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1981: Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures - Full Text

Reuel Lemmons

Anthony Lee Ash

B. J. Humble

Thomas Foster

John C. Stevens

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Reuel Lemmons, Anthony Lee Ash, B. J. Humble, Thomas Foster, John C. Stevens, Jerry Jones, Batsell Barrett Baxter, Jack P. Lewis, R.H. "Tex" Williams, Richard Rogers, Phillip Morrison, and Charles A. Siburt Jr.

Our Uncommon Commitment

Our Uncommon Commitment

being the

Abilene Christian University

Annual Bible Lectures

1981

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PREFACE

The 1981 annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian University is part of the 75th Year celebration. The theme of the entire year at the University is *Celebrating An Uncommon Commitment*. In keeping with that theme, we have entitled this year's Lectureship program, "Our Uncommon Commitment."

As Christians in an academic community, we are committed to many things. But central to everything that we do is the statement that appears on the cornerstone of the Administration Building—"We believe in the divinity of Christ and in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures."

In the last speech that Don Morris made in Chapel at Abilene Christian University, he closed with the words, "This is no ordinary College." The University community believes that the commitment to the divinity of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of the scriptures is central to their uniqueness.

The purpose of the annual Bible Lectureship program at Abilene Christian University is to further the cause of Christ in the world. We realize that there are many detailed ways in which the Lectureship program can encourage such growth and development. We strive to have some of the very best thinking in the brotherhood presented at the Lectureship. In the classes, and in the exhibit arrangement, many workable ideas are exchanged which prove helpful to others. Also, the inspiration provided by the fellowship of approximately 10,000 Christians each year helps to provide Lectureship visitors with some of their most wonderful spiritual experiences.

This book is dedicated to all those who earnestly yearn for God's will to become known and obeyed in all the earth.

CARL BRECHEEN
Lectureship Director

Main Speeches

A Church for All Times

Reuel Lemmons

Address: 5801 Wynona,
Austin, Texas 78756

Family: Wife: the former
Imogene Mayes. Sons: Norvel
and Leon.

Education: Graduated from
High School at Tipton,
Oklahoma; graduated from
Abilene Christian College,
cum laude, in 1935.

Ministry: Currently serves
as minister of the Westover
Hills Church of Christ in
Austin, Texas, where he also
is an elder. He preached in
Tipton, Oklahoma for eight
years, and for the Central
Church of Christ in Cleburne,
Texas for twelve years. During that time he headed a drive to
plant congregations of the church among the people of the
Union of South Africa, and preached over the powerful radio
station Mozambique, Portuguese East Africa.

In 1955 Brother Lemmons became editor of the Firm Foundation,
and continues in that capacity today. He has served on
the editorial staff of 20th Century Christian for over forty
years. He continues his extensive schedule of gospel meetings,
conducting more than thirty each year. In addition, he has
appeared on numerous college Bible lectureships, workshops,
and teacher training programs. His preaching and travels on
behalf of the church have taken him coast to coast, and into over
fifty foreign lands. He has preached on every inhabited continent
on earth.

Brother Lemmons has been a member of the Board of Trustees
of Abilene Christian University since 1950, and a member of
the Board of Pepperdine University since 1971. He is on the
Board of Christian Education Foundation, and is one of the
founders of Christian Minister's Association.



Other Fields of Special Interest: He founded the Pan American Lectureship in 1962, which is held in a different Latin American country each November. He is the author of two books, *Abundant Living*, and *The King and His Kingdom*. He edited the *Majestic Hymnal*, *Hymns of Praise*, and *The New Smith's Bible Dictionary*. He founded the Foundation School of Music in 1966.

All human institutions, including churches, bear upon them the marks of the circumstances out of which they were born, and the imprint of their human mentors. As they grow older, they begin to show the cracks and stress signs of age, and finally they pass into oblivion.

There is only one institution on earth today that will survive time and eternity. All banks will close, all schools will dissolve, and all commercial establishments will fall into decay, but the church of Jesus Christ will not pass away.

When Jesus confronted Peter with the question of his identity, in Matthew 16, he promised to build a church, based squarely upon the fact that he was the Son of God and Mary—not Joseph and Mary. He furthermore promised that the gates of Hell would not be able to prevail against it. It would be a church for all times.

On the day of Pentecost, God bombed history with the Holy Spirit. The message from heaven announced that this Jesus whom they had crucified had been made both Lord and Christ. Amid divine demonstrations of supernatural power the Gospel began to be preached among men, and the benevolence of God was poured out on a sincurse race. The remission of sins became a reality, and the gap that was created by Adam's transgression was closed by Jesus' sacrifice.

For the first time in human history it was possible for a man to stand before God forgiven, justified, and cleansed. The event of Pentecost marked the beginning of a church for all times.

It is exceedingly difficult for time-bound mortals to think of the church in a timeless way. We are so accustomed to thinking of churches in the denominational and sectarian sense we are hardly able to conceive of an organism rather than an organization; a timeless, shapeless order of redeemed souls rather than a list of names on a church roll.

We find it hard to sell undenominational Christianity, because we ourselves have trouble defining and identifying the church of God. Concepts are fully as varied as are concepts of God. In an effort to approach undenominational Christianity from a new, and yet old, viewpoint, let us consider the church as the covenant people of God.

A Covenant People

Man is essentially a covenant creature. It is covenant relationship with God that gives life its meaning. Adam in covenant with God was king and master of all creation. When that relationship was severed, he was totally undone, subject to death and inevitable return to dust. So long as he was in covenant with God, Adam walked and talked with God as a man might talk with his friend. He broke no bread; he offered no prayer; no smoke ascended from his sacrificial altar, for he needed no sacrifice. When he broke the covenant, death became the grim reaper. In himself man has no great worth—he is simply a few cents worth of common minerals and salts. He is only dust. This is the real terror of hedonism. If that is all

there is to man, his highest goal can only be to eat, drink and be merry, and tomorrow die and forget it. It is the connection—the covenant—with God that invests man with infinite worth. It was the covenant alone that vested Adam with dignity and status.

When Israel became God's covenant partner she was incorporated into a kingdom. God hedged Israel with ten thousand blessings, and she became "the people of God." The entire Old Testament breathes the spirit of celebration. There was no other people like Israel. The reason was the covenant. There is no other explanation of Israel's miraculous existence, jammed in as she was between the nut-cracker jaws of history's mightiest nations—Egypt, Babylon, and Syria, except that the covenant vested Israel with dignity and power possessed by none other. The Hebrew scriptures are ablaze with the celebration of the covenant. The feasts, the sacrifices, the rituals—they all proclaimed the covenant. Had Israel remained a faithful covenant partner she might have exercised dominion over the earth.

In the covenant Israel had access to God as no other people had access to Him. God did for Israel what he would do for no other nation. Every book of the Old Testament reflects the glory of Israel's having Jehovah as their king. The Jubilee trumpet sounded regularly. Their numerous feasts were occasions of celebration, and the joy of the people knew no bounds. They kept the Sabbath holy because it was a weekly reminder of the covenant. It was a sign and seal of the covenant. The boundless exuberance of Israel celebrating having God as their king simply transcends the understanding of a Gentile.

The Old Testament spirit of celebration, however, was not without its blemishes. There were sour notes

in the song. When the covenant was broken the spirit of worship and praise was disrupted. There was nothing to celebrate in Babylon. Their harps hung on the willows and their tears ran down without ceasing. It became the painful task of weeping prophets to pronounce the terrible woes upon a covenant breaking people.

When we open the pages of the New Testament we are immediately introduced to the Messiah who had come to fulfil all that was promised by the prophets. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me," Jesus declared, "because the Lord has appointed me to preach the gospel to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. . . ." The gospel was likened unto a great feast to which all had an invitation. The good news was to be proclaimed worldwide, that the broken covenant could now be renewed. God was to "make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, saith the Lord; I will write my law in their hearts, and on their minds will I write it; and they will not say, every man to his neighbor, 'know the Lord,' for each shall know me from the least to the greatest, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more forever." And thus Jesus refused to allow them to make his disciples fast while he was with them. In him were all the blessings of God's covenant. His death was not a disaster; it was to be the sealing of a New Covenant.

If the spirit of celebration was great in the Old Testament, it is much greater in the New Testament. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper he called it the New covenant in his blood. The Supper is much more than just a memorial feast. It is a celebration

of the covenant. It is the seal in blood of our emancipation proclamation. How any person could be a member of a religious order that did not regularly celebrate the covenant at the Lord's table I cannot understand. How any Christian can thoughtlessly absent himself from that celebration of the covenant is even less understandable.

Baptism is also a notary seal on the contract between God and man. It applies at the very point where the covenant is signed. It does not come before, nor does it trail along after, the validating of the covenant. Every verse in the Bible that deals with baptism attributes to it this significance.

Far from being simply "church ordinances" to designate brotherhood, or to apply membership, both the Lord's Supper and baptism are ordinances of the Lord. They are ordained to give solemnity to the covenant relationship. Modern religious efforts to play down the significance or the importance of either ordinance is next to blasphemy.

Covenants have signs and seals. The marriage covenant has a ring and a pledge. Noah was given a rainbow. The Sabbath was the seal of the law of Moses. The Lord's Supper and baptism are the signs and seals of the new covenant.

The New Testament church is the church of the New Covenant. All God's covenant people are included in the covenant church. That church is in no sense a denomination. The world's population is divided into two companies—those in covenant relationship to God and those who are not in covenant relationship with Him. There is no third alternative. The church for all times is and will be the entire covenant people of God.

It is the covenant that identifies the church. Sectarian sources use other means of identification. Their creeds, their governments, their distinctive names and dogmas—these all help to identify them. But with the church of Jesus Christ there is no other mark of identity save the covenant.

In covenant relationship with God the saints are invincible. They have everything to celebrate. If they break that relationship through apostasy they have everything to fear. Closely related to God's Kingship over Israel in olden times was the idea of God's righteousness—or that system of righteousness prescribed by God for Israel. Likewise under the new covenant, there is no way to separate the Kingship of Jesus from the righteousness prescribed by Jesus and demanded of his church. The validity of the church's claim to covenant relationship lies in its willingness to obey.

An Elect People

The Calvinistic doctrine of election makes God a respecter of persons and negates the idea that all men are created equal. On the other hand, the Bible clearly teaches that God did foreordain and predestine the redeemed to be confirmed to the image of his Son. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit makes it clear that those thus predestined God also called, justified and glorified. These facts lead Paul to the conclusion that if God is for us, who can stand against us. If God was willing to give his own Son to set us in this elect position, is it unreasonable to believe that he will, with him, give us all things?

As the covenant people of God there isn't a single spiritual blessing withheld. We are able to do all things

through Him who strengtheneth us. Our God is a tower of strength, and we do not have to fight our battles from the bottom of the hill, clawing our way up to victory. The sin problem has been settled, and we have been set on the summit of redemption—a vantage point from which we fight our battles with confidence. We are not struggling to be crowned; we are already crowned. We are the Elect.

God forbid that we should feel superior to others. We are as weak as they and as badly in need of grace as they. But we have an advantage that the rest of the world does not have. We have been accepted into the redeemed—added to the church daily—as we are being saved. Having been accepted, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and none can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. Having been adopted as children, we are made heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Jesus had pled our cause before the throne of outraged justice, and God has for His sake forgiven us. We are the elect.

Who, then shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? What shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril or sword? In all these things we are more than conquerors. And when the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, he shall send his angels with the sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to the other. They shall not be hurt by the second death because they are the elect. They constitute the church of all times for all times. This is not a sectarian body.

All the Saved Are in It

Jesus Christ shed his blood for the church. So far as we know it was his only possession. It could not have been bought with any less a price than every drop of his shed blood. The blood purchased nothing else except the church. Therefore, it cost all that he had to pay.

Because we are saved by the blood of Christ, and only by the blood of Christ, when one comes in contact with the blood, and is washed by it, he is added by the Lord who bought him to the ones redeemed before him, and they become one body—the church. “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of his grace.” Paul makes plain, in Acts 20, and in 1 Corinthians 6 that the entire church, and nothing other than the church, was purchased by the blood of Christ. The process of purchase is the process of salvation. In Romans 6, Paul shows that we come in contact with the blood when we are baptized into his death. Those who are partakers of the likeness of his death share in the likeness of his resurrection. We are redeemed from a terrible ruin by an awful sacrifice, and he who bought us at such a cost owns us, and adds us to the sheep that he has purchased before us, so that we become one flock and one shepherd. It is a church for all times.

All sinners, thus saved, and bought at such a price, are gathered into one church, or one flock. If the demands of justice could have been satisfied in any other way, then why, oh why, did not God spare his own Son the agonies of Calvary? If such a price had to be paid to redeem us, and there was no other

possible way, then we can rest assured that none shall escape who neglect such a great salvation. We do not hesitate to proclaim that the Bible teaches that only members of his church shall be saved. The very nature of redemption demands the conclusion. And the Bible clearly says so.

There is no such thing as a saved person not being added to the church. We do not join the church at will, we are added to the church by God's will. In the process of saving us He adds us. Perish the human concept that we are saved and at a later time join the church. When God takes us out of darkness he introduces us into the light. There is no such thing as a third intermediate state in which a saved soul may stay awhile until it decides which church to join.

Since the church is an essential institution, it is necessary that it be a church for all times. Human churches come and go. The church that encompasses all the redeemed must continue from the time men began to be redeemed until the time when it is too late to redeem men.

God opens and no man can shut. God shuts and no man can open. While the doors of the church are open the spirit and the bride say come, and he that thirsts may come and drink of the waters of life freely.

The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It

It is difficult for us to grasp the import of Jesus' promise that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the church. I have heard sermons to the effect that Jesus had to arise from the grave, and demonstrate the fact that the "gates of Hell," death, could not hold him before he could establish the church. This is

true, but that is not the import of this passage in Matthew 16. It is far more significant than that.

I have heard others say that the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom, and that as long as we have the seed we will always have the kingdom. The germ of spiritual life is in the seed and wherever, and whenever, the seed is planted the kingdom will grow; therefore the kingdom shall never disappear in history. This is also a logical conclusion, but I do not believe this is what Jesus had in mind.

The gates of Hell cannot prevail against the church for the same reason they could not prevail against Jesus. On the day of Pentecost, Peter explained why the grave could not hold Jesus: He was the Son of God. It wasn't possible for death to hold him because of this kinship with the Father. David did not have that advantage, and so "his tomb is with us to this day." But, because Jesus was the Son of God, "it was not possible that he should be holden of it." For this reason the gates of Hell could not prevail against Jesus.

And the gates of Hell cannot prevail against the church for the same reason. We are the sons of God! John tells us that to all who believe on him God has given power to become sons of God. Paul explains in Galatians 3 the process by which the believers may become sons of God, and pinpoints the moment at which they actually receive sonship. He says, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Christ was the Son of God, and when we put on Christ we put on sonship. This is when we do it. This is how we do it.

Becoming sons of God we become heirs to God and

joint heirs with Jesus because he is our brother and we have the same Father. This makes us the family of God, which is God's household. There was a time when God had only one Son. But no more. Now he has many sons. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

It dulls the glory God intended the church to have when we speak of adoptive children, when Christians—the church—are the real children of God—so much so that Jesus quoted David as saying, "ye are gods." And that isn't possessive either. It refers to what we are rather than whose we are.

Being the sons of God, it is as impossible for death to hold the church as it was for death to hold Jesus. He was the Son of God; we are the sons of God. No wonder the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

In the First Corinthian letter Paul makes it clear that the dead in Christ shall rise. Death cannot hold them. The living will be changed; the dead will be raised, and together they will be caught up to meet the Lord. "And so shall we forever be with the Lord." The gates of Hell shall not prevail against the church. This is the only institution in either time or eternity that possesses this precious promise. It is a church for all times.

The New Jerusalem

Truly, eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of any man what God has prepared for this redeemed group of souls. Limited

as the Holy Spirit was to the vehicle of human speech and the limitations of the human mind, it was impossible for even Him to fully convey to us the blessedness and the glory of being the church of the Living God.

When John said, "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," he was speaking of the church. We miss the point when we attach an eschatological interpretation to Revelation 21. The voice from heaven is saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people. . . ." This does not point to some future age in which God will dwell in millennial splendor on this clod of clay among his elect. It is telling us that here and now God is with the redeemed to be their God and they are his people. He is presently wiping tears from their eyes and death has been swallowed up in victory as the redeemed are taught to cry, "Oh grave, where is thy victory? Oh death where is thy sting?" Centuries of sorrow over sin and crying over a hopeless separation are at an end, and these former things have passed away. Behold God has made all things new, and He gives to all who thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Any messianic hope pinned on ancient Jerusalem, with its crumbling towers and its fought-over holy places, is a tenth rater compared with that hope which looks to the New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. No earthly climate, however serene, and no earthly rule, however just, could ever compare with the atmosphere of Heaven and the rule of Him who sits on the throne in the midst of the sea of glass receiving the plaudits and praise of elders and angels.

When the bride, the Lamb's wife, has made herself

ready and is ushered in to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the silver trumpets will herald through heaven the gladsome song, and they who have their robes washed white in blood, and upon whose forehead a new name is written shall sing while eternity rolls—

Redeemed-how I love to proclaim it!

Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;

Redeemed through his infinite mercy,

His child, and forever I am.

Our God: He Is Alive

Anthony Lee Ash

Address: Institute for Christian Studies, 1909 University Avenue, Austin, Texas 78705.

Family: Wife: the former Barbara Bailey.

Education: University of Oregon (2 years); Florida Christian College (A.A.); Florida State University (B.S. in Speech, 1956); Abilene Christian College (M.A. in Old Testament, 1959); University of Southern California (Ph.D. in Church History, 1966).

Work: Currently teaches at the Biblical Studies Center (Institute for Christian Studies), Austin, Texas (1975-). Was Graduate Assistant at Abilene Christian College (1958-1959). Was faculty member at George Pepperdine College (Los Angeles) in 1962, and at Abilene Christian College, 1962-1972. Was faculty member at Pepperdine University (Malibu campus) 1972-1975, and Chairman of Religion Division from 1972-1974.

Ministry: Currently serves as minister for the Westover Hills Church of Christ, Austin, Texas. His preaching experiences include serving as minister at Central Ave. Church of Christ in Valdosta, Georgia (1954, 1955); Church of Christ in Bainbridge, Georgia (1955-1957); Church of Christ in Burbank, California (1960); Church of Christ in Monrovia, California (1960-1962); Central (formerly Northside) Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas (1957-1958); College Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas (1965, 1966); Minter Lane Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas (1966-1972); Malibu Church of Christ in Malibu, California



(1972-1975). He has done evangelistic work in over 30 states and 8 foreign countries, and has participated in over 250 meetings and extended lectureships. He has spoken on the campuses of over 40 colleges and universities.

Other Fields of Special Interest: Is the author of six books—*Prayer*, *Decide to Love*, *Commentary on Luke* (2 vol.), *Commentary on Acts 1-12*, *Commentary on Psalms* (with Clyde Miller), and *The Word of Faith*.

Where is Baal? His prophets, with increasing desperation, have cried out for his answering presence in fire. But he has not come. They have limped about his altar, and gashed themselves with swords and lances. Still he has not answered. Elijah, Yahweh's prophet, has taunted them. "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened" (1 Kings 18:27). They have raved for Baal to come. But he has not. Where is Baal?

Baal is nowhere. Because there is no Baal. True, he is named, represented, located, worshiped, and prayed to. But there is no one on the other end of the prayers. He does not exist. Or, if you prefer, he is a dead god.

Doesn't that sound strange? A dead god. The terms "dead" and "god" are contradictory. Having said the word "dead," it is unnecessary even to say the word "god," because it doesn't fit.

Isaiah 44 is some of the richest satire in the Bible. The chapter makes the same point—where is Baal?—in another way. The prophet describes the efforts of a craftsman to build an idol. A log is cut in half. Arduous labor is expended to create a graven image from one section. When complete, the creator of the idol bows before it, praying. "Deliver me, for thou

art my god!" (vs. 17). The other half of the log becomes firewood, providing warmth and a cooking fire. The same man roasts meat, eats, warms himself, and says "Aha, I am warm. I have seen the fire" (vs. 16).

Isaiah raises some interesting questions. How can you tell, when a log is cut down, which half is sacred and which profane? Is there such a thing as holy looking wood? What if opinions differ? One craftsman says the north end is divine, while another senses deity in the south end. Suppose, horror of horrors, the log gets turned around. Then flesh is cooked over the god, and the firewood is worshiped! I catch the implication that the prophet feels anyone worshiping a block of wood is a blockhead!

Jeremiah addresses the same theme in 10:1-16. An idol, fashioned by a craftsman, cannot move once men nail it down (vs. 4). It cannot speak (5). It cannot inspire awe (5). It is incapable of good or evil (5). Idols are stupid and foolish. Their instruction is but wood (8). "They are worthless, a work of delusion . . . they shall perish" (15).

By contrast, Jeremiah pictures the Lord, who is incomparable, great in might, fear inspiring, worthy of praise (6, 7). He is the true, living God, the everlasting king. He shakes the earth, and judges the nations. His power and wisdom made the earth and stretched out the heavens. He controls the mighty elements (rain, mist, lightning, wind). Jeremiah's climactic statement is ". . . the portion of Jacob . . . he is the one who formed all things, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the Lord of hosts is his name" (16).

God lives! For Israel this means he created and sustains the universe. He chose a people and entered

into covenant with them. He is active in their history, revealing, guiding, chastising, caring, moving them toward his ends. The events that make up history are under his control, and will accomplish his ultimate designs. The Christian shares this vision, intensified by God's unveiling of himself through Jesus.

When we consider the living God, we come as travelers to a mighty mountain mass—awe inspiring and overwhelming. We can approach its outer reaches, but recognize there is so much we are incapable of exploring. Yet even moving about the fringes will be an intoxicating experience.

There is a sense in which I dislike the term “living God”—though I know it is employed in scripture. One way of saying it (not the Biblical way) implies that “living” is the controlling term and “God” the lesser word. But living is a word that must draw its meaning from God’s very nature. If he were not, there would be no such word—no such thing—as life. When we use any of the “life” words we are describing a thing that is because God is. We do not define the word and bring God to it. Rather we see God and from that understanding use the term “living” to describe what we see him to be.

So often the Bible speaks of life and death. What do these terms mean? When we define them, we ultimately discover that living describes a union with God, the source of life. And his life is from no other source. He is life. Everything else sharing that quality does so only by linkage with him. Death, then, is severance from life—from God. This is the essence of condemnation. Man has chosen to be apart from God. But how can one live—without life itself? Our meditation on life and death shows the cruciality of the context in which

we operate every day. We are never isolated from the need to deal with the most awesome realities.

The topic is the living God. Let us approach the foothills of our mountain peak and see what we shall find. There are countless discoveries to be made, I am sure. But those I wish to bring before our view concern secularism, sustenance, and supervision.

First, secularism. Baal is dead. He never lived. But Baalism is yet with us. Men are still assigning the highest priority to the world around, as did those who worshiped the dynamics of fertility. And men are still bowing before self as if no greater than the "I" existed. This is what Baalism finally amounts to.

We call it secularism. Paul called it the flesh. Hear his words in Romans 8:5-8.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

By "flesh" Paul means man living solely for himself —his every thought controlled by his limited nature—with no consideration of a God above him. This man—the secular man—has a whole world view which is man centered and godless. Mind you, he may not be opposed to the idea of God, or to your decision to go to church on Sunday. He is simply not interested. God to him is as irrelevant as confederate money. He has other intense interests and goals. He may be the

unbridled sensualist. He may have wasted his life on narcotics. He may be the money and power mad, hard-driving, corporate climber. But he may also be the decent chap next door who gets his boat out every Friday night and goes to the lake, to return on Sunday night for yet another week. He may want to get ahead—to work hard and play hard. He may have a splendid personality. He may even be a highly moral person. He may be clean cut and reputable. But his philosophy and operational procedures simply give no consideration at all to things like prayer, or the Bible, or church, or Jesus, or God Almighty. He is playing in an entirely different ball game than the Christian.

The secular beginning point does make an enormous difference. In fact, enormous is too small a word. It is all the difference from life to death. Watch secular man and see how his time is spent. Listen to what topics fill his conversation. See where he goes. Observe his recreation. Pick up on his idea of a good time. Find out what he puts first in a real clutch situation. The more you observe, the more you will form a picture of secular man. The sense of his life may be described by many words, but the most basic one is DEATH. He is dying, because he is apart from Life—from the living God.

The Christian begins at quite the opposite place. His experience is called LIFE. Who can depict the amazing richness of this experience? There are so many things to be said, and so many ways to say them. But the key is captured in the resurrection. Death and life grappled when Jesus was crucified and entombed. But it was no struggle. The grave was plundered by God's power. Death's back was broken.

Now men, linked to resurrection power through Jesus, face death in an entirely different way. It is no longer the psalmist's anxious fear of the pit, of Sheol. It is now "death, where is thy victory?" All will be well. Jesus is risen! No force can defeat the Christian. Jesus is risen! The true optimist has been discovered. He believes Jesus is risen. All trauma of life is met victoriously. Jesus is risen! Discouragement, debilitation, depression, decay can never have the last word. They are phantoms which must flee before the glad fact that Jesus is risen! Children of the resurrection, their lives grounded in the resurrection faith, take whatever life brings with joy (even rejoicing in suffering). They know no matter how bad things appear now, the final word is a mighty shout of triumph. "Jesus is risen, and so am I. I am alive in a living Lord. Death has no claim."

Call us back, Lord, to this resurrection faith. We have looked to the Baal of secularism. He has turned our heads, warped our values, confused our priorities. Even the church has forgotten. The world around has pursued, softly but unrelentingly, and we have lost the way. Give us clear vision. Return us to the center of life.

In the story of Elijah, with which we began, Baal did not save his prophets. They were all slain at the Brook Kishon (1 Kings 18:40). The tragedy of our tale is that modern Baalism—secularism—is as incapable of saving.

Salvation is not a popular idea in secular circles. But every man will some day need it desperately. There comes that hour when the game has been played down to the last hand. The grim opponent across the table is too fearful to look upon. When he does force your

eyes to his, the glance is nearly fatal. His name is Death. He holds his cards, waiting. You have wagered all, and now your very being lies on the table as stakes. The stinging cold is already closing in. The desperation point of your existence is upon you. It is absolutely the most serious point of your life. Now the hand must be laid down. The grim one waits to see. On your cards—in which all your final trust must be placed—is written *Baal, secularism, DEATH*. Then you utter the inner scream for salvation. For all else has fallen away, and life's real meaning and needs have been exposed. But the game is lost, for Baal cannot save.

Second, sustenance. The God who is alive is Creator. What he has created, he sustains. To those whom he has created and sustains he offers redemption. In this the God who is alive demonstrates the essence of his being as love. To speak of a living God is to speak of a loving God. Life and love are knit together in ways beyond our ken.

God as love is the center, the beginning point, the explanation, for all else. Go back to the very ultimate, beyond which it is impossible to go further, and there find love. From that dynamic center, pulsing with limitless energy, all else has come. The cosmos was loved into being. So were our universe, our solar system, our earth, each of us. Hatred, enmity, bitterness, warfare, will pass. Love will abide. It can never be defeated or broken or eliminated. It is as strong as a cross and an open grave. God can do naught else than to love. To do other would deny his very being.

Thus when we talk about being sustained we know it is sustenance coming from love. What power this offers in crisis, trauma, terror, depression. In the very

worst of days, or of years, remember that love, unseen for now, but mightily aware, and not so far from acting. Even in the devastating days of our lives we remember, and anticipate, through the horror. Neither the cold, nor the pain, nor the loneliness, nor the anxiety, nor the cruelty, nor the wars, show the real truth. Whatever may appear, it is not *that* kind of universe. It is one where love is on the throne. The pages are still being turned. When the last is flipped and the whole story is known, we will see.

I must remember he is a God of love. But he is not, as C. S. Lewis says, a senile benevolence who is only concerned that "all the young people have a nice time." He loves so much he oversees for our best even when it may pain us. Yet he is for us. He is not out to "get" us, or to make our lives miserable, or to condemn us.

I must remember when I am good, and when I am bad, that he loves me. In success and failure. In ambition and laziness. In victory and defeat. In optimism and pessimism. In spirituality and carnality. In growth and retrogression. In service and selfishness. He loves me. He loves me. He loves me.

And because he loves me he drives home to me a message I at times am barely willing to hear, but which becomes clearer as I go further in this pilgrimage. Because I love you, love one another.

This God of love sustains. In the broadest sense everything in nature continues by his power. But in a special sense his people are sustained in their most basic needs by his grace. But what does man need? The secular man and the Christian do not give the same answer to this question. The one often stops at superficial needs, gratification of which will not finally

satisfy. The Christian understands that God, who knows our most basic needs, because he built them into us, will supply those needs. These must surely include peace of mind, a sense of purpose and destiny rooted in the Ultimate, a way to meet every life circumstance, divine help to counteract human failure, a genuine awareness of being loved, a special community in which to live.

I like to approach God's sustenance through the model prayer (Luke: 11:2-4). I believe this is a crucial prayer for the Christian. It says to me, "Here are those things which God knows you need. Don't be sidetracked to others which are less important." It also says to me, especially in view of Luke 11:5-13, "These are the things God, the sustainer, wants to give you."

Let me share with you my understanding of what it means to pray this prayer. To pray "hallowed be thy name" is to ask God to help us glorify him by the kind of lives we live and by the kind of people we are. We ask him to help us to think properly, to help us have the right goals and motivations, to act and to speak as he wills. It is to say, "Help me, by your power, to so live that my total existence, by its very nature, declares your glory." I take it man has no greater need than this—to glorify his living Creator. This is the very reason God made man.

To pray "thy kingdom come" is to ask God to use us in the great task of evangelism. Of course the kingdom is here, as our past controversies with premillennialism have clearly reminded us. Yet not all men have chosen to be in God's kingdom, nor are the kingdoms of the world yet the kingdom of God in Christ. We pray for God to empower us so that we may be instruments by whom men are led to hallow

his name. Every time another person makes his decision to do that, the kingdom is increased, i.e. it comes to another life. To pray this is to ask God to help us to love (1 Thess. 3:12), to give us courage and wisdom (Acts 4:23-31; Jas. 1:5-8), to open doors for this great work (Col. 2:2-4). This giving of ourselves to the ministry of fishing for men is also one of the greatest human needs. If we do not learn to give ourselves away, we must surely die.

The prayer for daily bread asks, in my opinion, for the physical necessities for sustenance. The fact we pray for these things says, first, that we recognize God is their source, and second, that we can trust him, *daily*, to supply them. Implicit in this prayer, especially against the larger background of the gospel of Luke where it is found, is the recognition that we seek the necessities, not the luxuries. Jesus tells us that real sustenance and happiness are not found in pursuit of luxury (cf. Lk. 6:20-26; 12; 16). Though illusion tells us they are found there, God, seeing our real needs, dispels this false, but widespread view.

We ask for our sins to be forgiven. The dimension of this need is obvious. The wonder is that we can pray for it at all. We are certainly not deserving. If every other need were supplied, and this left unfulfilled, all would be lost. As we have said, apart from LIFE is only DEATH. Jesus also gives us an urgent corollary. We must forgive others. We need to do that. God will sustain us with his help in accomplishing this sometimes very difficult task.

We pray "Lead us not into temptation." We will be tempted, so long as we are human. We are not praying to be relieved of this. We are asking for divine strength appropriate to our shortcomings. Give us the way of

escape. Help us avoid circumstances which will defeat us. Help us be so changed we will no longer be drawn aside. But till then, keep us out of water too deep for us. We need forgiveness of the wrongs to date, but need help in resisting and avoiding temptations to come.

