of men and watch the church catch fire!

We must preach the *fundamentals of the faith*. (II Tim. 4:2) Philosophic or socially oriented preaching will kill a church. Liberalism is the gospel of the empty church building. Bible preaching appeals to intellectuals, youth, aged and middle-America. However, we are to preach the word whether it appeals or not. But, it has been proven that such grand themes as the Virgin Birth, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Lordship of Jesus, the Second Coming and Undenominational Christianity attract and convert men.

If we dilute the message, what do we have when we go to the lost? The first-century Christians recognized the need for *proper* teaching as well as urgent teaching. Early disciples persevered in the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42) and resolved doctrinal problems at the home base (Acts 15). God's ambassadors fitted their message to men's needs rather than their fickle curiosities. (Acts 17:18) They never

winked at heresy, but took courageous stands against immorality (I Cor. 5), sectarianism (I Cor. 3:3-4), modernism (I Cor. 15:12), fake doctrine (II Jn. 9-11), and apathy (Rev. 3:14-20). The results? Fantastic! Such bold actions turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6); caught the imagination of men; and won the respect of a hostile world (Acts 2:47; 6:7; 11:24). The divine strategy: *win with the word or die with a lie!* The early church gave the world a live option and multitudes stormed to the cross.

As then—so now! A religion that is definitive, lovingly tough, separate, evangelistic and fundamental will win. Liberalism has nothing to offer. Social discourses and a rosewater gospel are the burial garments for liberal churches. Only the gospel of blood can live! (I Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14)

Wayne Dehoney, a Baptist preacher, in his recent book explores the phenomenal growth among churches of Christ. His conclusion:

“. . . . The Churches of Christ are antiecumenical in their relationships; conservative in their theology; autonomous and democratic in their congregational practice without any semblance of a denominational superstructure; they have a rigid biblical theology, with a strong emphasis on the Bible preaching and Bible teaching; they make rigid moral and ethical demands on their members in such matters as social drinking; they are not “social action” oriented; they have a “messianic complex” after being the true people of God and the true church! All these factors combine to give them a high motivation, an unquenchable zeal and inescapable compulsion to win the world to an acceptance of their convictions and beliefs. *And they are growing rapidly!*”<sup>1</sup>

Well said!

### Harmonious Flesh

Spiritual bones must wear *one flesh*. While there must be a diversity of members (I Cor. 12:27) there must be singleness

of flesh. Luke succinctly describes the oneness of the Jerusalem church: "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul. . . ." (Acts 4:32). There will never be evangelism in the world until there is unity in the church.

Every local church must ask, "How many churches meet under this one roof?" This haunting question often has more substance than meets the eye.

You may declare: "There is only one, united church here! We have never fought over the building; there never has been a split; we have been together from the start." That's wonderful, but let me ask you again, "Are you really one in spirit—one in the Lord?" You see, we may all meet under one roof; worship the same Lord; partake of the same bread; attend the same classes; and mingle our voices in song—yet possess a divided state; we may be miles apart in spirit.

The most critical need in today's churches is a oneness of spirit. Paul urged ". . . that ye stand fast in *one spirit, with one mind* striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. 1:27) There is no substitute for the priceless ingredient of oneness. We may keep up the orthodoxy of doctrine and attempt to oil a militant program, but unless we possess and demonstrate the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), we are drilling in a dry hole.

There must be maintained in every viable congregation a common feeling of love and "family-ness" among the members. The "Jerusalem spirit" of being of "one heart and soul" must be characteristic of every local church. It's that extra plus; that sense of togetherness, "family-ness," or comradeship that vows, "We are one for all and all for one"; that spirit of the group that welds the local church into a mighty fortress for our God. Let's face it, this spirit is difficult to define; a church either has it or it doesn't. Such affinity declares, "We have experienced a common birth (Jn. 3:5); entered into a common grace (Eph. 1:7); share in a common battle (II Tim. 2:3); and entertain a common hope (Eph.

