

**2001**  
**West Virginia Christian**  
**Lectures**

October 7-11, 2001

"A Plea For The  
Fundamentals"



Central Church of Christ  
2013 Boyd Orchard Ct.  
I-81 @ King Street  
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Albert E. Farley, editor

## **THE BIBLE PLAN OF SALVATION**

### ***"A Plea For The Fundamentals"***

**Hear The Saving Gospel** – Romans 1:16-17, 10:17

**Believe That Jesus Is The Christ** – John 8:24; Acts 8:37

**Repent Of Sin** – Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9

**Confess Jesus As Christ** – Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

**Be Baptized (Immersed) Into Christ For The Remission Of Sins**

Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-38; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Peter 3:20-21

**Arise And Walk In Newness Of Life In Worship and Service**

Romans 6:3-5; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 2:10

### COVER DRAWING

The cover drawing of the Central church of Christ building was done by Timothy Everson, a member of the Central congregation. Timothy is 17 years old and a senior at Musselman High School. He is the son of Jim and Cindy Everson.

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August 27, 2001

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## LECTURESHIP SCHEDULE

### Sunday, October 7

Class	Why Restoration Was and Is Still Needed	Basil Overton
10:45 AM	Did Jesus Really Come Forth From the Father?	Basil Overton
4:30-5:30 PM	Singing	(Area Song Leaders)
6:00	The Comprehensive Christ	Basil Overton

### Monday, October 8

9:00 AM	Church Growth - Evangelism	Jerris Bullard
10:00	Biblical Authority	Tim Nichols
10:00	Ladies Class	Margie Overton
11:00	Restoration History: Apostasy in Church Government	Basil Overton
12:00 Noon	Lunch served in Fellowship Room	
1:30 PM	Faithfulness in Persecution	Emmitt Channell
2:30	Strong Families	Albert Farley
3:30	Counsel for the Hurting	Tim Nichols
7:00	Congregational Singing	
7:30	I Have a Personal Relationship With Christ	Basil Overton

### Tuesday, October 9

9:00 AM	Church Growth - Bible Classes	Mike Reese
10:00	Building Effective Church Library	David Kenney
10:00	Ladies Class	Margie Overton
11:00	Restoration History: Men and Matters In British Isles	Basil Overton
12:00 Noon	Lunch served in Fellowship Room	
1:30 PM	Worship	Albert Farley
2:30	Baptism	Emanuel Daugherty
3:30	United We Stand	Emmitt Channell
7:00	Congregational Singing	
7:30	Mechanical Instruments Used in Christian Worship?	Basil Overton

### Wednesday, October 10

9:00 AM	Church Growth - Leadership	Edward Dyche
10:00	First Love	Jim Farley
10:00	Ladies Class	Margie Overton
11:00	Restoration History: Thomas Campbell	Basil Overton
12:00 Noon	Lunch served in Fellowship Room	
1:30 PM	Biblical Inspiration	Don Cooper
2:30	Submission to God	Randy Chapman
3:30	Isaiah's View of God (6:1)	Edward Dyche
7:00	Congregational Singing	
7:30	Bible Answers To Five Important Questions	Basil Overton

### Thursday, October 11

9:00 AM	Church Growth - Preacher Training	Emanuel Daugherty
10:00	Preaching Christ	Don Cooper
10:00	Ladies Class	Magie Overton
11:00	Restoration History: Alexander Campbell	Basil Overton
12:00 Noon	Lunch served in Fellowship Room	
1:30 PM	Christ in Hebrews	Jim Farley
2:30	Book Review	David Kenney
3:30	Way of the Cross Leads Home	Sam Bartrug
7:00	Congregational Singing	
7:30	Holy Ghost Baptism and Water Baptism	Basil Overton

## ***Preface***

It is with joy and expectation that we offer our 2001 West Virginia Christian Lectureship book! We thank God for the privilege of being a part of this series of lectures, and we pray for His great blessings to be upon all of the lessons presented. May our words be in harmony with His Holy Will in Christ Jesus; may they have been written with hearts of love; and may they be received with meekness and submission by all who may hear and read them.

We are thankful for the Central Church of Christ - for their desire to host the lectures this year. We were heartened by their choice of theme and encouraged by their wholehearted involvement and participation in the planning and conducting of the sessions throughout the week.

This is our second lectureship book. The first volume, entitled *Thus Saith The Lord*, was written by the speakers of our lectureship conducted September 17-20, 2000, under the oversight of the elders of the Mannington Church of Christ. That volume was well received. This edition, as you may notice, is twice larger. This has entailed more labor and cost; however, we are thankful we are again able to offer it free to all who attend the lectures.

Our plea, in this series of lectures, is a plea for the fundamentals. When we speak of "fundamentals," we speak of that which serves as the original or generating source; we speak of that which is basic, radical, principal, deep-rooted, and essential.

When we plea for the basic, we plea for that which serves as the basis or the starting point. Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-14

When we plea for the radical, we plea for that which is the root or origin. Colossians 1:16-17

When we plea for the principal, we plea for that which is of central importance. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

When we plea for the deep-rooted, we plea for that which is deeply implanted. Matthew 22:37-40

When we plea for the essential, we plea for that which is of the utmost importance: that which is indispensable, necessary, and vital. John 14:1-6, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 10:17

Our plea is for God and His Holy Word, revealed by His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, through the inspiration of His Holy Spirit! We make our plea humbly and pray that it will be heard.

Albert E. Farley, editor

## ***Acknowledgements***

Our success in the planning and in the conducting of our lectureship is by the grace of Almighty God. We acknowledge His great Goodness and Mercy upon us, and we give Him our thanksgiving and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It would be impossible to list everyone who contributed to this special week. However, we would like to thank the following people:

1. The elders of the Central congregation, Danny Bowers, Don Deitrick, and Mark Everson, for deciding to host the lectureship, and for selecting the theme, speakers, and topics.
2. Warren Kenney for coordinating and directing the entire lectureship.
3. The members of the Central congregation for binding the lectureship books, serving meals daily, and for all the other things that are necessary to make the lectureship a success.
4. Timothy Everson of the Central congregation for drawing the picture of the church building for the cover of the book.
5. The speakers and writers who graciously prepared and sent us their lectureship manuscripts and their articles for the special October issue of *West Virginia Christian*.
6. Bobby Jennings, of the Wilson Ridge church of Christ, who prepared the Biographical section of the book.
7. David Kenney for technical assistance in helping me work through computer program problems.
8. The elders of the Main St. church of Christ in Pikeville, Kentucky, for allowing us to use their printing equipment again this year.
9. Jim and Linda Farley, of the Main St. congregation, who ordered the supplies and printed the pages of the book.
10. My wife, Nancy, for proofreading all of the manuscripts.



## A STATEMENT FROM THE ELDERS AND MINISTER



Left to Right - Don Deitrick, elder; Danny Bowers, elder; Mark Everson, elder; Warren Kenney, minister.

### A PLEA FOR THE FUNDAMENTALS - 2001

We are thrilled to host *West Virginia Christian Lectures* this year. We have earnestly tried to do our preparatory work well. Hopefully, that will be evidenced by what you see and hear during the week. We are also glad that the lectures are being preserved in permanent form in this volume.

Chosen for this year's lectureship is the theme *A Plea For The Fundamentals*. In the long ago, a king told God's people that it was too far for them to return to Jerusalem. We are hearing much of the same philosophy advocated today. We are being told that whatever life the restoration movement had is all but gone. We do not subscribe to that philosophy.

We do, however, believe it is time that we return to Jerusalem by emphasizing the fundamental themes of the doctrine of Christ. It is only in this way that we shall be able to find ourselves to be living in accord with the gospel message that was first proclaimed in Jerusalem and then throughout the world.

Fundamental topics will be discussed by faithful men throughout the week. We will discuss themes that range from "Isaiah's View of God" to the "Inspiration of the Bible", to "Worship", and "Submission to God". Additional themes of major significance to our day will be indicated in the table of contents.

There will also be special classes during the week. At 9 o'clock each morning we will offer a class on *Church Growth*. Bro. Basil Overton will be teaching a class on *Restoration History* at 11 o'clock. Sister Margie Overton will be teaching a special class for the ladies each morning at 10 o'clock. We will have two sessions on making better use of the church library by David Kenney. One of these will include a review of the life and teaching of the late Foy E. Wallace.

We wanted this lectureship to be relevant to the needs of the church in West Virginia as well as for all others who are influenced by it. We want to thank our speakers for their diligent work in preparation and presentation. We know, at least in part, how this must have strained already busy schedules. We trust that this work will be rewarded as the written speeches and the speeches delivered prove to be of great value to all who read and hear.

Now this volume is placed into your hands as a tool to help you further the cause that we all love so dearly.

Signed,

Don Deitrick                      274-2738

Danny Bowers                      725-0567

Mark Everson                      267-6212

Warren F. Kenney                      263-9249

## **WHY "RESTORATION" WAS NEEDED AND IS STILL NEEDED**

**Basil Overton**

What do we mean by "Restoration" when we speak of "The Restoration Plea," and "The Restoration Movement"? Technically speaking, we cannot restore the gospel, or the church, because the gospel has been in the world ever since it was first preached as we read about in the New Testament, and the church that Jesus established on the first day of Pentecost after His resurrection has been here ever since. It is true that there was a massive "falling away" of the church just as the New Testament said there would be. The Holy Spirit guided Paul to prophesy that the church would fall away from the gospel. (1 Timothy 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 4:1-6.) Paul referred to that as "a falling away" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. "Falling away" in this text is the translation of Greek "apostasia" which comes from "apo" that means "away," and "stasia" that means "stand." Our word "apostasy" is the Anglicized (transliterated) form of "apostasia," which means standing away or standing in another place.

We cannot be certain there was ever a time since Jesus built His church that there were no members of it on the earth. Even if we could prove there was ever such a time that would not mean the church did not exist. If the church did not exist no one could have become a member of it! The church has existed ever since it was established by our Lord on the first day of Pentecost after He was raised from the dead. All that time He has been head of it, and people could become members of it in the same way people about whom we read in the New Testament became members of it.

Perhaps we use the word "Restoration" because of the lack of a better term. We mean by "The Restoration Plea" that we want people to learn what the gospel and the church of the New Testament are.

Many mistakes have been made in "The Restoration Movement," but "The Restoration Plea" is not a mistake, but it is in complete harmony with what the New Testament requires.