There it is. Or at least part of it. When I think deeply about life, in general, and my life, in particular, I realize how truly these are the basic human needs. When these are supplied, life goes as it is meant. I am so grateful that I can pray this model prayer and know the living God sustains me in the deepest possible ways. I know my circumstances sometimes become so bleak I *think* I am orphaned. But I am not. Nor will I ever be.

Now let's look at sustenance from another perspective. God sustains the church. Flawed and inadequate as she is, God sustains her. Hear a lesson from the book of Acts, Chapter 12. The chapter opens with a terrible crisis. An apostle, James, has already died at the hands of Herod Agrippa I. Another, the incomparable Peter, languishes in prison. He is scant hours, it would seem, from his death. How will the church survive? What can it do? We hear of no plans to storm the prison, of no cloak and dagger efforts to smuggle the captive out. We do hear that "earnest prayer . . . was made to God by the church" (12:5). There follows a remarkable series of events, told with considerable humor. When all is done, and the smoke clears, what a remarkable reversal appears. Herod, once on the throne and devastating the Christians, is a corpse. He has died horribly, eaten by worms. The church, seemingly at its last gasp, is thriving. So much so that Luke tells us "the Word of God grew and multiplied."

In between this "before" and "after"—and here is the point—the mighty power of God has acted to save and sustain his people. Prayer, an angel sent from God, and the wonder is wrought. And this is no isolated case. It is the essential story of the first half of Acts. One peril follows another. Peter and James imprisoned and threatened with worse if the name of Jesus is mentioned further (4:18); all the apostles imprisoned, threatened with death, and then beaten (5:33-40); immorality corrupting the church from within (5:1-11); the body plagued with murmuring and division (6:1-6); Stephen paying for his faith with his life's blood (7:54-60); Saul ravaging the church like a wild beast, driving Christians from their homes to other cities (8:1-3). What will become of the church? Can it possibly survive all the assaults, from without and within? In every case it not only survives, but triumphs magnificently, just as in chapter 12.

This appears the more remarkable when we examine Luke's gospel and find out how inadequate and doubting the disciples really were. This is vividly shown by the last seven paragraphs of chapter 9, or by chapter 22, or by chapter 24, verses 11, 16, 37 and 41. Yet with such unpromising material, and such crises to be met, the church shines forth gloriously. How can this be? It is because God sustains his people! Read Acts 1-12 carefully, paying special attention to passages mentioning prayer, the Holy Spirit, and other indications of divine activity, and you have the answer. You will have gotten Luke's point. The church goes by God's power. So long as she depends on that power she cannot be put down.

And so, I am convinced, it always is and always will be. Acts was written for the ages—for the church of every century, including our own. Away, then, with

discouragement, lethargy, defeatism, pessimism, small-mindedness. God sustains his people. Let us be about God's work, forgetful of self, and allow his power to impel us onward, whatever the obstacle! The church is not our thing. It is his! Our vision must be enlarged. God will do his work through us, if we will but allow it.

Finally, supervision. God loved the world into being, loves it along its way, and will bring it to the end he has intended. He is the God who supervises—the God of history. History is not meaningless. It has a goal—God's goal. Any valid view of human events must keep in mind that reality. A living God makes and moves the whole process.

I sometimes hear people interpret the front page of the paper by explaining what God has caused, as they see it. I am always suspicious of these interpretations. They may be flawed by the bias of the observer. Any view of history needs to take due account of human freedom. Then, too there is Satanic influence. When I say God supervises history it is not to imply insight into the cause and direction of every contemporary event. But it is to say, even when the news is the very worst, that earth's final chapter will be a glorious one for the redeemed.

I am thinking of 587 BC, the year Jerusalem fell to Babylon, and of the mournful and dispirited captives led in procession to the east. How devastated they must have been. They were defeated. Their capital city was reduced to rubble. Homes were gone. Relations were ruptured. Perhaps most horrible, the temple had been razed. No more annual pilgrimages. No more animal sacrifices. No more daily offerings of incense. No more earthly center of Israelite piety. No more

priesthood in service at God's house. Their world, political and religious, had collapsed. One is hard put to imagine a darker scene. If imagination fails, a reading of Lamentations or Psalm 137 can stimulate it. "How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

How did the future seem to them? What happened to their view of God? How could they adapt to the changed way of life? We can realize how their circumstances could surround and overwhelm them.

But the destruction of Jerusalem was not history's last word. God's spokesmen had indicated there would be brightness beyond the gloom (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). For history is in God's control. Israel might not deliver herself. She might suffer for a time. But Babylon, the devastator, like Assyria before her, was yet under a greater control—that of God. And God would work his will. Captivity would some day end. God's nature would be vindicated, and his people would be blessed.

That is the word for all time. Wherever we seem to be going, we will eventually find all human affairs ending when and how God designs. Think of the anxious burdens that crush us these days, as we think of our world. Population explosion, energy shortages, pollution of the environment, widespread famine, local conflicts, the threat of global war, water shortages, terrorism, injustice, corruption, crime, increasing power of false religious and ideological systems, the possibility of the death of society as we know it (how long can America last?). The doomsayers have no lack of documentation for their dreary prognoses. We are right to be concerned and to address ourselves to these problems.

But I refuse to make them ultimate. God is ultimate.

We will not save the world. He will. He must be the center. It is more important that men be in the right place spiritually than that they win the arms race.

You are Jewish, it is World War II, and you have been packed with others into a train and carried to Auschwitz. You have been stripped of all property, all possessions. You have been separated from all others who have been significant in your life, with no hope of ever seeing them again. You have no thing or person with which you can identify yourself, save your naked and humiliated body. All you have is what is within you—your intellect, your values, your faith, your world view. Is this horror the end? Will it take your life? Worse, is it the final word about the nature of humanity? Is human history to be reduced to this kind of barbaric cruelty?

The Christian says no! Even amidst such unimaginable behavior the truth is held up, perhaps as a great paradox. God controls history. The world does not end in a concentration camp. God has another design for it.

The present scene may bewilder and even repulse. Though we cannot see what God is doing behind the scenes, he is making the “right moves.” In due time they will break into human view. Nothing will thwart his purpose.

What glad news this is for the church. And what an awesome reminder that nothing human is ultimate, nor will it escape divine evaluation (judgment, if you prefer) in terms of his purposes. Neither Assyria, nor Babylon, nor Nazi Germany will escape. Nor any corporation, large or small; nor any political organization; nor any rich man; nor any ideological leader; nor any mighty building project; nor any theory or system of philosophy.

Even when we cannot discern the current, the river is flowing only one way—God's way. Nothing can withstand its movement. The mightiest man-made dam will be swept aside when God so ordains. We must know this, and cry it out to our fellows. We do not supervise. God does. It is yield, or die!

We are still stumbling through the foothills. Yet I hope our minds have been expanded and our lives enriched. There is so much more to be known. It is, I suspect, much more wonderful than we have ever imagined. We have dealt here with secularism, sustenance, and supervision. Our God is alive, and will lead us as he wills. Can you imagine how it will be when we begin the real ascent?

Our Restoration Plea

B. J. Humble

Address: Abilene Christian University, Department of Bible, Abilene, Texas 79699.

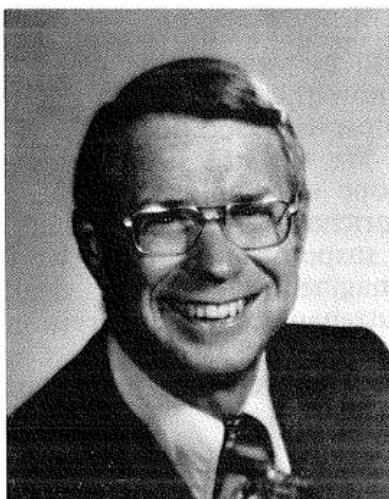
Family: Wife: the former Geraldine Carrington. Children: Eric and Rebecca. Three grandchildren.

Education: Attended Freed-Hardeman College and Abilene Christian College (B.A.). Did graduate work at the University of Colorado (M.A.), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the University of Iowa (Ph.D.).

Work: Currently is Head of the Department of Bible and Professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University. He joined the A.C.U. Bible faculty in 1964, and served as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the University from 1969-1978. He also taught at Florida Christian College from 1949-1953.

Ministry: Has preached for congregations in Kansas City, Louisville, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Other Fields of Special Interest: He is interested in the Restoration Movement in America, mission work, and special preaching trips. He has published sets of filmstrips entitled "Back to the Bible," "Proof from the Past" (dealing with Biblical archaeology), and "The Lands of the Bible," to be released early in 1981. Dr. Humble has made four preaching trips through Asia, Africa, and South America, two of which were round-the-world trips.



It seems fitting that in the 75th year of Abilene Christian University, one of our lectures should be devoted to "Our Restoration Plea," a study of our spiritual roots in America, who we are, why we believe the things we believe, and the debt of gratitude we owe to the past.

Our Debt to the Past

The churches of Christ in America are the result of a dream—the vision that men could go back to the Bible and restore the New Testament church. This dream appeared among the Anabaptists in the early years of the Protestant Reformation. Then, nearly 300 years later, it reappeared in America around 1800 among men like James O'Kelly, Barton W. Stone, and Thomas and Alexander Campbell. We owe a great debt of gratitude to those men, for as Paul "laid a foundation" and others were "building on it" (1 Cor. 3:10), so the early leaders of the Restoration Movement laid the foundation and we are building on what they did.

We owe a debt of gratitude to James O'Kelly, for he was probably the first man in American history to lead a sizeable group out of one of the Protestant churches to be Christians only. James O'Kelly was a personal friend of Thomas Jefferson, and he fought for American freedom in General Washington's army. When the Methodist church was established in America in 1784, O'Kelly was one of its founders. But over the years, O'Kelly became convinced that the episcopal government of the Methodist church was unscriptural and undemocratic. In 1792 (when George Washington was the first President of our country) O'Kelly and a

number of other Methodist ministers left their church. Two years later, they began wearing the name "Christian" to the exclusion of every other name.

We are also indebted to Barton W. Stone, a young Presbyterian preacher who came to Kentucky in 1796 (the year that John Adams was elected to be our second President). Young Stone began to have misgivings about the Calvinistic theology of his church, and he determined to follow the Bible rather than the Westminster creed. After the great revival at Cane Ridge, Stone and four other ministers renounced their church to be free men in Christ to follow his Word and wear his name.

We owe a debt to Thomas Campbell, a Presbyterian minister who arrived in America in 1807 (while Thomas Jefferson was our third President). Thomas Campbell's great contribution to the Restoration Movement was in writing the *Declaration and Address* in 1809. The *Declaration* was a powerful plea for the unity of all Christians to be achieved by going back to the Bible and restoring the New Testament church.

We are also indebted to Alexander Campbell, the son of Thomas Campbell. He was a gifted leader, and for fifty years, from the hills of Kentucky to the halls of Congress, he gave strong leadership to the restoration cause.

We are also indebted to Walter Scott, the great evangelist of the early Restoration Movement. Scott was the first preacher to see clearly that baptism is for the remission of sins as taught in Acts 2:38. When he began to preach this in the 1820's, thousands were converted, and the Restoration Movement began to grow rapidly for the first time.

We are also indebted to many men of later genera-

tions, men like Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb, and J. W. McGarvey. Fanning and Lipscomb had a great influence in Tennessee and across the south through the *Gospel Advocate*. They persuaded many churches in the south to remain loyal to the restoration ideal at a time when brethren in other parts of the country were drifting away from this dream.

But the concept of restoration—returning to the will of God—did not begin in America. The history of God's people across the ages has often been written in cycles—cycles of falling away and returning to God. This is seen in the Old Testament. Israel received the law of Moses at Mt. Sinai, but again and again they were unfaithful to their covenant, fell away, and had to be called back to God.

The reign of King Josiah was such a time. While Josiah was King, repair work was being done on the temple in Jerusalem, and the book of the law of God was discovered. The people had fallen so far away from God that they had actually lost the book of the law, and it was found in the temple. When the law was read to King Josiah, he knew that they had fallen away from God, and he and the people made a solemn covenant to return to the Lord and keep his commandments. The pagan idols were broken down, and the passover was kept for the first time in many years. The Bible says that there was no king like Josiah, for he “turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses” (2 Kings 23:25). This was restoration, calling the people back to the will of God, in the days of Josiah.

The restoration of New Testament Christianity has been a recurring theme in Christian history. It may

be found among the Anabaptists in the early years of the Protestant reformation. The great leaders of the reformation, Martin Luther and John Calvin, emphasized the authority of the scripture. But instead of asking, "What does God expect the New Testament church to be?" they asked, "Which of the practices of the corrupt medieval church are condemned by Scripture and must, therefore, be abandoned?"

The Anabaptists were not satisfied with this. They called for a complete restoration of the New Testament church. One of the early Anabaptist leaders, Conrad Grabel, wrote a letter to Thomas Muentzer, in 1525, with this plea:

We beg you as a brother that you will take earnest heed to preach only the divine word without fear, to set up and guard only divine institutions, to esteem as good and right only what may be found in pure and clear scripture, to reject hate and curse all devices words and customs and opinions of men, including your own. . . Whatever we are not taught by clear passages or examples must be regarded as forbidden.

This sounds very much like Thomas Campbell or Barton Stone, but it was written nearly three hundred years before they began pleading for a restoration movement in America.

Our Uncommon Commitment to the Word of God

There are a number of basic convictions that underlie the idea of restoring the New Testament church, and the most basic of these is an uncommon

commitment to the word of God. Our restoration plea is rooted and grounded in the faith that the Bible is true, it is the word of God, and it must be obeyed. It is not surprising, then, that the members of the churches of Christ are uniquely a people of the book.

Our uncommon commitment to the word of God begins with a strong conservative faith that the Bible is the inspired word of God. It should be obvious that no one is going to be seriously concerned about going back to the Bible to restore its practices unless he believes that the Bible is authoritative and must be obeyed. But no one is going to believe that the Bible must be obeyed unless he believes that it is inspired of God. Thus, a strong, conservative faith in the inspiration and the authority of the scripture underlies our restoration plea.

This view of the Bible accepts the claims that the Bible makes for itself. What does the Bible claim to be? Here is Paul's answer, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The apostle makes three great claims for the scripture in these familiar verses. First, he claims that the Bible is inspired ("breathed") by God. Peter makes the same claim for scripture when he says that "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). Second, Paul claims that the Bible is profitable for teaching and reproof, and this means that it is authoritative and must be obeyed. Paul's third claim for the scripture is that it makes the man of God complete, equipped for every good work, and this means that the scripture is all sufficient. This

uncommon faith that the Bible is inspired of God, authoritative, and all sufficient, underlies our restoration plea.

Our commitment to the authority of the scripture goes a step farther. It recognizes that the New Testament is normative for the church. It is God's pattern for what the church should be in every age. This view of the New Testament is clearly stated in Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address*, written in 1809. Campbell wrote that nothing should be bound on the church "but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles upon the New Testament church; either in expressed terms or by approved precedent." Then Campbell said: "The New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament church and as perfect a rule for the duties of its members as the Old Testament was for the Old Testament church."

Thomas and Alexander Campbell both used such expressions as "original standard," "perfect pattern," and "perfect constitution" to describe the Bible's authority over the church. We share that view of the New Testament. Reuel Lemmons wrote in a *Firm Foundation* editorial, "The New Testament is the constitution and bylaws for the church today. And anything that is not provided for in the New Testament is unconstitutional" (Nov. 26, 1974).

Thus, from Thomas Campbell to the present, it has been axiomatic that the ideal of restoring the church implies a God-given pattern for the church. This simply means that the New Testament reveals what God wanted the church to be in the New Testament times, and whatever God wanted his people to be *then*,

God wants his people to be *today*.

This does *not* mean that any one of the New Testament churches was a perfect model. The early Christians were human, just as we are, and they had their sins and shortcomings, just as we do. Which New Testament church could be the perfect model? Not Corinth. When we study Corinthians, we spend much of our time talking about the sins that plagued that church. Not Laodicea. They were lukewarm, and the Lord warned, "I will spew you out of my mouth." Even the Jerusalem church had its Ananias and Sapphira. No, not a single New Testament church was perfect. How do we know that they were not perfect? We compare them with the New Testament teaching of what God wanted them to be, and we see their faults. But in the very act of comparing them with what God wanted them to be, we confess that there is a standard, a norm, by which they can be measured, and by which we also can be measured today. This is what we mean when we say that the New Testament is the perfect constitution for the Lord's church.

This view of restoration is clearly stated in the writings of Alexander Campbell. In an article in the *Christian Baptist* (Feb. 7, 1825) Campbell argued that a reformation of the existing church was not enough. He pleaded:

To bring the society of Christians *up* to the New Testament, is just to bring the disciples, individually and collectively, to walk in the faith, and in the commandments of the Lord and Savior, as presented in that blessed volume; and this is to restore the ancient order of things.

Why do we believe that God has such a pattern for his church? God has always told his people how he wanted his great institutions to be built. In the Old Testament God commanded his people to build the tabernacle, and then the temple, and in both cases God gave specific instructions about how they were to be built. Here are his instructions to Moses in Exodus 25:

Speak to the children of Israel, that they take for me an offering. . . . And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. . . . And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.

Centuries later after Israel had settled in the promised land, the temple was built. David gave Solomon his son instructions about building the temple. He said:

And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind. . . . If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever. Take heed now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong and do it. Then David gave Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its house, its treasures, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat. . . . All this he made clear by the writing from the hand of the Lord

concerning it, all the work to be done according to the plan.

There are obvious differences between the tabernacle and temple and the New Testament church. The Old Testament sanctuaries were built of wood and stone, gold, and silver. The church is a spiritual temple, built by the hand of God out of the hearts and lives of obedient men and women. But even though one is material and the other is spiritual, the tabernacle was an earthly shadow, or type, of the church (Heb. 8:5). If God had a pattern for the shadow, he must have had a pattern for the reality. The Restoration Movement is rooted in the conviction that there is such a pattern and that we must build according to that pattern today.

Our Distinctive Practices

There is no way that you can really understand the churches of Christ, who we are and what we believe, apart from our commitment to restoring New Testament Christianity. We are different. We do have a distinctive witness in today's divided religious world. We live in an age when most people minimize religious beliefs. The average man-on-the-street shrugs his shoulders and says, "It doesn't make any difference what you believe as long as you are honest and sincere." We insist that it *does* make a difference. If the New Testament reveals what God wants the church to be in every age, then it *does* make a difference what we believe and how we serve our Lord.

For example, we have always insisted that baptism is immersion, only immersion, and that it is for the

remission of sins. Most churches do not see it this way. They ask, "What difference does it make?" We answer that the only baptism we can find in the New Testament is immersion. Look again at the baptism of Jesus and the baptisms described in Acts. It's not a question of how baptism was practiced in the first century. The real question is whether we must do it in the same way. Remember that New Testament baptism is a re-enactment of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. Paul made this clear in Romans 6:3, 4: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

What was the purpose of baptism in New Testament times? It was for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), so that sins would be washed away (Acts 22:16). Every time baptism and salvation are mentioned together in the same New Testament passage, baptism is always mentioned first, and salvation always depends on the baptism. There is no exception to this. And since we are set for the restoration of the New Testament church, we insist that it must be this way today.

We also teach that the Lord's death should be remembered every Lord's day in the observance of the Lord's supper. Every Lord's day? Many churches do not see it this way. Some have the Lord's supper on Thursday night before Easter; others, four times a year or twice a year. What difference does it make? We answer that the Christians in New Testament times met on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). If we are going to follow their

example, we will do the same.

Our views of church government are also distinctive. When you look at all the churches of America, you discover a bewildering array of ecclesiastical organizations, with bishops, presbyteries, synods, conferences, and general assemblies. In contrast, we believe that the local congregation is the only church organization that is authorized in the New Testament. The local church is a community of believers, free to follow their Lord, under the oversight of elders and served by deacons. The local church was the only organization the early Christian knew. After Paul established a number of churches in Asia Minor on his first missionary journey, he returned and appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). The New Testament elders are also called bishops. Paul addressed the book of Philippians, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). This is the way it was in New Testament times, and we believe this is the way God wants it to be today.

Let me emphasize, then, that the churches of Christ are unique, they are different, and there is no way you can appreciate this uniqueness apart from their commitment to restoring New Testament Christianity.

Our Future

What does the future hold for the churches of Christ? Will we continue to be a people of the book in the future as we have been in the past?

I do not presume to know the future, but I do know the past. I am not a pessimist about the future, but I know that the people of God have always faced

dangers. I believe that there are serious dangers facing us today that would rob us of our distinctive plea. I know that our remaining true to our distinctive witness depends on our uncommon commitment to the word and our commitment to the ideal of restoring New Testament Christianity.

The first danger that I see is the pervasive influence of a secular and affluent society. We have all preached that the church is in the world, but it must not be of the world. John warned, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). But the church and the world interact with one another, and as the church has an influence for good on the world, so the world has an influence for bad on the church. Unfortunately, some of the world always seems to rub off on the church.

Today the American way of life is more secular, more irreligious, more immoral than it has ever been before. The American home is in trouble. The Playboy philosophy seems to have captured this generation. The mass media, movies and television, glorify a way of life that is totally alien to our Christian way of life. Moral standards are crumbling. Ann Landers recently had a column about the pressures that young people face today. Here is what she said:

We must accept the fact that this is not the same world we grew up in. Our children and grandchildren are living in a heavily sex-oriented society. The pressures to give in are overwhelming. . . . The pill has changed everything. Also, there are peer pressures, advertising, movies, TV, and highly seductive music. . . . Once they

become sexually active, they don't quit. Every study I have seen in the past six years indicates that more young people are becoming sexually active at an earlier age, and it's unlikely that the trend will be reversed. . . . In my opinion, all this sleeping around is sad. I liked it better the other way. But we can't turn the clock back (*Abilene Reporter-News*, July 20, 1980).

Our young people need our love and understanding as they struggle to cope with these pressures. But the enticements of the world are not limited to youth. Let me emphasize that restoration involves the individual Christian in his own spiritual life just as it involves the congregation collectively. It calls us all, young and old alike, to a life of holiness and purity. And this is not easy in today's secular society.

The second danger that I see is that we may drift away from our unique plea. Our uniqueness is rooted in our uncommon commitment to the word of God. And if we ever lose our faith in the Bible and in the ideal of restoring the church, then we have lost everything.

Some may say, "That could never happen to us." Don't be so sure! Looking back as a historian, I know that it has happened to others, and history somehow has a way of repeating itself. As "Exhibit A" let's look at the Disciples of Christ, the liberal wing of the Christian Church. Historically, they have the same roots in America that we have. There was a time when the Disciples of Christ and the churches of Christ were one. There was a time when they believed in restoring New Testament Christianity just as strongly as we do. But this is not true today. Around the

beginning of the twentieth century, the Disciples of Christ became liberal theologically, and as a result of that liberalism, they have now openly repudiated the restoration plea.

One of the best known leaders in the Disciples of Christ has written in *Christian Century*, "The biblical and theological scholarship of recent decades has made restoration untenable. Most disciples who have repudiated restoration have no adequate basis for justifying their congregationalism, weekly communion, immersion baptism, boards of elders and deacons. . . . or other distinctive practices." Another influential leader who served as dean of Lexington Theological Seminary stated, "The restoration idea is basically a false concept. It would seem wise to abandon the use of the term altogether."

What caused the Disciples to make such a radical break with the past? A new liberal view of the Bible. When the liberal Disciple sees his Bible as a fallible book, why be concerned about restoring the church as it was in the New Testament? Why restore what might be fallible? Thus, when the Disciples became liberal in theology, they saw their quest for New Testament Christianity as an illusion, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

The third danger that I see is that our *debt to the past* may blind us to the *challenges of the present*. We do owe a great debt of gratitude to the past, but we dare not canonize our saints. We dare not allow ourselves to be more concerned about what Brother Lipscomb or Brother McGarvey said on some subject, than what the Bible says. If the voice of the pioneer preachers should ever replace the voice of the Lord, then we would have abandoned the goal of those

pioneers—to follow God and never follow man.

The danger is that we see the restoration ideal as an achievement of the past and not as a present challenge. But the church in every generation must be measured anew by the standard of God's word. The human experience is to fall short and try again to become what the Lord would have us be.

The pioneer preachers of the Restoration Movement emphasized the identity of the New Testament church. They struggled to restore believer's baptism for remission of sins, the weekly observance of the Lord's supper, and many other distinctive practices. These identifying marks of the New Testament believers are important, and we must continue to emphasize them. But there is more to New Testament Christianity than this.

Jesus called upon his disciples to love one another, and he made love an identifying mark of his people. Look again at John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all men know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Without love we are not the New Testament people of God. But how often do you hear this emphasized when we preach about restoring New Testament Christianity?

The New Testament church was fervently evangelistic and missionary in spirit. They lacked all our modern means of mass communication and rapid transportation, but even so they evangelized their world within a single generation. They were a people of prayer. They were deeply committed to Christ. They were so concerned about the life of the spirit, that they were rather unconcerned about material things. We have it reversed.

We are so concerned about material things, that we are often unconcerned about the life of the spirit. The early Christians looked for, and earnestly desired, the coming of Christ. The New Testament ends with a prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus."

When we look anew at the life style of the early Christians and compare it with our complacent self-satisfied brotherhood, can we say, really say, that we have become what the Lord wants us to be? No, the work of restoration is not complete. We dare not think of the Restoration Movement as a perfect achievement of the past. It is not a work that Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone finished and passed on to us to be preserved exactly as they had done it. Rather, we must see restoration as an ongoing work. It is a continuing challenge. It is a goal that still guides us just as it guided men of faith in earlier generations.

Relying on an uncommon faith in the word of God, let us go on and on in the continuing work of trying to become what God wants us to be. For this is what it means to restore New Testament Christianity.

"To Whom Shall We Go?"

Thomas Foster

Address: Fifth Ward Church of Christ, 4308 Stonewall (Interstate 10 at Waco), Houston, Texas 77020.

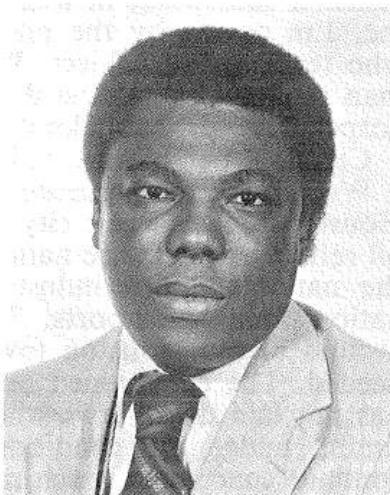
Family: Wife: the former Flora Mae Newton. Children: Pamela and Nicole.

Education: Graduated from L. W. Sullivan High School in Morrilton, Arkansas in 1963. University of Arkansas (B.S. Civil Engineering, 1967; M.S. Civil Engineering, 1968); attended Bible College in Houston, Texas.

Work: Captain in the U.S. Army (July 1968-July 1970); spent one year in Viet Nam, where received a Bronze Star Medal for heroic service above and beyond the call of duty; worked as an engineer for Shell Chemical from 1970-1973.

Ministry: Has served as minister for the Fifth Ward Church of Christ in Houston from April 1973 to present.

Other Fields of Special Interest: preaches for weekly radio program on station KYOK in Houston; has done television preaching.



A young minister in a college town was embarrassed by the thought of criticism in his cultured congregation. Seeking counsel from his father, an old and wise minister he said, "Dad, I'm hampered in my ministry here. If I cite something from geology, there is a professor of that science right before me. If I use an illustration from Roman Mythology, another professor is ready to trip me up for my little inaccuracy, if I

mention something in English Literature that pleases me, I'm cowed by the presence of the learned man who teaches that subject. What shall I do?" The old man replied, "Don't be discouraged son. Preach the gospel. They probably know little of that."

Certainly I empathize with that young preacher.

We bring you greetings from Houston, Texas. Houston is the largest city in Texas; the nation's top oil-refining center; the nation's space program center; the nation's major industrial city; and one of the nation's major seaports. The word has been going around in old Houston town that a new morality is needed. The enlightened ones are saying that, "God has not laid down laws which are for all men, at all times, under all conditions." As the discussions continue concerning which moral standards, immorality spreads like a prairie fire. Today Houston is inundated with billboards proclaiming the availability of liquor. A section of our city is becoming famous for its large population of homosexuals. Gambling and drugs have reached epidemic proportion. Peep shows and palm readers are the two fastest growing businesses.

It's only poetic justice that the subject assigned to me is "To Whom Shall We Go?" The proposition given me reads moral standards demanded by Christ are timeless. They are true today, however widely they may be violated by our society. But we must always be open to the Word, lest we confuse our customs with Christ's demands. But if we reject the moral standards of Christ, to whom shall we go?

To Whom Shall We Go for our Standard on Morality?

The word "*morality*" is from the Latin word

“moralis” meaning manner, custom, or habit. The question of morality—what is right and what is wrong in human relations?—is the central issue of our time. Friends, whose morality standard do we live by, whose standard do you raise your family by?

1). Teleological Theory states the view that an act to be right must make some contribution to the goodness of man or the world. Hedonism is the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the greatest good in life. Epicureanism is the doctrine that pleasure or the freedom from pain is the highest good in life.

Shall we deify pleasure? Shall we make pleasure our standard for right and wrong?

2). Self Realization Theory states the view that an act is right which tends to promote the development of all the normal capacities of man as a thinking, feeling, and acting person. Humanism emphasizes man and abandons all concept of the supernatural.

Shall we deify man? Shall we make himself the ultimate and sole arbiter of truth and knowledge.

3). Situation or Contextual Theory states that anything and everything is right or wrong, according to the situation. Good is the most living, concerned act.

Shall we deify love? Shall we worship at the shrine of love?

To whom shall we go, seeking a standard to live by in this chaotic world.

Apostle Peter Points Men and Women to Christ

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus

unto the twelve, will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God (John 6:66-69).

Many of the disciples followed Christ for a time, especially when the loaves and fishes abounded, but when self-denial was required the multitude turned back and walked no more with Jesus. Their departure prompted the question of Jesus to the twelve as to their intentions: "Will ye also go away?" The Jews of the first century were confronted with three rival systems: Sadduceeism, Pharisaism, and Essenism. Peter rejects these systems with the heart throbbing answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Lord, your words show the way to eternal life. Lord, you alone qualify, for you have the words of eternal life.

When our modern day prophets ask us to leave Jesus, may our answer be:

- 1). Give us something better than Jesus.
- 2). Give us a better answer to the questioning of our spirits than he has furnished.
- 3). To whom shall we go? Jesus has the words of eternal life.
 - A). If we go to the World . . . It will deceive us.
 - B). If we return to Sin . . . It will destroy us.

Moral Issues Confronting Us Today

The church of Christ must speak out on the moral issues confronting the world today. Have you not become convinced that we are in the midst of a moral crisis?

- 1). Drugs are being pushed in elementary school.
- 2). Television programs belittle chastity and virginity.
- 3). Family magazines are filled with nudity and erotic behavior.
- 4). Racial prejudice, in spite of affirmative action, is still alive and well on planet earth.
- 5). Homosexuals are "out of the closet," seeking ordination into the ministry.
- 6). Death penalty waits for 550 inmates in 28 states.
- 7). Pornography film recruiting of children is on the increase.
- 8). Abortions are being funded by the federal government.
- 9). Illegal aliens increase, with more than half of the estimated 12 millions coming from Mexico.
- 10). Unemployment increase with more than six million unemployed and this includes a disproportionate number of blacks.
- 11). War, legalized gambling, crime, inflation, hunger, juvenile delinquents, divorce, and materialism are challenging us for a match.

Today we need the bravery of Amos, Jeremiah, and Micaiah. We need to be sure first that we are *right*, secondly that we are *nice*, thirdly that we are *fearless*. Then let the pulpits burn with enthusiasm, for men, women, boys, and girls will still congregate to see a fire burn. Above all we must not be muzzled.

The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy (Amos 3:8). But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay (Jeremiah 20:9). And Micaiah said, as the Lord liveth, what

the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak (I Kings 22:14).