4:4-6). Therefore, as comrades-in-arms we must wear our badge of identity—which is love. (Jn. 13:34)

Love is a powerful force that welds together the various backgrounds and personalities; love is that Geiger counter that finds hidden good in the lives of all men; love is the adrenalin that flows through the body of Christ and enlivens it; love is the spark that ignites a flaming fellowship at the local level. God's religion in a word is love! (Jn. 13:34-35)

Every church must maintain a fellowship of mutual concern in order to *create the right atmosphere* for evangelism. Brethren will never love the lost in the world until they love one another in the church.

Today, we are interested in ecology. Our people are demanding clean air and streams. Someone said our air in one city is so dense and foul that the birds wake up coughing every morning. Another man said he thought he was looking at a bluebird, but he later learned it was a cardinal holding its breath.

Often our greatest pollution is in the church. Our atmosphere in many churches is stifling; you have often visited or held membership in dead, cold, impersonal churches; you could scrape the icicles off the walls; they telegraphed the feeling that they really didn't care whether you lived or died—"just so we hold services."

God knew you could not grow great churches out of inferior relationships. So, the first-century church appointed deacons to quell the disgruntled spirits (Acts 6). Stephen and his cohorts were appointed to develop a sweet atmosphere in the Jerusalem church; they were peace-makers as they pacified the peace-breakers (Acts 6:1-6). Their efforts paid off in the evangelistic field: "And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Their concern with the spiritual ecology bore fruit!

Evangelism begins with "family-ness"; charity begins at

home! We must create such a loving fellowship in each church that every member can say, "I'm loved, I'm important; they really care about me here." Out of that climate of warmth and love will emerge a mighty outreach to the lost.

God's family must be strong at the center. Divorce in human families often occur because the marriage is weak at the center and cannot survive the pressures and problems of everyday living. So, churches falter under duress because they have not centrality of love and harmony to sustain the hammer-blows of Satan; we must build to last!

### **A Brother's Keeper Program**

On a monkey's cage in Fort Worth there is a sign that reads, "I am my keeper's brother!" We may smile and deny the allegation. But, let's be convicted that the converse is true: *we are our brother's keeper!*

### **The Purpose**

In the beginning chapters of time there was an occasion when God asked a man, "Where is thy brother Abel?" Cain's reply was ". . . Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9) We cannot ignore this question in our own time. Are we our brother's keeper?

Every church needs to launch a Brother's Keeper Program. Churches small and large can benefit from this fellowship of mutual concern.

The Brother's Keeper Program provides individual Christians the means to work in an organized way to further the Lord's kingdom at the grass roots level. Leaders and members are offered a tremendous challenge to insure that the tasks assigned are discharged properly and efficiently.

One of the very basic reasons for an organized work such as this is to provide a link with every member of the congregation. Members will come to know that others do care and are interested in providing encouragement in faithfully living the Christian life. A member cannot decide either by pur-

pose or negligence to refrain from the worship assembly without the notice of other Christians.

This program can be a wonderful means of communication to and from every member of the congregation. Its worth cannot be measured in terms of effort expended but in the souls of men.

### **The Plan**

The congregation can be divided up into areas called Brother's Keeper Units. Each unit contains from twelve to fifteen families and is directed by two families, a leader and co-leader.

Monthly meetings are held for each unit in homes of its members.

This work will enable the church to become more effective in its work in that: (1) Reports can be made of newcomers, good prospects and fallen Christians; (2) Reports can be made of the hospitalized, sick, deaths and shut-ins; (3) Distribution of advertising, papers and announcements can be done; (4) Work for special Bible school drives, special classes and meetings can be secured; and (5) Food for the ill and bereaved can be provided.

There is no limit to the good that can be accomplished through this fine program. For further information contact Brother Wes Price, the author of this fine program, at the Trinity Oaks Church of Christ in Dallas.

### **AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?**

Am I my brother's keeper?

The Lord ordained it so.

He appointed me to work in his vineyard

That His cause might prosper and grow.