Those who take their religion seriously should enjoy and appreciate learning historical facts that enlighten all of us concerning present religious conditions. Just as a matter of education we should be grateful to those who labor long in the tedious task of learning matters that they can teach us, and which matters will enlighten us.

It is not my purpose in speaking and writing about church history, or any other matter, to insult and offend people that are involved in religious relationships and activities which are not taught in the Bible. My pure motives

and purposes in all that I say are to enlighten and to educate people who may not be aware of the facts which I present.

Someone whom I was teaching in a personal evangelism discussion asked me if the church history I relied on was written by members of the church of Christ. I assured him it was not. Some seem to think some in the church of Christ wrote the history so it would support the religious views of those in that church, but that certainly is not true.

We who preach the gospel of the New Testament should not be shocked if those who have heard us fall away because, after Paul and other inspired preachers preached, there was a massive falling away of the church. That falling away had two phases: (1) many doctrines and practices not in the gospel were introduced over a period of many hundreds of years; and (2) there was a falling away from the New Testament order of church government. Here I present the first phase, and in the next lesson I will present the second.

### **Introduction Of Practices And Doctrines**

1. One of the first unscriptural practices introduced was the use of so-called "holy water" which historians say was begun about 120 A.D. This practice was borrowed from pagan religions which practiced the sprinkling of "holy water" on themselves and their heathen temples of false or mythological gods.

There is nothing in the New Testament about "holy water"!

2. The practice of doing penance was begun about 157 A.D. This was the infliction of temporal punishment on those who sinned even though it was said their sins were forgiven. Another invention of men that followed was the granting of indulgences which meant the sinner did not have to do whatever he was assigned to do as temporal punishment.

There is nothing in the Bible about penance and indulgences!

3. The Lord's supper was corrupted into being a "sacrifice" instead of a "memorial" about 350 A.D. The New Testament Book of Hebrews stresses that Jesus was sacrificed "once and for all" when he was crucified. Those who administer the so-called sacrifice of the mass claim they perform a miracle and change the bread and the fruit of the vine into the actual body and blood of Jesus, and that is why they call these "blessed" elements "the real presence of Jesus."

There is nothing in the Bible about "the sacrifice of the mass" or "the real presence"!

4. Praying for the dead came into pretty general practice by 380 A.D. The practice was derived from heathen orators who practiced addressing the dead in their speeches.

There is nothing about praying for the dead in the Bible!

5. Celibacy for priests evidently was begun in 386 A.D. by Siricius, bishop of Rome in the apostate church. He tried to keep the priests in his district from marriage, but marriage for the so-called clergy was not forbidden throughout the apostate church until the 10<sup>th</sup> century. This doctrine, like most of the doctrines of men introduced, was debated for years by leading church men.

The doctrine of celibacy has caused many to live in an unnatural state, and records prove it has caused much sin.

There is nothing in the Bible that teaches that ministers of the gospel must not marry!

6. Extreme unction was started about 588 A.D. It was the "anointing" of a person's body when it was thought he was about to die. It is called "administering last rites."

There is not anything in the Bible about "extreme unction"!

7. The doctrine of purgatory, which says there is a place where children of God who die while guilty of sin go and stay in temporary punishment until the sin is expiated, was introduced about 593 A.D.

There is nothing about purgatory in the Bible!

8. Instrumental music was introduced into the worship of the apostate church hundreds of years after the New Testament was written. It was officially approved by the pope of that church in the latter part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. There was controversy over it. The church split in 1054 A.D. into the Western or Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern or Greek Catholic (or Orthodox) church. Not all congregations of the Roman church used instruments in worship, and none of the congregations of the Greek church used it, and with possibly a few exceptions they still do not. The middle ages Italian term "acapella" means singing like they did in church!

There is nothing in the New Testament about using mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church!

9. The word baptism means immersion. In the New Testament baptism in water was immersion. Two or three hundred years after the New Testament was written sprinkling water on some people was called baptism. Later infants

were sprinkled. Those baptized we read about in the Bible were old enough to have sinned, and old enough to repent of their sins and confess their faith in Christ, and were baptized in order to be saved. (1 Peter 3:21.)

There is nothing in the Bible about anyone, infant or older, being sprinkled with water and calling it baptism! There is nothing in the Bible about anyone already saved being baptized (immersed), but those who were baptized were baptized in order to be saved! (Acts 2:38.) Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.)

Reputable historians have for centuries written about the foregoing doctrines and practices and many others that were introduced into the apostate church.

Let us all be excited and concerned about The New Millennium, but more excited and concerned about The New Testament and learning from it!

## **DID JESUS REALLY COME FORTH FROM THE FATHER?**

**Basil Overton**

Jesus said, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father." (John 16:28.)

In Volume Three of his eleven volume series of historical works, the great American historian Will Durant says that some have attempted to prove that Jesus Christ was a myth. They denied that Jesus lived.

Among these was Bruno Baer, who in 1840 began his series of passionate controversial works in which he attempted to prove Jesus was a myth. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, some Dutchmen laboriously attempted to prove Jesus never lived. Among these were Pierson, Naber, and Matthas.

Durant says that in England J. M. Robertson and W. B. Smith made attempts to prove Jesus never really lived.

It is obvious that Will Durant did not believe that the New Testament was written by men who were directed by God in what they wrote. However, following what he wrote about those who deny Jesus actually lived, Durant said that it would be easier to believe the miracles recorded in the New Testament than it is to believe that a few simple men in one generation invented so appealing a personality as Jesus and the lofty ethic attributed to him, and the inspiring vision of human brotherhood which Jesus is pictured as presenting.

Durant went on to say that after two centuries of "Higher Criticism" the outlines of the life, character and teaching of Christ remain reasonably clear, and that there is no feature in the history of Western man as fascinating as this story of Jesus Christ. (See: Volume III of Will Durant's works entitled: Caesar and Christ, Simon and Shuster, N.Y., page 557.)

### **An Imposter, And Designing Opportunist?**

Other skeptics admit Jesus Christ really lived as the New Testament says he did in the land of Palestine. However they say he was an imposter and a designing opportunist, therefore not what he claimed to be.

This concept of Jesus is self-destructive, because some scholars have pointed out that there never has been a period that offered a more tempting opportunity to a designing opportunist than when Jesus lived in Palestine. C.S. Farber, presents some of the evidence of this in his book entitled: Difficulties Of Infidelity. (See pages 96-201.)

When Jesus lived, the Jews in Palestine lived under the bondage of a Roman military occupational force. They were very restless and impatient because of their Roman oppressors. They were eager to cast off this unpalatable and vexatious suppression. They expected a mighty deliverer. Even the two disciples of Jesus who talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus told him they had hoped it was he who would redeem Israel. (Luke 24.) Obviously they meant redemption from Roman bondage.

If Jesus was a designing imposter who was seeking an opportunity to be what the Jews were looking for, why did he not play that role?

The Jews expected, not a prince of peace, but a prince of war who would liberate them from Caesar. Had Jesus been a designing opportunist and an imposter, doubtless, he would have fit himself into the expectations of the Jews.

The Jews thought the Messiah would confer on them abundant prosperity and exalt their nation and raise it from the ashes and anguish of ages of destruction and devastation. Why did Jesus not fulfill their expectations?

According to what the Jews expected the Messiah to be, when Jesus was saying, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the heavens have nests, but the Son of man has not a place to rest his head," he should have been conducting a financial campaign to raise funds for an army. If he had been like what the Jews expected he would have led a rebellion against Rome under the banner of a heaven-sent deliverer! Instead he taught the Jews to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's!

If Jesus had been an imposter seeking to be what the Jews were expecting, he would have flattered the vain Pharisees for their piety and their religious practices. Instead, he strongly rebuked them for their hypocrisy. (Matthew 23.) Had he been an imposter seeking to please the Jews, doubtless, he would have attempted to entice the Sadducees with offers of temporal abundance. Instead, even though he never said temporal blessings were wrong, he did often warn of the dangers thereof.

### **Was Jesus Deceived About Himself?**

Jesus claimed to be God's only begotten Son. He said repeatedly he came forth from the Father. (For examples see John 6:38; 16:28.) If he was not what he claimed to be, he was not even a good man, for he told things about himself that were not so. If he told such knowing it was untrue, he was not only not a good man, but he was also a liar. How could a liar and deliberate deceiver have produced a flawless system of morals and standards for living? Reason compels us to say he could not have done so.



Others say Jesus really thought he was what he said he was, but that he was deceived. Reason rejects this because if he was deceived about himself he must have been a deranged and naïve simpleton. How could such a person have done the teaching he did?

### **His Miracles**

Skeptics have tried in vain to do away with the miracles that the New Testament says Jesus performed. His miracles make it easy for one to believe he is indeed the Son of God. John's record of his miracles was designed to convince of this. (John 20:31,31.)

The easiest things to believe about Jesus are the things the New Testament says about him. If one does not believe all these things, he will have to believe the things about him which are much harder to believe.

### **Conclusion**

If you are a lost person, the most reasonable and most profitable thing you can do is to believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son and that he died for your sins. Then turn from your sins. The New Testament calls this repentance. Then for God to forgive your sins, confess that you believe Jesus Christ is God's Son, and be baptized (immersed) upon the name or authority of Jesus Christ in order for God to forgive you of all your sins. In thus being buried in baptism, you will be raised to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38.) You will be a Christian, which means you will be in the body of Christ which is his church.

Read your New Testament and you will see that all of this is taught in it. If I can be of any help to you in your becoming a Christian, please contact me.



# **THE COMPREHENSIVE CHRIST**

**Basil Overton**

One of the greatest privileges one can have is to tell others about Jesus Christ. Never has the world needed Christ more than now. He is the most colossal figure of history. He is the highest mountain peak of history! We can all see him alike. Look at him from five viewpoints.

## **The Christ Of The Cradle**

Perhaps many think of Christ merely as a baby, especially at Christmas time. He was a baby, and he was born in a barn in Bethlehem, but we do not know the date of his birth.

When Paul wrote the Colossian Christians, they were troubled by what is called "the Colossian heresy," which denied that Christ was all sufficient as a Saviour. Those who promoted this heresy affirmed that Christ was all right as far as He went. They said there were orders and principalities of angels superior to Christ. Paul answered these heretics in the first two chapters of Colossians. In Colossians 1:15, Paul affirmed that Jesus is "the firstborn of every creature."