The Moral Code of the Bible is Absolute

Thanks be to God that we are not lost at sea without an anchor. All the knowledge that we need for acceptable Christian service is contained in the inspired word of God. Friends, our problem is not one of finding the truth: it is the problem of believing and living the truth. The Bible qualifies as a worthwhile standard in that it is inspired and infallible. The Bible originated with an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God. Therefore, it is fully capable of being for all men, at all times, under all conditions. Only God could give a standard for all seasons. If the Bible is not from God, then the writing of Rudolph Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, and Emil Brunner must be given equal time. If the Bible is not God breathed, then Reader's Digest quoting, sad story telling, emotional soft peddling must be given equal time. If we shut the Bible, then what?

Friends, the Bible is the word of God, truth is attainable, truth is constant, truth is absolutely true, and right is eternally right. Therefore, let's go forward, for we must not retreat even if we offend this easygoing relativist, compromising generation, that prefers indecision, non-commitment, no absolutes, and accept all contradiction as "equally true." Our times demand that we should "preach the word," we should not merely preach about it, we should not pervert it, nor apologize for it, but preach it. Deep in my soul, I am thoroughly convinced that sophisticated, technologically astute America needs the same facts, threats, commands, and promises of the gospel as did those of the first century. The gospel will still work.

Paul wrote to Timothy that he might know how to live right (I Tim. 3:14-15). John wrote that we might believe in Christ, and accept the truth (John 20:30-31). God gave us these writings to keep us from sin (I John 2:1). Luke wrote Theophilus that he might know the certainty of the truth (Luke 1:1-4).

Listen to Some Beautiful Wisdom From Above:

- 1). Ex. 23:2—Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment;
- 2). Jer. 5:30-31—30. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. 31. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?
- 3). Jer. 6:16—Thus said the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest, for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.
- 4). Jer. 10:23—O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.
- 5). Isa. 5:20—Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
- 6). Ps. 37:23—The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.
- 7). Ps. 73:24—Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

- 8). Micah 6:8—He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?
- 9). Mt. 7:12—Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.
- 10). Mt. 12:29-30—29. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.
30. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.
- 11). II Tim. 3:15-16—15. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
- 12). I Pet. 1:22—Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.
- 13). II Pet. 1:3-4—3. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. 4. Whereby are given

unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

- 14). II Pet. 1:21—For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Let's Go to Jesus

Let's make up our minds to go with Jesus. Let's direct our lives and our homes by the truths of God. Immorality, regardless of its popularity or whether its label is "situation ethics," "humanism," or "hedonism," never leads to the peace that passeth understanding. Therefore, with the words of the hymns of our youth, let's march onward to Jesus.

- 1). Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.
- 2). On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand . . .
- 3). What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms . . .
- 4). Savior lead me, lest I stray, gently lead me all the way . . .
- 5). I must tell Jesus all of my trials; I cannot bear these burdens alone; in my distress he kindly will help me; he ever loves and cares for his own.

They Shall All Be Taught of God

John Christopher Stevens

Address: Abilene Christian University, ACU Station, Box 7844, Abilene, Texas 79699.

Family: Wife: the former Ruth Rambo. Children: John Clark and Marian Joyce (Mrs. James Cole). Grandsons: Christopher Clark, Jonathan Ira, and Benjamin North.

Education: Graduated Richland High School, 1934; Abilene Christian University (B.A. 1938, major in Bible, minor in Greek); University of Arkansas (M.A. 1948, Ph.D. 1954, major in History, minor in Political Science).

Work and Ministry: Currently is President of Abilene Christian University (1969-). Was preacher for Church of Christ, Jasper, Texas 1938-1942; Central Church of Christ, Beaumont, Texas 1942-1943. Chaplain: (1st Lt., Major) U.S. Army, 1943-1946. Served as a chaplain with a front-line Infantry battalion, participating in all the campaigns in Western Europe including Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland, the Ardennes, and Central Europe. Joined the faculty of Abilene Christian University in September 1948 as Assistant Professor of History; became Dean of Men in 1950, Dean of Students in 1952, and Assistant President in 1956.

Other Fields of Special Interest: Dr. Stevens has recently been appointed by Texas Governor William Clements to be one of eleven Directors on the Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation of the State of Texas. He is currently serving as Secretary of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas (since 1971), and was President of the Abilene Higher Education Authority (1975-1979), and of the Association of Texas Colleges and



Universities (1974-1975). An active participant in community affairs, Dr. Stevens has served on the governing boards of many local civic organizations, and as a member of the Abilene City Council.

In Capernaum, Jesus was teaching his disciples. There he gave them this great admonition to strive for spiritual goals and not just for materialistic goals: "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal" (John 6:27).

Then Jesus set about explaining that not by loaves and fishes can people be brought to the kingdom of God; in fact, the lesson for all time and eternity is this:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. (John 6:44-45)

That is the lesson: They shall all be taught.

In the middle ages the Emperor Charlemagne, who considered himself a devout Christian, set out to convert the heathen Saxons to Christ. For eighteen straight summers he sent his armies into the lands of the Saxons. There, each year, they subjugated the pagans and forced them to confess Christ. But for that same period of eighteen years, as the Frankish armies would withdraw from Saxony to return to winter quarters, the Saxons relapsed from the faith, burned

their church houses and killed the priests and resumed their pagan ways. The lesson is clear: you cannot convert people by physical conquest. Neither can they be converted by coercion, bribery, or cajolery. You cannot pass Christianity from generation to generation by legal means, as in the case of the inheritance of property; or by genetics, as in the case of passing on physical characteristics from parents to children. The only way God has left us to convert people to Christ and to keep them in the service of Christ is through teaching, teaching, teaching.

We have so many examples of this in the Bible that we could not take the time in one lecture, or perhaps a dozen lectures, to look at all of the scriptures having to do with this great subject. In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, God told the Israelites:

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.

Let us just note here that the people of Israel must have followed this teaching rather conscientiously, for their children and grandchildren and descendants through many generations were so strong that centuries

of persecution, of being hounded from place to place and from country to country, could not wipe out their distinctiveness as a people.

This same emphasis on teaching our children is found in Paul's language to Timothy. One reason Timothy was so well prepared to carry out this admonition was that he had been taught so faithfully all of his life: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you." (II Timothy 1:5).

We who are in the Christian colleges and schools exist for the purpose of serving young people who wish to put Christ first in their educational programs and in fact in their lives, and desire to use every method and means available to them in teaching their sons and daughters the way of Christ. As God told the people of Israel to teach their children, "when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise," so we figure we are among the people who are helping to teach under all circumstances.

Eleven-and-a-half years ago it was my good fortune to begin serving as president of Abilene Christian University. I followed a truly distinguished and faithful Christian gentleman, the late Don H. Morris, in this work, just as he had followed six other faithful and dedicated Christian men in the job. One of the things which early came to my attention was that we needed to do more work than we had ever done before in taking the story of Christian education to Churches of Christ throughout our land. We were aware of the fact that many families in the church really do not know what opportunities exist in Christian education

to help them accomplish their teaching goals. They want to teach their sons and daughters the way of Christ and to prepare them to be so strong in the faith that, no matter where they go in this secular world and no matter what they may do to make a living, they will be able to retain the faith and diligently serve the Lord. They need all the help they can get in doing this job. We saw that it was not possible for a great many people to be aware of the opportunities of Christian education because, for one thing, there is no one national publication among our brotherhood that goes to all homes. We have some outstanding publications, it is true, but not nearly enough families in the church take them and read them regularly. Hence, they may not know about our Christian colleges. Furthermore, our young people in graduating from high school are undoubtedly influenced to a great extent by their fellow students. Since most of their fellow students are not members of the church and know nothing of Christian colleges, they are making plans to attend the nearest or the most popular secular university, and our young people have a strong tendency to go where their friends go. It is still true that a fairly small percentage of young people from our Christian families attend any Christian college anywhere.

In view of these facts, we launched a program of speaking on Sunday and Wednesday evenings to various congregations on the subject of Christian education. At first only a few of us were involved. But it soon became apparent that this was a good work and that we could be of service to the church and at the same time the church could be of service to Christian families in letting us speak and be put in

contact with Christian young people and their parents. Hence, especially in the last ten years, we have carried on the most extensive program of seeking to educate more and more of the families of Churches of Christ concerning opportunities in Christian education ever attempted by any of our Christian colleges. Each year, on the average, some 60 members of our faculty and staff and occasionally the chairman of the Board of Trustees or other board members are involved in speaking to an average of between 325 and 400 congregations each year, to between 75,000 and 100,000 people per year on the general theme of Christian education. We have spoken in approximately a dozen states on this theme.

In seeking and filling these appointments, we have always followed certain principles: (1) Our sermons would be Biblically-based, (2) The sermons would not be commercials for Abilene Christian University, but would be pro-Christian education everywhere and at all levels. Although all of us work at ACU, we absolutely and undeviatingly support and believe in the work of other Christian colleges. Furthermore, we believe in and support the work of Christian high schools and elementary schools. And that goes also for Bible Chairs at state colleges and universities, and we believe in and support the work of the preacher training schools that are faithfully helping to prepare good people for further ministry and service in the Kingdom of the Lord. We have offered these services to the church at no cost to the church. We do not provide our faculty members extra compensation for doing this work. They do it as a labor of love and we appreciate what they are doing.

In looking at this scripture, "They Shall all be

taught by God," and in speaking specifically of the work of Christian colleges and schools and Bible chairs and preaching training schools, may I suggest that we should have these five principal objectives in all of our educational programs: The first goal of any institution of Christian education is to strengthen the faith of its students. If we do not serve as a faith-building institution, we have no right to exist. We know that faith comes and is built in various ways. To begin with, the individual must choose to be a person of faith. In Hebrews 11:24 we read that, "By faith Moses . . . (chose) rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." The institution of Christian education makes it easier for young people to choose to be believers rather than unbelievers. We do that by providing Bible teaching, campus activities that encourage faith, and by making it possible for the student to have hundreds of friends and acquaintances to share the faith.

Next, we know that faith comes by study of God's word: "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Every student in the Christian college who expects to get a bachelor's degree is required to take a certain number of courses in the Bible itself. On the faculty of Abilene Christian University at the present time we have 21 full-time teachers of Bible. These individuals are highly qualified, dedicated, scholarly, faithful. Their work is faith-building.

A third way students develop faith is through works. James wrote, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith."

Work for the Lord helps to develop faith. Students in the environment of an institution of Christian education have an opportunity to participate daily in the work of God's people. Every student is encouraged to find a church home and to continue in diligent service. In all of these ways, the educational institution is helping students to build faith.

The second major goal of the institution of Christian education is to help students develop a greater love for the Lord's church. We are not content with simply teaching faith in the Lord in the abstract. The individual who says, "I love the Lord but I am not a faithful member of the church," does not realize the true relationship that exists between the Lord and the church. The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:23). The church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:32). It is the family of God (I Timothy 3:15). Therefore, no one can love Christ without loving his church. No one can be in Christ without being in the church, because the same process which puts one into Christ adds one to the church (Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:49).

I would like to see the day come that every graduate of Abilene Christian University would go out into the world to serve the Lord. In serving the Lord that individual will be a faithful member of a congregation of the Lord's church. I would like to think that our graduates would be well enough prepared and with enough self-confidence that they could move into a congregation of 1,000 members and go to work in some worthwhile capacity; or, on the other hand, if a graduate should happen to be situated in a place with only a dozen members of the church and with a rather struggling and feeble work being carried on, he

or she would not be too sophisticated for it all but would simply fit right in and "make a hand" in trying to build up the cause of Christ. This is a specific purpose of Christian education.

The third goal of institutions of Christian education is to help each student succeed in his or her personal goal in life. In other words, we want to provide a really first-rate, quality educational experience for our students. The Christian educational institution ought to strive to offer a truly outstanding educational program that needs no apology anywhere. Trustees, administrators, faculty members and staff members should be fully competent, qualified, and dedicated to their work. They should be at least equal to their counterparts in any secular educational institution insofar as their professional competence may be concerned. Just as the Christian physician should strive first of all to be a competent practitioner of his profession, and just as the Christian pilot should strive first and foremost to be a safe and qualified pilot, so the Christian institution must put emphasis on quality performance. This is certainly the teaching of the Bible. Paul told the Galatians: "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men . . ." (Colossians 3:23).

Every Christian works for at least two employers: (1) whoever it is the Christian is working for on this earth, whether an individual, a corporation, the government, or the public, and, (2) Christ. So the Christian is concerned not only with giving satisfactory service in his or her immediate employment, but even above that, bringing honor and glory to the cause of Christ by the way he or she carries on daily working activities. Hence, the Christian educational institution

has to start out with a strong program. So our goal is to have a great Chemistry Department, and Biology, Physics, Mathematics, English, Foreign Languages, Business, Psychology, and so forth.

Christianity and its impact in higher education should be over and above and in addition to the ordinary excellence; that is why Christian education adds a whole new dimension to education.

So I say that our third goal as an educational institution is to help our students succeed in their professions and jobs and callings and vocations, while remaining faithful to Christ.

Now let me point this out and make it very clear: We measure success by not only what our students accomplish in this world but by their faithfulness to Christ. Suppose, for example, that one of our students majors in Business and goes out into the business world and has an astoundingly successful career, but, in the process, loses faith in Christ. We would not name that individual as the Alumnus of the Year because in our opinion we have failed the student or the student has failed or we jointly share the responsibility for the failure. In other words, we define success not simply in terms of what the person accomplishes in relationship to his or her career goals, but also in terms of what the individual accomplishes in faithful service to Christ. We are truly anxious to help our students succeed—really succeed—in life and in faith.

Our fourth goal in Christian education is to help build stronger Christian families and to help prepare people for their responsibilities in building Christian families. It is a source of great distress to see good marriages fall apart. We believe our whole campus

situation contributes to building strong families. Our Institute of Home and Family Studies is diligently striving to prepare people to go out into the churches and schools and communities wherever they are and work more effectively to build strong families. We are not concentrating simply on preparing people for the role of marriage counselors. The term "marriage counselor" ordinarily calls to mind the picture of one who strives to save troubled marriages. But we are not concerned simply with saving troubled marriages, although we are interested in helping to prepare people for that important work. I am told by some experienced people that if 20% of troubled marriages can be rescued, the work has been done well. That is important, but we are more interested in helping people to go out into their various areas of service and teach young people to prepare themselves for life-long marriages. This work needs to extend to families everywhere. We need to bring up our children so that they will not be so self-centered that they cannot adjust to their marriage partners. We need to teach our sons and daughters how to live and let live and understand and love one another. We need to reverse this dangerous slide into oblivion for marriage and the family. The Christian college still needs to teach every day and in every way exactly what the Bible says about the permanence of marriage. Instead of trying to discover how many excuses there may be for divorce, we need to be concentrating on what the Lord actually said about the permanence of marriage.

We need to help people see that the home should be the happiest place of all. It is not enough to teach people that they ought to stay married just because it is wrong to get a divorce. They ought to stay married

because they love each other and love their families and find the greatest possible happiness in that situation. When people get away from their daily work they ought to prefer to go home over any place they could go. When they take vacations, they would rather have their families than anybody they could think of. The husband should think his wife is the greatest woman in the world and she ought to think her husband is the greatest man she knows. All of these are matters which present themselves as opportunities for Christian education. The institution of Christian education has a marvelous opportunity to help with Christian families in the very fact that we bring together several hundreds or thousands of Christian young people and provide them an opportunity to get acquainted with one another. So many of them find their companions for life on the campus. This is by no means down the ladder in importance when one goes about estimating the value of the Christian college.

And then the fifth goal I would mention for the Christian college is to help our students to develop good personal habits and a sense of morals and ethics that will survive in a rough and tumble secular world. In his prayer to the Father, Jesus said, "I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15). Yes, we are in the world but not of the world. But that is sometimes easier said than done. Too many have loved this present world, as Paul said of Demas (2 Timothy 4:10).

Let us look at some specifics.

For example, under the heading of good personal habits, we plan to continue to emphasize on this

campus that the only sensible position for the Christian to take in today's world with regard to the drinking of alcoholic beverages is total abstinence. We want our students while they are here to learn that they can have a good life and a useful and happy life without having to either stimulate or stultify themselves with intoxicants or drugs. The money they save can be used in the Lord's work.

When one considers the magnitude of the problem of beverage alcohol in the United States of America today, I think one can easily see the reason for this position.

One hundred million Americans are drinking intoxicants today. Of that number, fifty million are problem drinkers. Of that number, ten million are actual drunks. They are the people who are physically addicted. They are in the gutters, either literally or figuratively. Another ten million are psychologically addicted; that is, they are not down and out in the street or in the gutter but they have to have a drink or more every day. They may get by with it for a long time, but if some particularly traumatic situation should arise, then they can quite easily slip over into the ranks of those who are physically addicted. Then there are another thirty million who, while not necessarily psychologically or physically addicted, simply drink all the time. Quite often they drink too much. These are the people who get out on the highways and run over people or who have terrible things happen to them in their homes or with their jobs. A number of members of the United States Congress and other high government officials in recent years have been disgraced because of drinking. Some of them were admitted alcoholics and some not, but

they had their problems.

Occasionally a member of the church who wants to defend drinking will sharply cross-examine those of us who advocate complete abstinence from intoxicants, including whiskey, wine and beer, and they will ask such questions as, "Where do the scriptures teach that one should not drink?" Well, I will just suggest three passages of scripture for study in this connection in today's world: Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit" (Matthew 7:16-17). Look at the fruits of alcoholic beverages in our society. If one were even to attempt to calculate the murders, suicides, broken marriages, beaten children, abandoned families, bankrupted businesses, and other tragic ills of our society that are directly attributable to the drinking of intoxicants, I do not see how anybody in the world could doubt the nature of the fruit of drinking.

Again, Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." It would seem quite clear in today's world that one of the things a Christian ought to deny himself would be a habit which is destroying so many millions of people. Even concerning the eating of meat, Paul said, "Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall" (I Corinthians 8:13). If Paul could say that concerning meat, how much more should we say it today in our society concerning drink. Furthermore, I am persuaded that if the Mormons and Adventists can do without coffee and tea and other drinks containing caffeine, surely my brothers and

sisters in Christ and I ought to be able to deny ourselves the intoxicants that are destroying so many human lives.

The third passage I cite comes from the book of James: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him" (James 1:5). Asking for wisdom means asking for common sense in order to know how to deal with problems the answer to which may not be quite so simple. Surely the Lord intends for us to use our wisdom in dealing with a problem whose bitter fruit has plagued mankind now for so many years.

A matter of morality which we need to teach vigorously has to do with sexual conduct. The church needs to teach and Christian educators need to emphasize again and again that under God's will there is only one condition in which people can have sexual relationships, and that is within the institution of marriage. The whole idea of pre-marital sex or extramarital sex is contrary to God's eternal word. Any society which misuses this gift of God will suffer the penalties. At the Christian college we have the opportunity to teach young people that measure of self-respect—the healthy self-image—that will give them the strength and the ability to resist and to reject invitations to violate God's teaching in this respect. The best sex education in the world is that which teaches the individual to have a healthy self-image. First of all, the individual must be taught that he or she is a creature in God's own image. Secondly, we need to know that whatever we do, say, or think, is open before our God and Father. And then third, we need to think too much of ourselves and too much of

others to be unfaithful in this basic realm of morality. Let's concentrate on preparing people for Christian marriage. In so doing we will do more to combat this whole realm of loose morality than in any other way we could conceive.

In the realm of ethics we need to teach our students today to be scrupulously honest in all of our dealings with one another. If people who wear the name of Christ are as prone to lie and cheat and steal and misrepresent things as if they had never confessed the name of Christ, what profit have we gained from our relationship to our Lord? Every course of study in the Christian college's curriculum should have some emphasis on the basic matter of honesty and old-fashioned ethics; otherwise we are failing in our opportunities.

In all of these ways we have an opportunity of teaching people God's will. "They shall all be taught by God." What a blessing! Let me say that teaching has to be positively done. You cannot teach people the way of Christ by remaining silent. We have to be aggressive and vigorous and positive in all of our approaches. I believe Christian education is going to look better in the next quarter-of-a-century than it has ever looked in our history. We call upon all of us to redouble our interest and our efforts on behalf of Christian education.

The Lordship of Christ

Jerry Jones

Address: Harding University, Bible Department, Searcy, Arkansas 72143.

Family: Wife: the former Claudette DuBois. Children: Angela Lynn, Kris Ann, and Charles Allen.

Education: Harding College (B.A. 1960), Harding Graduate School of Bible and Religion (M.R.E. and M.Th. 1963), New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (Th.D. in Preaching, 1974).

Work: Currently Chairman of Bible Department (since 1974) and Professor at Harding University. Has been at Harding from 1966-1970 and from 1972 to present.

Ministry: Served as fulltime evangelist in Rolla, Missouri (1963-1966), and preached in Gretna, Louisiana (1970-1972). Has preached in 32 states and 4 foreign countries (Germany, Australia, Austria, and Yugoslavia). In 1980 he has spoken in 41 churches and at 8 lectureships or workshops.

Other Fields of Special Interest: Selected to appear in the 1959-1960 edition of *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges*. Received the Baker Book Award for the outstanding Bible graduate in the class of 1960. Selected for *Outstanding Young Men in America in 1971 and 1972*. National Observer Student Achievement Award from the Education Service Bureau of the Dow Jones and Company, Inc., 1972.



A study of the life of our Lord has caught the attention of many for centuries. John uses the

hyperbole "the world could not contain all the books if everything were written" (John 21:25).

When the disciples accepted Jesus as the Lord of their lives, it changed the course of their lives. Jesus did not simply interrupt their lifestyles but he rechanneled them. The claim that Jesus had on the lives of his disciples was bought with a hunger in the desert when he could have turned the stones to bread. It was bought with the sweat in Gethsemane. It was bought with a deathless love which through all the years has refused to let a lost world go.

A study of Jesus as Lord is necessary if we are ever to capture the same style of discipleships and commitment which characterized the first century. One of the basic tenets of restoration Christianity is a restoring of the original. Restoring only the form is superficial when the heart is not there. Our Lord dealt severely with those who had only the form but no heart.

There are three important essentials to the study of Jesus as Lord. The first essential is the definition of Lordship. There are at least ten different uses of this term. The word can be used as a term of respect. This would correspond to our "sir" in English or "Monsieur" in French. If one were interested in expressing affection or respect, this word could be used. If one were writing his father, he could address him as Father and Lord. In English, we would say "Dear Father." The concept of ownership is involved in this word (Matthew 20:8; 21:40; Luke 19:33). When one wanted to make a distinction between master and servant, this word could be used (Matthew 6:24; Ephesians 6:5, 9; Colossians 3:22; 4:1). The head of the household receives this type of designation

(I Peter 3:6). The term came to mean one who is a protector of those who need protection. In Greek society when a woman entered a contract or agreement, she was represented by a *kurios*. The authority for one to make military decisions or dispatch troops is inherent in this word (Mark 2:28). The word *kurios* became a standard title for the emperor. The title later on was prefixed to the names of gods and goddesses. In the LXX the word was used to translate the name of God (Luke 2:9; 4:18). (For additional material see the study in William Barclay, *Crucified and Crowned*, London: SCM Press, Limited, 1961, pp. 180-185.)

As the implications of this word became evident in the first century, they take on a very important meaning as it relates to the life of Jesus. The connotations of the word Lord translate into a very beautiful picture of Jesus. Jesus is our owner. He redeemed us (I Peter 1:18-25) and bought us (John 10:11, I Corinthians 6:19-20). Jesus is head of his household (Ephesians 5:22-23) which is the church (I Timothy 3:15). He is the master of our lives and destiny (Colossians 4:1). He functions as king and emperor over our lives (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:36).

A second essential to the discussion of Jesus as Lord is the declaration of his Lordship in the New Testament. As one attempts to study this subject throughout the New Testament, he is impressed with the multiplicity of times the Lordship of Jesus Christ is declared. The simple reading of these passages establish beyond a shadow of doubt the emphasis and stress upon this crucial declaration as a theme of the New Testament. The gospels (Luke 2:11; 1:43; Matthew 3:3; 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 13:13; Matthew

12:8), the book of Acts (2:36; 10:36; 18:8), epistles (Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:9-11; Ephesians 4:4-6) and the book of Revelation (17:14; 19:16) are extremely clear in their declaration of the Lordship of Jesus. The multiplicity of times that this great theme is mentioned shows the apparent importance that it had in the life of the early church.

The most important essential in the study of Jesus as Lord is the demands that his Lordship places upon the world. There are four areas in which the demands of Lordship are demonstrated. The first area is in the life of the individual Christian. The object of one's conversion has important implications in how one lives after conversion. Lordship plays a very important role in conversion. The truth is established as one studies the multiplicity of times that Jesus as Lord is stressed. As one involves himself in discipleship, the Lordship of Jesus is stressed (Acts 11:23, 16:15). The object of our conversion must not be the church. The church is important in order to be reconciled (Ephesians 2:16), but it is not the reconciler. One must not be converted to doctrine even though doctrine is important in making one free from sin and a servant of righteousness (Romans 6:16-18). One must not be converted to a preacher even though a preacher or teacher is important in conversion (Romans 10). When the object of one's conversion is Christ, it produces a disciple, which is essentially what the Lord said to do (Matthew 28:18-20). When you convert a person to the church, it produces a sectarian. When you convert a person to a doctrine, you produce a legalist. When you convert a person to a preacher, you produce a follower of men. We must not be guilty of producing in the 20th century what the Lord was not pleased with in the 1st

century. One of the unique aspects of Christianity has to be in reference to loyalty. Hinduism demands a loyalty to ideals. Confucianism demands loyalty to tradition. Shintoism demands loyalty to a country. Islam demands loyalty to a code. Judaism demands loyalty to a law, but Christianity demands loyalty to a person. Because of my loyalty to God, I involve myself in the family of God. If our loyalties are in the proper perspective we will not have people moving from one part of the country to the other without involving themselves in the body of Christ or the family of God.

One of the major differences between the old and new law concerns our knowledge of the Lord. When one becomes part of the covenant, they already know the Lord, which is a distinct difference from the old covenant (Hebrews 8:11). When you ask someone about their conversion and they respond they have been "raised in the church," this indicates a misunderstanding concerning conversion. One can be reared in a Christian atmosphere but he must be born of the water and the spirit to enter the church. This statement ("raised in the church") could portray more than what one would like to portray. We are Christians by regeneration and not generation. Under the old covenant when one became a part of the Israelite community, he was not aware of it until much later in life. Many people join denominational churches by way of infant baptism and have no knowledge of their entrance into that religious organization. It should never be said of us that we attempted to enter the new covenant of Christ without knowing about Lordship prior to our being part of the covenant (Hebrews 8:11).

As Lordship plays a very important role in the initial conversion, it also has an important place after one has been united with the benefits of the death of Christ. In the area of morality, the concept of Lordship is stressed (II Timothy 2:19). Jesus as the Lord of our lives produces a relationship with the Father. Because of Jesus, I have the capabilities of being a son of God. Because of my relationship to God through the Sonship, I am to conduct my life accordingly. It is interesting to observe that when Paul deals with the problem of immorality, he stresses the truth by way of a stress on relationship. In the first 8 verses of Thessalonians 4, Paul mentioned God five times as he deals with the problem of moral purity. Paul does not demand morality based upon detection, inflection or conception but based upon one's relationship to God as he functions in the family of God. Paul believes it to be unthinkable that one could have the indwelling of the Spirit and live a life not in harmony with the Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

One must remain loyal to the Lord in matters of doctrine. Because of my loyalty to God through Christ, I seek to be loyal in doctrine. When one understands the implications of union with God, he will seek to be what God wants him to be. The concept of "son of" relates back to the Old Testament. It denotes the idea of belonging to or partaking of. Because I am the son of God, I partake in the very nature of God. Because I partake of the nature of God, I want to seek in every sense of the term what God wants me to be. The concept of fellowship becomes very sweet when one realizes it is in connection with one's relationship to God. Because I am related to God, I will seek the fellowship of the other members

of the family of God. When the concept of fellowship in the family of God is stressed, we will have greater attendance "at the family meetings" than ever before. When one finds more fellowship fraternizing in civic and garden clubs, no wonder he has more loyalty and interest. If the church offers only moral guidance, no wonder some turn with greater interest to the Boy Scouts.

Lordship has so much to do with daily ethical decisions of the Christian. It is involved in every phase of his life. The Christian needs to become the mind through which Christ thinks, the heart through which he loves, the voice through which he speaks and the hand through which he helps.

Our homes can become better places in the Lordship of Christ. To begin with, one would not involve himself or herself in a contract with one who is not a servant of the Lord because of his respect for Lordship (II Corinthians 6:16). I am convinced that if we teach our relationship to the Lord as one who is a servant, then a servant will not involve himself or herself in the contract with a non-servant who would in turn jeopardize that service. We have not emphasized servanthood enough to our young people as they contemplate marriage. The cross of the Lord will unite homes. As homes break up across the nation, it must be stressed that someone has left the cross. When the cross becomes the center of the home and everyone moves closer to that center, they of necessity must get closer together.

The second area in which the demands of Lordship are demonstrated is in the life of the church. Prejudice is still an issue facing the church. We have made some great strides in racial prejudice, but there are still

improvements that need to be made. In some areas there is prejudice against the uneducated and the poor. Paul's answer to racial prejudice was the Lordship of Christ. Because of Jesus Christ, this Pharisaical Hebrew of Hebrews could overcome his prejudices. One of the most significant statements that Paul made in this realm is found in Galatians 3:28-29. Paul proclaims that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female, but we are all one in Christ. When one realizes the orthodox Jew was thankful on a daily basis that he was neither Gentile, slave or woman, Paul's statement becomes extremely significant. We will never overcome racial prejudice by telling people they should not be prejudiced. Racial prejudice will be overcome when one accepts the implications of the Lordship of Christ.

The restoration of the New Testament church involves restoration of the family concept. From a fleshly viewpoint we desire to be with family. If you have ever worked in a Christian camp, you have dealt with some homesick young people. There is something about the pull of being with family that is extremely unique. We will drive great distances and travel late into the night to be with family. As family, we will tend to overlook some of our idiosyncrasies and quirks in personality. If the same feeling that we have in our fleshly families could be put into the family of God, we would dwell together in greater unity and harmony. Because of the common bond of the Lordship of Christ, we will move closer together as brothers and sisters. As we are closer to one another, we will become extremely concerned about one another. It would be unheard of for one of the immediate members of your family to be gone for months at a time without your missing them or inquiring about them. This is a strange

and sad commentary on the church as the family of God when its members can be gone for weeks, months and even years without an inquiry on anyone's part. Sometimes these members are not the most accessible or obvious; but, nevertheless, they are members.

One of the great analogies that Paul makes about the church is his analogy of the human body. In I Corinthians 12 he relates the church to our human body. He stresses the idea that there are many members yet one body. He stresses that each part has a particular function, and that the body cannot do without this function without being hindered in its progress. It is very easy to downplay some lesser parts of the body and fail to realize their great function. Imagine a man who is asleep on a very cold night. He has placed many covers and quilts over him but has left his feet sticking out from underneath the covers. Because of the extreme cold, his feet begin to turn blue. A friend of his comes by and urges him to pull his cold feet underneath the covers with the rest of his body. The man in bed replies, "I don't want those cold things in bed with me!" Such would be a ridiculous response, but I am wondering if we have not responded in a similar way to some lesser parts of the body of Christ. The Lordship of Christ creates a common bond in which we can really be God's spiritual family.