The minister's duty is to teach us the word

The Elders—to see we don't fall.

But to be a brother's keeper

Is the duty of one and all.

If we're truly our brother's keeper  
 We'll visit the sick and bereaved.  
 And always give unselfishly  
 To any who are in need.

A brother's keeper is willing  
 To serve others day or night  
 And in their darkest hour of sorrow  
 Be their guiding light.

So will you be a brother's keeper  
 And lend a helping hand  
 Giving aid and comfort when needed  
 Whenever and wherever you can?

Be a Good Samaritan every day  
 Filled with His spirit of love.  
 Rejoicing as a brother's keeper  
 Guided by His hand from above.

**Howard Drake**—member at Walnut Hill  
 Church of Christ

*A loving family will heal a needy world with the gospel!*

### **The Right Spirit**

A third, basic principle in involving a local church in evangelism is capturing *the right spirit*. God's army must not only be organized and equipped with effort, but animated with a heavenly spirit:

Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. And I will put My Spirit with you, and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. . . .  
 (Ezekiel 37:13-14)

Ezekiel learned that the Spirit is the central dynamic of life. Skeletons and skins alone remain corpses!

It takes more than organization and activity to bring off a spiritual resurrection. Too long have we relied on human programs, finite wisdom and effort to reach a lost world. The

real fuel to run the congregational machinery is *proper attitudes*. Without the proper spirit or motivation a local unit of God will soon descend again to “death valley.” It’s the spirit that counts; when the right posture or disposition is infused, then right organization and functioning follows. Fruit-bearing in an orderly fashion is the real by-product of “spirited” souls.

Churches must not seek to be great! They must seek Christ! When we really find Him all else will fall into place. Soul-winning is a result—an effect of a “soul revival” in the church; growth and success for Christ are but serendipities—footnotes to our allegiance to the Lord.

### **The Spirit of Submission**

We are under new management!

Isaiah *saw God* and in life-submission volunteered, “Here am I, send me!” (Isa. 6:8) Paul *saw Jesus* enthroned and knelt with these words: “For we preach not ourselves, but *Christ Jesus as Lord*; and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (II Cor. 4:5).

The Lordship of Jesus is the touchstone of our faith; Jesus as Lord is the axis of scripture. Any man who has accepted only the Saviourhood of Christ, without His Lordship, has missed the very basis for his new allegiance.

Christ demands a clean break with the world, the flesh and the devil! Too many baptized pagans have flocked into churches lightheartedly bringing their idols and their sins with them. Too many of us are still attempting to serve Christ and Caesar, God and Mammon; too many are leading double lives—fearing the Lord and serving their own gods; too many are willing to crown Christ as Lord with their lips but not with their lives. We have failed to see that we cannot be saved on the installment plan with our fingers crossed and inner reservations.

Jesus demands loyalty beyond any earthly dictator. To prospective followers He threw a stern challenge: “Let the

dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” (Lk. 9:60) “Go. . . . preach the gospel. . . .” (Mk. 16:15-16); and “No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Lk. 9:62) Our Lord was after disciples—not more joiners!

Is Jesus your Lord? Is He Lord of your body, your thoughts, your tongue, your temper, your passions, your spare time, your life plans, your pocketbook, your church life and your recreation?

The heart of the deeper Christian life is making Jesus Lord. This dynamic is the motivation for evangelism.

### **The Sense of Awe**

We must draw closer to the heart of Jesus. This comes only through *worship and the sense of awe*.

Isaiah plead, “Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8) because, “. . . my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:5). The sense of awe, praise and adoration overwhelmed the prophet and sent him into the harvest field when he “. . . saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted. . . .” (Isa. 6:1). Isaiah sensed God’s greatness and his own smallness; Jehovah’s holiness and his own uncleanness; the King’s authority and his own submission; and the Lord’s infiniteness and his own finiteness. Isaiah could not stand the comparison and he prostrated himself before Heaven’s will. (Isa. 6:5; 8)

The church must recapture her sense of awe; the art of worship. Devotion creates emotion that triggers submission: “Here am I; send me.”