Jesus certainly was not the first one to be born into the world, but he was the first one to be born of a virgin who conceived by the power of Almighty God.

Ancient culture gave special status to the firstborn one in a family. He had privileges, powers, and rights other children in the family did not have. He stood out among the other children. Paul's statement that Jesus Christ is "the firstborn of every creature" may have reference to our Lord's standing out above all others. He is chief among all humanity.

In Colossians 1:18 Paul said Christ is the firstborn from the dead. But Christ was not the first one to be raised from the dead. Before his death, He raised Lazarus, and the daughter of Jairus, and the widow of Nain's son.

When Paul was preaching in a Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, he affirmed that Jesus was raised from the dead to die no more. (Acts 13:34.) This is the sense in which Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

## **The Christ Of The Creation**

One may contend that we should just preach Christ as the redeemer and not spend time talking against the evolutionary hypothesis, and for the creation story in the Bible.

One cannot preach Christ as the Redeemer without affirming with equal emphasis the fact he is also our Creator!

When John started his account of Christ called the Book of John, he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1-3.)

John recorded accounts of many miracles Jesus did, and he affirmed that Jesus made everything in the beginning! In answering that Colossian heresy Paul said that Jesus is our Redeemer (Colossians 1:14), and then he immediately affirmed that He is our Creator. "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by him and for him." (Colossians 1:16.)

The writer of Hebrews affirmed that God speaks to us through Jesus Christ. To show that Christ is qualified to be the one through whom the Father speaks unto us, he affirmed in the very beginning of the epistle that God made the worlds by Jesus Christ! (Hebrews 1:2.)

In showing his superiority over angels the writer of Hebrews quoted from a Psalm that tells how God the Father spoke to God the Son and said, "And thou Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." (Hebrews 1:10.)

One cannot preach Christ as God's spokesman without preaching that that same Christ laid the foundation of the earth and made the heavens!

### **The Christ Of The Cosmos**

The Greeks had a word they used to refer to order and orderliness. It was the word kosmos. It was put into English as cosmos.

The Greeks saw order in the universe and in the world. They referred to the world as the cosmos. Our word cosmetics came from cosmos because cosmetics are what we use in setting our faces in order!

Some ask, "What possible bearing can the Bible have on this modern, sophisticated space age?"

The Bible says more in one verse that explains "this space age" than all the words that uninspired men have spoken and written about it! That verse is Colossians 1:1 where Paul, in answering the "Colossian heresy," affirmed of Jesus Christ, "And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

Consist of this verse is a translation of Greek sunesteken. This word is a form of the word that means "to have been permanently framed."

The word Paul used (sunesteken) means that Christ holds this universe in place. He created it, and He operates it and holds it in place! He is more than a baby in a barn; He is the creator; and He is the operator and sustainer of what he created.

### **The Christ Of The Cross**

If you do not believe that Christ is the Christ of the cross and that He died there for your sins, it will not matter whether or not you believe He is the Christ of the cradle, or the Christ of the creation, or the Christ of the cosmos.

The more one tries to explain and rationalize the awful ordeal Jesus endured in being crucified, the more He senses how incomprehensible that awesome experience really was.

Our sins are so bad before God that the only sacrifice that would suffice for them was the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. "Who his own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter 2:24.) "We being dead to sins" of this text is from the Greek words which are literally translated, "In order that to sins dying." When one becomes a Christian he dies to sin by being baptized into Christ." (Romans 6:3,4.)

### **The Christ Of The Crown**

If we do not recognize Jesus as the Christ of the crown, there is no use in our believing anything else about Him! Before He ascended, Jesus said all authority had been given unto him. (Matthew 28:18.) He was raised from the dead to be crowned King of Kings. (Acts 2:30.) In answering that Colossian heresy, Paul affirmed of Christ, "And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence." (Colossians 1:18.)

Saying Christ is the head of His church is the same as saying He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16) because the church is the Lord's kingdom, and He is exalted above all kings by being king of His kingdom. Just as no king or any other ruler is above Christ, even so no kingdom, no nation, no political domain is superior to the church of our Lord which is His kingdom.

To submit to King Jesus one must put His complete trust in Him. He can do this only by repenting of His sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30), confessing his faith in Him (Romans 10:9,10; Matthew 10:32); and by being baptized or immersed in water in order to reach the saving power of the blood our Lord shed in giving himself

for us. To completely rely on the Lord and be saved by God's grace, this is what one must do. When he has done this, he must continue to rely on the Lord by worshiping God in spirit and in truth and serving Him daily.

### **The Christ Of The Church**

One should not try to separate Christ from His church. Some have said, "Preach Christ, not His church." This shows ignorance of God's word.

Both Christ and His church were in God's eternal purpose. (Ephesians 3:10,11.)

Christ and His church were both in God's promise to Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-3; Ephesians 3:1-9.)

The prophecies of the Messiah (Christ) also included His kingdom or His church. (Isaiah 9:6,7; Daniel 2:44.)

The angel Gabriel, in announcing the birth of Jesus to the one who would be his mother, also told her that her son would have a kingdom and would rule upon God's throne. (Luke 1:26-35; 1 Chronicles 29:23.)

John the Baptizer quoted Isaiah who prophesied concerning the Lord Jesus when he said, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." (Matthew 3:3.) John equated "the way of the Lord" with "the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 3:2.)

Jesus preached himself saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life...I am the vine...I am the resurrection and the life...I am the door...I am the good shepherd." But He also preached His church. One way He did this was in all those parables where He taught things about His kingdom which is His church. Even when He said, "I am the vine," he added, "ye are the branches." No doubt this was an analogy of the relationship of Him and His church which He taught even before He actually established His church.

Study the Book of Acts and the New Testament Epistles and see how many times in the preaching of the inspired men they showed that preaching Christ included preaching His church.

When Saul persecuted the church, He persecuted the Lord. (Acts 9:4.) When Philip preached Christ, he preached His kingdom, the church. (Acts 8:5,12.) When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he preached Christ and His kingdom or church. (Acts 28:31.)

The Book of Acts begins with the story of Jesus preaching things concerning His kingdom to the apostles for 40 days, (Acts 1:3) and it ends with Paul

preaching Christ and His kingdom in his own hired house in Rome. (Acts 28:30,31.)

One cannot preach Christ as Savior without telling He is the savior of His body the church. (Ephesians 5:23.)

If one preaches on the blood of Christ, he must tell that the church was purchased with His precious blood. (Acts 20:28.)

Every gospel preacher should preach on the love of Christ, and a good text to use is Ephesians 5:25 which says Christ loved the church and gave himself for it! This text also is good to use in preaching on the giving spirit of Christ. He gave himself for His church!

If one preaches on the headship of Christ, he must tell that He is the head of the church! (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18.)

One cannot preach Christ without preaching His church!





## **CHURCH GROWTH THROUGH EVANGELISM**

**Jerris N. Bullard**

God wants lost people to be found (Heb. 12:15; 2 Peter 3: 9). This is His passion...His mission. We have been invited to be God's co-workers in His search for the lost (1 Cor. 3: 9; 2 Cor. 6:1 and 5: 20), but we must remember that it is God who sends, empowers, and produces the results. If we really mean what we say when we sing, "O to be like thee," we too will be passionate for souls. Any Christian who does not have a passion for evangelism should realize he is not like his Father, who is a missionary God.

### ***God the Great Sender***

God is the Great Sender. The language of sending describes the range of God's concern and activity in the world. God called and sent Abraham to a land where He would form a people, who, in turn, would be sent out to the world (Gen. 12: 1-3; Isa. 42: 5-7; 43: 10-13; Matt. 23: 15; John 7:35). He sent Samuel to deliver His people, and to anoint Saul and David as kings (1 Sam. 12: 11; 16: 1). God sent Nathan to David to call him to repentance (2 Sam. 12: 1). He sent the prophets Elijah (2 Kings 2), Isaiah (6:8), Jeremiah (1: 7; 7: 25; 25:4; 26:5; 29: 19; 35: 15), Haggai (1: 12), and the greatest of them all, John the Baptist (John 1:6-8). God sent His own Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and He sent His Holy Spirit (Gal. 4: 4-6). God's Son has in turn sent us into the world (Matt. 28: 18-21; John 20:21). He sent His angels (messengers) to the seven churches (Rev. 22: 16). God is a missionary God who does His work through mankind. In most religions it is man who is seeking God, but in the Judeo-Christian faith it is God who comes seeking man (Gen. 3: 8-11; Matt. 4: 19; Luke 9: 23 )!

I have difficulty with our traditional concept of the word "missionary." It seems to imply a professional clergy who work outside the U.S.A. Further, it appears to imply that the church is relieved of its mission obligation by simply saying, "Here is our check, i.e. here is our support for missions." The missionary is often in the position of saying, "You give us the resources and we will do the mission work for you." I do not believe this to be a biblical concept. Rather, I would suggest that all Christians are missionaries and the entire world - in whatever place they find themselves - is their field. Mission work must become personalized to the extent that every member understands his or her worth to God in seeking the lost. Each member must use his or her gifts, abilities, and resources to find (in partnership with the Lord) the lost. Mission work is God's global effort (which, of course, includes the U.S.A.) to gather worshippers to Himself. Evangelism must be a part of our everyday lives. All occupations may be used by the Lord in "Mission" activities and can be equally effective in winning souls. For example, a doctor need not quit practicing

medicine to preach. A farmer need not quit plowing to be a Bible class teacher. A homemaker need not forsake her domestic duties and chores to spend her full-time in cottage meetings. Anyone, in any occupation, who gives a cup of cold water in Jesus' name, is a missionary. Our gifts will be used by the Lord to reach people. It is not ability God requires of us but, rather, usability. God so designed His plan for saving the world that the plan cannot be completed without the participation of Christians in all walks of life working as co-missionaries with God.

### **God Enables Church Growth**

It is God who enables church growth. It is not our methods, money, plans, or "right contacts" that cause growth. In fact, if there is any earthly explanation for our ministry, we should close it down. Our ministry should be of such a character that there is no explanation for its continuance apart from the power of God. Even though man often reviles Him, God's love refuses to give up on the soul He has made. In the 1890's Francis Thompson wrote, *The Hound of Heaven*. The shocking metaphor portrays God in unremitting pursuit of the souls of mankind:

### ***The Hound of Heaven***

Francis Thompson

*I fled Him, down the night and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears  
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.  
Up vistaed hopes I sped...  
And shot, precipitated,  
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,  
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.  
But with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbed pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
They beat—and a Voice beat—  
More instant than the Feet—  
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."  
  