Church discipline seems to be a concern of many, but little is being done. In my travels I have had many requests concerning information about this subject and some from churches that I thought were doing a good job in this area. If you were called upon to name one church with an effective discipline program, who would you suggest? What discipline has been practiced

by sincere brethren and has been basically ineffective in bringing about the restoration of the wayward? Usually discipline is only exercised after the case becomes totally acute. Occasionally an eldership decides that they are going to purge their rolls of those who are not interested and have not been coming. When a wayward member of the body who has not attended a family function for years receives the threat of disfellowship, he is usually unmoved. Disfellowship has no meaning to him since he does not understand the meaning of fellowship. You cannot take away from a person something that he does not have. By the time the act of disfellowshipping is brought about, most of the members of the family don't know the person who is being disfellowshipped and the disfellowshipped doesn't even know a large percentage of the family. Obviously this is not always the case, but it appears to be the case more than we would like to admit. Discipline and restoration is a responsibility of all (Galatians 6:1-2). The elders have a very important responsibility in this area. The good shepherd is one who goes out and seeks the lost sheep (Hebrews 13:17). In far too many cases the attitude has been adopted that these wayward members have done their own disfellowshipping and we don't need to do anything. The attitude expressed in the statement, "We cannot ask them to leave so we will not ask them to return," is extremely revealing. One might not go as far as to verbalize this statement, but in many cases the action is the same.

With nearly 200 years of restoration history in our past we are still struggling with the Great Commission. In spite of the number of surges that we have made in mission work and the advances that we have made in

technology, the gospel still has not been taken to the whole world. Obedience to the Great Commission will never become a top priority until one believes the Great Commissioner is Lord. When one studies the book of Acts, he is impressed that the church was made up of people and was not the possession of the government. When the church gained respectability and became the church of the empire, it became weak. The church became the property of a few elite and professional leaders. Evangelistic outreach was no longer a characteristic of a common member but was left to a priestly class. Instead of the home as a center of learning, the monastery became a replacement. Bible content was for the professional; therefore, it gave birth to the Dark Ages of religious activity. When religious fervor began to take an upswing, buildings began to be erected all over the world. These buildings were to serve as a means to an end but became an end to themselves. Evangelism became entrapped within the walls. The gospel was preached with great fervency within these walls, but the ones who needed to hear were not there. As we come together as the family of God, we declare to go forth and fulfill the purpose of this family which is to enlarge. In my position and work, it has been very easy to talk with many preachers. Some of the most talented men that I have ever known have quit the full-time pursuit of preaching to take on a secular employment. In most cases these men are still extremely dedicated and committed to the work of the Lord. This discouragement stems not from a lack of financial provision but because they feel they have not been allowed to be in the heart of the purpose. A study of the book of Ephesians will reveal to us the eternal purpose of

God. The eternal purpose of God involves the salvation of the lost to the praise and glory of God. The total activity of the church has to be measured in eternal purposes and not temporary purposes.

A third area involved in the demands of Lordship is the life of the Christian school. Our Christian schools were founded for three basic reasons: (1) to provide a quality secular education in a Christian environment; (2) to train young people for greater service in the kingdom of God as they pursue secular employment; (3) to train young people to enter into full-time church work. These are solid reasons which merit our full support. It has been my observation as we have tried to expand as a Christian school and to become competitive with secular education in many areas we have gradually moved from the center of the purpose. If one would review the basic reasons for Christian education in light of the eternal purpose concept of the Ephesians, some alarm should be brought to those in important administrative positions. When one looks at budget, faculty activities, athletics and the major fields of our students, he must become concerned. Many times it is possible to be involved in many good things and yet not be involved in that which is major.

It is very easy to confuse motion with progress. A man in a rocking chair has a lot of motion with very little progress. We must be called back to the purpose that God intended for the church. I give the following quote for your consideration concerning the purpose and direction of the church:

The present day church appears to be having transmission trouble. It appears to be confused in regarding itself more as a reservoir than as a

channel. Our churches lack numbers, but our prisons are full. Our minds are enlightened, but our morals are decadent. We have built big churches, but they have become monuments. The people are asking, 'What mean these stones?' At one time we wanted to be involved in a movement, but now find that instead we are shackled with the indebtedness of a monument. We must shift our emphasis from building an institution to that of changing the world for the glory of God. It appears that we have been doing a thousand good but secondary things that the Lord never told us to do. We have been majoring in minors and specializing in the trivial, while our work is not sociology, but salvation. Our concern should not be first of all reform, but redemption. It is not progress, but pardon. It is not first of all culture, but conversion. It is not economics, but evangelism. (Lloyd M. Perry, *Biblical Preaching for Today's World*, p. 152)

I believe this author puts his finger squarely on the problem. I am sure he is not viewing the church from a non-denominational concept as we would; but he is nevertheless, seeing the tragedy of majoring in minors. When our Christian schools tend to be nothing more than a state school with a glorified Bible chair program, we need to take a fresh look at the Lordship of Christ and what it would mean in the school. If our Christian schools are not under the Lordship of Christ, they have relinquished their right to exist!

Another area of the demands of Lordship is in the life of a non-Christian. One's estimation of Jesus determines his whole lifestyle. Jesus knew this same

truth and for this reason he challenged his disciples concerning his identity (Matthew 16:13-18). If Jesus is nothing more than a resurrected John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah, he does not have a claim on the disciples. The disciples will not have any more allegiance to him than they would these great Old Testament characters. However, because Jesus is the Christ, it makes all the difference in the world in those who claim to be disciples.

A non-Christian has only four possibilities concerning Jesus. Jesus is either a legend, liar, lunatic or the Lord. If the non-Christian can be convinced Jesus was a mythological character, then there is no allegiance to him. When the historical nature of Jesus is established, the non-Christian moves to the concept that Jesus is a liar. Jesus becomes a liar in the mind of a non-Christian from two aspects. First of all, Jesus is a liar in his claims. Jesus makes startling claims concerning his relationship with the Father in the great "I Am" passages. If Jesus is all that he claims to be, the non-Christian cannot treat him like he would any ordinary individual. He must reject the claims of Jesus in order to remove the claims of Jesus from his life. When the claims of Jesus are rejected, he must affirm by deed that Jesus is a liar. The second aspect in which Jesus is a liar for a non-Christian would be his teachings. The teachings of Jesus concerning what necessitates discipleship are extremely clear. To reject these teachings indicates an unbelief in the demands of Jesus. When one does not believe in Jesus, then the idea of his divinity, being born in a stable, raised in a despised house and being associated with the undesirables, is unthinkable in the life of a non-Christian. The teachings concerning wealth, worry,

and happiness border on ridiculous in his mind. The idea that he is better off giving away rather than receiving doesn't make sense to his secular mind. If a non-Christian is ever compelled to accept Jesus as Lord, obedience is not an optional matter. The Lordship demands decision. The decisions of Peter and Paul were based upon their view of Jesus as the Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

We must stress the Lordship of Jesus in our preaching. Jesus is either Lord of all or Lord not at all. The world must be called upon to either be for him or against him, to love him or hate him, to confess him or curse him. Once one bows to the Lordship of Jesus the whole purpose can be changed.

It is time to seek unity in the body of Christ. We must not be sidetracked into issues of a divisive nature. We have allowed many side issues and personal opinions to splinter the body of Christ! I believe if some of my brethren had been on the Titanic when it was sinking that some would be disputing over the deck chairs! With a world which is lost in sin and destined for hell, let us address the issue of the day—salvation of a lost world. For far too long we have been like the group of boys playing touch football outside the Cotton Bowl totally unaware of where the big game is being played. If the historians would write a history of the church in the last half of the 20th century from the minutes of our business meetings and budgets, what would they say were our major concerns?

We must let no issue, whether it be translations, indwelling of the Holy Spirit, marriage and divorce, or preferred methods of interpretation of difficult texts splinter the body. We must refrain from spreading contention and strife among brethren. The best advice

I ever received in this area is on the crude side but true. Don't get in a puking contest with a buzzard because he is better equipped and has more experience. We can spend our lives trying to win battles and end up losing the war!

We must give ourselves to magnifying Jesus as Lord. We must not support or propagate any human system even if it be a human tradition inherited from our forefathers. Our allegiance to God the Father and his son, the Lord of all, must dominate. If we do not recommit ourselves to emphasizing both form and content, what will keep God from putting us out of business, putting us into eternity and raising up a new people to do his will?

A return to Christianity rather than "churchanity" is crucial. Jesus merits our allegiance as we prepare for the day in which every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God.

We make many decisions but only one commitment. From the commitment of Jesus as the Lord of my life, I am able to make the day to day decisions with the consistency of the disciple of the Lord. It is my prayer that we all measure our jobs, hobbies, spending and preaching by the only truth that all some day will confess Jesus is Lord!

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

To Him Be the Glory

Batsell Barrett Baxter

Address: 3703 Mayfair Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee 37215.

Family: Wife: the former Wanda Roberts. Children: Scott, Alan, and John. Grandson: Brandon Scott.

Education: David Lipscomb High School (Diploma 1933), Abilene Christian University (B.A. 1937), University of Southern California (M.A. 1938, Ph.D. 1944), Vanderbilt University (Master of Divinity 1957), and Abilene Christian University (Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, 1979).

Work: Currently Professor of Bible and Chairman of the Bible Department, David Lipscomb College (1956-). He has also worked as Instructor and later Professor of Speech, Pepperdine University (1938-1945), Professor of Speech and Bible, and Chairman of the Speech Department, David Lipscomb College (1945-1956).

Ministry: He has served as minister for the Church of Christ in Whittier, California (1938-1941), North Hollywood, California (1941-1945), Belmont Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee (1945-1946), Trinity Lane, Nashville, Tennessee (1946-1951), and Hillsboro, Nashville, Tennessee (1951-1971, 1973-1980).

Other Fields of Special Interest: Travel and Photography. Brother Baxter has made trips to Europe and the Bible Lands (1949, 1972, 1979). He spent approximately one month in Tokyo, Japan in 1957. He led a campaign of 40 workers in establishing a new congregation in London, England in 1961, and led a similar campaign in 1963 with 90 workers. He visited the Bible Lands during the summer of 1979, recording 39 radio half-hour programs for the Herald of Truth.



He made fifty-two half-hour television films in the 1960 series of Herald of Truth, and fifteen additional films in the 1962 series. From 1961-1965 he was the regular speaker on the Herald of Truth radio network, and was the television speaker from 1966-1977. He was the radio speaker with Harold Hazelip from 1976-1980, and the television speaker with Harold Hazelip and Joe Barnett from 1978-1980.

Bro. Baxter is the author of 14 books, some of which are: *Speaking for the Master, If I Be Lifted Up, Great Preachers of Today, I Believe Because, When Life Tumbles In, The Search for Happiness, A Devotional Guide to Bible Lands, and Family of God*. He is the editor of the new *Up Reach Magazine*, a publication of Herald of Truth, beginning 1979.

Nothing on earth is more interesting than people. Of course, there are many other things that are interesting, too, such as mountains, valleys, rivers, oceans, plants, animals, weather, and so much more. Yet, none of these even begins to rival the interest that we have in people. In fact, the interest that we have in most of these other things grows out of their relationship to people. Most of what we read in our newspapers and magazines, see on television, and hear on radio have to do with people: who they are, what they look like, what they say, where they go, what they do.

In the study of people, one of the most interesting areas is the study of the things to which they are committed. Along with this, the depth and intensity of the commitments is of unusual interest. The overwhelming lust for power is reflected in the lives of many of the most prominent names in history: Xerxes, Alexander the Great, the Pharaohs, the Caesars, and in more recent centuries Napoleon, Hitler, and others. A very different kind of life-filling commitment is

found in the lives of Leonardo da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Brahms, Beethoven, and Bach, and even our recent contemporaries Arthur Fiedler and Leopold Stowkowski. Still different were the driving forces behind Thomas A. Edison, Henry Ford, and Andrew Carnegie. Of still a different type were the commitments of Albert Schweitzer, Florence Nightingale, Joan of Arc, and Mother Teresa. What is it that has caused men like Thomas Hillary to risk his life in conquering Mt. Everest, and Jacques Cousteau to spend his life exploring the denizens of the deep? Still other commitments are reflected in the lives of Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron, Roger Staubach, Terry Bradshaw, O. J. Simpson, and Dr. J. How true it is. The life commitments of those around us and those of the past, along with the intensity of those commitments, constitute the things that interest us most.

Our Own Commitment

At this juncture in our discussion it seems highly appropriate for each of us to ask himself, "To what am I most committed?" And then a second question, "Just exactly how deep is my commitment?" Most of us would probably think in terms of a number of different commitments in our lives—to family and friends, to certain favored institutions, to our country, and to many other worthy causes. Ultimately, I feel certain that all of us would conclude that our deepest commitment is to our Lord Jesus Christ and his church. Then comes the question, "Why?" Is it simply because we were born into a certain family whose members happened to be Christians? Is it because we just happened to live in a certain section of a certain

nation? Is it because of the person we married? Is it because of the schools we attended? More important yet: How deep is the commitment? Is it a casual commitment which could be abandoned under heavy pressure? Or, is it a commitment for which we would give our lives if need be?

My mind goes back to a letter which I read some years ago from a young American student to his fiance telling her why he must break off their engagement. The young man wrote:

We Communists have a high casualty rate. We're the ones who get shot and hung and lynched and tarred and feathered and jailed and slandered, and ridiculed and fired from our jobs, and in every other way made as uncomfortable as possible. A certain percentage of us get killed or imprisoned. We live in virtual poverty. We turn back to the party every penny we make above what is absolutely necessary to keep us alive. We Communists don't have the time or money for many movies, or concerts, or T-bone steaks, or decent homes and new cars. We've been described as fanatics. We are fanatics. Our lives are dominated by one great overshadowing factor. **THE STRUGGLE FOR WORLD COMMUNISM.**

We Communists have a philosophy of life which no amount of money could buy. We have a cause to fight for, a definitive purpose in life. We subordinate our petty, personal selves into a great movement of humanity, and if our personal lives seem hard, or our egos appear to suffer through subordination to the party, then we are adequately compensated by the thought that

each of us in his small way is contributing to something new and true and better for mankind. There is one thing in which I am in dead earnest and that is the Communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife and mistress, my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night.

Its hold on me grows, not lessens as time goes on. Therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which both drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, books, ideas and actions according to how they affect the Communist cause and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideas and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad. (Author unknown)

If Communists can be as dedicated as this for their cause, how much more should Christians pour themselves out in loving, glad devotion to Jesus Christ. The Lord is not looking for men and women who will give their spare evenings to him—or their weekends—or their years of retirement. Rather, he seeks those who will give him first place in their lives.

Motivation for the Christian Life

With all that we have just said about commitment clearly in our minds, I now want to turn to the Bible and review with you what I believe to be the basic motivation for the living of the Christian life. To do this I should like to take you to the book of Romans.

If you have a Bible within reach, please open it to the book of Romans, from which we will be studying. The theme of the book is sometimes said to be: "The Gospel of Righteousness." It deals with our salvation—with sin . . . grace . . . faith . . . and righteousness. The doctrinal section of Romans is found in chapters one through eleven, while the ethical section appears in chapters twelve through fifteen. The last chapter is a chapter of personal greetings. The first major section, Romans 1-11, is doctrinal, or we might say is characterized by the "indicative mood." It is a statement of fact, a statement of what is. The second section, Romans 12-15, is the ethical section, characterized we might say by the "imperative mood." It is a section of commands, of what must be done, of how we must live.

Now focus with me on our special text, Romans 12:1-2, one of the most meaningful passages in the entire book, or the entire Bible for that matter. In the RSV it reads:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

An alternate reading in the NIV puts it in these words:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern

of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Once more, let's listen to the ASV wording of this passage:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

An Analysis of the Text

With this reading clearly in mind, let us notice some of the specific phrases and try to determine their deep significance. Notice first, "I beseech you therefore. . . ." The apostle Paul is saying I appeal, I urge, I beseech, which expressions all indicate an urgency. The word "therefore" points back to all that he has written in the first eleven chapters of the book of Romans. So, in order to get the real import of this key passage we need to go back and review the basic theme of the book. Notice a few passages:

Romans 3:21-25. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

Romans 5:1. Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:1, 31, 33, 38-39. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus . . . What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? . . . Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies . . . For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 11:33. O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

Our sinfulness has been overcome and we are now judged to be righteous by the action of God, through Jesus Christ, whom we accept in obedient faith.

The next expression which we wish to emphasize is "by the mercies of God. . . ." Here is the crux of the entire point that we wish to make. What God has done for us is fantastic. Our condition as miserable, lost sinners, without hope of salvation, has been changed by God's mercy and grace. *This is the primary motivation to live the Christian life.* At another time

Paul put it this way, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (II Corinthians 5:17).

In the book of Colossians, Paul emphasizes this motive for the new kind of life which Christians live. He wrote:

Colossians 3:1-3. If then you have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right-hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:5-8. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth.

Colossians 3:12-14. Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Right Motives for Right Action

As we discuss the proper and central motive for the Christian life, even at the risk of being misunderstood,

I would like to pause and give an illustration of what I have sometimes observed as wrong motives for very commendable Christian behavior. The New Testament indicates very clearly that evangelism was very important in the early church. The evangelistic tone was set on Pentecost (Acts 2). The book of Acts highlights eight major conversion stories. The early Christians "went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). The early Christians "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). "All they that dwelt in Asia heard the word" (Acts 19:10). Nothing seems to have been quite so imperative as the carrying of the gospel to those who had never heard it and consequently were lost. The same is true in our day. Among Christians, nothing is more imperative than sharing the good news of Christ with the lost world about us.

Having recognized this primary emphasis in the New Testament, why is it that most of us are doing so little to share the gospel with the lost? One of the reasons, in my judgment, is that we have often used *wrong and inadequate motive appeals* in trying to promote evangelistic activities. One such questionable appeal is competition with other religious groups. We have said, "Look at the Mormons, they are sending thousands of missionaries into the world." We have then said, "Look at the Seventh-Day-Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, they are doing the same. Surely we ought to be doing more than they." While this is true, it is hardly the basic motivation that will lead people to spend their lives in sacrificially preaching the gospel to the lost. Just to beat the Mormons, or the Adventists, or the Jehovah's Witnesses grows thin after a little while.

Sometimes there has been almost an appeal to

adventure and excitement and foreign travel as the motivation. At other times sheer duty has been emphasized. Duty it may be, but without being coupled with desire, it is often shortlived. Sometimes the expectation of others, parents or friends, has been the motivation appeal. Unfortunately, occasionally ego-satisfaction or self-advancement seems to have played a part in mission activity. Sometimes those who have failed at home have felt called to go to foreign mission fields where the work is infinitely more difficult and more demanding. As an escape from failure at home, foreign mission activity is hardly justified. Let me hasten to say that the great host of the hundreds and hundreds who have gone into mission areas, both in this country and in other nations, have been motivated not by these motives but by a love for God and a love for lost souls. It is only when we recognize what God has done for us and want to share our blessings with others that the motivation is deep enough to be lasting and effective.

There are many hindrances and impediments which prevent mission efforts. Among them are preoccupation with secular affairs, feelings of personal inadequacy, family responsibilities, love of the American way of life, inactivity of other Christians, and many more. But, when each one of us looks inwardly and evaluates himself, probably the deepest of all is a lack of commitment to Christ which grows out of a lack of appreciation for what Christ has done for us. As we comprehend more fully what it means to have been hopelessly lost and now to be redeemed by the blood of Christ and on our way to eternal life in heaven, obstacles will be overcome. We will do more, in whatever way we are qualified to do more in reaching the lost.

Our Sacrifice

Now, return with me to our text. Still in Romans 12:1, there is the expression "to present your bodies a living sacrifice." All of us know, of course, that Christ alone offers the sacrifice which redeems or saves (Hebrews 10:10-18). Our sacrifice is a thanksgiving . . . a thank offering . . . not an atonement. Christ's sacrifice bought our freedom from sin; our sacrifice expresses our gratitude for that wonderful act.

Then comes the expression "spiritual service" or "reasonable service" or "worship." This is the response of rational creatures, made in God's image, who were lost and now are saved. Because of what God has done through Christ, we want to render spiritual service as an evidence of our gratitude.

In Romans 12:2 there is the line, "Be not fashioned according to this world" or "Do not be conformed to this world." The world about us is often far from a Christian world. Because of our deep gratitude to God we do not allow ourselves to be fashioned or conformed to the culture in which we find ourselves living. If we think as the world thinks, if we accept the world's philosophy of life, if we agree with the world's values, we will act as the world does. But, because we are redeemed and are new creatures we think differently and we act differently. Incidentally, this is one of the major reasons why I believe so strongly in Christian Education, from elementary school on through college. There are things which our children need to be taught, attitudes which they need to learn, faith which they need to develop, which the public schools of America cannot teach.

Next comes the expression "but be ye transformed

by the renewing of your mind." Christianity requires the use of the mind. Christianity is a teaching religion. It is important then that we put Christian values in the mind so that the result will be Christian living. The prophet Isaiah recognized this principle centuries before Christ when he wrote, "For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

The Center Is Crucial

If we had a chart, or a blackboard, I would like to put this in the form of a simple drawing. The drawing would have an inner circle, something like the hub of a wheel, and then a much larger outer circle. The inner circle would represent Christian attitudes—a Christian philosophy of life, a Christian world view, a Christian view of God, Christ, man, life, and the purposes for which man should live. Then, with this center properly formed man's behavior, represented by the outer larger circle, would take care of itself. If we plant the right principles in the heart, and plant them deeply and indelibly, then behavior will follow along the right path.

This is crucially important. Christ placed a tremendous emphasis on inwardness in his teachings. For example, he said,

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. (Matthew 7:15-17)

A good man does a good deed . . . out of his basic good nature. It is not the other way round, a good deed makes a good man. It is quite possible for people with evil and ulterior motives to do good deeds. The right way is to have the heart right, then the good deeds will result.

At another time Jesus said,

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45)

Paul had it exactly right when he wrote to the Philippians,

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

I should like to use one further example from Paul's writings. In I Thessalonians 1:3, he spoke of "your work of faith and labor of love and stedfastness of hope. . . ." Those words are paired in a very interesting way. Three of them have to do with outward, visible matters, while three have to do with inward attitudes. Notice *work*, *labor*, and *stedfastness* are the outer, visible acts. But notice, too, that they grow out of the inner attitudes, as indicated by the words *faith*, *love*, and *hope*. If we get the attitudes right the outer behavior will take care of itself.

Returning again to our text, there are two additional

phrases to which we wish to give attention. The first is the word "prove" which simply means to understand, accept, and approve as good. The final expression is "the will of God" and the result of proving it is that we discover it to be good, acceptable, and perfect. When examined carefully God's plan, God's will, is good, acceptable, and perfect.

Conclusion

Why live the Christian life? Why be more deeply committed to Christ and his church than to anything else? The answer is very simple. Realize how lost you were, then realize what an infinite difference has been made by God's action in your behalf. Then, in worshipping him, in living a pure clean life in his honor, and in advancing his Cause, there is nothing that you will not want to do to help. The beauty of it is that it will not be forced upon you by sheer duty, or by artificial external pressures from others, but will be an internal desire that makes your Christianity a joy.

I would like to close our discussion by going back to the sentence that precedes the text that we have examined in our study today. At the end of the first eleven chapters of Romans, as a kind of climax to all of the great truths which Paul had been privileged to proclaim by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he said, "For from him and through him and to him are all things." Then he added, "To him be glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11:36) There then follows the text that we have studied which reveals the primary reason for the deepest commitment of our lives, the commitment to honor and glorify God in everything that we do. "To him be glory for ever. Amen."

Afternoon Sessions

Shall I Speak Falsely for God?

Jack P. Lewis

Address: Harding Graduate School of Religion, 1000 Cherry Road, Memphis, Tennessee 38117.

Family: Wife: the former Annie May Alston. He and his deceased wife, Lynell Carpenter, have two sons, John Robert and Jerry Wayne.

Education: Abilene Christian College, Sam Houston State Teachers' College, Harvard University, and Hebrew Union College, receiving a Ph.D. from each of the last two schools. Has received numerous fellowship grants, the most recent being from the American Schools of Oriental Research for a year (1967-68) at its Jerusalem School.

Work: Currently Professor of Bible (1958-) at Harding Graduate School of Religion. He also taught Bible at Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas (1954-1958).

Ministry: Has done local work with congregations in Throckmorton and Huntsville, Texas, in Providence, Rhode Island, and in Covington, Kentucky. Has preached in numerous other congregations in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas, and has appeared on numerous lecture programs at the Christian Colleges. He is on the editorial board of *Restoration Quarterly* and *Journal of Hebraic Studies*. He is a member of the board of directors of the University Christian Center, Oxford, Mississippi. He was president of the southern section of the Evangelical Theological Society from 1969-1970.

Other Fields of Special Interest: Dr. Lewis has made seventeen trips to the Holy Land. He made a trip around the world in 1974; a trip to Scandinavia in 1976; to the British Isles



in 1977; and to Eastern Europe in 1978. He has taken several groups to Hawaii.

Dr. Lewis is the author of *The Minor Prophets*, *The Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature*, *Historical Backgrounds of Bible History*, *Biblical Archaeology*, *Gospel of Matthew* (2 vol.), and the editor of *The Last Things*. He has published numerous periodical articles. He received the Twentieth Century Christian Education award in 1968 in recognition of his "scholarly research, profound writing, and inspirational teaching." He is one of the translators of *The New International Bible*. He has completed a manuscript on English versions of the Bible, entitled *The English Bible from KJV to NIV*, which will be published in March 1981.

Introduction:

Job's friends, who had come to comfort him in his misery, sought to uphold that which was orthodox teaching for their day: God is just. He punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous in this life. Since the friends subscribed to a theory of retribution which claimed that "the prosperity of the wicked is but for a while," that Job had suffered reverses was ample evidence of his wickedness, even though they could not point to one specific sin of which he had been guilty. God would not have afflicted him unless flagrant iniquity were found in him. That Job would not admit his fault only added, in their opinion, to his guilt. Since God rewards the righteous, should Job confess and seek mercy, his prosperity would return. They pledged God to this course of action in accordance with their sense of justice.

Job, knowing his innocence, found that the words of his friends only aggravated his suffering. He lashed out at them, charging, "You whitewash with lies, worthless physicians are you all" (13:4). He asks

them, "Will you speak falsely for God, and speak deceitfully for him?" (13:7). He charges, "Your maxims are proverbs of ashes, your defenses of clay" (13:12). It was not Job's purpose to accuse his friends of intentionally lying. They were convinced of the truth of what they were saying; however, while acting out of the best of motives—that of desiring to uphold the honor of God—they were using falsehoods. A lie in God's defense is still a lie. God, himself, later said of them, ". . . You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (42:7).

The friends, with their arguments, were in a similar position to that which Paul attributes to himself when he said, "I have lived before God in all good conscience up to this day" (Acts 23:1), and "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9), and still later, "I acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13).

Job's accusation contains a challenge to all of us who are teachers of God's word, whether our work is on the home front or on the foreign field. Are we, though motivated by the best of motives, teaching falsehoods while thinking that we are expounders of truth? Are we who are engaged in the educational process sending out men and women of good motives, zealous for the Lord, but who will expend that zeal in teaching truth mixed with falsehoods?

I. Why Men Speak Falsely for God

A. Men speak falsely for God because of lack of information! Goethe said, "There is no more terrible sight than that of ignorance in action." A brother dedicated by long service in his chosen mission field

confided to me some time ago that he and his associates were preparing a translation of the Bible into the language of his area. He wanted to know if I thought the KJV or the RSV was the better version from which to translate. When I asked if any member of his translating group knew either Hebrew or Greek, he confessed that no one did. Can you not see the picture here of well-intentioned men telling a society what a book says which they themselves cannot read in its original language? While they could convey the basic outlines of the Biblical message, their procedure dooms their translation to inaccuracy in details which all their care, zeal, and good intentions cannot overcome.

Some time ago a well-known brother wrote a book entitled *The Certified Gospel*, which is a take-off of Paul's statement, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man" (Gal. 1:11; KJV). Then later another brother published an article with the same title in which he elaborated on the idea that "certify" means "to guarantee." He stressed that the Gospel is guaranteed. We would not quarrel with his idea of the reliability of the Gospel, but both men seem oblivious to the fact that *gnorizo* used by Paul merely means "I make known" and carries no idea of guarantee at all.

A chapel speaker at our school picked up the phrase "Counselor" for the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; RSV) and proceeded to inform us how grateful he was to have someone to listen to his problems and to advise him. He evidently could imagine himself stretched out on the great celestial couch with the Holy Spirit standing by and listening. It seems never to have occurred to him to ask if *paracletos* conveyed that

meaning; nor did it occur to him that "counselor" was meant by the translators to be taken as a synonym for "attorney" or "advocate," and not at all in the sense he was expounding.

A high school teacher confided to me that he had been assigned to teach apologetics the next year. "I do not know what I am expected to teach," he complained. Perhaps I will be pardoned if I react that his students would be better left untaught. There are few shocks to faith greater than that of learning that the trusted teacher does not know what he is talking about.

Some time back we had people teaching others with a filmstrip that taught that the world was created in 4004 B.C.; with one which taught that Noah's flood had been found in the silt layers of Ur of Chaldees; and with one that taught that remains of Israelite building structures had been identified in excavations in Egypt. Yet another strip proclaimed that "Ham" means "black" and in this way connected in the student's mind the curse of Noah with the black race.

These various cases illustrate that men may know the general truth of the Bible well but may be expounding error in minor details, oblivious to the fact that they are teaching falsehoods. Who of us would like to affirm that he has never taught falsehood while aiming to teach the truth?

B. Men speak falsely for God because they feel called upon to defend a position! I grew up in an atmosphere in which men found a proof-text against instrumental music in worship in Amos's woe to those who "invent for themselves instruments of musick (*sic*) like David" (Amos 6:5; KJV). I myself used the argument many times; but I remember with unusual

clarity the day I was sitting in registration line at Sam Houston State Teachers' College collecting church preference cards. During a lull in the line, the preacher for the instrumental church raised the question of the instrument arguing that it was "commanded and commended" in the Bible. He cited 2 Chronicles 29:25 as his proof. I had never heard or seen that verse before. In disguised confusion I assured him that his exegesis must be wrong. I had to defend a position; I did not know any better. I am thoroughly convinced that the New Testament does not provide for instrumental music in worship; but one need not speak falsely for God in order to establish the position.

You no doubt have all heard men argue against the Adventist position on the Sabbath by using Hosea 2:11: "I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts." A look at the context would have shown them that the prophet was talking of the effect of the exile and was not discussing the period of the New Covenant at all.

A good brother made an argument in our chapel on a particular religious question. In the question period following his address, I asked of the argument he had made, "But is that not a broken reed of a staff?" He replied, "Well, maybe so, but I have never had a denominationalist to answer it in a debate." Is the cause of God to be defended by subtleties held merely because the opponent is not astute enough to detect that they are subtleties?

C. Men speak falsely for God because they have not clearly distinguished between essentials and non-essentials—between tradition and the Gospel. The Pharisees of Jesus' day knew the written law from

Moses; but they also championed the authority of the oral law as being of equally binding force. They found fault with the man who ate without washing his hands and who healed suffering people (not in danger of death) on the Sabbath day. In their opinion he was a sinner just as much as he would have been had he lied, killed, or committed adultery. In a very similar way the Catholic Church demands belief in the traditions of the church and claims for them an authority alongside the Bible.

The leaders of the Restoration Movement rejected tradition, talked of giving a "thus saith the Lord" for beliefs and practices, and spoke of unity in essentials and of freedom in non-essentials. However, they failed to tell us comprehensively and conclusively what beliefs and acts fall in the two categories. Our failure to agree on what is essential and what is non-essential has resulted in a division in the Restoration Movement in every generation of its existence, with each side of the division convinced that its position is a part of the essentials of the Gospel. Each preaches its position as the will of God. While denouncing tradition, we have developed some very strong traditions. "What have our brethren always taught on that?"; "We have never done it that way"; "What is the position of a certain paper?" or "What is the position of an editor?" are extremely strong arguments.