We have lost our sense of awe. We seldom teach in books, classes or sermons on this superlative subject; consequently, we have lost God in our assemblies. Our formal “worship” of dead singing, perfunctory prayers and dull experiences leaves us cold. Few attenders are seeing the King, His throne or His awesome majesty. Disdain for the Sunday and Wednesday evening pew is indicative of our

poverty of worship. We will never look out to others and in to self until we have looked up to Heaven's throne.

We put skin on God in worship. God becomes real, awesome and resplendent as we "kiss toward Him." Worship is little men looking up to a great God and becoming like what they see; it is the habitual vision of greatness; it is becoming enraptured with God's power, grace and loving forgiveness (Isa. 6:6-7); it is dressing one's heart with profound gratitude; it is filling one's mind with divine dictates; and it is shodding one's feet with heavenly service.

We will never really see the earth's lost until we see heaven's Occupant!

### **The Lift of Love**

The fire went out at Ephesus!

The body of saints at Ephesus could have made success reports to the religious papers. They were a working, conservative church. They loathed fake doctrine and impure deeds—but they had heart trouble.

Christ's prognosis was, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4). The honeymoon was over—the spark had gone out! They were doctrinally sound but spiritually empty; they were doing all the right things for the wrong reasons; they had lost their original motivation; hearts that should have been aflame were as cold as marble.

The church today often suffers from the same malady. We can experience a wave of mass evangelism and church activity with love nowhere near. Most of us need time out to tune up!

To restore our original love for Jesus, we need to re-examine our hearts. We must face our sins, the cross, and the Judge to bring us back to our senses (Gal. 6:14; II Cor. 5:10). That real love for Jesus will only be recaptured when we confess our sins (Jn. 5:16), renounce ourselves (Lk. 9:23), and submit our lives to the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:37). Our

greatest need in all our lives is a new beginning with God each day. When closeness to Christ is lost, the fire either goes out or merely smolders.

The way back to love for the Lord is easily bridged by intense study of God's word (II Tim. 2:15), by constantly agonizing in prayer (I Thess. 5:11), and by total immersion in the service of Christ. Take your eye off Jesus and you will become only a robot of righteousness; the inner man will be hollow.

Christ says to His people, "Give me your heart." Let's daily discover anew the Christ!

### **The Adrenalin of Assurance**

Guilt never built a great church! A sense of condemnation is leukemia of the spirit.

A dynamic church is the outgrowth of renewed souls who have captured the joy of salvation (Ps. 51:12; Phil 4:4). The local church must possess an atmosphere of victory and expectation. The assurance of salvation must ignite every soul within the local framework. Doubt, pessimism and guilt suffocate God's dream for a lost world. When men know what God has done for them, they know what they must do for God!

Too many of us serve God in fear and doubt. While we repudiate the doctrine of "once in grace, always in grace," we have espoused the notion of "once saved, barely saved." We view ourselves hanging over the abyss of hell by our fingertips. We fear that God will soon release our tenuous hold and shove us into the pit. Many of us view God as a bully who has put us on the track of a roller-coaster religion; we feel saved one minute and lost the next. We fear that we must die with a prayer on our lips or a filmstrip in our hands; many have quit in their frustration.

Brethren, such gloom and view of our Lord is heresy. God wants happy, radiant people; persistent fear is no part of God's program for His saints: "For God has not given us a

spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” (II Tim. 1:7) Again, John penned, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love Him because He first loved us” (I Jn. 4:18-19).

Isaiah was enthralled with God’s loving forgiveness: “Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs. And he touched my mouth with it and said, Behold, this has touched your lips; and is forgiven.” (Isa. 6:6-7)

Isaiah’s sense of inward cleansing and freedom from sin’s guilt led this sage to enlist by crying, “Here am I; send me!” Evangelism was born of assurance!