I pleaded, outlaw-wise...  
Across the margent of the world I fled,  
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars...  
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue...  
Still with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbed pace,*

*Deliberate speed, majestic instancy  
Came on the following Feet,  
And a voice above their beat—  
“Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.”*

*“...I am He Whom thou seekest!  
As thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.”*

As God provided Himself with a ram in Genesis 22: 7-8, so He will provide Himself with workers - missionaries to seek the lost. How can we be involved in the work of God? I would suggest three ways:

1. We must first discipline our hearts and bodies to be holy (1 Peter 1: 14-16). Holiness implies being full of the word of God, the Spirit of God. Note how the seraphim in Isaiah 6 praised God: “Holy, Holy, Holy.” They did not say, “love, love, love,” though God is love. Nor did they say, “Creator, Creator, Creator,” though Revelation 4 praises God as Creator. But, the seraphim exclaimed day and night, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.”
2. Secondly, we must pray fervently and earnestly for the lost (1 Thess. 5: 17). John Hyde, a missionary to India, became known as “Praying Hyde.” He had calluses on his knees and elbows as a result of spending hours in prayer before the throne of God. He was often heard praying passionately, “Give me souls or I die.”
3. Finally, we must be people who are willing to serve others. Two examples are (1) the services of Elisha, who “poured water on the hands of Elijah” (2 Kings 3: 11); and, (2) the Lord Jesus pouring water into a basin and washing the feet of the disciples as an example for us (John 13: 12-17; Matt. 20: 26-28).

We are co-workers with God and as such we are to evangelize. We have been saved to save others. To evangelize is to tell the story of Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and His appearance after death (1 Cor. 15: 3-8). This is our task.

### ***God Harvests His Field***

These are exciting times because it is likely that we are experiencing more people coming to Christ on a global basis than at any other time in the history of the church of Christ. There are now more members of the church in Africa than there are in the U.S.A. Additionally, there are also more members of the church in India than can be found in the U.S.A! This rapid advance of the Gospel should cause us to lift up our eyes to see the white fields where God has placed each one of us (John 4: 35). God is the reaper - the harvester of His own field. Our telling the story of Jesus and the plan of salvation does not

infer results ... results are hoped for, but it is God who must give the increase (1 Cor. 3: 7). As workers together with God, we must be aware that there are both a great commission (Matt. 28: 18-20) and a great commandment (Matt. 19: 19). There are spiritual needs, i.e. the need of salvation, and social or physical needs. As one of our favorite songs says, "To love someone more dearly everyday, this is our task." One beaten by thieves does not need a tract placed in his pocket. His physical needs must be provided. Again, how can we teach a starving person? Someone has well said, "An empty stomach has no ears." But fulfill people's needs and then the opportunity for teaching the Word may be presented. We must keep before us the old question, "What would Jesus do?"

The church is God's instrument to reap the fields of the world. The task of evangelizing begins at the level of the local church - wherever that local church is located on the globe. There is no short cut to church growth. It requires ministry, and ministry is the result of a sanctified life. If the Lord would use us to help grow His church, we must first be willing to pay the price of becoming prayerful, righteous, and service oriented people.

The words of Jesus in John 21: 4-6 seem relevant here:

*But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*

We are all fishers in the kingdom of God, called to let down our nets into the sea of humanity. I say to you, in the words of our Lord, "Friends have you caught any fish? Then, throw your nets on the other side."

## **BIBLICAL AUTHORITY**

**Tim Nichols**

Some accuse us of circular reasoning when we assert that the Bible is the Word of God and then point to passages of Scripture to establish the facts that God exists and the Bible is His Word. This charge would be justified if this were our only method for ascertaining these truths and our only basis for encouraging others to accept them as such. The Scriptures, however, point to abundant proofs that are available for all to inspect that demand the conclusion that God exists; and the Scriptures contain compelling evidences of their own inspiration and authority. The injunctions to "prove all things" and to "hold fast that which is good" while abstaining from all things that are evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22) apply to this matter as they apply to others. Our faith in God and in what He has revealed is not some blind leap in the dark, and it will bear up under the closest scrutiny.

God exists. Anyone recognizing his or her own existence has sufficient evidence for this conclusion. Those whose eyes have seen the earth, the moon, and the stars have before them testimony that our Creator is powerful and active. Those who examine elements of creation through the microscope and telescope see even greater complexity and order than the casual observer who is already awed by what is before him. Design proves the existence of a designer who is equal to the task of designing what is observed. For every effect there must of necessity be an adequate cause. "For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God" (Hebrews 3:4). The existence of a hut proves the existence of a builder equal to the task of erecting it. The fact that the space shuttle is real demands that rocket scientists are actual beings rather than figments of our imaginations. The universe is real, and you are an active part of it. It shouts of God's reality, and there is no language in which it cannot be heard. It roars of God's existence 24 hours every day and 7 days every week in every corner of the world:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof (Psalm 19:1-6).

Those who look upon this evidence and, contrary to it, deny the existence of God are accountable for having closed their eyes against the light.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).

That the Scriptures are the Word of God is equally subject to investigation and verification. We are impressed by the internal consistency among the various books written over a very long period of time by a great number of different men who could not have conspired together to produce a book without a single contradiction. We note that **none** of its pronouncements are in conflict with any known **fact** of science or history. The accuracy of the prophets can only be credited to Divine guidance. These considerations, along with countless others, are perfectly consistent with the claim of the Bible for itself and the claims of those who penned it that it **is** the product of God's mind. Old Testament passages making this claim are too numerous even to list within the space requirements of this article, but many spoke as David did when he said: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). Jesus asserted that God spoke to those living in His days upon the earth through the Scriptures that had been written long before that time: "...have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying..." (Matthew 22:31). Jesus asserted that Old Testament writers had spoken "by the Holy Ghost" (Mark 12:36) and that all of their words "must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake..." (Acts 1:16). Paul attributed the words of Isaiah to the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25), and he called the Old Testament Scriptures the "oracles of God" (Romans 3:2), saying that they "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). He recognized that these Scriptures anticipated the extension of themselves into the New Testament age: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8). The writer of Hebrews declared that the Holy Spirit still speaks through His inspired Word and that men still must heed His voice (Hebrews 3:6-19). Peter proclaimed that we must "take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place" to that "more sure word of prophecy" which was delivered to "holy men of God" who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:19-21). Paul's inspired message came to him through the process of revelation:

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth,

but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

The facts concerning the Scriptures, their content, the claims of those who penned them, the effect that they have upon man, their close correspondence with what we can observe, and many other testable proofs lead us to conclude that:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

That the Bible proceeds from the mouth of God ("given by inspiration of God" translates a Greek word meaning "God-breathed") is enough to establish that it is authoritative in all that it says to us. The Creator of heaven and earth is speaking to you. You are obliged to listen, to heed, to recognize that His wisdom is vastly superior to your own, to acknowledge that His ways are right ways, to alter your thoughts to conform with His, and to teach others His thoughts rather than your own. To even **think** beyond what God has revealed and to count that thought as being on equal footing with revealed truth is sinful (1 Corinthians 4:6). To presume to **speak** our own thoughts as though they were God's thoughts is equal to elevating oneself to sit upon God's throne. The "man of sin" or "the son of perdition" is he who "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Respect for what God has said is expressed by both the teachers and the hearers of doctrine. The noble Bereans "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). The reception of **God's** Word produces a "renewing of" the "**mind**" that transforms a man that he "may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" and no longer be "conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2).

In our thinking, and in our spiritual service, we must **limit** ourselves to that which proceeds from God. When God has taught us to believe, teach, or do a thing (individually or collectively) as a matter of spiritual service, then we can know that we **have** Divine authority for it. When God (by means of His Word) has **not** instructed us to believe, teach, or do a thing as a matter of spiritual service, then we can be equally certain that we do **not** have Divine authority for

it. When God **explicitly** commands, or otherwise **explicitly** expresses in His Word that a thing be done or believed, then we are "authorized" by Him to believe or do it. When He **implies** that a thing be believed or done, then He "authorizes" it just as certainly. Jesus told the Sadducees that they had been in error and that they had not known the Scriptures or the power of God because they had failed to believe what God had implied concerning the resurrection of the dead in His statement to Moses from the burning bush (Matthew 22:29-33; Exodus 3:6). They had built a false doctrine composed of their own thoughts.

Brethren, let us acknowledge God and honor Him by bowing before Him and by trusting His revelation. In our individual lives, as we live among men, in our private devotion and worship, and in all our private thoughts and actions may we allow Him to direct our steps. In our families may we follow His ways rather than our own. Collectively, as the church - the family of God - may we worship, work, and fellowship on the basis of - and only on the basis of - His inspired revelation. May we open our eyes and see that our Bible is no common book, but the mind of Christ ready to fill our own minds with truth for living lives that are godly.



# SMILE, YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN

Margie Overton

## Introduction

Christians should be the happiest people in the world. We should serve the Lord with gladness. (Read Psalm 100.)

### Christians Do Have A Lot For Which To Be Thankful And Happy

We can be thankful for forgiveness of sins. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.)

We have the gift of the Holy Spirit. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

We have the hope of heaven (salvation). (1 Peter 1:3-9 – 2 Peter 1:3-11.)

We can be thankful for fellowship of kindred minds.

These blessings are worth more than all the world, and still some claiming to be Christians go around with long faces.

Someone said, "they look like they could eat oats out of a churn," or "weaned on a dill pickle." We should be happy. (Read Psalm 146.)

Remember the smile is the universal language. Everyone enjoys a friendly, pleasant face.

Many people are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges. Smiles help to break down walls.

Being happy helps to get rid of tensions.

If you find yourself tired and looking worn at the end of the day, or most of the time, you had better stop and take a good long look at yourself – put a strong rein on tension.

Doctors contend that there is a connection between the physical heart and the emotional heart. Many of the ailments which affect men are not the results of organic difficulty. They grow out of the fact that people do not think right thoughts, cherish proper emotions, or maintain worthy motives. (Someone has

said that it is more important to know what kind of person has the disease than to know what kind of disease has the person.)

### **If We Want Happiness We Need To Take Time Each Day To Study Our Bibles**

If we want happiness it is very important to believe the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

To be happy we must truly believe the Bible and obey its every command for us in the Christian age.