When a man insists that I must say "thee" and "thou" when I pray, he has not distinguished between tradition and Gospel. When he rules that I must teach from the KJV or the ASV and use other translations only for comparative purposes, he is ruling where God has not ruled. When elders rule that only ladies who suffer from arthritis can attend worship in pants suits,

they have, in my opinion, confused the authority of their position as elders and also have confused essentials with non-essentials. I have encountered preachers who would not baptize a man until he promised to quit smoking; preachers who could tell you how long a lady's hair must be; preachers who assured the much-married person that God demanded she go back to husband number one; and preachers who felt called on to pass personal judgment on every speaker a school invited to speak from its platform. All of these and a hundred more issues which have plagued the peace of the church find people identifying their desires and preferences with the truth of God.

If we have all these problems of tradition and custom here at home, we should be reminded of the fact that the question becomes all the more acute when we set our hand to export our Christianity into another culture. The history of those who have identified various details of Americanism with the Gospel and have attempted to export them is a tragic history. They spoke falsely for God in that they bound men where God had not bound them. In Paul's day the Pharisees wanted to bind Jewish culture on the Gentiles, insisting that they must be circumcised and keep the law in order to be saved. Early missionaries who went to Hawaii taught the natives to adopt New England style dress though it is quite unsuited to the warm Hawaiian climate. Some missionaries have exported a church polity which was essentially majority rule because in politics that is the American way. Often they have built specially styled buildings without regard to whether the natives could maintain them after they are gone. We probably all have some difficulty in thinking of maintaining the church without thinking of buildings in some sense.

D. Peripheral Areas

I am persuaded that most of the men we enroll in our various training programs and most of the people we send to the mission fields have a clear grasp of what we call "the fundamentals of the Gospel." It does not take a long program of training to learn faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and the Lord's Supper every Sunday, no instrumental music, the name of the church, and some other like topics of importance to the Christian life. No scorn is intended toward these items. We believe we have all spoken truthfully for God on these essentials since we first began our varied ministries.

But what have we been saying in what might be called the peripheral areas of our teaching? Though we know the book of Acts well, how about the Minor Prophets? A lady wrote recently, "We always begin our study at Genesis and never get around to the last books of the Bible." When we allude to historical data, are our facts accurate? When we use archaeological data, are our facts exact, or are we expounding positions accepted from Halley's *Handbook* which positions archaeologists did accept in Halley's day but which have been shown to be erroneous and have now been abandoned by archaeologists? What grasp have we of church history and of the questions the church faced in the various centuries? Patrick Henry said, "Experience of the past is the only lamp I have with which to guide my feet in the future." Must we continue making mistakes that we could avoid if we knew of the past?

II. Better Training for Better Results

Though the common man has a basic suspicion of educated men, "Great tasks demand men of great preparation." Both the work of the church at home and mission work are great tasks! We grant that education is a two-edged sword. It ordinarily increases a man's ability to do evil if he is deceived or if he chooses to do evil. A long list of trained heretics running from Marcion to modern ones could be compiled; a long list of trained unbelievers, running from Celsus through Darwin and Karl Marx down to some current philosophers who have caused many to be lost, could also be compiled. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that education also increases a man's ability to do good if he chooses to use himself for good. We cannot afford to reject training because some men in prominent places abuse it and disappoint us.

What God has accomplished in history through the hands of trained people is marvelous to contemplate. Moses, trained in all the learning of the Egyptians, led God's people out of Egyptian bondage. Two-thirds of his 120 years were spent in getting ready for the last third. Paul, first trained in Tarsus, but also further educated at the feet of Gamaliel until he had progressed beyond many of his own religion (Gal. 1:14), could become the Lord's chosen vessel to bear God's name to the Gentiles. In fact, all of those whose names we remember in the history of the church have been trained people. The untrained and the mediocre have been forgotten. Seventy-two scholars in Alexandria opened God's truth to the Greek world in the preparation of the Septuagint Bible. Origen was unequaled in

the scholarship of his day. Jerome presented the world the Vulgate Bible which has been used by western Christendom for more than a thousand years. He molded religious expression of all the Romance languages in countless and unchangeable ways. Erasmus gave the world the printed Greek New Testament. Martin Luther, a university professor holding the doctor's degree, broke the strangle hold of the Catholic church on men's minds by leading the Protestant Reformation. The preparation of the King James Bible was a scholars' project carried through by university men in the early seventeenth century. The ASV was produced by scholars at the end of the nineteenth century. Bethany College gave the Restoration Movement J. W. McGarvey, Moses Lard, and Robert Milligan.

When the Lord selected his disciples, he chose men of differing abilities and differing backgrounds for the task. He set in the church apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues (1 Cor. 12:28). Various abilities and various preparations had their place. We would err today if we tried to pour everyone into the same mold. I have my own opinions about some programs, as do you, but I am not interested in getting into an argument over whether this program is superior to that program. I would not for a moment contend that every preacher or every missionary should aim at a doctor's degree. We differ in native ability; we differ in vision; we differ in opportunity; but it does seem to me that there is one thing that we, and all the students with whom we work, hold in common. That thing is expressed in the phrase from the child's song which goes, "You can

be better than you are." You may not have the ability, the time, the vision, or the need for this degree of training or for that, but you *can* be better than you are!

It would seem to me that we as teachers in our various schools should impress on our students the idea that true scholarship is important. We can only do that by being practicing scholars ourselves. We cannot be content to "encourage one another in mediocrity." One has said that the unlearned teacher is like the blind torchbearer. He holds his torch boldly aloft, but only he is unaware that the torch is unlighted. The most important thing you can teach the student is how to keep on learning across the entire course of his life. To do that you must follow the same program yourself.

The missionary has a particular need for learning in that he is *the* authority in religious questions to those he is teaching. His students cannot write some other well-known brother or have recourse to a well established library to get their questions answered. For these people the missionary must not speak falsely for God. He must give no uncertain sound.

Though I am sure that many of you could duplicate my experience out of your own experience, I never cease to be amazed at what people expect me to know as is evidenced by the questions I get. Most of them are from preachers! "Is the word 'day' in Genesis a twenty-four hour day?" "How do you harmonize geology and the Bible on the age of the earth?" "What is your view on the meaning of Genesis 3:15?" "Is there evidence from archaeology or from other records that in ancient times men lived to be very old?" "What is the date for the stone age and for the dark age?"

A whole group of questions are on the versions problem. "I would be interested in your judgment about the RSV as compared with the ASV." "Where can I obtain information on the *Emphatic Diaglott*? What is your personal opinion of it?" "Do the Dead Sea Scrolls have vowels?" "Why do all English Bibles use 'baptize' instead of 'immerse'?" "What is your judgment of the footnote on Matthew 16:18 ('Peter means rock') in the NIV? Do you consider the note at the end of Mark 16:8 is fair?" "Do you know if anyone in the church has written anything worthwhile either in support of or in opposition to the NIV?"

There are questions that deal with the adultery problem: "Would you be kind enough to parse the Greek words in Matthew 19:9; comment on each clause of the verse in relation to the context; on each verb; and give an interpretation of Matthew 19:9." "I am bothered over the phrase 'living in adultery.' Does the original language tell us that adultery is a state of life or an act?"

An experienced preacher writes, "Help! I enrolled a Catholic priest in our correspondence course. Here we are already all the way up to lesson two and 'he done got way out of my ball park.'" Another, "Please note the following books as good, fair, or poor for the church library." Another, "Is the view that the Holy Spirit works only through the word to be made a test of fellowship?" "Prove that we are to eat the Lord's Supper every Sunday." "How do you personally persuade someone on the one church idea?" "Do you feel that the instrument could ever be used (e.g., alone at home), without being scripturally wrong?"

"Is the 'Day of Preparation' and the 'Day of Passover' one and the same day? I really need help

on this!" "Our preacher insists that it is all right for Christian women to say 'Amen,' 'That's right,' and other words of agreement orally during the sermon. Is it needlessly taking away their freedom to forbid it?" "Is the command to abstain from blood (Acts 15:20, 21) still binding on us today?" "At the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 were genealogical records destroyed so that Jews could no longer even prove that they were Jews? Can you supply bibliographical information?" "I would like some assistance with several passages of Scripture in the Old Testament. A preacher used Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 8:4ff.; and Numbers 19 to prove that baptism was practiced in the Old Testament by priests and in proselyte conversion."

Despite the time consumed in answering questions, I am grateful for the confidence that people have in me that would cause them to entrust their questions to me. I am glad to serve in that way; but my only point here is that a minimum of training does not equip a man to speak truthfully on such a multiplicity of matters. A degree cannot guarantee that he can. It demands all the training one can acquire and then a lifetime of continued study. If an ivory tower professor like me has to deal with all these things, think of all the questions to be faced by the working missionary, and of all the equipment he needs in order to deal with them! Two instances will illustrate the point. A man supported by the congregation I attend, on his most recent furlough, raised questions of what to do about the circumcision ceremony practiced in his area as the induction of both men and women into adulthood. The uncircumcised was an outcast from society; yet the ceremonies had pagan

overtones and were the occasions of lapses from faith when Christians participated. He was also concerned with plural marriages. Some, in his area, he confided, were inclined to fellowship the polygamist if he was teaching his children not to be polygamists! If the children became polygamists, then they thought he ought to be disciplined! Personally, I do not think cutting the dog's tail off a little at a time in this way makes the operation less painful.

I am of the opinion that the high dropout rate among missionaries can be reduced only by better preparation. When the days on the parade ground of visiting the churches are over, when the well wishers have completed their great sendoff, and one finds himself in mortal combat with well-trained representatives of the opposition who challenge, "You believe the Bible because you were born in a Christian culture that depends on it. Show us why one should accept the Bible and its revelation but should reject the alleged revelation in our religions"; how is one to do it? When one is, as it were, on night guard duty in a lonely foxhole in an out-of-the-way place of the world, there are only a few things that can keep him there. First there is his conviction of the validity of the cause he represents; next there is his realization of the needs of lost souls; there is his sense of duty and his personal dedication to that cause; there is his faith in his weapon (the sword of the spirit), and his confidence because of his training in his ability to wield that weapon effectively.

III. Aim High

The zeal, the dedication, and the self-sacrifice manifested by the many men and women who have

gone to the mission field are a continuous rebuke to those of us who lustily sing, "I will go where you want me to go, Dear Lord, I will be what you want me to be . . .," and then revert to business as usual in the major American endeavor of keeping ahead of the Joneses. It is a beautiful thing to see a young person on fire with love for lost souls who knows what he wants to give his life to and who can hardly wait to be on his way to the sacrifice and service that lie before him. Augustine said that Christianity is that system where one loving heart kindles another heart. Without dispute, the zeal, the sacrifice, and the dedication of our missionary people have stirred many hearts. The preparation they have had has not always matched the zeal they had. John Cotton, a pioneer Boston preacher, said, "Knowledge is no knowledge without zeal—that is without religious conviction—but zeal is but a wildfire without knowledge."

For many years in teaching I have encountered the young person so excited about the mission work he is going to do that he has not time to prepare himself to do it. He is so eager to begin his enormous task that he cannot settle down to study. His grades are poor; but he is on fire with zeal. I have seen men return from the field, conscious of their need of additional preparation, enroll in classes but after a few weeks drop out because they have accepted too heavy a schedule of reporting to churches or of raising money. The result is that after their furlough they return to their fields in no better shape—knowledge wise—than they were when they came home.

I would feel that we, as teachers, need to try to crossbreed zeal and knowledge. There should be no antithesis between the two; we must make "zeal with

knowledge' the goal. We need to show men the value of knowing Hebrew and Greek so that they can judge for themselves and not be entirely dependent on what others have said the Bible teaches. Our lack of preparedness to deal with the versions question has made that need obvious on the home front; but it should be no less obvious when dealing with the translations into the various native languages. We must open men's eyes to the essentiality of learning the languages of the people they are working with. Every time I speak through an interpreter I ask anew, "If I were on the learning end, would I tolerate this?" The unfailing answer is, "I would not!" A knowledge of the culture of the people and of the history of the people is essential to our success. While some feel they can learn these lessons on the field, I am persuaded the preface to the KJV is correct when it says, "It is a preposterous order to teach first and learn afterward," and "To learn and practice together is neither commendable for the workman nor safe for the work."

In world politics it is possible to conceive of Uncle Sam as the arsenal of the world, year after year footing the bill for skirmishes around the world. He can be thought of as the breadbasket of the world to pour out dollars for raising the living standards of every small society which wants foreign aid; but in a short time such policies as these would bankrupt the United States. It would raise the tax burden on the American tax-payer until the so-called American way of life would be only a nostalgic memory. The only way to avoid the calamity is to get the various economies to carry their own load. In an analogous problem, the resources of the American churches,

limited by the lethargy of our people, will never be able to supply enough to evangelize and keep evangelized the various parts of the world. Establishing beachheads is essential for a beginning, but we are doomed in our task if we do not arrive at some means of shifting the various fields off onto their own resources. If we are content to send persons and dollars generation after generation only to maintain small islands in the wilderness of sin, the task is hopeless. In Biblical terms, our task is to teach faithful men that they may teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2). It takes trained people to do that.

Conclusion:

The safeguard against speaking falsely for God is knowledge. Thinking men cannot join those whom Erasmus accused of supposing that the strength of the Christian religion lay in men's ignorance of it. When we have better trained men, we will have better results.

It is most essential that we do not repeat a mistake made in the thirteenth century (A.D. 1269). Marco Polo tells how the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan who ruled over large portions of western and central Asia and Russia sent envoys to the Pope at Rome to ask that one hundred missionaries be sent to his capital in order that his people be taught the things of Christ. He asked for intelligent men, acquainted with the seven arts, well qualified to enter into controversy, and able clearly to prove by force of argument, to idolaters and other kind of folks, that the law of Christ was best, and that all other religions were false and naught; and he promised that if they could prove this, he and all under him would become Christians.

The envoys reached Rome at a time when there was a vacancy in the papacy, because rival factions

in the college of cardinals could not agree on the new Pope, and it was two years before Gregory X dispatched two Dominican friars to convert the greatest power in Asia to the rule of Christ. The emperor asked for one hundred, and the church answered with two, and those two, appalled by the length and perils of the journey, turned ignominiously back after they reached Armenia. "All Asia was white unto harvest, but there was no effort to reap it." Today, when there is such a striving for knowledge in all parts of the world, we must not send two when hundreds are needed. We must not be mediocre servants when we could be better than we are. We must not speak falsely for God when we could speak truth.

It is For This We Labor and Strive

R. H. "Tex" Williams

Address: Sunset School of Preaching, 3723 34th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79410.

Family: Wife: the former Mary Jane Williamson. They have five children.

Education: Graduated from High School in Waco, Texas; attended Texas A&M University one year on a Jesse Jones academic scholarship; transferred to Abilene Christian University in 1947, and graduated in 1950. He now has his Master's degree in Missiology.

Work: Currently Chairman of Sunset School of Missions, an adjunct to the Sunset School of Preaching.

Ministry: Has served as local minister for several congregations, including Brownwood, Austin, and Abilene, Texas, as well as Oakland, California. Worked four and a half years for Boles Children's Home in Quinlan, Texas.

Tex, his wife, and their oldest son went to Southern Africa in 1957. Their other four children were born in the Republic of South Africa while Tex served as a missionary. The family moved back to the United States in 1970, after working there 13 years and helping to start works in the neighboring nations of Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana.

Other Fields of Special Interest: In the past several years, he has traveled extensively to all continents, visiting missionaries and mission points. He speaks on many missionary emphasis programs here in the United States, and conducts a number of gospel meetings each year.



All Christians will agree that the apostle Paul had an uncommon commitment to saving the lost—an uncommon commitment to missions. It was his obsession, a driving force that captured his affections on the road to Damascus and held him captive until his death in a Roman prison. All his epistles sooner or later express his deep concern for the lost, patterned after the purposes and love of the God and the Savior whom he served.

It is impossible in this discourse to mention all of Paul's written statements of his mission concern, so our usage here will be limited to a few of those found in his epistles to Timothy and Titus. In the first chapter of I Timothy, Paul expresses his own thanks for the grace he had received that brought him salvation. He wrote,

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.
(I Timothy 1:12-15)

Paul recognized that he was a sinner, that he had received a grace that "was more than abundant," and that his conversion was a pattern for all lost men. It was God's purpose through Jesus to save all men. Paul

was appointed by Jesus to His service to preach the gospel. Paul's uncommon commitment to missions was based upon his own salvation by grace in spite of his sinful life and upon his divine appointment by Jesus. This is reinforced in chapter 2 of I Timothy. Paul urges that prayers "be made on behalf of all men" (v. 1). He then adds that prayers should be made

. . . for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle. . . . (I Timothy 2:2-7a)

The purpose of chapter 2 of I Timothy is Paul's desire to let brethren know of the need for their prayers on behalf of world evangelism—missions. He uses four words for prayer to emphasize every aspect of this need. Prayers are to be made "for men" because it is God "who desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth." The only hope that lost men have is through the one God and the one mediator, Christ Jesus (v. 5). If they do not hear of the one God and the one mediator, they have no hope. Because of this Paul was appointed a preacher and an apostle (v. 7). Paul's uncommon motivation is revealed even more in this passage. The concern of God for the lost is evident, the sacrifice of Jesus who "gave Himself as a ransom for all" is once again paramount,

the need for a prayerful commitment from saints is commanded and finally, Paul's appointment to preach so that God's purposes might be fulfilled is necessary.

Paul's commitment, then, is based first of all upon God's grace, mercy and kindness that made the coming of Jesus possible. Secondly, Christ's redemptive work at Calvary is quite evident in Paul's writing as a thing that sustained his motivation. This resulted in the hope of salvation for all who could hear the word of the gospel which brought on a need for a commitment to preach. Perhaps all this is best summarized by Paul's statement in I Timothy 4:10. "*For it is for this we labor and strive*, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."

Paul's unusual commitment for missions that manifested itself in his laboring and striving for God's cause was passed on to others. Some few joined him, became like him in traversing the world to preach and teach the gospel in new places to new people. Churches also caught the spirit and sent those who could teach and preach. This caused the growth of God's kingdom not only in the cities where the local churches existed, but also into other areas within their sphere of influence. Paul wrote of the success of the young church at Thessalonica.

You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward

God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. (I Thessalonians 1:6-8)

If God's purpose to save all men and bring them to a knowledge of the truth is to be realized, the church in every generation must develop the unusual commitment manifested by Paul and the church during his time. It must be realized in our day. There are so many nations without the gospel and so many people who are lost. We must get the gospel to every nation.

Isaiah prophesied that the gospel would reach all nations. He wrote,

In the last day, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and *all nations* will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us concerning his ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' (Isaiah 2:2-3)

Note that Isaiah writes concerning the kingdom of God and says that in the last days the mountain of the Lord's house will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills. All nations will flow to it and many peoples will come and say, "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob—that he may teach us concerning His ways that we may walk in His paths."

This is a marvelous passage of scripture as it presents the coming of the kingdom of God to be established as the mountain of God in every nation throughout the entire world. That affords such wonderful opportunities and occasions—so many beautiful

thoughts—that many people say, “Let us go up to that mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob. Let us let Him teach us concerning His ways so that we might walk in His paths.” In Daniel 2, Daniel interpreted a dream for the king in which a statue had been seen that had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay. It represented kingdoms that would arise in that particular time and in times coming. In verse 34, Daniel begins to describe and to tell what that dream was and to predict fulfillment. He said concerning those kingdoms that “in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. And that kingdom will not be left to another people.” It will crush and put to an end all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. In verse 35 he identifies the mountain and the kingdom as being the self-same-thing, because he describes the stone which was cut out and that smote the image and destroyed it by saying that the stone which struck the statue became a great mountain and filled all the earth. I think this is a marvelous passage that gives us a vision of what God’s kingdom is supposed to be and what it can be. But, I have some problems with this passage of scripture, especially, in its fulfillment. You see, we live in the last days. We live in the time when the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the manifestation of God’s love has been poured out. This was done for all nations. Not only is it a time when redemption is possible, but it is a time in which God’s people have an urgent responsibility to preach salvation to all who are lost. It is through the church that this is to be accomplished. The mountain of God’s house, God’s house, the church,

the kingdom of God are all one and the same thing.

But there is a problem here. Because you see, the prophecy says, "That all nations will flow to it." Again Isaiah states, "Many people will say, 'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob. Let us be taught in His ways and let us walk in His paths.'" I have a problem also with what Daniel said in that the stone which was cut out smote the image on the feet and grew until it filled the entire world. My problem with the prophecy is the fact that this has not happened. We must recognize the fact that when the prophet talks about nations, he is not talking about geographic nations. But rather, he is talking about the many ethnic groups that live in our world. They live in North America, South America, Asia, Africa and throughout the entire world. I visited Papua New Guinea not too long ago and found that there are 750 ethnic groups living on that small island alone. They each speak a common language, have common cultural concepts and are in need of the gospel of Christ. There are some 180 nations, geographic nations or political nations, in the world where as yet the mountain of the Lord's house has not been established. What is the problem with the prophecy? Why are they not there? Angola in Africa has 5½ million people. The mountain of the Lord's house does not exist there, to my knowledge. Australia with some 14 million people has only a foothill. There are men who are laboring there and are struggling and striving for a breakthrough so that we might have a great reformation movement among those people. I hope and pray that that will come so that the mountain of God's house will fill the heart of every person,

every ethnic group in that nation. Bangladesh has 80 million people with just a small molehill, but no mountain. In Chile, with its 10 million people, only a small molehill possibly exists. In The People's Republic of China, and we have been praying for the opening of China for the past two decades, hoping that someday we might be able to evangelize those people, we have a small speck on the horizon thanks to one man that we know about that has gone back to preach to his own people and has been able to establish a congregation of possibly nearly 500 people. And yet the mountain of God's house does not fill it, and people are not saying "Let us go up to the house of Jehovah." Again, Columbia, South America has 24½ million people and only a molehill exists there. In Ethiopia, an open door to us at one time, is now closed to new mission work. Twenty-eight million people live there. We have brethren who still work there, but the church is small. We could not get very many others interested in going to preach the gospel when Ethiopia was open. In India, with 650 million plus population, there are possibly foothills but the mountain of the Lord's house does not exist. In Japan, with 113 million people, and in South Korea, 35.3 million people there may be a small molehill. In the nation of Norway—4 million people—one speck of God's mountain. In the Philippines, 2 million people—maybe again a foothill. In Sweden, 8 million people—I don't even know if there is a speck on the horizon. Tanzania, 15 million people—a molehill. In Zaire, Africa, 25 million people—not even a molehill. I could go on and on and I haven't even touched the larger part of our own nation where the gospel has not been preached and where God's

mountain does not exist. I have not even mentioned the Communist nations of the world nor have I mentioned those nations that are overwhelmed with the Islamic religion. I have a problem with Isaiah 2, I have a problem with Daniel 2. If the mountain of God's house is to fill the earth, why is it not there? Is it because the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot touch the hearts of people to move them and motivate them? Have we been given the wrong instrument or the wrong tool with which to work in heralding the message of redemption and salvation? I don't think so. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ because it is the power of God unto salvation." I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ will still change the minds of people. I do not care what nation they come from nor what ethnic group they may be a part of, the gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to fulfill the purpose that God had in mind. What is it then that is plaguing the world in which we live? Why are not the people saying, "Let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob?" Why are they not saying, "Let's let Him teach us His ways?" Why are people going to such things as Buddhism? Why is Islam refining itself and exploding throughout various portions of the world because of its impact financially and politically? Why is Communism making so many inroads and captivating so many people? Is it because the Communist doctrine is stronger than the doctrine of Jesus Christ? Does it mean that the Communist teaching is more powerful than the love of God? I don't believe that this is the case. I think the key to our whole problem and the reason that the mountain of God's house does not exist in these nations and why it does not today fill the whole world

is explained to us in a parable given by Jesus in Mark 4. Beginning in verse 1, He talks about the fact that there was a man that went forth to sow seed. Seed fell in four different kinds of soil. In some places the seed did not produce or if it did produce it produced for a brief period of time and then it died away. But then there was an area of ground that was described as good soil where the seed fell and produced a hundred fold. The disciples came to Jesus and asked Him why He taught in parables. Jesus told them that they had been given to understand the "mysteries of the Kingdom of God." Jesus was talking about the Kingdom of God, the mountain of God's house. He was discussing its growth and enlargement. The key to the whole growth of the Kingdom of God is conveyed in verse 14. Jesus said, "The sower sows the word." That is the reason why the mountain of God's house has not filled the earth. The seed has not been sown because the sower is you and me. We have not sown the seed in nations that will be receptive to the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The harvest depends upon this. The minds of men, the soil of the Kingdom can neither accept nor reject the gospel of Jesus Christ if it is not preached to them. It must be sown in their hearts or it cannot grow. Paul says this in Romans 10:13, 14.

For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved, how then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed and how can they believe in Him whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher?

The problem is not God. The problem is not the gospel. The problem is not the soil, the hearts of

men. The problem is the lack of sowers, for God has given us the responsibility and the opportunity to be the sowers of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, so the mountain can fill the earth and so that nations will be attracted to it and come and say, "Let's go listen to what has been said to guide our lives so that we might walk in His paths."

I believe that Daniel and Isaiah's prophecies show the *potential* of the Kingdom of God. What we need are men and women to match the mountain. We do not have it in our generation. Three years ago we had nearly 800 missionaries on the field heralding the gospel of Christ. We are down to between 450 and 500. Are there those who will go to serve under any circumstances and conditions to preach the Word of God. I am so convinced of the fact that God will go with me in the spreading of the gospel of Christ that I believe that if I were given the opportunity I could go into Communist China the first thing in the morning and in a matter of a few short months have the gospel of Jesus Christ established and the beginning of the mountain of God's house there. I say this because the power is not in me, but in the Word. It works that way. In Isaiah 55:10, 11, the Lord speaking to Isaiah said,

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

And then Jesus in Mark 4:26-29 talks about the growth of the Kingdom of God. He talks about a man who went out into a field taking seed which he sowed. He went back into his home, slept, and went about his tasks that day. When he checked his field he found that it had produced. Listen to what Jesus said,

The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and goes to bed at night, and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows—now, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

The harvest is not there, because we have not sown. There is no problem with the seed. The problem is with the sower. When there is no sower to sow the seed, God's power will not work. For God has conditioned you and me to tell the story of Christ to those who are lost. I wish that it were possible for you and me to hold hands and to travel through time and space and to spend a day in a village of The People's Republic of China and see them living without the gospel of Christ. I wish we could walk by the banks of the Nile and speak with people there who have been led to a misunderstanding of God—who He is and how He serves. I wish we could spend some time in the Congo Basin and the Amazon Basin with tribal people. I wish you could see it. I wish you could smell it. I wish you could listen to them talk. I wish you could see their dilemma of living an entire life not ever hearing the precious name of Jesus Christ. And I will tell you why they never will. Because

you won't go. It works! The kingdom will grow! The seed is powerful! The hearts and minds of men long for the message of redemption! But the problem is the sower. Seed will not grow unless it is in the minds of men and the seed cannot be sown from heaven, for God has so decreed that He will not bring the message any farther than he has brought it. Angels will not be sent, God will not raise up preachers of the gospel of Christ from pews or books or stone. He appeals to the hearts of those who once walked in darkness, tasted the fruits of unrighteousness, lived in bondage outside of Jesus Christ and who now live in the light of the gospel of Christ and live in the hopes of redemption and salvation. And if this is not the way it works, then it will not work.

I receive reports from American Samoa. We had two missionaries, a man and his wife and children, who went down to American Samoa and they worked and labored. Their hearts were wrung out because of the disappointing lack of opportunities there. But, they continued on for a period of time and then they had to return. Another family went in and took their place. I get their reports once a month and have for the past five or six years. Somewhere along the line, the word of God, the seed of the mountain got in the hearts of two or three good and honest people. Now the mountain is beginning to grow in American Samoa. Those who are converted taught others. You see, they became sowers and took the good seed to the hearts of others. That is why I believe that we can take the gospel into the heart of Islam, into the heart of Buddhism, and into the heart of any group of people or any religion in the entire world. What we need are sowers who will take the Word! If we can

achieve this, then we are going to achieve world evangelism for the first time. It can be done by God's people. I still believe in our generation. In the New Testament we read of men and women who also manifested an unusual commitment to missions. Paul was called by Jesus directly. So were Peter, James and John. But there were also men like Barnabas, Titus, Timothy, Apollos and others who developed the unusual commitment. They began working out on the outskirts of the kingdom, out on the cutting edge. They went into the synagogues and were persecuted because of it. But, when they left, the church was there. The beginnings of the mountain of God's house began to appear in Corinth, Ephesus, Rome and in other parts of the world that we do not even find mentioned in the New Testament in our times. All these were great people of God. I believe, brethren, that we have the same quality of persons in the Kingdom of God in our day. I am convinced of this.

What we need is a renewing of commitment among those who have their hope set on God. We need in churches and among individual Christians those who will labor and strive that the Kingdom may grow and prosper and fill the whole earth. Where do you, Christian, fit in?

The Passion of Preaching

Richard Rogers

Address: Sunset School of Preaching, 3723 34th Street, Lubbock, Texas 79410.

Family: Married and has four children.

Education: Abilene Christian University and Florida Christian College.

Work and Ministry: Currently teaches at the Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas (1964-). Served as local minister for the Sunset Church of Christ from 1970-1980; has preached in gospel meetings and campaigns in 41 states and 20 nations; has frequently spoken for Christian College Lectureships and Evangelistic Seminars and Workshops throughout the brotherhood. He served on the panel for the television program, "Let the Bible Speak," for six years. He currently teaches with Ted Kell in the "TV Bible Study Series," which when completed, will consist of 800 thirty-minute color cassettes, covering the entire Bible. He is the author of eight books, including *The Holy Spirit of God* and *Hallelujah Anyway*.



Preaching with passion is nearly like saying, "I want to talk about black ebony or white eggshells." Really, it is synonymous, isn't it? Now there may be some things that we call preaching that are not passionate, but preaching is done with passion. Not necessarily with noise, although if we are noisy we are noisy. But there is a quiet passion also. If it is not done with passion, then I dare not put the word preaching after

it. There may be impassionate lecturing and there may be impassionate teaching, even. But, I cannot imagine anything being not passionate when it is preaching, because we walk in the footsteps of Christ when we preach. When people looked at Jesus, what did they think of Him? That is a question which I think is never fully answered, but perhaps it was answered best when Jesus turned to those who knew him best and said, "Whom do men say that I am?" Nobody said, "They are persuaded that you are the successor to Socrates. They are well aware of the fact that you are the finest of instructors in the Word of God." However, what they said included both of those. "Some say [that you are] John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." That meant that they thought of Jesus as preaching salvation and judgment, because that is what those people preached. They think of Jesus when they think of John the Baptist standing up in front of a crowd of people and saying, "You brood of vipers." That is passionate. "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" For that is what John the Baptist did, and if you will check Matthew 23, Jesus went a little bit further and just called them vipers. It would mean that, like John the Baptist, he would demand proof of repentance, that he would demand that the people who came would be willing to pay the price of coming. He wasn't trying to get numbers to count, but trying to get people that he could count on. As John the Baptist said, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance," Jesus turned to a large crowd following him and said nothing that I normally say on Sunday morning. I mean if we get a large crowd of people coming to our building we

say, "We are just thrilled to death to have everybody here, and feel real complimented that you have done us the favor of coming here to hear the word of God." Jesus turned and did all he could to make them leave. He knew that if they didn't leave then, they would stay.