Today’s church, born in eternity and bathed in blood, must be assured of eternal life. We must believe in Heaven’s grace that causes us to walk in the red rain of Calvary: “But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (I Jn. 1:7) As we daily strive to walk in Jesus’ will, His blood keeps on cleansing us from all sin. God knows what’s in our heart and as we stand ready to repudiate sin in our lives, Jesus’ blood compensates for our frailties. My appeal, therefore, must be to Jesus’ blood and not my own imperfect life. Heaven takes over where human frailty falters. His blood allows for my weaknesses. When I possess the attitude of contrition and confession—the blood keeps me clean. (I Jn. 1:9) What exhilaration—what joy!

With such peace within, I must tell the good news to others: “Restore unto men the joy of Thy salvation. . . . Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, And sinners will be converted to Thee.” (Ps. 51:12-13) World evangelism begins with personal assurance. Soul-winning is not an option—it is an imperative. If men seal our lips, we will talk on our fingers; we will aspire to get the message out to others. The

church, therefore, must be at peace *with* God before it can bring peace *from* God.

### The Frontier of Faith

“. . . and this is the victory that has overcome the world—*our faith*.” (I Jn. 5:4)

We must believe in what we are doing; we must be convinced that soul winning is the greatest work in the world; we must be convinced that we can evangelize the world.

We often blame circumstances for our failure; the real culprit is unbelief. It's what is on the inside that counts! Our position tomorrow is determined by our disposition today; success is not determined by altitude but by attitude. We must capture the optimistic and positive mind of Jesus: “. . . we are taking *every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*.” (II Cor. 10:3) We must think as Christ thought.

There is no room for gloom and pessimism in God's camp; leave that with the world!

We must say with Paul, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13) We must be thermostats rather than thermometers. A thermometer simply registers the environment, while a thermostat changes it. We must make the most of our circumstances or they will make the most of us.

Someone has said that optimism is an elephant hanging over a cliff with his tail wrapped around a dandelion. That's optimism! We must not be like the grandmother who said to her granddaughter, “Honey, I don't care what you play on that piano—just so it's sad.” When we hear folks say, “It won't work,” or “It can't be done,” then we know they have buried their faith.

I often hear folks moan that they are but “grasshoppers” because the church is small, uneducated, poor or leaderless. But, when will we learn that obstacles are often but opportunities. Paul turned prisons into cathedrals of worship (Acts 16) and Jesus transformed His cross into a crown.

(Heb. 12:1-3) So, when life hands us lemons—let's make lemonade! Let's not believe our doubts nor doubt our beliefs.

Faith, then, is a dynamic for victory. It will move mountains, unlock padlocked doors and overcome the world. Our life will never become our cemetery unless we bury our faith. Let's pray: "I believe; help thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9:24)

### **Commitment to Compassion**

Someone has said, "If a perfect man existed in a world such as ours, he would die of horror and compassion at the terrible things that happened in it every second." A perfect man did exist; He died of compassion.

"When He saw the multitudes, He was *moved with compassion* on them, because they were. . . .as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

See this portrait of the compassionate Christ; painted in soft, blended shades, it conveys all the mercy, love and innermost feelings of Jesus.

Jesus' hands best reflect the mercy and empathy of heaven: "And one shall say unto Him; What are these wounds in thine hands? Then He shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends'" (Zech. 13:6). Look closely at those hands: laid on a cross, pierced by nails, torn in agony and hurt for human redemption (Eph. 1:7). Oh, how the nail-print hands of Jesus should move us to compassion.

It is so hard to keep on caring in our day. The news blitz so bombards us daily with war, hunger and victims of floods and earthquakes, we find ourselves building an iron curtain around our emotions. We are often the victims of "compassion fatigue." It's so difficult to keep on mustering up more pity as the needy come to our doors, as broken homes cry for deliverance and as lost souls crowd upon the mental screen of our conscience. There are so many unfor-

tunate and disinherited; we attend to three and six take their place; we often tire and become weary in well-doing (Gal. 6:9). Weariness with caring has administered a massive dose of Novocain to our consciences; we shut out the cries of the lost.