I believe that after having done these things, that we can then smile and be happy because we are Christians. "If you know these things happy are you, if you do them." (John 13:17.)

We might then ask, why is not every Christian happy? Some have not learned the joys of serving. In serving you can be great in God's sight. (Matthew 20:26-28; Matthew 23:11.)

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (Philippians 2:3.)

We should rejoice in the Lord. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." (Philippians 3:1.) 1 Thessalonians 5:16 tells us to, "Rejoice evermore."

We should rejoice that we have such a Savior. When we think of our sins, we may now rejoice that there is one who can deliver us from them. When we think of the worth of a soul (worth more than the whole world, Mark 8:36) we can rejoice that Jesus can save us. We must do all that we can to help save souls. Teach and give so others can know.

We can rejoice that Jesus has made known to us the way of pardon. He certainly is everything that we want a Savior to be. We need one to make atonement for our sins, and He has done this. We need one to give us peace from a troubled conscience, and He does it. We need one to support us in trials and bereavement, and He does it. We need one who can comfort us on the bed of death and guide us through the dark valley, and the Lord Jesus is just the one to do all this. He is what we need!

When we look at His character, it is just such as it should be to win our hearts, and to make us love Him. When we look at all that He has done, we see that He has accomplished all that we can desire. Then I ask, why should we not be smiling?

The principal joy of the true Christian should be that he is in the Lord. "Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:3-5.) We cannot find happiness in riches (1 Timothy 6:17-19), or gaiety, or vanity or ambition or in worldliness in any form, but in communion of the Lord and in the hope of eternal life.

Being in His friendship and in his service should be the highest of our joys, and in these we may always be happy and wear a big smile. It is the privilege, therefore, of a Christian to rejoice. He has more sources of joy than anyone else; sources which do not fail when all others fail.

True religion is not sadness or melancholy; it is joy, and we as Christians should never leave the impression that our religion makes us gloomy or morose. A cheerful countenance, a sparkle in the eye, a conversation pleasant and kind should always be the joys of our heart. All with whom we come in contact should readily see that we have a joyful heart.

Psalm 1:1-3 says, "Blessed (happy) is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

"He that handleth a matter shall find good: whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he." (Proverbs 11:20.)

"Where there is no vision, the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." (Proverbs 29:18.)

### **We Should Have Thankful Hearts**

If we have thankful hearts we will not be murmuring and complaining. "Do all things without murmuring and disputing." (Philippians 2:14.) When we moan, murmur, groan, sigh or grumble, we are disobedient to the divine injunction of God's word.

A Swedish proverb says, "Those who wish to sing can always find a song." That is true, and it is also true that those who want to complain can always find something about which to complain!

Someone has said that the difference between a woman with beautiful features and a woman with true beauty is her inner glow.

We need to take our hands out of our pockets or get up off the couch and get busy for the Lord. Don't sit and watch TV all day. I cannot do your work for

you and you can't do mine. The happiest people that I know are working. Work is the remedy for loneliness, worry, etc.

There is a place somewhere that I alone can fill, and if I don't take my place, no one ever will. It's all a part of God's great plan that I a worker be. Somewhere in his kingdom wide, God has a place for me!

### **Father Where Shall I Work Today**

Father where shall I work today?  
And my heart flowed warm and free,  
Then he pointed me out a little place,  
And said, "Tend that for me."  
I answered, "Oh no, not that,  
Why no one would ever see,  
No matter how well my work was done,  
Not that little place for me."  
The words he spoke, they were not stern,  
He answered me tenderly and said,  
"Ah little one search your heart,  
Are you working for them or me,  
Nazareth was a little place  
And so was Galilee."  
--- Selected

If we fill out hearts with regrets over the failures of yesterday and with worries over what might happen tomorrow, then we have no today in which to be thankful and happy.

Learn to live one day at a time.

I have no yesterday; God took it away. I may not have tomorrow, but I do have today.

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." (Psalm 146:5.)

Look back and give thanks. Look forward and take courage. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13.) Look around and serve. Remember the greatest shall be servant of all. Look up and rejoice.

To be happy add not to your possessions, but subtract from your desires.

Remember we are workers together with God. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1.)

Being fully persuaded of this, I want to be busy for my Lord. That really makes me happy. I have something worthwhile to make me smile.

Ann Landers said in her column Gem of the Day, "You can make more friends in two months by becoming really interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get people interested in you."



## **APOSTASY IN CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

**Basil Overton**

It is an impeachment of the infinite wisdom of God to arrange the government of the church of Christ to be anything other than what the New Testament teaches on that subject.

The New Testament teaches that each congregation of God's church had a plurality of elders if there were men in the congregation who had the qualifications which the Holy Spirit gave. (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1.) These are also called in the New Testament presbyters, shepherds, pastors, bishops, overseers, stewards, and rulers or leaders.

If the Lord's order for church government is followed, no one can hold an office or position in the church higher than being one of a plurality of men who oversee one congregation in "the office of a bishop." (1 Timothy 3:1.)

Historians say that within a little less than 100 years from the time Paul predicted the apostasy of the Lord's church, a man was referred to as "the bishop" of a congregation in Antioch in Syria. This was a plain departure from the New Testament order of church polity or government.

This departure grew. It was not long until there were many places where there was "the bishop." Eventually "the bishop" got power over a district or province, and he would appoint an assistant or a chorepiskopos or country bishop to work with rural people.

Eventually, those designated as "the bishop" in various places began to meet together. The Greeks called these meetings Synods, and the Romans called them Councils. These meetings became permanent institutions. Those who presided over them were called Metropolitans. Each Metropolitan ruled in his district without interference from other Metropolitans.

### **Emperor Constantine Was Involved**

In 325 A.D. the Roman Emperor, Constantine called a universal church council to convene at Nicaea, Bithynia in Asia Minor. Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration in 313 A.D. to stop persecution of the church. He became sole emperor in 323 A.D.; then Christianity was officially enthroned and sanctioned by the Roman government.

Dr. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut said this of Emperor Constantine, "He delayed his baptism until just before his death, in the prevalent opinion of his time that baptism washed away all sins previously committed. He was certainly a wise

politician, if not a great Christian; for he had the insight to ally himself with the movement which held the future of his empire." (The Story of the Christian Church, The John C. Winston Company; page 74.)

Dr. Hurlbut says it was "the prevalent opinion" of Constantine's time "that baptism washed away all sins previously committed." It is easy to understand why this was "the prevalent opinion," because Saul of Tarsus was told by Ananias, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16.) There are many passages in the New Testament which clearly teach that being baptized in water is the act of faith by which one gets into Christ and into his body which is his church, where his sins are washed away in the blood of Christ! (Revelation 1:5.)

### **There Were Five "Patriarchs"**

The apostate church leaders referred to above as "Metropolitans," formed districts much larger than the provinces where the Metropolitans ruled. Those who ruled over these larger districts were called Patriarchs. At first there were three Patriarchs, and later there were five, one each in Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria.

The word "pope" means "papa," or "father." "Patriarch" means "chief father." The five Patriarchs were called "pope" many years before anyone was recognized as "universal pope."

Dr. Philip Schaff, one of the world's greatest church historians, wrote an eight volume set of books entitled: History of the Christian Church. There are about 7000 pages in the eight volumes. This set of historical treatises is considered as a classical work. Most of the following information is from Volume IV of this great work.

Gregory I who was Patriarch of Rome was elected "pope" in 590 A.D., but over a limited area. He did not claim to be universal head of the church, but he emphatically denied that he was, and he strongly denounced such a position of primacy. (Schaff, Volume IV, page 219.)

Gregory regarded the four other Patriarchs as on an equal level with him in authority. (Schaff, Volume IV, page 219.)

John the IV (also known as John the Faster) was one of the five Patriarchs in the apostate church. He was located in Constantinople which is now Istanbul, Turkey.



## Universal Head Or Pope

In 595 A.D. a church synod in Constantinople confirmed the title of "Universal Bishop" which had been conferred on John IV by the emperors Leo and Justinian as an "honorary title." Consequently, John referred to himself as "Universal Bishop" in correspondence with Patriarch Gregory I of Rome. Philip Schaff wrote the following concerning Gregory's reaction to John's title: "But Gregory I was provoked and irritated beyond measure by the assumption of his Eastern rival, and strained every nerve to procure a revocation of that title. He characterized it as a foolish, proud, profane, wicked, pestiferous, blasphemous, and diabolical usurpation, and compared him who used it to Lucifer. He wrote first to Sabinianus, his apocrisiarius or ambassador in Constantinople, then repeatedly to the patriarch, to the emperor Mauricius, and even to the empress; for with all his monkish contempt for women, he availed himself on every occasion of the female influence in high quarters. He threatened to break off communion with the patriarch. He called upon the emperor to punish such presumption, and reminded him of the contamination of the See of Constantinople by such arch-heretics as Nestorius." (Schaff, Volume IV, page 220.)

Schaff also says, "After the death of John the Faster in 596, Gregory instructed his ambassador at Constantinople to demand from the new patriarch, Cyriacus, as a condition of intercommunion, the renunciation of the wicked title, and in a letter to Maurice he went so far as to declare, that 'whosoever calls himself universal priest, or desires to be called so, was the forerunner of Antichrist.'" (Schaff, Volume IV, pages 223, 224.)

Obviously, the idea that anyone should be universal head of the church was a new idea at the close of the sixth century A.D.

Sabinianus succeeded Gregory I as Roman bishop in 604 A.D. Sabinianus was succeeded by Boniface III in 606.

Phocus became emperor by killing Emperor Maurice and all the family of Maurice which consisted of a wife, six sons, and three daughters. Schaff describes Phocus as ignorant, vulgar, cruel and a deformed upstart. (Schaff, Volume IV, page 221.)

Schaff goes on to say a compact was made between Emperor Phocus and Bishop Boniface. This compact was that Boniface would recognize Phocus as lawful emperor, and that Phocus would decree that the Church of Rome was over all other churches, and that the bishop of the Roman church was universal head or pope.

Boniface III assumed the title of universal bishop and Emperor Phocus sanctioned it. Under that title the succeeding bishops of Rome held their

“ecclesiastical primacy.” Because of this, Boniface is said to have been the first universal pope.

I feel confident that my dear friends who want to know why I cannot submit to anyone’s authority who claims he is “universal head” or “pope” of the church, can clearly understand from the foregoing why I cannot, and why I believe that no one else should!