Then they said that he was Elijah and Elijah faced God's enemies down at Corinth. I am not going to preach those points, you know those points, but surely there is passion. As Elijah says, "I don't know what anybody else is going to do, but I am going to stand here for God and let the devil take the hindmost. Anybody that stays on this mountain, once all the smoke is cleared, belongs to Baal. Anyone that leaves with me belongs to God." They had said something about Jesus' life that was passionate enough that they thought he wanted them to make a decision. Because that is really what Elijah did, and all of his life he stood as a signpost that said in or out, right or wrong, there is no spiritual Panmunjom, no compromise with evil. And he refused to do so, in a very passionate way. Jeremiah ministered to a remnant in the midst of a falling nation. And maybe there was something about Jesus' life that made them realize that the nation was doomed, but that he would come to call a small remnant out of a doomed nation. At least John thought so as he wrote his gospel. He said, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as did receive him, to them he gave the right to become sons of God even to those who believe on" the name of the Son of God. Throughout his life, again, and again, and again he lifted up his voice and cried that he had come to make crossroads in their lives. He had come to present them with a fork in the road.

He said, "if I had not come they would have not known sin, but now that I have come." So we need, when we stand to preach, to present the Biblical challenge of choice, and to do so in a very passionate way, not as someone announcing news, but as someone proclaiming good news. There is a difference, isn't there? I have watched the newscast on T.V. I watch them read all of that bad news, but I have watched them drop the paper, smile, and speak when they had good news to say. Lots of times we announce the good news as if it were just news, as if it were just the news of the day and not the good news of eternity. It is no wonder then that people don't get excited. It's no wonder then that 50 percent don't come back Sunday night. There was no fire burning Sunday morning. I would to God that there were a preacher or two among us that would have to say to his brethren what Charles Spurgin the Baptist said to his brethren every Sunday morning, "I don't want to see any of you back Sunday night, because there won't be room for you; the lost will be here tonight." And none of Spurgin's Baptist brethren came to his audience except those 200 or 300 that were in the room below his feet praying for his message to the lost on Sunday night. Somebody asked him how he did that. He said it was very simple. He just set himself on fire and "they come and watch me burn." And that is literally true. People will go and watch a fire every time. Very few people will go to watch a hydrant go off. But they will come to watch a fire burn, so there is a necessity for being passionate. Now, I'm not necessarily talking about loud; I'm loud. My mother said I whispered in a roar when I was a boy. I'm just naturally loud. But, anybody that has heard Ken

Dye preach knows that he preaches with passion. He is conversational. I would go to sleep if I preached like that and you would, too. That is just not my nature. Ian doesn't holler too much. He used to holler at us when we didn't get the grades in. That is what he becomes passionate about. There is a need for passion.

Now, let's get to the second point. What caused Jesus to be like that? What will be the cause of us becoming passionate preachers, preachers that have to preach. I remember something Brother Homer Hailey told me when I was a freshman at Florida Christian College, and I think he was quoting a fellow on the first two points and he added the third. He said there are two kinds of preachers, a fellow who has something to say and a fellow who has to say something. There is a third kind, and the only one that deserves the title, and that is the fellow who has something to say and has to say it. That is the kind of preaching that will build the local church. That is the kind of preaching that will glorify God. That is the kind of preaching that sets brethren afire. That is the kind of preaching that will attract the lost. The preaching that says, "This is my hour. I am here. I must speak. This is the message I must say. God help me, like it or not, I must say it." I mean whether I like it or not. I don't care about you right now. I may not even like what I have to say. But, it is what I must say.

What gives that kind of passion? I think number one, Paul would say that the love of Christ gave him that kind of passion. In II Corinthians 5:14 he says, "The love of Christ constrains me." One version says, "compels me." One version says, "leaves me no choice." The Greek, I understand, is "the love of Christ hems me in." The picture is that, maybe, of a

cow or a steer going to slaughter. It can't go to the right because of the barrier, and it can't go to the left because if it tries to back up there is the goad that pushes it forward. He says, "The love of Christ drives me, it impels me." I will listen to anybody that is impelled. It doesn't really matter about the style he uses, whether he hollers, whether expositarily, or just Biblically, or textually, or topically or autobiographically or any way. If I know that this is a message that he must say, I am going to listen to him because he is impelled. But Paul says that it was the love of Christ that impelled him. "For we thus judged one died for all and, therefore all died." Now most of us have spent some time away from our wives. Why did we stay faithful? Well, of course, if you are ugly like me, you may not have had the opportunity. Why does a man stay faithful to his wife? The fellow who says, "I am going to be faithful to my wife because I love her so much," is liable to be unfaithful. He has the wrong motivation. I will tell you very simply why I have never been tempted to be unfaithful to my wife. She loves me. That is the mystery of mysteries. But, that fact impels me to be faithful to her. You see, it wasn't Paul's love for Christ that impelled him. It was the love that Christ had for him. With that kind of background, how can we be anything but passionate. How can we be anything but thrilled to tell the story of the one that loves us more than he loved even heaven's occupancy.

I think that Paul would go on to say that the grace of God compels him—the gifts that he receives from God. He said in I Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored

more abundantly than they all: not I, but the grace of God." And so he besought the Corinthians and said, "Do not receive the grace of God in vain." You see, if I am a recipient of the grace of God and I preach simply because that is my profession, rather than my confession, then it is no wonder that I don't preach with passion. If it's a job, if it's a vocation, and God forbid, if it is an avocation, then we will never preach with passion. But if it is a response to the greatness that God has done for us, if like David we are saying, "This is what I render unto Jehovah for all of his benefits toward me," then it will be with passion. Now the brethren may quit paying me, but nobody will ever make me quit preaching, because God has bestowed upon me too many things for me ever to do anything but respond with all of the passion and love and fiber and burning of my being to say, "Here I am, the servant of God by his grace."

Number three, the word of God impels us. I love Jeremiah. I love him particularly in chapter 20. I identify with him. "I won't preach ever again. I mean I've told these stiff-necked, stubborn brethren for the last time. I QUIT!" In chapter nine, you remember, he wanted to build a lodging place for wayfaring men in the wilderness. He wanted to go into the motel business in Grants, New Mexico. He said he was just going to drop out. He said, "I tried it. I quit for a while, but I couldn't stay quit. The longer I didn't preach, His word just welled up inside of me until it became like a fire, and I got tired of trying to hold it in, and I was weary of forebearing, and I couldn't stand it." He just burst with the Word of God. Maybe sometimes we need to quit for a while to find out whether we are preaching for the right reason and

really let that fire build up if it is there. If it is not there, don't ever speak for God again. There is nothing that shames a lover more than someone who hypocritically says to love him.

But then, the work. That makes us passionate, doesn't it? The work to be accomplished. I mean we not only have Jesus who loves us and the Word that impels us, and the gifts that enable us, but look at our work, brethren. We have received the grace of God to be ministers of the Word of God to offer up the Gentiles as an offering unto God. When I stand before God, I do not want to stand emptyhanded, I don't care what that song says. You know that song that says, "Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling." I don't want to do that. I want to present to God a nation, a world that has heard His story. That is the sacrifice pain won't offer. That is the work that he has left me to do, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And, then I will say with Paul, I think I can say with Paul—do you mind if I just share my heart with you for a moment? Whether you mind it or not, I am going to do it. I believe I can say with Paul and mean it (in Acts 20:24) that I really don't count my life as dear unto myself. I think I am a dear person to God. I think that my life is of value to God. But I really don't count my life as dear unto myself for what reason that I may accomplish my course and finish the work that he has given me to do. I want to finish the job. Don't you want to finish the job? There is a reason for passion. I've got my hand out to work, and I want to see it through to the end. I want to be able to say before I die that I am a minister of the gospel that has been proclaimed in my lifetime unto

every creature and all of the world. I will not die happy without being able to say that. I am sorry that right now I might die without being able to say that. But, if just this many men become passionate preachers, I will live to see it done. I mean those that will love nothing but God, and hate nothing but sin, and accept nothing as their task but that all the world hears the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we will do that with passion and say that with passion, the brethren will catch on. They will feel a debt. You see, what makes me feel passionate is a debt. I owe something. It is not just the privilege, it is not just a gift, I owe something and not to God. I owe something to God, but that is not what I'm talking about. I read Romans 1:16 wrong all my life until twelve years ago. Paul didn't say for I am a debtor to God in that verse. He said I am debtor to Greek and Barbarian, to the wise and the foolish. Greeks speak Greek, Barbarians are those that don't. Wise are those who have been to college and foolish are those who haven't. This is literally true, I am told by those that know the language. So, I am indebted to everybody that speaks American and everybody that doesn't. I'm indebted to everybody that has been to college and everybody that hasn't. I have never met a person that I didn't owe the presentation of Jesus Christ to. Now I am not telling you that I have always paid that debt, but I am telling you that I have always owed it. I get passionate about the 28th of the month when I don't have enough money. I always come to the end of the money with too much month left. I get very passionate about that time because I have three bankers, fourteen department stores, and sixteen gas companies that are going to be passionate on the

second of that month. I owe a debt. We are in debt to anybody who sits in church, not to entertain them, not to lead them in worship. The function of preaching is not to lead people in worship. The function of our assembly on the Lord's day is not worship. We do that, but that is not why we come. We bring worship to that building. We come to build up the body of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 14). If our preaching doesn't get that job done, it is simply because it is not done with passion.

What are the objects of our passion? Upon whom do we bestow this passion? Well, bestow it upon all of the lost, right? The passage we just quoted, Romans 1:14-16. "I am a debtor both to Jews, both to Greek, both to Greek and Barbarians, both to wise and to foolish, so as much as in me is, I am eager to preach the gospel also to you that are in Rome, for I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God unto everyone who believes." It doesn't matter what religious, sexual, social, language backgrounds a person may have. Background doesn't matter. I need to feel passionate toward that lost man. I would to God that every preacher of the gospel would be sent by their elders for some period of time every year to some place where nobody knows Christ. There is a feeling there that is not felt anywhere else.

I flew from here to Songkhla and preached there in the southern part of Thailand just across from Malaya. Brothers were there and I felt real good and was really built up in the meetings that we had in Songkhla and Hatyia, strong little churches there, not big, but strong. We got in Tommy Allison's old Toyota High Ace and headed up to Bangkok. We drove through Nakhon Si Thammarat, one and a half

million people. There were no Christians. I tell you without any shame, we wept. We went through Surat Thani, one million people, no Christians. Songkhla, one million people, no Christians. Pran Buri, two and one-half million people, no Christians. It makes you different doesn't it? It really does. It really does. And I think that it would add a passion to your preaching that would turn that congregation up-side-down and in-side-out. It would lead them toward a passionate life that they have never thought about experiencing in all their lives. Shame on you elders if you don't do that to your preachers. Don't give him a vacation. If that guy goes over there and just brings back a bunch of relics, kick him plum in the river. But, you give him assignments to do things and to go places and to see things so that he can come back and share with the brethren who will never have the opportunity to do that. He doesn't have to get seasick, just head him South a few hours. He won't drive long into Mexico before he will experience the same thing. He can drive on through Honduras and drive on into South America and get to where the largest cities in all the world will soon be. He will come back passionate. We are not passionate preachers because we are normally only handling the problems of pampered brethren. It is about time that we look on the fields that are white unto harvest and realize that we stood behind the gun, that we are on the catbird's seat, that it is our responsibility to see that the brothers see the lost across the street, down the street, up the nation, over there, across there, everywhere until finally there beats in the heart of the preachers and the elders and the leaders of the congregation. There will only be 10 or 15 percent that will ever lead the church. Out of

120 brethren there were only 12 apostles, that is 10 percent. There will only be 10, 15, or 20 percent that will ever lead the church. But, you give me 10 percent of a church that has a passion for souls, and I will give you a world that knows of Jesus (if you will let me have thirty years). It happened once.

I am also passionate because of my nation. I love America. I go away for just a day or two and come back and hear the national anthem, and I cry. I cry whether I have been away or not. Football game—dumb place to cry, I cry. I love my nation. I don't have the tie to it that Paul had to Israel, but I understand a little bit of what he means when I think about people that are good folk, that I love, that love their families, that love their city, that are good citizens and good fathers and good mothers, and lost and going to hell—straight to hell. Pass go. Do not collect \$200. I weep. I am not trying to be sensational, I do weep. I do have a desire as Paul did. "I want to tell you as I have told you before and tell you now even weeping, they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Their god is perdition. Their glory is their shame. They mind earthly things." I live in the city of churches, Lubbock, Texas. It leads the nation in percentages of divorces. There are more porno movie-houses per capita in Lubbock, Texas, than any city in the United States. There are more massage parlors per capita (and you can get a massage in one of them) in Lubbock than in any city in the United States. How I ache that it wouldn't be that way. I cannot preach on morality as if I were only discussing news. There has got to be passion.

Then, the church. I mean Paul, in II Corinthians 11, talked about stonings (that was a part of his passion),

and beatings, and shipwrecks, and he said, "I was in danger." That was a part of his passion. He said that besides all of those things which are external, "there is that which presses on me, and that is anxiety for all of the churches." We need to preach passionately about God's intent for the churches and the churches lack of intent for Him. I think that will make you passionate.

What would be the outcome of it? What if we became passionate? I mean if we really let these things make us passionate, if just a handful of us decide that, "Yea, that's right." And, from now on just burn every time we get up. What would happen? The race will be run. The world will be won. Basically, one man got passionate, and the Gentiles heard the gospel of Jesus. And, that one man closed his life in a cell that was so small that he could not stand up or lie down. He wrote on a piece of parchment words that conquered Rome. He said, "I am already being offered. I am already being sacrificed to God. The time of my home going is at hand. I have fought the good fight. [Is that passionate, a fight?] I have finished the course. I have kept the faith." Because that passion rules my life, I live on an evangelized globe. So, I can go home because my function was to preach where Christ has never been named. I don't know who God has ordained in this generation that that be his function. His whole life be not building on another man's foundation, but going where Christ has never been named. Whoever that is, if you and I will be passionate, in just a few years, he can write a letter and say there is no more reason for me to live. I have kept the faith. I have fought the fight.

I urge you, therefore, in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead by His appearing in His kingdom, that you preach the word, that you be urgent, insistent, in season and out of season, with all longsuffering, and with doctrine. Brethren, let's just try to burn up for Christ.

Featured Classes

Faith for the Struggle

Phillip E. Morrison

Address: Church of Christ at White Station, 1106 Colonial Road, Memphis, Tennessee 38117.

Family: Wife: the former Mary Margaret Grounds. Children: Richard, Bryn, Jim, and Janet.

Education: Attended public schools of Davidson County (Nashville), Tennessee. Was an honor graduate of David Lipscomb College. Did graduate studies at Abilene Christian College and the University of Miami.

Work and Ministry: Presently serves as minister of the Church of Christ at White Station in Memphis, Tennessee (1976-). Has served as minister for the Plaza Church of Christ in Sumter, South Carolina; the Northwest Church of Christ in Detroit, Michigan; the Central Church of Christ in Miami, Florida; and the Church of Christ in Falls Church, Virginia.

Other Fields of Special Interest: Is on the editorial staff of *Power for Today* and *Twentieth Century Christian*. Writes for the *Gospel Advocate*, and has assisted in the writing of Bible School material published by the Gospel Advocate Company. Has lectured at a number of colleges, including David Lipscomb College, Abilene Christian University, Harding University, Michigan Christian College, Northeastern Christian Junior College, and Florida State University. Is a frequent speaker for civic and service clubs. Serves on a number of Boards for schools, childrens' homes, Christian camps, etc. Represents the "Herald of Truth" radio and television ministry in promotional work, script writing and sermon research. Serves as managing editor of *Up Reach* magazine.



Has had extensive radio and television experience. Has also contributed sermons to *Great Single Sermons*, published by Biblical Research Press. A book of his sermons, *Sermons for the Seventies*, has been published by the Western Christian Foundation. Another volume is almost ready for publication.

A Sunday School boy was proud of the paper he had drawn, colored and captioned "Faith in God." On his way home, however, he was holding the paper out the bus window, watching it flutter in the breeze. In a careless moment he relaxed his grip and watched helplessly as the paper flew away behind the bus. In dismay the boy shouted to the bus driver, "Stop! Stop! I've lost my faith in God!"

Our world is full of boys like that—and of girls and men and women. Some people struggle to find a faith they have never had; others struggle to regain the faith they once found so meaningful.

Typical of the first group is an acquaintance, marvelously talented and thoroughly trained. With doctorates in both medicine and biochemistry, she was a respected cancer research scientist. As we sat one day discussing our respective interests, she suddenly asked, "Do you pray?" Somewhat startled by the implication that I, a preacher, might not pray, I replied, "Of course I pray! Don't you?"

With a wistful, almost envious look and tone of voice my friend said, "No, I don't pray, because I don't think there is anybody listening." From conversations both before and after that one I know how much she wanted to believe in God. There was a desperate quality about her struggle to believe. She respected the faith of others, and wanted a faith like

their's for herself, but she couldn't quite bring herself to believe.

I knew another woman, a graduate student, whose faith had once been strong but now was diluted by cynicism and distrust of others. As I tried to help her reclaim the faith which had once been so precious, she began to weep and explain: "As a graduate student in social work I live daily with the problems and the anxieties which plague so many people. I see every day people whose lives are shattered by divorce, alcohol, disease and sin of every kind. I feel so keenly the need for Christians and churches to address those needs, but my home congregation is still debating about whether or not women must wear hats to church!"

Both she and I knew that did not justify her abandoning the faith. But circumstances do alter our feelings. And many people—so many that we would be staggered by their number—have lost their faith and are wandering like sheep without a shepherd.

So many thousands in our time are fearful of the future. They are troubled because the future is uncertain. But the future has always been uncertain. None—except those who have been blessed with miraculous, divine foresight—have ever been certain of the future. All the rest of us face the future with either our natural fears or the confidence produced by faith and trust in God. As someone has said, "We may not know what the future holds, but we do know who holds the future."

Those of us who have grown up in the faith sometimes forget what a precious privilege that is. It is so easy to take for granted and forget to appreciate the blessing of believing. It is also hard to appreciate the

difficulties many people experience as they struggle to believe. For many of them the gospel story—so familiar to us—is new and fresh and incredibly exciting.

Landon Saunders tells about a young man who attended a seminar and listened in amazement as the story of Jesus was told. Finally he could contain himself no longer, and interrupted to say, "Now, wait a minute. Did I understand you to say that there was a man named Jesus, who was born to a virgin? And did you say that this Jesus was killed by his enemies? And that on the third day after his death, this Jesus was resurrected, and came out of the grave? Did you really say that?"

"Yes, that's what I said," Landon replied.

"Well!" said the young man, "don't that beat all!"

That does beat all. It beats anything any of us have ever heard. And if that story doesn't move and excite us anymore, perhaps our own struggle for faith is not yet complete. Comedian Woody Allen said he would find it easier to believe if God would give some kind of clear sign—such as depositing a large sum of money in a secret Swiss bank account. God has given a sign far more impressive. His love for us is so great that He has given us His only begotten Son (John 3:16). That love has been expressed so vividly in that God sent Christ to die for us even while we were yet sinners (Romans 5:8).

The struggle for faith is sometimes a difficult one. But many people have successfully completed that struggle. What is such faith worth? Is there any real reason for seeking it? Does it really accomplish anything worthwhile for those who possess it? *The struggle for faith is meaningless unless it produces faith for the struggle.*

For many the excitement is in the chase—the pursuit of a worthwhile goal. Once the goal has been reached the excitement is gone and there is little incentive to maintain the position. That was the kind of thing Alexander Solzhenitsyn had in mind when, in a 1978 speech at Harvard, he said that the West has grown soft, and does not have the inner strength to deal with today's problems.

In the words of C. S. Lewis, "We tend to think but do not act; we tend to feel but do not act; if we continue to think and feel but do not act, we will no longer be able to act."

Defining the Struggle

The struggle we have in mind is not measured in human or material terms. It is not a struggle for institutional success. It has nothing to do with regaining our lost glory as the fastest growing religious body in America. It is not defined in terms of buildings, or colleges, or benevolent institutions, or of programs. It is the struggle for meaning, the need to fulfill our destiny, the desire to find meaning and purpose for our empty lives.

Columnist Ann Landers has said, "If I were asked to give what I consider the single most useful bit of advice for all humanity it would be this: Expect trouble as an inevitable part of life and, when it comes, hold your head high, look it squarely in the eye and say, 'I will be bigger than you. You cannot defeat me.' Then repeat to yourself the most comforting of all words, 'This too shall pass.' "

The problem is that such trouble does not always pass. But even when life remains a struggle—for meaning or against adversity—it can be rewarding and

fulfilling. Landers acknowledges, "No one knows why life must be so punishing to some of God's finest creatures. Perhaps it is true that everything has a price and we must sacrifice something precious to gain something else. The poets and philosophers say adversity, sorrow and pain give our lives an added dimension. Those who suffer deeply touch life at every point; they drain the cup to the dregs while others sip only the bubbles on top. Perhaps no man can touch the stars unless he has known the depths of despair—and fought his way back."

The example of Job comes quickly to mind, not so much because he fought his way back as because his relationship with God provided the way back. Job is remembered as a man of patience, but he deserves to be remembered also as a man of faith. Our adversities and anxieties may not be on a par with Job's, but like him, we are engaged in a desperate struggle.

This battle cannot be won by ordinary means. Because it is a spiritual battle it cannot be won with carnal weapons. Success will be won only by the people of faith, whose belief and absolute trust causes them to follow the only leader who has made the journey from heaven to earth and back again, and who has promised to repeat the journey in order to gather in those belonging to Him.

Lewis Joseph Sherrill, in *The Struggle of the Soul*, suggests that "The individual in the present world is caught between two fires.

"On the one hand modern civilization requires that the individual be a person of extraordinary strength if he is to thrive in the midst of that civilization. For in proportion as our civilization grows more complicated, more difficult to understand, and more resistant

to rational control, to that extent the individual is the harder put to it to find or make his place in society as a self-respecting personality. And in proportion as the pressures upon modern living grow more numerous and more disturbing, the individual is threatened or even undermined at every soft spot which he carries in his make-up as a person. In a word, modern civilization demands character marked by a high degree of strength and maturity in those who would survive it.

"And yet, on the other hand, modern society is producing, in vast numbers, persons who are rendered deficient because they cannot achieve precisely that kind of strength and maturity which our civilization demands. Instead, while the civilization is requiring one thing in the character of men, the society out of which that civilization has arisen tends to produce the very opposite in the character of men."

Man never has been able to solve life's problems by his own intellect and might. Pulling one's self up by his own bootstraps is supposed to be the epitome of human accomplishment. In fact it is an impossible and ludicrous picture. Man must look to God and His Word for direction and strength.

All Bible stories are contemporary stories. Whether it's a story of jealousy, greed, avarice, murder, fornication, drunkenness, abuse of power or rejection of God—it's sure to have its twentieth century counterpart.

God's response and help are just as contemporary as the problems and sins of any age. He can still deliver his people from bondage. He still heals the sick. He still forgives sins. And His power to raise the dead will one day be demonstrated in the grandest way possible.

Can you imagine what kinds of headlines and television specials a single example of resurrection would generate? Infinitely more impressive is the general resurrection Paul describes: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:51, 52). This will be the greatest news story of all time, but there will be no one left to write it or read it!

The Focus of Our Faith

People believe in all kinds of things. Some put their trust in "chariots, and some of horses; but we boast of the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7). Others may put their trust in riches, power, lands, or other material or human objects.

In Stuart Briscoe's volume on the Psalms, *What Works When Life Doesn't*, he comments on the first verse of the book:

" 'Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,' means happiness isn't found in a life-style that leaves out God. An atheist has a godless philosophy. He chooses to believe that God does not exist. He does this by faith, quite obviously, because he has no concrete evidence that there is no God. But the atheist has a major problem. If there is no God behind the universe, there is no reason behind his own existence. Both he and his world are products of fate, the chance products of meaningless events."

The Christian's faith is in God. He puts his trust not in things, but in the God who made all things and controls all things. Again, such faith is not an end but

the means to an end. Because God possesses certain qualities, faith in Him equips us for whatever struggles we encounter.

Our faith is in the God who provides. One of the great stories in the Old Testament is in the first eight verses of Genesis, chapter twenty-two. "After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here am I.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. Then Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.' And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here am I, my son.' He said, 'Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.' So they went both of them together."

Of course the story goes on to tell how God stopped Abraham before he could take Isaac's life. For years I read the story without really seeing what it says. In my mind, Abraham's reply to Isaac was barely honest. I thought he was saying, as fathers sometimes do, "You're not old enough to be concerned about such

things. You let me worry about that while you just keep on carrying the wood."

But Abraham actually said, "God will provide himself *the lamb*. . . ." I wouldn't argue that Abraham perfectly understood exactly what God was going to provide, but he did believe that God *would provide*.

It is my firm conviction that God still provides—that he is still the God of providence. The providence of God is more than just a doctrine to which we pay lip service. It is the direct intervention by God in the affairs of His people.

If someone should say, "God directed me to do so and so," or "the Holy Spirit told me such and such," people would properly raise an eyebrow. God no longer speaks to His people directly as He did in times past; neither does He speak indirectly through the Holy Spirit as He once did. The testimony of the Scriptures is clear.

"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

"First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (II Peter 1:20, 21).

"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

"Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge,

it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away" (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

How, then, does God's providence operate? We don't always know. Sometimes it is in answer to prayer. If we're not convinced that God provides, why do we pray for God to heal the sick, or deal with our other needs? Has prayer become such a formality that we go through the motions and say all the right things, then deny the results?

At other times significant events in our lives may not be satisfactorily explained except by providence. Do Christian young people learn to love each other, marry and establish a Christian home purely by chance or by their own skill and knowledge? Is it mere coincidence which offers to us special opportunities for service to God?

"But," someone says, "How can you tell what is providence and what is chance? How can you be sure?" Maybe we can't always be sure. It is not necessary to label with certainty every incident and every circumstance in life. It is enough to know that our faith is in the God who provides. Because He does provide we may be equipped for whatever struggles life may offer.

Our faith is also in the God who will not abandon us in our time of need. It is significant that Jesus coupled a great challenge with a great promise: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I

will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Few things distress us as much as being left alone. Babies crave companionship, cuddling, the reassurance of loving presence. Even a stray puppy taken from its mother will be comforted by an old shoe or some other evidence of human presence.

L. D. Johnson observes that people experiencing distress often become irrational in their search for solution.

"Hand-wringing lamentation is tempting, but unproductive. Flight into some kind of safe retreat is also hard to resist but not very helpful. Multitudes are doing one or the other—lamenting or running, or both.

"People who are taking flight into alcohol or other drugs are running. People who are retreating to their hideaways at the lake or beach or in the mountains, or taking extensive and frequent trips abroad are probably running. People who spend all day over bridge or at parties are probably running. . . .

"The word from God's Word is that we humans do not learn much from experience. We tend to make the same mistakes again and again. But the word is not one of despair; it is a word of hope, for God has the last word."

Maturity brings self-confidence and security. There is at work in the Christian a dual process: reliance on the God who will not forsake, and a steady spiritual maturation. Spiritual maturity, however, as prized and desirable as it is, never produces total self-reliance. We can never get along without God, for we depend on Him for everything.

When the Bible speaks of the need for Christian

growth it does not suggest that such growth frees one from dependence on God. On the contrary, it insists that real growth, real maturity, acknowledges an ever greater dependence on God and gives Him an ever increasing place of importance in our lives.

Growth is produced by reliance on the life-sustaining strength of God's Word. "Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (I Peter 2:2, 3).

Christians must "beware lest ye be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:17, 18).

Immature Christians are as "children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles" (Ephesians 4:14).

Do we overcome such childish behavior by our own strength? By our determination and will? While we must make the effort and initiate the change, results depend on how near we draw to God. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the Head, into Christ, from Whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and rebuilds itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15, 16).

Sometimes Christians fail to make satisfactory progress. They're still babies when they should be mature. The solution to their problem is not found in declaring their independence but in recognizing the need for God's presence and strength in their lives. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers,

you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's Word. You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14).

The faith that strengthens us for every struggle is the faith that God is still with His people, strengthening them and providing for their growth, just as He has always done.

Our faith is also the belief that God will give us the strength we need in every circumstance. Most of us will never know the hardships which were so common in Paul's life. Yet, for our smaller struggles, we have available the same powerful resources. "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:12, 13).

Sarah Andrews was just a young woman when she left home to begin her mission work in Japan. There she stayed for the rest of her life, even through the terrible years of World War II. Imprisoned, she took the meager ration of food allowed and shared it with others who needed it more. When asked if she did not suffer from hunger, sister Andrews would say, "I have gone without food, but I have never gone hungry."

So complete was Sarah Andrews' faith that she never doubted God's strength, ability and willingness to provide. One year, as she faced the humiliation of beginning a new year with unpaid obligations (Japanese standards were different from ours!) she knew that

only one mail boat was scheduled to arrive in time to help. The boat came on schedule, but it did not have the support money sister Andrews needed. Undaunted, she went down to the beach, kneeled in the sand and faced the ocean. "Lord, you know my needs and how important it is that these needs be met. Lord, I know that you can use a little boat as well as a big one. And I believe that You will not let Your people down." Somehow it isn't even surprising to learn that a smaller, unscheduled boat did arrive with mail and money for God's servant.

With David we say, "This is my strong refuge, and has made my way safe" (II Samuel 22:33). And with the same great man—a man after God's own heart—we say

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1).

And again

The Lord is my strength and my shield;
in Him my heart trusts;
So I am helped, and my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to Him
(Psalm 28:7).

When the apostle Paul sought relief from his "thorn in the flesh" he asked three times for God to remove it. God's refusal to remove the troublesome problem was explained this way: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9).

How did Paul respond to such disappointing news? "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak then I am strong" (II Corinthians 12:9, 10).

Recognizing that Christians would experience sufferings and difficulties in their battles with Satan, Peter urged, "Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you" (I Peter 5:7). Then, after warning about the omnipresence of Satan, Peter gave a beautiful promise: "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, establish, and strengthen you" (I Peter 5:10).

Our success comes, "not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). No matter how strong we may be—physically, mentally or spiritually—we will eventually meet a challenge we cannot handle by ourselves. When we are so weak that we can do nothing, by the strength of Christ we can do whatever needs to be done.

Then, our faith is in the God who provides the reason for our living, for our being. There is a destiny about the Christian life, beautifully stated by Paul: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with Him" (I Thessalonians 5:9, 10).

If it were not for the fact that so many people do it, we would say that people cannot live without a destiny and a sense of purpose. Even so, we can say that people do not live very satisfactorily if

they do not have a sense of purpose.

Just having a purpose is not enough, however; it is important that our purpose harmonize with the will of God. Some spend a lifetime struggling for wealth, power, position, recognition or some other human success. Jesus had an admonition and a question for such people: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life" (Matthew 16:24-26).

In a strange sounding reversal of conventional human wisdom, Jesus said, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

From Adam's time to our own, every person who has tried to live outside the will and purpose of God has failed. We do not have the record of every life, but every recorded life follows a consistent pattern. Adam, Moses, Abraham, Saul, David, Judas, Peter, Paul—each name triggers remembrance of a life story. And in every instance, satisfactory and successful living was accomplished by living within the will of God. In exceptional instances such as David, or more typical cases such as Judas, failure to live by God's pattern produced disastrous consequences.

Paul was a promising young man, probably a perennial candidate for the "most likely to succeed" award. He had everything going for him. "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:7-14).

Struggles are always less ominous when we know we are struggling for a purpose. And they're even less frightening when we know we have the resources for dealing with them. Nothing so well equips us for the struggle or guarantees the possibility of success as does faith in God.

The Nature of Our Faith

Faith's importance is clearly established by the number of times the subject is mentioned in the Scriptures. Paul uses the word "faith" thirty-seven times and the word "believe" eighteen times—just in the book of Romans. In a short book like Galatians the word "faith" appears twenty-one times, while the letters to Timothy have the word twenty-seven times and in Hebrews it appears thirty times. John uses the word even more frequently; it appears more than ninety times in his writings.