How different was Paul: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3).

I hear Paul's heart-sob for the lost! He was convinced that men were lost—doomed and damned. He saw men as immortal souls banished from God and destined for Hell. This shattering thought so shocked his sensitivity and horrified his soul that he offered to trade his own soul for perishing men.

Watch Paul as he sits over next to the burning chasm of hell: he is a witness on execution row! His soul churns and repulses as he beholds Satan's victims taken down a long, dark corridor to an awesome door; on the other side looms the devil's horror chamber—the electric chair of the Bible. Paul's eye fastens on a brother ready to be delivered to the pit: the victim eats his last meal; they shave his head; a Rabbi reads from the Old Testament; the Jew is led to a huge door and when opened, the furnace flames of hell leap for their prey. Paul, in shocked revulsion cries, "Oh, God, I would go to hell if it would spring my poor brother from death." Oh, what sacrificial love!

Would you make such an exchange? We can't go to hell for others, but we can go to their door with the saving gospel. When will we go?

### **A Heavenly Hope**

The first century church was a bride in waiting: "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour." (Matt. 25:13) The theme of their lives was, "Maranatha! Maranatha!—Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming!"

We don't get very excited about the Lord's return. We

envision our earthly life to endure for 70 or 80 years, we think of dying after a long life and being buried for at least a million years; all this doesn't excite us nor instill a sense of urgency to take the world for Christ.

What a different perspective the early disciples had. They heard Paul say, "...the Lord is near" (Phil. 4:5). They were moved by James who assured, "...for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (Ja. 5:8). Finally, they were inspired by John who promised, "Yes, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

The first-century saints were militant because they believed that Jesus could very well come in their lifetime. The above scriptures are not setting a date but suggesting a spirit: *a constant looking for the appearance of Jesus*. (Phil. 3:20-21; Heb. 9:28; I Thess. 4:15-18) They eagerly awaited the Saviour. Brethren—so must we!

We must believe that Jesus could come for us before the day is through. **THE SECOND COMING MUST BE OUR MASTER LIGHT OF HOPE.** We must feel that every knock might be His knock; every voice, His voice; every shadow, His shadow. We must so live as if Christ died last evening, was raised this morning and is coming again tonight!

Such a spirit of expectation will put God's saints on the move; it will cancel our complacency and enliven our spirit; it will bring a new spirit of urgency to a passive people.

May we so capture the spirit of hope and expectation that we can bow with John and shout, "...Come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20)

### **A Final Word**

The world stands at the crossroads, at the brink of doom. Our century of crisis now faces a final choice between world evangelism and world revolution.

The case is not yet terminal; the verdict is not yet in; but this old world is heaving heavily.

The world is aflame with starvation, bankruptcy, lawlessness, communism and unbelief. There is confusion and near panic in the councils of men. Our generation is armed with such a stockpile of missiles that in just one flash the whole earth could tremble like a devastated Hiroshima.

The intellectuals, who have led us into the new space age, live lives of suffocation. There is a gnawing that for all his modern advance, man has missed the best things in life. He hides behind the facade of feigned serenity, as if he is really master of his ship.

What you hear ticking is a potential, spiritual explosion! It can be Pentecost, Samaria, and Cane Ridge all wrapped into one. The need has never been greater and the multitudes have never been more accessible. It's a poor time for God's people to develop evangelistic laryngitis.

It's time we get on with the task of the Great Commission. We must not fail the Lord who sends us nor the world that needs us.

I appeal to every child of God to begin thinking in terms of taking this old world for Christ—beginning **now!**

“It may not be on the mountain's height,  
Or over the stormy sea;  
It may not be at the battle front  
My Lord will have need of me;

But if I am needed anywhere,  
In paths that I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Thine,  
I'll go where you want me to go.

—  
I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,  
Over mountain or plain or sea;  
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,  
I'll be what you want me to be.”

FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup>See Dehoney, Wayne, *Set the Church Afire!*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971) p. 30.