## **PERSECUTION**

**Emmitt Channell**

When the Pharisees closed their ears to Jesus' message, he told them that they were just like their fathers who persecuted the righteous, "from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah" (Mt 23:35). Jesus spoke of persecution in his parables which teach about discipleship. He said that persecution would accompany obedience to the word. After telling his disciples that they were blessed to hear things that prophets and righteous men of ages past had longed to hear, he explained the Parable Of The Sower saying that the seed among the stony places represents the person who receives the word, but "when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matt 13:18-21). He taught that persecution often comes with the blessings of discipleship (Mk 10:28-30). Among the plainest teachings of Jesus are statements concerning persecution. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt 5:10-12). "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets (Lk 6:22-23). "But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them" (Mk 13:9). "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." (Jn 15:20).

Jesus and his disciples faced great opposition as they preached to the Jewish people. The parents of the blind man, whom Jesus healed, expressed what many of the people felt: "... they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (Jn 9:22). Even some of the Jewish leaders believed on him ... "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn 12:42-43). Under the limited commission, Jesus warned his Apostles about persecution. This would become a kind of pattern which would follow them throughout their ministry. Some of the things they were to suffer included: (1) to be as sheep in the midst of wolves; (2) to be delivered up to the councils and scourged in the synagogues; (3) to be brought before governors and kings; (4) to have close relatives who would deliver each other up to be

killed; (5) to be hated by all men; (6) to be servants who suffered like their master. But, in all of this, they were commanded "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:16-28).

Jesus gave the same warnings in foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 21:12-17). Jesus suffered much persecution during his life. The Pharisees "held a council against him, how they might destroy him" (Matt 12:14). His enemies accused him of casting out demons by the power of the Devil (Matt 12:24; Mk 3:22; Lk 11:15). They said he was a winebibber, a glutton, a friend of publicans and sinners. (Matt 11:19). The scribes and Pharisees tried to find something in what he said that they could use against Him (Lk 11:53-54). The chief priests accused Him of many things (Mk 15:3). Luke said they "vehemently accused him" (Lk 23:10). They accused him of perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar and calling himself a king (Matt 27:3). After Pilate said "... I find no fault in this man ... they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place (Lk 23:4-5).

Even in his hometown of Nazareth: they tried to kill him by throwing him off a cliff (Lk 4:29). Toward the end of his ministry, when His work was not yet finished, he had to avoid going to Jerusalem because the Jews were trying to kill him (Jn 7:1; Jn 11:53-54).

Finally, they were able to hang him on the cross, but, even there, the persecution did not stop: they "set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth" (Matt 27:37-44). Christ fulfilled all that the prophets had predicted about his suffering (Acts 3:18).

Despite the fact that the Lord had proven his deity by the things he did and taught, after the resurrection, there was great opposition from unbelievers. The chief priests and elders "...gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matt 28:12-14).

When the church was still very young, Paul wrote to Gentile Christians: "For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men" (1 Thess 2:14). Thus, the predictions of Jesus that His disciples would suffer as he did came true.

Just as the persecution of Jesus took many forms, so it did also in the early church. Sometimes there was death as in the case of Stephen and James (Acts 8:1; 12:2). Saul of Tarsus, zealous concerning the law and convinced that Jesus was an imposter, began to persecute the followers of Christ. He was involved in the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58). After his conversion, he wrote: "...I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). The Apostles themselves were often imprisoned and forbidden to preach any more in the name of Christ (Acts 4,5).

We sometimes think that it would have been wonderful to be in the early church to hear the Apostles preach and to be a part of the initial evangelizing of the world. But just imagine how difficult it must have been to for a Christian in the early church! If you were in Palestine, there would have been great opposition from the Jews who rejected the Gospel. If you were in a predominately Gentile country, the persecution would have come from those who were steeped in sin and did not want to hear of message which demanded a change in lifestyle. No, it would not have been easy to be a Christian in the early church!

But what happened to the early church is the norm for those who are disciples of Christ. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12). Remember, Jesus had predicted the suffering of His disciples and that was not just for the early church. The Parable Of The Sower applies to anyone in any society who hears the Gospel. It speaks of falling away because of "persecution" (Matt 13:18-23).

That leads us to ask: "what would happen if we experienced the kind of persecution that early Christians did?" Most of us are not suffering for Christ. Most congregations can't even get their members to give up weekly trips to the shore or the mountains throughout the summer, programs on TV, athletic events, etc. in order to attend worship. I know several congregations who have given up having Sunday evening services. The rationalization is "Nobody comes anyway, so why have it?"

I fear that, if persecution did come in our society, what Jesus described would happen to most of those who now claim to be Christians: "hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received

seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt 13:20-22).

We have a lot of "stony ground" and "thorny ground" Christians today. Note that those on the stony ground had no "root in himself." Today, it is hard to get some Christians to come to Bible study and worship often enough to put down any roots! Does that sound like where you attend? Some of those who hear the word and obey the Gospel are soon choked out by the "care of the world" and the "deceitfulness of riches." Paul said, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom 6:2). It doesn't take much persecution to turn some away from Christ. But here is another question: is there any form of persecution which we might face today? In our day, one might expect verbal abuse and false accusations for faithfully following Christ. Remember, this was one form of persecution suffered by Jesus and the Apostles.

You might be accused of hate if you teach what the Bible says about homosexuality. The battle with the homosexual agenda is going to be one of our great fights of our generation!

You might be called a "legalist" if you insist that Christians ought to obey Heb 10:25 and not forsake the assembly. If you attend a congregation which still has Sunday night services where an invitation is offered, you might not know it, but you are attending a "conservative" congregation. What is wrong with one who would use the word "conservative" in derision? If you believe what Jesus said about marriage and divorce, you might expect to be ostracized. Some who don't want to hear that taught, go off and start their own congregation where anyone is accepted regardless of their marriage status.

You might be ridiculed if you don't believe that alcohol is one of the greatest problems in our society and a threat to the church. The plain facts are that alcohol today is the greatest factor in automobile accidents and family problems. To claim that a Christian can consume it without any harm is unreasonable.

You might be accused of believing that "Church of Christ doctrine," which is so despised, if you don't think that the church of Christ is just another denomination. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn 8:32) If we don't plant the seed of truth found in the Bible, the result will not be the church of the Bible.

Whatever the form of persecution, we should follow the example of the faithful who have suffered in following Christ. Those in Faith's Hall of Fame chose to "suffer affliction with the people of God" rather than "to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb 11:25). The Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name (Acts 5:41).

Paul was told at his conversion that he would suffer "great things" for the name of Christ (Acts 9:16). Later he wrote about suffering with Christ that we might be glorified with Him (Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12). He wrote about suffering which accompanies the privilege of believing and sonship (Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 3:12). Paul even refused to exercise his rights, choosing rather to suffer lest he should hinder the Gospel of Christ (1 Cor 9:12). He labored, working with his own hands. In obedience to Christ, he said "being reviled we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it" (1 Cor 4:12). He also viewed his suffering as being for the consolation and salvation of his brethren (2 Cor 1:6). Through his suffering, Paul had learned both how to enjoy blessings and suffer needs (Phil 4:12 KJV). He said he labored and suffered reproach because he trusted in the living God (1 Tim 4:10) and he was persuaded that God would faithfully keep that which he had committed unto Him (2 Tim 2:12).

Paul could have compromised and avoided persecution from the Jews, but he chose to be faithful and bear the "offence of the cross" (Gal 5:11) while others gave in and practiced circumcision "lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (Gal 6:12). He taught us to suffer with one another as members of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:26).

Peter reminds us that there is no glory in suffering for our own faults but when we do well and suffer for it and take it patiently, "this is acceptable with God" (1 Pet 2:20; 3:17). He adds, "if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; (1 Pet 3:14). Perhaps Peter's most familiar statement about suffering is in 1 Pet 4:15-16: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf".

The exhortation to Christians suffering persecution is: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev 2:10) and "let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Pet 4:19)





## STRONG FAMILIES

Albert E. Farley

When the Lord God created our father Adam, in the beginning, He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet (suitable) for him." The Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took one of his ribs, and made a woman. Genesis 2:18-25. Later, our Lord Jesus Christ said, in Matthew 19:4-6, "...Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." This is God's divine account of the beginning of the first family. Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled ... Hebrews 13:4. Proverbs 18:22; Psalm 127:3-5.

Thankfully, a majority of Americans express support for marriage and the home. "Almost three-quarters of adult Americans believe that 'marriage is a lifelong commitment that should not be ended except under extreme circumstances.' Even 81% of divorced and separate (sis) Americans still believe that marriage should be for life."<sup>1</sup>

This, however, is not supported by what Americans are actually doing with marriage and the home today. Of the more than 120 million who are now married, 10,086,183 are living without their spouses, and another 4,795,275 are legally separated.<sup>2</sup> Of the more than 213 million men and women alive today who are 15 years of age and over, 21,365,741 or 10 % are divorced. The divorce rate quadrupled from 4.3 million in 1970 to 18.3 million in 1996.<sup>3</sup> The marriage rate has fallen about 30% since 1970 and the divorce rate has increased about 40%.<sup>4</sup> Sixty-five percent of new marriages fail.<sup>5</sup>

When marriages weaken and fail, the innocent children are the most tragic victims. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, more and more children are living with only one parent. In an incomplete count from 35 states and the District of Columbia, the survey reveals that 4.9% of our children now live with

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<sup>1</sup> *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*, ed. David Blankehorn, Steve Bayme, and Jean Bethke (Milwaukee, WI: Family Service America, c. 1990), 97-98. Cited on page 8 of *The Abolition of Marriage*, by Maggie Gallagher.

<sup>2</sup> Census 200 Supplementary Survey Summary Tables. Data based on twelve monthly samples during 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Census Bureau's release about its *Marital Status and Living Arrangements*.

<sup>4</sup> Ahlburg and DeVita, "New Realities," 4-12, Cited on page 5 of *The Abolition of Marriage*, by Maggie Gallagher

<sup>5</sup> Teresa Castro Martin and Larry L. Bumpass, "Recent Trends in Marital Disruption," *Demography* 26 (1989): 37-51. Cited on page 5 of *The Abolition of Marriage*, by Maggie Gallagher.

the male alone and 19.1% live with the female.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, many children are born outside the bonds of marriage.