The best known chapter on faith begins with a simple, yet eloquent declaration: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Hebrews 11:1-3).

While this statement defines faith and suggests something about its nature, it by no means exhausts the things said about the nature of faith. It is important that the nature of faith be understood, for faith is so essential to life.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16, 17).

"The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11).

"Now the just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38).

"The just shall live by His faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

Again and again the Bible emphasizes the importance of faith. Of course we accept such teachings, but, lest someone think that salvation comes by faith only, we are quick to call attention to the Bible's emphasis on works. "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.'

Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the Spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead” (James 2:14-26).

Some have believed so strongly the Biblical declaration that “the just shall live by faith,” that they have added a word to make the Bible say, “The just shall live by faith *alone*.” In rebuttal, others have said, “No, the Bible clearly teaches that ‘man is justified by works and not by faith alone.’ ”

Does the Bible teach salvation by faith? Yes. Does the Bible teach salvation by works? Yes. But the resulting dilemma is not nearly the problem some have made it. Since the Bible does not teach either faith only or works only, it is obvious that the Bible teaches some combination of faith and works.

The Bible teaches faith, but not faith only. The Bible teaches works, but not works only. The truth is, therefore, that the Bible teaches faith *plus* works. Perhaps that’s true in a sense. But it seems more

accurate to say that the Bible teaches us to cultivate the faith *that* works.

After all, faith and works are not neatly separated categories, easily distinguished one from another. They are, rather, blended together in such a way as to support and complement each other.

And another thing: there is quite a difference between teaching that salvation comes by faith only and teaching that it comes only by faith. "Faith only" implies faith plus nothing else. "Only by faith" means that we cannot be saved unless we accept the testimony concerning Jesus and believe Him to be the Son of God. "And without faith it is impossible to please Him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Martin Luther argued that faith in God or believing in God is the greatest honor people can give to God. In his words, "Faith gives the glory to God. Nothing greater can be given Him. Giving the glory to God means to believe Him and consider Him truthful, wise, just, merciful, omnipotent—in short, to acknowledge Him to be the Author and Giver of everything good. Furthermore, it is the nature of faith that a man who believes another does so because he considers him a true and veracious person. This is the greatest honor one person can bestow upon another, just as on the other hand it is the greatest dishonor to regard a person as base and false and a frivolous man. So then, when the soul firmly believes God's Word, it considers Him veracious,

true, and just; and that bestows the greatest possible honor upon Him, for thereby the soul acknowledges that He is right and thereby honors His name and lets Him act according to His good pleasure because it does not doubt that He is true and veracious in all His words. On the other hand, we cannot offer God a greater dishonor than not to believe Him. By so doing the soul considers Him unfit, false, and frivolous, and for its part denies Him by its unbelief, and in its opposition to God sets up its own opinion in its heart as an idol as if it knows sins better than He.”

Two things need to be said about the nature of the faith we seek. *First, it is a faith that is absolutely confident.* It is strange that we can be so certain about the human part of life, with all the frailties and uncertainties that are common to it, and so tentative and so unsure about the eternal. We’re often vocal to the point of being obnoxious about our political beliefs or our athletic loyalties. But when questioned about our future, we tend to equivocate and our certainties are replaced by half-hearted hopes and aspirations.

The Bible, however, gives us the basis for greater assurance. Ephesians 3:12 speaks of “Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in Him.” Hebrews 4:16 admonishes, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

The writer of Hebrews also speaks directly to our point about the kind of faith needed for our struggle when he writes, “But recall the former days when, after you are enlightened, you endured a hard struggle

with sufferings . . . therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward" (10:32, 35).

As Paul gave thanks for the Christians in Thessalonica, he remembered their "work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brethren beloved by God, that He has chosen you; for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thessalonians 1:3-5).

Did you notice the strength of those words? Boldness! Access! Confidence! Assurance! Each one gives insight into the kind of faith that can withstand anything.

But Paul had an even greater measure of the faith we covet so much. Paul made passing reference to the fact of his suffering when he wrote, "But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I'm sure that He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me" (II Timothy 1:12).

Even the awareness of his impending death could not shake Paul's faith. "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul says, "I know;" we say, "I hope." Paul says, "There is;" we say, "Maybe." And we don't think that difference is strange. After all, we reason, Paul was an apostle, specially chosen, inspired! Yes, but his apostleship did not provide his assurance. He was confident of his relationship with the Lord Jesus

Christ in exactly the same way that we may be confident of ours.

Not even the combined forces of all the worldly powers can overcome the Christian. "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (I John 5:4).

In the second place, our faith is by nature a "therefore" faith. Have you noticed that faith is seldom followed by a period, but almost always by a comma? For example, Paul quotes from Psalm 116:10, when he writes, "Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we too believe, and so we speak" (II Corinthians 4:13).

The enslaved Israelites were not sure about the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and they even questioned the plan of God to deliver them from Egypt. However, after Aaron revealed the will of God and confirmed the word with the signs given by God, "The people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped" (Exodus 4:31). Notice that they didn't just believe; they believed and worshipped.

A similar response of faith is seen in the fascinating story of Jonah. The most reluctant preacher in history delivered the shortest sermon on record: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4). The message was delivered and the Ninevites believed it.

What happened when they believed? "And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). Some kinds of

faith may not require a response, but faith in God always does.

No clearer example of this truth can be found than that recorded in Hebrews, chapter eleven. Again and again the examples are cited, with each one sounding much like the others.

"By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. . . . By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death. . . . By faith Noah, . . . took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household. . . .

"By faith Abraham . . . went out, not knowing where he was to go. . . . By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive . . . since she considered Him faithful who had promised. . . .

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. . . . By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob . . . blessed each of the sons of Joseph. . . . By faith Joseph, at the end of his life . . . gave directions concerning his burial. . . .

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents. . . . By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. . . . By faith he left Egypt. . . . By faith he kept the passover. . . .

"By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land. . . . By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish. . . .

"And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barach, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received

promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mockings and scourgings, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth.

“And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:4-39).

How Vital is Faith?

The importance of faith as the weapon needed in the struggles of life cannot be emphasized too much. The Bible repeatedly stresses the importance of believing. And please note, before we call attention to these Biblical statements, that faith is needed, not just in order to comply with God’s will, but also because it is the only way to win the victory over Satan, God’s enemy and our tempter.

Jesus left no room for doubt. “I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am He” (John 8:24). The essential place of faith is also stressed in Hebrews 11:6: “and without faith it is impossible to please Him. For whoever would draw near to God must

believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Dr. Frank Crane acknowledged that there is danger in faith when he said, "You may be deceived if you trust too much, but you will live in torment if you do not trust enough." If trust is important in this life, as Dr. Crane maintains, how much more important in the life for which we are preparing?

The importance of faith is also shown by examining the sermons preached in Bible times. Peter's sermon on Pentecost is an example of preaching designed to build faith. We may find it remarkable that the sermon which produced more baptisms than any other sermon in history wasn't even a sermon on baptism! Peter knew that if people really believed in Jesus Christ they would be eager to accept His will. Is that not true today?

Most of our preaching is done where people already have at least a nominal faith. Perhaps the great conversion stories are being written by missionaries working among somewhat primitive people, because there the story of Jesus is new and exciting. But in any culture, people who really believe are compelled to act.

We live with pretensions of faith that become downright hypocrisies if not perversions. We sit in church business meetings and hear good works rejected because, "we can't see our way clear to do them." Doesn't anybody in the group remember that "we walk by faith, not by sight"? (II Corinthians 5:7).

Individually we pay lip service to faith, but often relegate it to a place of secondary importance. Prayer becomes a court of last resort, utilized when

"there's nothing left to do but pray." Our trust is often placed in people, or power, or possessions—all of which have previously disappointed us—rather than in God, who never has and never will let us down.

Thus the exhortations to faith and faithfulness are to be taken seriously, for in them are the seeds of life. Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, *exhorting them to continue in the faith* and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21, 22).

Paul also had a message for the Corinthians: "Be watchful, *stand firm in your faith*, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love" (I Corinthians 16:13, 14). His second letter contained a similar admonition: "*Examine yourselves to see whether you are holding to your faith.* Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!" (II Corinthians 13:5).

The church at Colossae could not assume that its faith required no examination. "And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his Body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, *provided that you continue in the faith*, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard. . ." (Colossians 1:21-23).

We're often concerned about trivial or mundane things. A good friend enjoyed telling about a former boss who would stop by his desk and say, "Quick now! What were you worried about one year ago today?" Most of us would not be able to answer,

even if given ample time to think. Realizing that, we should also realize that the things we are worrying about today, won't seem very important when viewed from another perspective.

At times we're able to see only limited results from our labors. Discouragement and despair become our constant companions. God never intended for us to live like that. He has only asked us to do our best and leave the results to Him. Even if we should become as skilled at planting and watering as Paul and Apollos, it is still God who gives the increase (I Corinthians 3:6).

James teaches that it is better to be poor in this world and rich in faith than to be rich in this world and poor in faith (James 2:5). Obviously those are not the only alternatives, though poverty in both this world and in faith is more common than wealth in both realms (Matthew 19:24). Ultimately the destiny of every soul is decided by one consideration: whether or not he has kept the faith.

How Faith is Acquired

Faith is attractive. When we see how it changes a life and makes victorious living possible, we want it for our own. Unfortunately, many people want a vital faith the same way they want a new Cadillac or a seaside condominium; they want it if it can be obtained cheaply or through some circuitous maneuver.

Faith is not cheap and cannot be acquired cheaply. Religious leaders who suggest that faith is simply a matter of opening the heart and receiving Jesus misunderstand the Lord's teachings and misguide His people. Making Jesus available to man cost God His

most precious possession and required the highest expression of His love. To display such a treasure as if it were a bargain basement special or a garage sale discard is to trifle with God, His Son and His Word.

Faith is the result of a carefully constructed and executed plan of presenting Christ to the world. After establishing the fact that faith is essential, Paul wrote, "But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?' So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Romans 10:14-17).

We cannot say that hearing the Word of God always produces faith. In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-23), Jesus taught that the gospel sometimes falls on unprepared or unwilling ears. Hearing does not always produce faith, but faith always comes by hearing the Word of God. There isn't any other way. Perhaps that's why George Dana Boardman declared, "The world is dying for want, not of good preaching, but of good hearing." Someone else has said, "We frequently concern ourselves with the speaker's ability to deliver. We should, first of all, concern ourselves with our capacity to receive."

A great deal of subjectivity has been injected into what is essentially an objective matter. Human feelings have replaced Biblical evidence, and faith is measured

by what one feels more than by what he knows from God's revelation. William Childs Robinson, in his book, *The Reformation: A Rediscovery of Grace*, speaks directly to the point:

"God's objective revelation of Himself is the work of Christ, God's subjective revelation that of the Spirit. The Spirit speaks not of Himself; He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, thus glorifying Him. In severing this connection, enthusiasm left itself with no objective criterion and exposed itself to the danger of unregulated spirituality. Instead of the saving knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ, it offered sundry varieties of religious experiences, for where the Holy Spirit is sundered from Christ, sooner or later He is always transmuted into quite a different spirit—a spirit of the religious man, and finally, the human spirit in general."

That is one of the things which happens to faith when we look for it in the wrong place. Leaving the objective declarations of God's Word, we become easy prey to the subjective imaginations of others or even of ourselves.

Robinson continues to describe the contrast between faith drawn from the Bible and faith that is man's own creation:

"The apostles declared: We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. The true Holy Spirit comes from God, from the ascended Christ, and brings in His Hands to shed abroad in our hearts the love of God revealed in the death of Christ for sinners. Consequently, it is not enough for a preacher to be a religious genius who fancies that he can by his own or others' current experiences awaken the dormant possibilities of religion in the hearts of the hearer.

Nor is it sufficient to have a philosopher of religion presenting himself as an example of faith or as a possessor of human understanding, or even using the crucifixion of Jesus or the stoning of Stephen as a stimulus to bring an existential decision to the student. While these may give the appearance of devotion to Christ, they do not locate the glory of salvation in His atoning work for us. Rather, the historical revelation of Christ is treated as the stimulus to a subjective spiritual experience in the individual, not as itself the content of that experience. The spiritualist individual experiences his conversion and the resulting spiritual glow rather than Jesus Christ and Him crucified, so that when he bears his testimony, it is to speak of his newfound peace and happiness rather than to confess that Jesus is Lord."

Of course that was not the apostolic approach. Paul, a most learned man, sounded almost anti-intellectual when he asked, "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. . . . For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (I Corinthians 1:20-25).

The next chapter makes it even clearer. Paul didn't really have any axe to grind with wisdom and knowledge, whatever their source. He simply felt compelled to keep attention focused where it belonged. "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing

among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (I Corinthians 2:1-5).

Again Robinson's summary sentences have value: "But true preaching from the Holy Spirit which came at Pentecost leads the hearer back through all his experiences to the Source of all true and proper experiences, that is, to Jesus Christ. He calls the hearer to no other faith than faith in the Christ who was born in Bethlehem, who died for our sins on Calvary, who rose again from the dead on the third day."

Conclusion

Jesus of Nazareth will not go away. Though He has been gone from the earth for almost twenty centuries, He remains the most influential person of any age. Because His claims about Himself are so startling and unique, they still must be accepted or rejected. One cannot be neutral or uncommitted where Jesus is concerned.

He allowed no such neutrality while He was alive. He quickly turned from the idle speculations about His identity to demand that the apostles answer for themselves. "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea-Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do men say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter

replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God’ ” (Matthew 16:13-16).

Jesus then acknowledged that identity, claiming for Himself a divine nature. That claim was consistent with His claims made on other occasions. For example, in Matthew chapter ten, Jesus said He would acknowledge before the Father those who would confess Him on earth. And in John 14:6 He declared that no one could make his way to the Father without Jesus as his avenue of approach.

These are astounding claims for anyone to make. And we must either dismiss them as foolish, misguided utterances, or take them seriously. Jesus also claimed:

Equality with God (John 5:17-18).

To have come down from heaven (John 6:38).

To have had the glory of God (John 17:5).

To be perfect (John 8:29).

To be the Son of God (John 9:35-37).

That He and the Father were One (John 10:30).

That to see Him was to see the Father (John 16:28).

Some who do not want to face the tough question and either accept or deny Jesus search for a comfortable compromise. Such people often deny Jesus' divinity while accepting Him as a great teacher, a generous humanitarian, or one of the world's greatest men.

The late C. S. Lewis explained why such a position is unacceptable: “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn't be a great moral teacher. He'd either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he's a poached egg—or else he'd be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut

Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But don't let us come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He hasn't left that open to us. He didn't intend to."

Our faith is that Jesus is the divine Son of God. Because that faith is solid, we are secure. We can face anything, overcome anxiety, live the successful life Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount, because our faith is adequate for the struggle.

W. H. Auden said,

To choose what is difficult all one's days
As if it were easy, That is faith. . . .

Helping in Crisis

Charles A. Siburt, Jr.

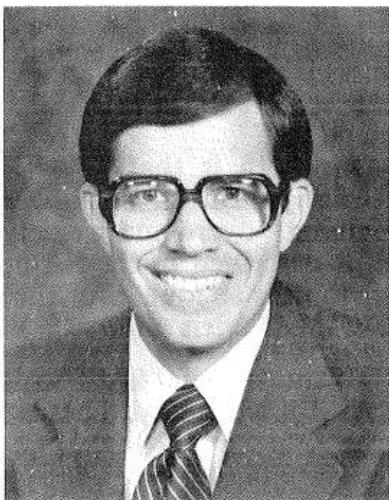
Address: 1718 Picadilly,
Tyler, Texas 75703

Family: Wife: the former
Judy Carol Bailey. Children:
John Bailey and Benjamin
Charles.

Education: Graduated from
Midland High School, 1964;
Lubbock Christian College
(A.A. 1966); Abilene Christian
University (B.A. cum laude,
1968; Master of Divinity,
(1971); Post-graduate work
at Colorado State University
(Drug Abuse, Human Sexual
Behavior, Family Relations),
and at Iliff School of Theology,
Denver Colorado; Austin
Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Doctor of Ministry, 1978).
Is a certified instructor for Parent Effectiveness Training.

Work and Ministry: Currently is the preaching minister for the
Glenwood Church of Christ in Tyler, Texas (since December
1975). Has served as minister for the church in Imperial, Texas
(1968); Lingleville, Texas (1969-1971); Meadowlark Church of
Christ in Fort Collins, Colorado (1971-1973); and as associate
minister for the University Avenue Church of Christ in Austin,
Texas (1973-1975).

Other Fields of Special Interest: Member of Pepperdine
University Chancellor's Council and Abilene Christian University
Advisory Board; member of Tyler Downtown Rotary Club and
Tyler Mental Health Association; member of International
Transactional Analysis Association; associate member of the
American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists. Has
written for *Restoration Quarterly*, *Power for Today*, and
Twentieth Century Christian. He was in *Who's Who in Colorado*
in 1972, received the L.C.C. Outstanding Alumnus Award in



1974, and was listed in *Outstanding Young Men of America* in 1974 and 1975. He was a participant on the Pepperdine University Lectureship in 1973 and 1975, a featured speaker on the 1976 L.C.C. Lectureship, teacher for A.C.U. Bible Teachers Workshop in 1977, and for the A.C.U. Lectureship in 1978.

I. The Meaning of Crisis

A dedicated Christian man, age 65, is now eligible for retirement from the company for which he has worked more than 40 years. He has lived in the same town all of his adult life, has reared his three children there, and has been a highly respected elder in his church for more than 20 years. He has been effectively involved in numerous civic and business activities in his community. He has so distinguished himself for his service in his company, his community, and in his church that he has become a living institution, a legend in his own time. Though he is eligible to retire, his company's policy will not require him to do so until he is 70. He suffers from some chronic health problems, and he feels some pressure from his wife to get out now instead of later.

She admits, however, that she is herself ambivalent about the decision. On the one hand, she would enjoy having the freedom to travel and to visit their grown children and their grandchildren; she would like to see him free from the job hassles that have weighed on him for so many years. But she is not sure how well she can adjust to having him at home all day; she enjoys her daytime independence; she wonders if she might feel trapped and regret his decision to take immediate retirement.

In addition, he struggles with the uncertainty and insecurity of his new identity as a "retiree." His whole life has been invested in handling responsibility. If he left his job, would he also lose the respect and esteem he enjoyed as a leader within his company and within the community? Could he still make significant contributions to his community and be recognized as a valuable person? Would he feel as good about himself if he no longer made the handsome salary he now makes? And if he should decide to wait until he is 70 to retire, how can he use the next five years to prepare for that inevitable event? His ambivalence is complicated by the fact that he has been the helper and never the helped. He does not receive assistance well. He is much more comfortable helping others to solve their problems. It is difficult enough for him to even express his anxiety to others, much less allow them to assist him in working toward a solution. His decision is inescapable, but he is stumped.

A devoted Christian woman is married to a likeable, successful, Christian man. They are both in their mid-thirties; they have two children; they have moved 12 times in 14 years because of the nature of the husband's job. In many ways, he is a "self-made man." He is from a poor family, and he learned the value of hard work as a boy. All his life he has struggled for achievement, and he has achieved much. He is respected among his peers and by his company for his competence and his character.

She was reared in a strong Christian home where she was taught traditional role expectations. She looks to her husband to be provider, disciplinarian, spiritual leader, male model, strong and dependable, yet

sensitive, caring, patient and wise. She admires him greatly and believes that he lives up to most of her expectations. She is proud of his success in business and of his winsome charm that endears him to everyone who knows him.

However, she often feels insecure about herself and about her ability to measure up to her own expectations of herself as a wife, a mother, and strong companion for her husband. She is often intimidated by the behavior of her children and feels a deep need for the approval of others. Her home and her church family are of premium importance to her because they provide her with the security anchors that she needs so desperately. But they have moved so often that she has not been able to enjoy those anchors for very long anywhere.

Now, however, she has found a place of security. Her husband has taken a job in a lovely town with a strong church. They are both happier than they've been in years. His company is pleased with his work and has given him significant, frequent raises to tell him so. Their children are loved and accepted. And she has a lovely home, a warm church family, and a supportive network of good friends. They have lived here three years and plan to stay much longer.

Then, one day, he comes home from work and informs her that his company has offered him a significant promotion but that it will require that they move to a major city. He must give the company his decision in a few days. He is immediately interested in the offer, even though he knows what another move, especially now, will mean for his family. He believes that he could jeopardize his future with the company if he refuses, but he also fears that he might injure the

emotional stability and happiness of his wife and children if he does not. He has always been an achiever, one who thrives on challenge and accomplishment. Besides, the financial benefits would be attractive, to say the least. And moving now could mean advancement to a more long-term position in the future.

She is immediately threatened by the offer. Why now? Why them? Why to that city? She is just now beginning to develop a real sense of security. She has been working with a therapist to sort out her insecurities and to develop greater strength within herself and in her relationships with others. She is thriving on the friendships that she has developed here. She is just now getting the house fixed the way she wants it. This town is nearer to her parents. Their experience in church here has been the best yet. She has never been more content. She has always been willing to go along with whatever was best for him in his career, but she stands to lose more than ever before this time. This time she resents it. She wonders if she really has a choice. Will her needs and feelings really make any difference? Will she not only have to give up all the pluses she enjoys here, but face the reality of seeing less of her husband because of the increased demands on his new job as well? So she is torn between her immediate needs and the professional, as well as personal, needs of her husband. What can she do?

A thirty-five-year-old woman who has been married for 18 years and has two children, begins to notice that her husband is not himself anymore. He is irritable, even hostile. His behavior is strange indeed. When they married, he was the "Rock of Gibraltar,"

and she depended on him for her security. Then he enjoyed taking care of her, and she needed him very much. Their marriage had gone very smoothly. He worked hard and was making progress and climbing the ladder of success in his company. Gradually, she began to develop and become more independent. She received some professional training to prepare her for a secure vocation; she even began to blossom socially as she gained more self-confidence and poise. She was still very shy, but she was definitely making progress. Suddenly, his confidence began to slip as he encountered some shattering defeats in his work, as he became increasingly aware that his physical stamina and agility were declining as he grew older, and as he recognized his wife's growing independence. The tension between the two mounted slowly at first, but then escalated sharply. Arguments became more frequent; communications failed; contentment vanished.

He informed her one day that he wanted a divorce because of their obvious incompatibility. They separated, and rumors began to fly that he was, and had been for sometime, seeing a younger woman who was also an employee at the plant where he worked. He even began to appear in public with his new "girl friend." People began to tell his wife what was going on, but she refused to believe it. It couldn't be. Surely he was merely going through a temporary phase. This behavior just was not like him at all. She was patient. She refused to believe anything less than the best about him. She even became defensive at the very hint of any wrongdoing on his part. She defended him to their children. She blamed herself because she was convinced that his behavior had to be a reaction against her. What other explanation could there be?

Her denial continued until her husband began to flaunt his girl friend in his wife's face. She lived with him in his apartment; she accompanied him and his children on a week-end camping trip; she even took him with her to her church.

Finally, he filed for divorce, but his wife still floundered in total shock and disbelief. How could this be? How could she handle the future on her own? Could she support herself and her children alone? Who would get custody of the children? What if he contested her for their custody? And what would she do about other men in her future? Could she even consider remarriage? Was there any hope for reconciliation and healing? How guilty was she for what had happened? She became physically ill and emotionally unstable. She had nowhere to turn.

An eighteen-year-old boy, the oldest of three children, had graduated from high school and was preparing to enter college in the fall on a music scholarship which had already been committed to him. He was working during the summer on a dairy farm in an effort to make and save money for his college expenses. He had always been a devoted son and dedicated Christian, a model of humble service and highest morals. He was a good student. Throughout his adolescent years, he had carried an extra measure of responsibility in his family because his father was blind, the victim of two detached retinas. His mother had returned to school for vocational training and had been working for several years. The young man dreamed all summer of what college would be like and of the music training he would soon receive.

Everything changed one day when he was working with a piece of farm equipment at his job. He caught

his right hand in a threshing machine. It was gone. Only a stub and one finger remained. His dream of a music scholarship, and possibly a music career, were smashed. Hadn't his family suffered enough? How could he go on to college now? He would have to change his major. His whole life would have to be adjusted. How could he accept the tragedy? How could he cope with life.

The four situations given above are all different, but they all have one thing in common. They all share the common experience of participating in crisis.

A crisis occurs when a person faces a stressful event or an obstacle to a life's goal that he finds to be insurmountable or unsolvable by his normal problem-solving methods. The usual ways of coping don't work. He is overwhelmed and is unable to find a way out of his predicament.

A stressful event is not necessarily a crisis. Crisis occurs when a person's interpretation of the event leads to stress so severe that he/she can find no relief. There is a significant difference between these key words: stress, predicament, emergency, crisis. Stress is not crisis: stress is tension, strain, or pressure. Predicament is not crisis: predicament is a condition or situation that is unpleasant, dangerous, or embarrassing. Emergency is not crisis: emergency is an unforeseen combination of circumstances which calls for immediate action. Predicaments and emergencies lead to stresses which carry the potential of becoming crises, but whether such predicaments and emergencies become crises depends on our ability to handle these stresses. Therefore, crisis is the turning point at which we decide how we will handle the stresses that we encounter.

Perhaps this is why the Greek word *krisis* which is frequently translated as "judgment," can also mean a selection, a decision, or a verdict. The decision is up to us and is not automatically determined by the event. Though we cannot always control the event, we can and do determine the ultimate interpretation of that event and the nature of our response to it. The point at which we make this crucial decision is the point of crisis, the moment of decision.

A healthy, meaningful life is related to the fulfillment of our basic human needs. Someone has described our essential human needs as the "Seven Basic Attachments." Norris Hansell suggests that we are essentially attached to:

1. Food, oxygen, and other physical supplies necessary to life.
2. A strong sense of self identity.
3. At least one other person in a close, mutually supportive relationship.
4. At least one group which accepts us as a member.
5. One or more roles in which we feel self-respect and can perform with dignity.
6. Financial security, or a means of participating in an exchange of the goods and services we need and value.
7. A comprehensive system of meaning, or a set of values which help us to set goals and to understand ourselves in the world around us.

People in crisis suffer a perceived threat to or loss of one or more of these basic attachments (Hoff, p. 6).

Most of what is now known about crisis theory has emerged within the last 40 years. The disastrous Cocoanut Grove Nightclub fire, in which over 490 persons finally died, occurred in 1942. The survivors

of that tragedy were taken to Massachusetts General Hospital, where Dr. Erich Lindemann, a psychiatrist, began to notice certain common characteristics among those who had lost close relatives in the fire. They displayed the familiar symptoms of grief. They employed both realistic and unrealistic methods of coping with their loss, and where realistic methods were ineffective, unrealistic defenses and methods of escape and denial took over. When these unrealistic methods of coping were dealt with by caring helpers who enabled the victims to find better ways of confronting their crises, the victims were able to re-establish themselves and re-enter life with new strength and resources for coping with crisis.

Perhaps the most outstanding figure in the development of crisis theory was Gerald Caplan, another psychiatrist, who worked with Lindemann to establish a community mental health program in the Cambridge, Massachusetts, area in 1946. Much of what has been done in the field of crisis theory and intervention during the last decade has been based upon, or at least somehow related to, Caplan's work. According to Caplan, a crisis arises out of some change in a person's life space that produces a modification of his relationship with others and/or his perceptions of himself (Switzer, pp. 43, 44). Caplan developed a theory of the person in crisis and worked to train and involve a variety of public helpers in the task of crisis intervention.

James Tyhurst has examined a person's response to community crises such as natural disasters and, during the 1940's and 1950's, studied transition states such as migration, parenthood, and retirement.

Another important contribution was made by the

1961 Report of the Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health in the United States. Entitled *Action for Mental Health*, the report documented the results of a five-year study. It revealed that the masses of people who needed help in coping with their crises were not getting the help they needed, when they needed it, and where they needed it—close to their natural setting. The report also revealed that: (a) people in crisis were tired of waiting lists; (b) professionals were tired of lengthy and expensive therapy that often did not help; (c) large numbers of people (42%) went initially to a physician or minister for *any* problem; (d) long years of training were not necessary to learn how to help distressed people; and (e) volunteers were a large, untapped source for helping people in distress (Hoff, pp. 9, 10).

Caplan has observed that a crisis does not occur instantaneously. There are four identifiable phases or stages in the development of extreme anxiety and, finally, crisis:

Phase One: A traumatic, emotionally hazardous event causes an initial rise in one's level of anxiety. The person finds himself in a predicament and responds with his usual problem-solving methods in an attempt to reduce or eliminate the stress caused by his anxiety.

Phase Two: In this phase the person's usual problem-solving ability fails. There is a lack of success in reducing the anxiety with the usual coping methods in the period of time

expected. A feeling of helplessness and ineffectiveness results.

Phase Three:

In this phase the individual's anxiety level rises even higher. The increased tension moves the person to use every resource available—including unusual or new means—to solve the problem and reduce the increasing painful anxiety. This is the "hitching up belt" stage. The person dips deep into his reserve of strength and extends the range of his behavior in attempting to maintain his emotional balance. Trial and error behavior, both in thinking and in action, seeks to change or remove the problem. The person may redefine his role or change his goals, and the problem may be solved in this phase. If it is, the person usually becomes stronger and takes a significant stride forward toward mental health; he has learned methods of dealing effectively with a new and threatening situation and has now brought this new coping method into his assortment of responses.

Phase Four:

This is the state of active crisis which results when: (a) internal strength and social support are lacking; (b) the person's problem remains unresolved; (c) tension

and anxiety rise to an unbearable degree.

A word of caution is appropriate here. Just because a person has experienced a traumatic or hazardous event, it is not necessarily true that the person is in a state of crisis. There is a need to determine whether the reaction of a specific person is a crisis or not. Such an assessment can be made by answering three questions: (1) Has there been a recent (with a few weeks) onset of the troublesome feelings and/or behavior? (2) Have they tended to grow progressively worse? (3) Can the time of onset be linked with some external event, some change in the person's life situation?

The degree of the crisis is determined by several factors. One is previous experience: some people have had to weather more crisis than others. In fact, some experts even theorize that one's personality is a composite of how they have coped with crisis. A second factor is the severity of the traumatic event. Obviously, there is a difference between being incapacitated by a 24-hour virus and being diagnosed as having terminal cancer. A third factor, and a most important one, is the availability of "significant others." People can endure almost anything if they don't have to endure it alone.

Faulty thinking is often common in crisis situations. A breakdown in thinking may begin to take place when a person experiences a physical or psychological overload. He may encounter an event that is significantly incompatible with his present pattern of thinking about himself, his world, or his relationships. His expectations about life are shattered. His conceptual

map is inadequate to account for all the new data. His thought patterns and belief systems are violated by the event. There is a marked dissonance between the new information and his usual forms of planning and carrying out his behavior. Such dissonance increases the feeling of helplessness and shock. Such is often the case in crisis involving divorce.

Christian parents, age 55, learn that their grown son and his wife, both of whom are also Christians, are getting a divorce after 10 years of marriage and two children. Divorce has never been a permissible option for the parents. They have never encountered divorce close-up, and they never dreamed that it could or would happen to anyone in their family. It is one thing they have always taught against; it's the unpardonable sin; it's the ultimate tragedy. It separates the sheep from the goats. But now it has happened, and they are unequipped to accept this reality and to cope with its massive impact upon them, their son, their grandchildren, as well as their church family. They don't know what to think. The pieces don't fit anymore.

In such cases there are two basic options. One is to use another coping tactic, such as denial. The other is to examine the new information as an unavoidable reality and to adjust one's belief system to include what has happened and to respond in the healthiest way possible under the circumstances.

Someone has suggested that crises come in three colors: (1) red (anger); (2) yellow (fear, anxiety); (3) black (depression, despair). In contrast, the person in crisis may find shades of blue (calm, stability) to be most helpful.

Helping in Crisis

II. Guidelines for Those Who Would Help

There are two basic kinds of crisis: developmental and situational. Developmental crises are related to the ongoing process of human development through a series of developmental stages. The work of Erik Erikson provides valuable aid in understanding these crises. Please notice the chart provided on the next page. Eight stages of human development are shown. Erikson proposes that life is to be thought of as a series of stages, each one of which has significance in and of itself, but each also contributes to or detracts from the achievement of the goal of "integrity," which he has designated as the positive goal of the final stage of life. Each of these stages has its task and outcome characterized by contrasting terms, one emphasizing the positive need and the positive outcome, if the need is successfully met, and the other a possible negative result. For example, the series of stages of childhood are basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, and industry versus inferiority. Adolescence is marked by the conflict between identity versus self-diffusion. Adulthood consists progressively of intimacy versus self-absorption, generativity versus stagnation, and finally, integrity versus despair. Erikson declares that if a person is to accomplish the tasks and have the needs of one of these stages adequately met, it is important that basic trust has been established in the very first stage, and that the outcome of each successive stage be more on the positive side than on the negative.

People generally experience a higher level of anxiety during developmental transition points than at other times. The natural change in roles, functions, body

THE STAGES OF LIFE

Developmental Stage	Life Task	Psychological Crises	Key Question	Ego Strength
1. INFANCY (1st year)	Developing BASIC TRUST through a loving, dependable, nurturing relationship with parenting person	Sense of Basic Trust Vs. Sense of Basic Mistrust	Can I Trust my world, myself?	Hope
2. EARLY CHILDHOOD (2nd, 3rd years)	Developing a sense of AUTONOMY while retaining basic trust	Sense of Autonomy Vs. Sense of Shame, Doubt	Can I be an individual and not lose the love I also need?	Will
3. PLAY AGE (4th, 5th years)	Developing a sense of INITIATIVE	Sense of Initiative Vs.	Can I prize and exercise my growing sense of strength and trust?	Purpose
4. SCHOOL AGE (6th-12th years)	Developing a sense of INDUSTRY, and of one's role as a boy or girl	Sense of Industry Vs. Sense of Inferiority	Can I acquire competency in the basic skills of my culture?	Competence
5. ADOLESCENCE (13th-18th years)	Developing a strong sense of IDENTITY (Fidelity)	Sense of Identity Vs. Sense of Diffusion	Who am I? As a male or female? What is my worth? What are my own values?	Fidelity
6. YOUNG ADULT (19th-25th years)	Developing INTIMACY	Sense of Intimacy Vs. Sense of Isolation	Can I establish close and meaningful relationships?	Love

image, and ways of relating to self and to the world create internal turmoil and stress. Each of these stages is a developmental crisis because each is both the opportunity for significant growth and an occasion for the dangers of the failure to grow. So long as a person lives, the stress presented by each stage is unavoidable. These transitions are normal and can be anticipated and prepared for. They need not be nightmares; they can be happy times with a positive sense of growth and achievement. But for some, the challenge of human growth is indeed a nightmare; life's turning points become crises with destructive effects. Appropriate support and nurture from others makes the difference.

The first two cases presented above are examples of developmental crisis.

Situational crises occur as a result of some unanticipated or accidental traumatic event. There is a more rapid change in a person's perception of himself and his world, usually triggered by some type of personal loss. Since this type of crisis is unforeseen, there is generally nothing one can do to prepare for it. The impact of these crises is perhaps more devastating immediately than developmental crises.

Some common situational crises are: (a) loss of a parent through death or divorce; (b) loss of job or status; (c) dislocation (mobility, moving); (d) fire; (e) natural disaster; (f) diagnosis of a chronic or a fatal illness.

The traumatic event, in addition to causing present anxiety, may also arouse earlier feelings of anxiety that have been repressed or covered in some way. Therefore, the person in such a situation may feel a sense of a double threat, having sufficient power to

make him feel highly vulnerable and therefore, less capable of coping with this event and the feelings that accompany it. Still, however, the crisis is due to the internal reaction to, or the interpretation of, the external event. Thus, events that may be very threatening for some may not be for others.

The third and fourth cases mentioned above are examples of situational crises.

A crisis is truly a turning point. The combination of the power of intense emotion and the breakdown of previous patterns of coping produce a situation in which a person may either go under or may experience rapid new growth. The very nature of crisis is that it forces change and readjustment. A person in crisis must learn new methods of coping that become a part of his increased ability, resiliency and strength to confront the inevitable events of life. In crisis there is a painful state of imbalance, and some kind of recovery of balance must be established. So crisis represents both a need and an opportunity for significant growth. It encourages creativity and lowers resistance to using inter-personal relationships and other resources in new ways for growth. From this perspective, crisis can offer exciting possibilities for positive change and growth.

During a crisis a person is more open to influence by others than he is at any other time. His emotional equilibrium is upset, his thinking is unclear, and he is extremely vulnerable to the slightest nudge. The presence of significant other persons may have a major effect in determining the outcome of the crisis. Thus, there is an opportunity not only for the person in crisis, but also for significant other people related to him if they are willing and prepared to help.

Several outcomes are possible for the person in crisis. First, a person can return to his or her pre-crisis state. This happens as a result of effective problem-solving made possible by one's internal strengths and external supports. While new growth may not occur, the person simply returns to his usual state of being.

Second, the person may not only return to the pre-crisis state but can grow from the crisis experience through discovery of new resources and ways of solving problems. These discoveries result from the crisis experience itself.

A third possible outcome is that of a detour or resistance to growth: the person shuts off in response to the crisis and shrinks back from the challenge and opportunity for growth. In so doing, he does not merely recover his usual state of being but actually loses ground and becomes weaker, even more handicapped for confronting similar crises in the future.

A fourth, and even more unhealthy, outcome is possible. In order to reduce the intolerable tension and anxiety, the person may lapse into neurotic or psychotic patterns of behavior. For example, the person may become very withdrawn, suspicious, or depressed. His distorted perception of events may be exaggerated to the point of blaming others inappropriately for the misfortunes he has experienced. Or he may reduce the tension, at least temporarily, by excessive drinking or other drug abuse, or by impulsive disruptive behavior. He may even resort to more lethal behavior, including suicide, homicide, spouse battering, or child abuse. These negative and destructive outcomes of the crisis experience occur when the person lacks other, more constructive ways of solving life's problems and relieving intolerable

anxiety.

In light of these possible outcomes, it is obvious that those who would help should have the following goals: (1) to help people in crisis to at least return to their pre-crisis state; (2) to do all we can to help them grow and become stronger persons as a result of the crisis; (3) to be alert to danger signals so that negative, destructive outcomes of crisis may be prevented. Negative results of crisis are often not necessary but occur because of insensitivity by others who could help or because of a lack of appropriate resources for constructive problem-solving.

Some basic principles or guidelines can be useful to those who would serve as helpers to those in crisis.

(1) "Basically normal" people can and do have crises. Like death and taxes, crisis is no respector of persons; it happens to everybody. To live is to encounter crisis because life is a series of turning points or decisions. Therefore, there need not be any stigma attached to the mere fact of being in crisis.

(2) Crisis is triggered by some precipitating event. Crisis does not just happen. There is some traumatic experience, some hazardous event, some specific stimulus that produces stress and which may be interpreted by the person in such a way as to become a crisis. Sometimes the precipitating event may be something which has happened in the immediate past—within the last few minutes, hours, days, etc. However, it is possible that the person has experienced similar events several times before, but the most recent such event has become "the last straw" which makes the cumulative stress and anxiety of that series of events unbearable. The precipitating event may be a doctor's diagnosis, an accident, a personal encounter

with another person, a "normal" life event such as marriage, parenthood, retirement, aging, or death, a negative of positive development in one's work, a natural disaster such as flood, tornado, earthquake, and a wide gamut of others.

(3) People are capable of helping themselves. We do people a great injustice when we automatically assume that they are helpless. Human beings are created to be resilient and resourceful. They are not the weakest creatures on earth. We are misguided to assume that they are highly capable and strong as long as things are going well, but automatically become weak and helpless infants in more negative circumstances. In fact, we actually are guilty of discounting them and slighting their ability and responsibility to cope with life for themselves when we do not pay full respect to the strength that is inherent within them. We are not primarily responsible for the help which they need; they are. Except in rare cases, they are the ones who must accept ultimate responsibility for the outcome of their response to crisis. Thus, it is very difficult for us to help them if they will not choose to help themselves and to let us assist them as useful, caring resources in solving their problems.

(4) People are capable of further growth with a little help from others. Though the person in crisis is primarily responsible for the outcome of his crisis, there is no question that the one most important resource he needs to cope effectively with his crisis is the availability and support of "significant others." There is no substitute for another person who will struggle with the one in crisis. A fellow struggler can provide not only a compassionate presence, but may lend clarity by way of new information or

broader perspective in the victim's time of decision.

(5) Others do not have to be professionals in order to help. In fact, there is strong evidence that some of the most effective help received by persons in crisis is received from others who are not professionals at all. Some of the traits that make a helper effective are location, availability, mobility, and flexibility. The degree of one's training is not nearly as crucial as is the degree to which the helper is an integrated and growing person, one who is personally productive and creative, one whose life is dominated by personal meaning and fulfillment.

(6) Some crises can be predicted. This is especially true of developmental crises. For instance, the mid-life crisis in men, menopause in women, retirement, death, and many others can be anticipated. Some crises can even be prevented if anticipated and prepared for.

(7) People in crisis cannot stay that way forever. The state of crisis and the anxiety that accompanies it are too painful. There is a natural time limit to the crisis experience. This is because the individual cannot survive indefinitely in such a state of emotional turmoil. The acute emotional upset lasts only a few days to a few weeks. So crises get resolved, for good or bad, within a period of weeks, depending upon a number of factors, one being the availability (or lack) of significant others.

(8) At resolution, the balance gets restored and a direction is set for the longer term. This is what makes the crisis so important. The way in which crisis is resolved does set a direction for the future. Thus, the choice of how to cope with crisis is really a choice about how to live in the future.

Our view of crisis is enlarged by our Christian

perspective. The Bible views human life in a distinctive way. It does not see life as a treadmill. Life is more than a monotony of sameness, a squirrel cage, or an assembly line. Nor is life a saga, a chronicle of ups and downs. It is not a survey of human heroics and glamour. Both of these views are essentially limited to existence in the here and now; they limit life to the human plane only. In scripture life is viewed as a pilgrimage, which, as such, is open not only to nature and humanity, but also to God who transcends nature and humanity. It is life that is open to the future and to the power of God. It is also life that is headed somewhere, namely, from God and to God. It is also life, along the way, with God.

Life as pilgrimage is necessarily a life of growth. A person passes through certain stages as he moves on toward the complete fulfillment of life. Crises may arise at any time along the way, and with each one the motive of growth is met by the motive of loss (death).

When a crisis is met at the secular plane, the solution, too, will have to remain in the secular plane, at least as far as conscious meaning of the solution is concerned. It is a solution at the level of the saga.

But crisis can also be conceived and dealt with in religious terms. In that case the very same events can be given not merely a temporal setting, but also a setting which is universal and eternal. And the solution of crisis, in this case, becomes a happening which transcends the merely human and partakes of grace and the power of God.

Seen in this way, each crisis is an event in which God confronts man; it is a time of decision between advancing into growth or shrinking back from growth

and its risk. In essence, crisis is a moment of decision between faith and shrinking back.

The writer of Hebrews addressed himself to a church in crisis. Apparently, they had become tired and anxious, tired because the pilgrimage of faith upon which they had embarked with hot enthusiasm had stretched on much longer than they had expected, cooling their enthusiasm into fatigue, and anxious because they had come face-to-face with the very real threat of persecution and suffering. They were about ready to give up, to throw away the confidence which was theirs in Christ, and to turn loose of the sure benefits promised to them in God's future. The writer preaches a sermon to encourage them to endurance, faith, and hope. A significant point in his exhortation is that, as Christians, "we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls" (10:39). Then the writer surveys the members comprising the faith "Hall of Fame," those trusting persons throughout the history of God's people who had all encountered crises (moments of decision, turning points) along their pilgrimage and had responded in faith instead of shrinking back. The one common characteristic uniting them was faith, indeed a particular kind of faith: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). The great heroes of faith responded to God as they did because their confidence was not based in a reality limited to the human plane. Instead, they had an unwavering confidence in God's promises and an abiding certainty in "things not seen." Their ultimate trust was in a reality that transcended their immediate existence. They had not fully possessed the things God had promised them, and they had not

seen the realities they trusted, but they confidently believed in both. From that belief in things "out of this world" they drew strength, patience, and endurance for facing every life event along the way on their pilgrimage.

Paul Tournier suggests that a Christian is like a person hanging from a trapeze bar. The trapeze bar is whatever our security is truly invested in. Growth challenges occur when God swings another trapeze bar toward us. As a new trapeze bar confronts us, we are faced with a dilemma or crisis because we are challenged to relinquish our present stability or security and reach out. One difficulty is that the new challenge usually appears at first as a frightening threat. To grasp any new situation we must let go of the old situation. But the new trapeze bar swings toward us just far enough from the present one that we cannot hang on with one hand and grab the new one while still clinging to the old one. So each new opportunity to grow carries with it a decision to surrender an old security, but each new challenge also represents a chance to place our trust more deeply in God's hands through a very threatening, risky act of faith. If our security is at stake, then the risk is always frightening. It is truly a time of vulnerability and anxiety. There is a kind of death involved in each significant step of growth. Crisis is a real test of faith, an examination of what or whom we really trust. Our response to crisis, then, is really an indicator of our faith.

The Bible recounts numerous vignettes revealing the interplay between crisis and faith. Abraham had a secure place with his father in Ur and then in Haran, but God asked him to turn loose of that place and

go to a foreign land in which his safety and future would be uncertain. He did, and God gave him the security of a new place in what was to be Palestine. That was a crisis for Abraham, and he responded in faith.

Then Abraham wanted the assurance of the continuation of his "name" through a son. And in his old age he and Sarah had a son. That son, Isaac, represented Abraham's assurance that his heritage would continue. So when Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac on the altar, it was something like asking him to give up his only child and his hope for the future. But Abraham was willing to turn loose of the security he had in Isaac and trusted God in his time of decision. At the turning point he said "yes" to God. In his time of crisis he did not shrink back but trusted in "things not seen." That trust made him the model of the man of faith for all generations.

Moses experienced a similar crisis. He was raised in a position of affluence and power, but was confronted by God with risking his position to help his own people. Then he ran away and found a new security and family in the land of Midian. Then the unexpected broke in on Moses' security. God confronted him in the burning bush (Exodus 3), asked him to turn loose of that safe place, and challenged him to go confront the Egyptian pharaoh and lead the people out of Egypt. Moses struggled with God and with himself but finally turned loose and went. And at the end of his adventures in the wilderness, just as he was arriving at the promised destination, Moses was asked to surrender his place with the people and not to go into Palestine. Moses did let go, and he is famous as a great spiritual hero because he acted in

faith in order to do God's will.

Listen to Luke's account of the turning point in the life of Saul of Tarsus:

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the High Priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he journeyed, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (Acts 9:1-9)

This incident, undoubtedly, was a traumatic event, a crisis for Saul. It truly was a turning point, a moment of decision. It affected him physically—when he opened his eyes "he could see nothing" and had to be led by the hand into the city. It also affected him mentally—he questioned his old beliefs and actions, for example, his standing by at the stoning of Stephen. And it affected him spiritually—one of the most vigorous persecutors of Christianity became one of its most ardent promoters as he even allowed

himself to be persecuted for the faith in the future. It even affected him emotionally, so much so that he "neither ate nor drank" for several days. Yes, the Damascus road experience was a crisis, a turning point, which had an impact on every dimension of Saul's being, and he was never the same again. He was happily swinging on his Jewish trapeze bar, stable and secure, but God threw a new and even more promising trapeze bar his way, and Saul responded in faith. He did not shrink back, and that response of faith made all the difference in the outcome of this life-jolting crisis.

Finally, there is Jesus himself in Gethsemane. A week earlier the people had welcomed him into Jerusalem with palm branches, hailing him as the Messiah. He was apparently fulfilling his mission and was being accepted by the people. Yet at Gethsemane Jesus was confronted by God. It was as though God said, "Turn loose of your ministry and mission and trust their safety and your future to me alone." Three times Jesus tried to talk God out of that course, but the call was to "turn loose." Jesus did, and that decision had the Resurrection as its outcome. That historic, world-changing confrontation is prolonged in history every time one who trusts in Jesus is confronted in crisis and responds in faith through the power of the Spirit.

Helping in Crisis

III. A Way To Help

In his fascinating book entitled *The Wounded Healer* Henri Nouwen cites an old legend from the Talmud:

Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi came upon Elijah, the prophet, while he was standing at the entrance of Rabbi Simeron ben Yohai's cave . . . he asked Elijah, "When will the Messiah come?" Elijah replied, "Go and ask him yourself." "Where is he?" "Sitting at the gates of the city." "How shall I know him?" "He is sitting among the poor covered with wounds. The others unbind all their wounds at the same time and then bind them up again. But he unbinds one at a time and binds it up again, saying to himself, 'Perhaps I shall be needed: if so I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment.' " (pp. 83, 84)

The Messiah, the story tells us, is sitting among the poor, binding his wounds one at a time, waiting for the moment when he will be needed. So it is too with the Christian helper. He must bind his own wounds carefully in anticipation of the moment when he will be needed. He is called to be the wounded healer, the one who must look after his own wounds but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others. He is both the wounded helper and the healing helper, one who uses his wounds as a source of healing for the wounds of others.

In another of his books Nouwen suggests that ministry (helping) is best viewed as "remembrance" and that a minister (helper) is most appropriately seen as a living reminder of Jesus Christ. The great task of the helper is to make connections between the wounds of hurting persons and the suffering of God

in Jesus Christ, to connect the human story of God's saving, healing love.

If we are not impressed with the idea of being a living reminder, it is because we fail to appreciate the power of remembrance. Brevard S. Childs writes: "The act of remembering serves to actualize the past for a generation removed in time from those former events in order that they themselves can have an intimate encounter with the great acts of redemption. . . Although separated in time and space from the sphere of God's revelation in the past, through memory the gulf is spanned. . ." (pp. 56, 60).

Listen to what Peter can affirm to an unimpressive assortment of Gentiles: "You are the chosen mediators of God. You are God's go-betweens. To you he has entrusted the ministry of 'patching up,' 'bringing back together,' and 'rejoining.' " This paraphrase is not inaccurate because a priest is a mediator between two alienated parties; he is a go-between; his business is "patching up," "bringing back together," and "rejoining." When Martin Luther expounded his view of the "priesthood of all believers" during the Reformation, his constant plea was that there should be "a priest at every elbow." Jesus, our High Priest, has entrusted to us the ministry of serving as priests to others, to see to it that there is indeed "a priest at every elbow."

God has called us to be wounded healers, living reminders, priests at every elbow. But the question is how. Are there some basic, practical steps that we can take in our attempts to help those in crisis? The answer is a definite yes.

There are two types of crisis intervention: first order intervention and second order intervention. Second

order intervention involves crisis therapy, a more long-term kind of assistance, lasting about six weeks plus, after the immediate crisis experience has passed. First order intervention, however, is better described as "immediate first aid."

Invariably, a number of questions surface in our minds about the nature of such "immediate first aid." How long does it take? Depending upon the particular situation involved, this first-order kind of help may take as little as twenty minutes up to as much as three hours. The amount of time spent is not nearly as important as the quality of presence made available within it at the point of greatest need.

Who can render this kind of help? One of the best features of this kind of help is that it can be given by anyone and everyone—family members, friends, fellow employees, students, police, medical personnel, teachers, neighbors—anyone who is perceptive and caring enough to respond to those bearing the symptoms of crisis. As is the case with CPR (Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation), anyone who knows how can help.

Where and when can it be given? It can be given anywhere: at home, at school, at work, on the telephone, riding in a car, while taking a walk, in a hospital room, in an office, in a church foyer, over lunch, or anywhere else that lends itself to meaningful sharing. Often timing is more crucial than location, although it is preferable to have both.

What are the goals of this "First aid"? They are to re-establish immediate coping; to give support; to reduce lethality (life-threat to oneself or to others); to aid in linking the person to helping resources.

A five-step approach can be used, with some flexibility, for helping in any kind of crisis.

The first step is to make feeling-level contact. The helping behavior that is so vital here is the use of empathy statements. The helper listens for the facts, but he also listens very closely for feelings. He may summarize and reflect what he hears from the person needing help. He even uses "body language" and non-verbal expressions to let the person in need know that he is being heard. This kind of helping behavior lends "calm control" to an intense situation.

The person in crisis will then feel heard, understood, accepted, and supported. The intensity of emotional distress will be reduced, and problem-solving capabilities will be reactivated.

Step two is to explore the dimensions of the problem. The helper should inquire about the immediate present: What was the precipitating event? What was the situation before that precipitating event? Who was involved? What happened? Where did the event occur? When did it happen? How did it happen? What other details may have a bearing on the person's state of crisis? The helper should also ask about the present: What is the victim's physical and emotional state? How is he/she presently coping or trying to cope? What strengths does the victim display right now? What is the level of lethality (life-threat)? In other words, is the person potentially homicidal or suicidal? If so, to what degree? Then the helper should inquire about the immediate future: What will the victim do today or tonight? What will he do in the next several days or weeks?

As a result of such detailed inquiry, some focus will be drawn on what needs to happen now and what needs to happen later. Both dimensions are extremely important. This step is a crucial pivot in the helping

process because it determines what happens in steps three, four, and five. The information gathered here will give the helper direction as to what is most appropriate from this point on. Many helpers flounder, not knowing what to suggest or to do, merely because they do not ask for the information they need. The victim is the expert as to what happened, how he feels, and repercussions for his situation. When in doubt, ask.

Step three is to examine possible solutions. The helper should ask what the victim has attempted thus far and should then explore what the victim can/could do. The victim will likely see only a few limited options and may register fright about the options he dreads most. An effective helper can be extremely valuable here. He can offer other alternatives and suggest options which the victim has not even thought of. It may be that the very options which are most frightening to the person in crisis are also those which hold the greatest promise for growth and solution to the problem. The helper can provide valuable assistance by helping the victim to categorize the available options into immediate and later solutions and by helping the victim to rank the options. This enables the person in crisis to clarify the possibilities of problem-solving action and focuses his energies into constructive possibilities. It enables him to see what he can do instead of focusing only on what he thinks he cannot do.

The fourth step is to assist in taking concrete action. At this point two possible helping behaviors exist, depending on (a) the level of lethality and (b) the person's capability of acting on his own behalf.

If lethality is low and the person is physically and

mentally capable of acting on his own behalf, then the helper should assume a *supportive* stance. A supportive stance involves a "we talk but *you act*" relationship; the contract for action is between helper and victim. The degree of involvement from the helper may range from verbal support to advice.

If, on the other hand, lethality is high or the person is not physically and mentally capable of acting on his own behalf, then a more *directive* stance is appropriate. In this stance, a "we talk but *I may act on your behalf*" relationship may be feasible. The contract for action might include family and other community resources. Here the degree of involvement from the helper may range from actively mobilizing necessary resources to actually controlling the situation.

The ultimate objective of this fourth step is that of implementing immediate solutions intended to meet immediate needs.

The fifth and last step is follow-up. It involves securing identifying information, such as telephone numbers, address, whereabouts, schedule, name of personal physician, minister, nearest responsible family member, etc. It also involves exploring possible follow-up procedures: a personal visit, a phone call, a meeting at a neutral site. It is very important to establish a contract for re-contact. The helper must not, if at all possible, leave the helping relationship open-ended or non-specific. There is a valid need to arrange for closure.

A part of this step is to secure feedback concerning the three sub-goals of immediate first aid: to determine whether support has been received; to assess whether lethality has been reduced; to confirm that linkage to available resources has been accomplished. The helper

can also set the next phase in motion, namely, suggested later solutions. If immediate needs have been met by immediate solutions, if concrete action has been taken, and if linkage for later needs has been made, then STOP. If these conditions have not been met, then you should go back to step two (exploring the dimensions of the problem), reassess the problem at this time, and continue.

Remember, this five-step approach for immediate first aid applies to any and every crisis. Of course, the particular situation encountered will require that the helper exercise some flexibility in its application, but these five very basic steps will prove to be very helpful.

It is now appropriate to offer a word of caution to those who attempt to help other people. After making several attempts to help a person whom you believe needs your help, you may begin to experience growing frustration. The frustration may be due to a number of causes. It may be due to working against difficult odds. You may very well often feel like a little David against a huge Goliath, especially when the person or crisis encountered is a very complex one. Or, the frustration may be due to a sense of unending responsibility. You may begin to see no light at the end of the tunnel, no relief for the demands placed upon you as one who would be of help in a serious crisis. Helpers are usually characterized by an immense sense of responsibility anyway, and that burden may become too heavy under the long-term demands of helping other people. Finally, the frustration may be the result of the heartbreak over failure. When you have tried your best and the crisis does not have a positive outcome, you may blame yourself and actually

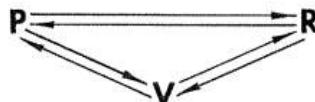
grieve over the disappointment.

As the frustration mounts, you may eventually become aware of negative attitudes towards those you are trying to help. You may find yourself thinking that they are hopeless and helpless "basket cases," that they are lazy, unmotivated, insincere leeches, that they are, in short, terminal.

Soon you may be overwhelmed by the awesome burden of helping. You may find yourself in the double bind of feeling on one hand that the endless number of those needing help are really helpless and yet believing on the other hand that they all, somehow, must be helped. The burden you feel may become increasingly heavy until it finally crashes in on you and leaves you feeling powerless and victimized, taken advantage of by the very ones you tried to help.

These are characteristics of what may be called the "Rescue Trap."

Please notice the diagram below. It shows what is commonly referred to as Karpman's Game Triangle.



The triangle is comprised of three basic roles: Persecutor (P)—"I am better than you, you are inferior"; Rescuer (R)—"I know more than you, you are inadequate"; and Victim (V)—"I am helpless, you are better than me." While most people do not enjoy occupying the role of Victim, there are some who find the attention and concern shown toward them while occupying that role to be extremely satisfying. In fact, some may be unhealthy enough that they either squeeze all the attention they can out

of the crises that do come their way, or "arrange," consciously or unconsciously, to be a Victim so that helpers will continue to invest attention in them. In other words, some people actually find a payoff in playing the part of Victim; since they do not receive the volume of strokes they crave by being healthy, they seek such strokes by being "always in need." By no means should you conclude that every person who appears to be in crisis is really a manipulative, "professional martyr" pandering for an "attention hand-out" at the expense of any would-be helper. Nor should you, as a helper, view people in need as conniving "con artists" who are sure to take advantage of you. But the fact is that this is sometimes the case and if you serve as a helper long enough and often enough, you will certainly encounter such a person along the way. When you do, it is very important, for your sake as well as his, that you be aware of what is happening and be equipped to handle the situation effectively.

There are two kinds of such Victims: those who look for Persecutors and those who look for Rescuers. Some will settle for either one, while others will persist until they find both.

A person may begin in the Victim role, crying and moaning about how hard life is and how inadequate he is. As long as the helper is willing to play the role of Rescuer, the Victim is quite content and may continue to stay in the Victim role indefinitely. However, if the helper should become tired of hearing the Victim's whining and decide to withdraw, then the person playing the Victim's role might switch to become a Persecutor, castigating his helper (Rescuer) for not really caring about him. Or, if the helper

should challenge the Victim to make some difficult but healthy decisions and to respond to his crisis with responsible, adult behavior, then the victim may begin to resist the help that he has asked for because the help offered is not the kind of help he had in mind. Perhaps he only wanted sympathy, not accountability; he wanted someone who would pity him and discount his ability to respond with appropriate strength, not a challenge to change; he may have wanted "soft" love, not "tough" love. In this case, the Victim may see the helper no longer as a Rescuer but as a Persecutor. In either case, the Victim's objective is to keep the helper hooked; it is his way of getting his need for strokes met without having to assume responsibility for change or for coping with himself and his crisis. When you try to help this type of person, it is very easy to become caught in the "Rescue Trap."

An equally subtle tendency occurs when the helper plays the role of Rescuer in an unhealthy way. In this situation the Rescuer operates from a one-up position, denying the Victim's power to help himself. The Rescuer may be so obsessed with "helping" that he accepts the Victim's invitation to help without making demands for equal participation from him or by imposing "help" without being asked. When this occurs, much unhealthy and unhelpful energy is wasted in the name of "helping," and no positive change occurs.

There are effective ways to avoid the "Rescue Trap." There are times when you should not help without an agreement. It is usually unwise to commit yourself unconditionally because there are certain limits beyond which you should not go. If you commit yourself "to do anything they want you to do," you

may soon discover that they will ask more than you may feel comfortable to give. More than that, however, you may be asked to do something that is not healthy for either you or them.

Don't ever believe that a person is absolutely helpless, unless he is unconscious or heavily drugged. He may believe he is helpless and may be very persuasive in trying to persuade you that he is indeed helpless. You must remember that no one, not even you, can ultimately do as much for the person in crisis as he can do for himself. And because this is true, it is also true that no one, not even you, is ultimately as responsible for him and the outcome of his crisis as he is. When people are feeling helpless, you can be most helpful by assisting them in finding ways in which they can apply the power they do have or the ways in which they can gain more constructive power for themselves. This approach is always better than "doing it for them."

Don't do more than 50% of the work. Demand that they do at least 50% of the work at all times. The helping relationship is a partnership in which both partners must exert themselves responsibly and constructively. Without the victim's cooperation and mutual effort there is really very little you can do.

Don't do anything you don't really want to do or don't think wise to do. Do not let your concern for the person in crisis lead you to violate your own sense of wisdom, discretion, and sense of propriety. If you do, you will probably begin to resent that person and become totally ineffective in your attempt to be of help to him.

Should you find yourself being angry at the person you are trying to help, you can assume that

you have become a Rescuer by doing one of two things: by having done more than 50% of the work or by having done something you didn't really want to do or think wise to do. In such cases it is best to re-align the balance and boundaries of your relationship with the person you are trying to help. It may even be necessary to withdraw from the situation, or at least from the role of primary helper. Your effectiveness may be too damaged to survive. You may need to let someone else become the primary helper.

There is one final suggestion, and it may be one of the most important. Learn how to be quiet. Do not make the serious mistake of equating helping with talking. Words do play a very important part in the helping process, but words are effective because of their appropriateness and not because of their quantity. There are times when the most helpful thing you can do is to be quiet. When the thick mantle of grief has fallen upon another person, an abundance of words only reveals an insensitive spirit to the grieving. Joe Bailey and his wife lost three of their children in a matter of several years. In his book, *The View from a Hearse*, he shares his feelings when one of the children died:

I was sitting torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly. He said things I knew were true.

I was annoyed, except to wish he'd go away. He finally did.

Another came and sat beside me. He didn't talk. He didn't ask me leading questions. He just sat beside me for an hour and more, listened

when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left.

I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go.

The key is to remember that talking is to serve the needs of the person in crisis, not your own. Babbling is almost always for your sake and no one else's. And it won't do you much good. Sensitive presence communicates a powerful message of compassionate love, and it requires very few words to get the job done. It is a language of its own. It may take more love to discipline yourself to be quiet than to stumble through a sea of words, grasping for a few phrases that sound good to you whether they help the person in need or not.

The Gospel of John records Jesus' response at the death of his good friend, Lazarus: when Jesus saw her (Mary) weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; and he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" (John 11:33-36) Jesus didn't say much with words. He just wept, and that said everything that needed to be said.

The crises are many and challenging. Your opportunities for helping are also many. As you extend the ministry of Jesus into this world as living reminders of his healing love, may you respond to the challenge, but may you also remember and believe the promise Jesus has made—" . . . and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

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