Also, a growing number of children are now living with neither parent. In Florida alone, more than 250,000 children live in homes headed by grandparents. This is an increase of 33% since 1990. In West Virginia, there are now 24,276 children living with their grandparents. This is a 10.5% increase since 1990.<sup>2</sup>

Also, according to data released by the Human Rights Campaign, 2,916 households in West Virginia have reported themselves as same-sex couples in the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>3</sup> In comparison, the census reported that there were only 307 same-sex couples in West Virginia in 1990. This is an increase of 950% in ten years! Same-sex marriages are now legally recognized in Denmark, France, Norway, the Netherlands, and Germany - and, no doubt, in many other nations of the world.<sup>4</sup>

What is happening to marriages, homes, and families? Why are so many marriages failing? Why are so many families weak? The answer is obvious: we have left God's fundamentals of the family and the home.

The fundamentals for strong Christian families must be sought in the Word. Matthew 7:24-28. The scriptures reveal several fundamental truths upon which every marriage must be built if it would be happy, successful, and strong.

**The first fundamental of a strong family is the sacredness into which it is entered and upon which it is built.** By sacredness we mean the holiness and purity with which the husband and wife regard their marriage. Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:6. Marriage is from God; God does the joining and man has no right to separate whom God has joined together! The vows of marriage by the bride and groom are made before God and man, and the commitment is "... till death do us part." There are only two divine ways for marriage to end. Jesus said, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Matthew 19:9. The second way for marriage to end is by death. Romans 7:2-3.

Also, children are a sacred heritage and stewardship; they are gifts from God. Job 1:21; Psalm 127:3-5. The practice of abortion on demand is a sin against

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<sup>1</sup> The Associated Press, Clarksburg, *Exponent*, July 25, 2001, p. A11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> The Associated Press, Clarksburg, *Exponent*, July 18, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> The Associated Press, *International Herald Tribune*, August 2, 2001.

the sacredness of human life and has done much to destroy the strength of millions of families.

**A second fundamental of a strong family is the love that binds every member together.** Our love for God must come before any relationship with man. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Matthew 22:37-39. Families can be strong only when these commandments are obeyed by all family members.

Paul commanded, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it ... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. Ephesians 5:25, 28. In Titus 2:3, Paul wrote, "The aged women likewise ... That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children."

Love demands that we be kind and forgiving to one another. Paul said, "Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth." 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Friends, this is the fundamental for which we plead. The family that is built upon true love will be a strong family.

**A third fundamental of a strong family is faithfulness.** In Galatians 5:19-21, adultery and fornication are the first two works of the flesh listed by the apostle Paul. These are perhaps two of the most commonly committed sins, and they are grievous sins against the family and the home. In order to avoid fornication, the Bible says, "...let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." 1 Corinthians 7:2. Unfaithfulness to the marriage vow is the breaking of wedlock. Ezekiel 16:38.

All members of the family must be faithful in the roles given to them by the Lord. Paul speaks of the distinct roles of the husband and the wife in Ephesians 5:22-25. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing ..." 1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1.

In strong families, parents must fulfill their duties and responsibilities to their children. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6. Parents are the primary stewards of children. Schools are helpful. The church certainly ought to be helpful. But

the primary responsibility of training up a child is upon the parents of the child! Paul treated this same subject in Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Parents also have a God-given responsibility to provide for the physical needs of their children to the very best of their ability. Paul said, in 2 Corinthians 12:14, "...for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Timothy 5:8.

**A fourth fundamental of a strong family is honor.** Husbands must properly honor their wives. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them (wives) according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." 1 Peter 3:7. In this regard, husbands must "render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband." This is in reference to the marriage rights and privileges that God has granted to each spouse in marriage. In wedlock, "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife." These rights and privileges must not be kept back except in times of absolute necessity. Paul declared, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." 1 Corinthians 7:1-6.

Wives must honor their husbands. "Nevertheless let every one of you (husbands) in particular so love his wife as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." Ephesians 5:33; 1 Peter 3:6.

Children must honor their parents. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Ephesians 6:1-2.

**A fifth fundamental of a strong family is sacrifice.** The virtuous wife and mother of Proverbs 31 is a woman of sacrifice. She sacrifices of her time and her strength; she brings her food from afar (14); she rises early – while it is yet night – and gives food to her household (15); she works up into the night (18); she spreads out her hands beyond her own household and cares for the poor and needy (20). When we read of this unselfish woman, we cannot conceive of the possibility that her marriage could fail. Sacrifices strengthen families. Paul said that parents are to lay up for the children – not the children for the parents. 2 Corinthians 12:14. This often involves sacrifice. In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul said, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own

house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” Selfishness is the cause of much grief and heartache in families. True love is a love that “seeketh not her own.” All marriages require many sacrifices – from husbands, wives, parents, and children. Sacrifices are often difficult and painful, yet love makes them easier. Perfect loves makes sacrificing a privilege and a joy.

**A sixth fundamental of a strong family is discipline.** Husbands and wives must be disciplined in their relationships with each other; fathers and mothers must be disciplined in their relationships with their children; children must be disciplined in their responses to their parents and to their brothers and sisters. By discipline, we mean the teaching, instructing, correcting, and the learning necessary to be a faithful disciple of Christ. Our English words “disciple” and “discipline” are from the same Latin root, relating to “a pupil, a learner, a follower.”<sup>1</sup> Discipline involves teaching and learning. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed ...” John 8:31-32.

Teaching may be administered through example and in word. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6. This truth remains the hope of children in every new generation. “And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4. Our children need to know the holy scriptures from childhood. 2 Timothy 3:15.

Corrections and punishments are fundamental elements of a disciplined, strong family. When children are disobedient to parents, they require discipline. This oftentimes must involve corporal punishment or whipping. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Proverbs 13:24; 23:13; 29:15.

**A seventh fundamental of a strong family is contentment.** All families exist in circumstances unique to themselves. Our nation is caught up in a never-ending quest for riches, wealth, and worldly gain that has destroyed many families. Paul warned against this in 1 Timothy 6:5-11: “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content ...”

How many homes have been weakened and destroyed because the parents are in pursuit of the elusive American dream? In too many homes, both parents are out of the house much or most of the time; young children are handed over to pre-school programs, day-care centers, babysitters – or even worse – left to themselves while mom and dad are both working long hours. It is, of course, sometimes necessary for both parents to work outside of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

home. But, many times it is because of discontentment. This discontentment often leads to bitter arguments, separations, and divorces.

Dear friends, the strength and survival of any structure – whether physical or spiritual – depends upon the strength of its foundation. When we plea for strong families, we must begin with the foundation – the fundamentals. We have sought to plead for and to discuss some of these fundamentals in this lesson: Sacredness, Love, Faithfulness, Honor, Sacrifice, Discipline, and Contentment. Certainly, other things are important factors in the establishment of strong families. Hopefully, we have touched on some that will encourage and aid all of us in our families. Remember, “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: ...” Psalm 127:1.

# COUNSEL FOR THE HURTING

Tim Nichols

## Introduction:

Much of this material is condensed from a series that can be located on the world wide web at <http://www.mindspring.com/~tnichols1> and selected at "How to Not be So Anxious, Angry, and Depressed." I hope that this brief summary of this material will help us to learn more about how to benefit from Biblical truth as it addresses the deepest "thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). I hope that many will develop ways to use these truths in helping their brethren who often experience emotional pain that comes from thoughts and beliefs not directed by God's Word.

In the Scriptures are "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). No human thought can equal or displace them. As we consider ways to gain the full benefit of revealed Truth for ourselves and others, let's not lose sight of this central truth. To whatever degree that I might inadvertently stray from it in my comments, to that degree ignore my words. To the degree that I present and apply God's Word to life as it is lived in the real world, please hear it and use it.

We are all aware that the Scriptures teach us not to be overly anxious and angry. I hope to help us to look at Biblical insights to feel these emotions less intensely, to comply with those instructions in order to please God, and for our own well-being. I offer no simple panacea, but a challenge for all to examine thoughts and beliefs about the, sometimes harsh, realities around us.

## What is the Source of Our Emotions?

We tend to assume that our emotions are **directly** caused by the events, people, and circumstances that surround us. We use language that betrays this underlying assumption: "He makes me so angry....", we sometimes say; or "They make me so upset when they...." or "This thing has me so depressed...."

Many seem to think that there is some cause behind our every negative emotion over which we have absolutely no control. We seldom look carefully at the **process** by which the events, circumstances, and people have led to our negative emotional responses. Please explore, however, the possibility that something over which you have a **great measure of control** mediates between those things occurring outside of you and your emotional responses to them. Our **thoughts** lead either to distressing or to pleasurable emotions-- or to any point on the continuum between. They can be reformed with God's help. The struggle with depression and anxiety **can** be confronted by applying Biblical

principles relating to your **thoughts**. Your thoughts, beliefs, and interpretations of people, events, and circumstances, for the most part, **create** your emotional responses to them. This is Biblical and consistent with very credible research. This insight **alone**, however, is not enough to bring about helpful change. There are specific, ways to use this insight to overcome the negative impact of external events on your own internal responses; and to increase your experience of positive emotions that will help you to take constructive action in the real world.

This is **not** another statement of the "power of positive thinking." This is about rational thinking that does not attempt to deny the harsh realities of life. It is about taking personal responsibility for believing things that are **true**. It is about disciplining ourselves to go through the process of determining what is and what is not **true**. It is about reaping the spiritual and emotional benefits of going through this process. It is about doing the hard work and genuine self-searching that many will not be willing to do.

This is not a guarantee that all of your negative emotions can be completely erased. In fact, I will argue that such an expectation is, itself, irrational and undesirable. You **need** a certain level of tension to get up in the morning and to accomplish reasonable goals. But the intensity of your unnecessary negative emotions can be reduced to manageable and useful levels. You are, by design, able to deal with reality. God created **you** and the world in which you live. He has provided all the resources you need, including His inspired Word, to deal with the obstacles that the real world throws in your way. These challenges may be difficult, at times, but they are never insurmountable. Reality **includes** struggle, but you are equipped to deal with it.

We are overly distressed more from our distorted views of reality (from our thoughts that do not at all conform to reality) than we are by things that are **true**. Christians enjoy a very clear promise from God that we will not be tested beyond what we can endure (1 Corinthians 10:13). Allow yourself to believe that every situation has options that will allow you to bear whatever may come your way.

### **God Knows Our Thoughts**

God is concerned, not only with the relatively insignificant hairs that grow on your head, but more importantly with the thoughts that are occurring within your head. He is able to see that some of those thoughts are empty and without purpose. He is able to see that many of those thoughts, though they are often highly regarded by our fellow mortals, are not as profound as we sometimes make them out to be. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity" (Psalm 94:11). "And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain (1 Corinthians 3:20).



## **God Directs Us to Think Rational Thoughts**

You are equipped with the ability to reason about events and ideas. God directs you to nurture this ability because He knows that rational thinking will help you to thrive in the environment in which He has placed you and that these will prepare you for heaven. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith" (1 John 5:3, 4).

## **God Directs Us to Think Thoughts that are True and Right**

Truth is objective. Some things are true and some things are false. Directions given by God are right and those thoughts and actions that are contrary to them are wrong. There **are** moral absolutes and God is their Author. We can choose to ignore them because God has created us with the capacity to choose to believe whatever we want. He gives you with the duty to believe truth, however, and He will hold you accountable for your choice (Romans 1:20). "The **thoughts** of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit" (Proverbs 12:5). "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy **thoughts** shall be established" (Proverbs 16:3; cf. Isaiah 26:3-4; 55:7-9; Psalm 119:113; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 2:18; Romans 8:5, 6). Who could be more qualified to design a book that is able to address your every need than the God Who created you and all that is around you? The question answers itself. "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off" (Psalm 139:2). "For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory" (Isaiah 66:18).

## **Our Thoughts Exert a Profound Influence Upon our Feelings**

Although the psychological literature is full of conclusive proof that this is the case, let's turn our attention to some Scriptures that both teach and illustrate that our thoughts are largely responsible for our emotions. "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Proverbs 15:13). "Anxiety in the heart of a man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad" (Proverbs 12:25 NKJV; cf. Daniel 4:19; 5:6; Luke 4:36-38; Mark 14:72).

## **You Can Take Charge of Your Thoughts and Change Them**

We can learn to harness them and bring them into conformity with facts and evidence. It requires persistent effort, but the Scriptures teach that it **can** be done (Jeremiah 4:14; Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 22:37, 38; 1 Peter 1:13; Ephesians 4:17, 18).

## **You Can Replace Your Faulty Thinking With Truth**

Using your God-given capacity to reason, you can liberate yourself, with the aid of Divine Revelation, from your faulty thoughts and beliefs and from the emotional strain that they cause. In fact, the Scriptures assert that we can arrive at truth and know that we have found it. Having found it, we can place it in the position of our previous faulty thoughts (John 8:31, 32; Amos 4:13; Psalm 139:23, 24; 2 Corinthians 10:5; Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 3:6-8).

### **A Closer Look at the Relationship Between Our Thoughts and Our Emotions**

Having ascertained that the Scriptures indeed teach that we are capable of choosing to think rationally and that our thoughts are, for the most part, the cause of our emotional state, let's move on and examine some Scriptures that more directly prescribe the kinds of thoughts that will help us to overcome our anxiety. We often tend to remind anxious people that Jesus taught that we are not to be anxious (Matthew 6:25) without helping them to discover what steps they can take to reduce their anxiety. Sometimes their unsuccessful attempts to stop being anxious by sheer will power alone can actually increase their level of anxiety and feelings of guilt. The Scriptures give us more on this subject than **just** the command not to be anxious. They offer more concrete solutions over which we can exercise a great degree of control. In Philippians 4 the apostle Paul gives both the command not to be anxious and the **means** by which that command can be obeyed (Philippians 4:4-8). To put this prescription in its context, be aware that Paul is writing these words from prison. He has been unfairly confined for preaching the gospel. His circumstances were not those that you would immediately be able to guess from the tone of His Words. His example impresses us nearly as much as the message that he was inspired to write.

He begins with the positive command to rejoice. This is followed by the necessary negative command not to be anxious. He teaches us to pray about our concerns and then tells us that we can come to have the peace of God which will keep our hearts and minds. Other Scriptures clearly point to our ability to rejoice in the midst of unpleasant circumstances (Acts 5:41, 1 Peter 4:13, Matthew 5:12, Luke 6:23, 2 Corinthians 6:10).

In verse 8 he summarizes those things about which we must think if we are to sustain an attitude of rejoicing and peace without anxiety. We are to think those thoughts that are "true" (actual, true to fact, conforming to reality), "noble" (honest, without pretending), "just" (right), "pure" (undefiled), "lovely", "of good report", "virtue" (morally excellent), and "praiseworthy." Some of these are closely related. Those things that are honest, just, pure, and morally excellent would also be true. Those things that are "lovely" are probably less

objective and more subject to personal tastes. Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens may not be lovely to you, but you can choose to focus your thinking, to a greater degree, on those things that are. This does not imply that you ought to ignore the harsh realities of life. They are "true." But ruminating about only those things that you perceive to be ugly without putting them in rational perspective and failing to also focus on the beautiful things will rob you of the more realistic joy and peace that God wants you to have. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul" (Psalm 94:19). "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:3, 4). "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 7:22).

The final part of this prescription is to act in ways that are consistent with your rational thoughts. Your emotional well-being is not "all in your head." ***It is also in your hands and in your feet.*** "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9). You create emotional pain for yourself when you **behave** in ways that are contrary to your rational thoughts. You also create another sort of emotional pain when you behave in ways that are **consistent** with your irrational thoughts. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts" (Isaiah 65:2). "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:18, 19). "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3). "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies of your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Colossians 1:21, 22).

In addition to the comfort that we can give to one another by merely being there and expressing genuine concern, we can help one another by helping one another to meditate about God's promises, to reason about events that surround us, and to plan courses of action that are guided by revealed truth.

May God bless our efforts.



# **I HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS!**

**Basil Overton**

Yes, I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This does not mean I have met Him in person. This does not mean I have felt Him touch me. This does not mean He has come to me in person and spoken to me. Those who say they have had such personal experiences with Jesus may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong.

Someone may ask how anyone could have a personal relationship with Jesus without having such experiences as those stated above.

My personal relationship with Jesus is not by feeling or fantasy, but by faith. What is this kind of faith? It is believing what Jesus and those whom He guided by divine inspiration have said in the New Testament. When one ignores this New Testament teaching, he cannot have a personal relationship with Jesus. He has neither the Son of God nor God the Father! (2 John 9.) One should be very careful not to substitute emotional upsurges and fantasy for the word of God!

## **What My Personal Relationship With Jesus Includes**

1. It is very personal! I am in Christ because I have been baptized into Christ. (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3,4.) Not only am I in Christ (Colossians 1:2), Christ is in me. (Colossians 1:27.) This also means I am in the body of Christ which is His church. (Colossians 1:18; 3:15.) Believing all this makes me feel good, but my feeling good about it is not the proof of it. The proof of it is that the New Testament says it.

I cannot comprehend how Christ dwells in me, neither can I comprehend how I dwell in Christ, but I believe both because of what the New Testament says and because I have done what it says do to get into Christ. If I had to have some kind of feeling to know Christ is in me and I am in Him, it would not be by faith but by feeling!

2. My personal relationship with Jesus means I am a member of His body which is His church. (Colossians 1:18; 3:15.) We know from the New Testament that to be in Christ is the same as being in His body. It follows therefore that being in Christ is equivalent to being in His church.

How wonderfully personal it is to be a member of Christ's body!

I can truthfully, and by faith say that I am a member of the body of Christ because nearly 60 years ago (September 1, 1941) I believed in Jesus as the

most wonderful person that ever lived in this world; I believed in Him as the Son of the living God because He said if I did not do this I would die in my sins. (John 8:21-24.) I repented of my sins and confessed my faith in that most wonderful person that ever lived in this world and was baptized into Him, or into His body, His church. (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9,10; 6:34; Galatians 3:27.)

3. My personal relationship with Jesus includes my worshipping God just as Jesus said I must do in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24.) Such worship makes me feel good, but my feeling good is not the proof it is right. The only proof I can have that it is right is that the New Testament says do it! There need not be hoopla and ballyhoo, nor can there be, in worship that is in spirit and in truth.

My personal relationship with Jesus does not mean that I worship merely for what I can get out of it, but instead I engage in it to worship and praise and honor God my Father through His Son Jesus Christ. This is a solemn and serious time for me and very personal. It is a time of joy, but the joy need not be and should not be expressed with outlandish gestures and undue outbursts as though it were a circus. This does not mean we should not sing enthusiastically in worship. How could one not sing enthusiastically when he sings about "the wonderful love of Jesus"?

4. My personal relationship with Jesus also involves continually spreading the gospel. I began my preaching work 56 years ago, and still enjoy proclaiming the gospel. Spreading the gospel by writing is one of my chief joys. The World Evangelist is a tool of evangelism. Through it people all over the world have opportunity to learn the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Not every Christian man can be a public preacher, and no Christian woman is authorized to preach publicly. But every Christian can do something to help get the gospel to others, even if it is inviting people to attend church services where they can learn the gospel.

5. When I help widows and orphans, and the deprived, I am engaged in my personal relationship with Jesus. Such action is so personally involved with Jesus that Jesus said when I do such I am doing it for Him!

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? Or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them,

Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” (Matthew 25:34-40.)





## **GROWING THE LOCAL CHURCH THROUGH THE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Michael P. Reese**

Every organization has one or more main factors that contribute to its overall growth and success. With Microsoft it would have to be their "Windows" operating systems for several personal computers. With McDonalds it would be hamburgers and french fries. With Little League Baseball it would be the opportunity to play competitive team sports with nationally recognized rules. With Coca-Cola it is their secret formula original "coke." While there are other contributing factors to the success of these companies, these are the products that have "made" these organizations.

One of the main factors for the growth and success of the local congregation is the educational program. Most recognize that the overall work of the church falls into three areas: evangelism, benevolence and edification. A strong, comprehensive, Bible-based education program is essential for and contributes to all three areas of church work. It will be the purpose of this lesson to show how the education program of the local church is essential to its overall growth both numerically and spiritually.

In Ephesians 4:11-16 one finds principles for a working model for church growth. While the various offices listed undoubtedly had miraculous gifts, in principle these offices still have application for the church today in the non-miraculous realm. The apostles and prophets still influence today by their written word, the Bible pastors and teachers still feed the flock of God. Saints still need perfected or equipped for works of ministry (v.12). Although the gospel message from God is complete (Jude 3), mankind's understanding and comprehension of that gospel is incomplete. Thus, the need for continual teaching through the Bible school. It seems as though man has just as much need to be rooted and grounded in the faith so that they are not "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (V.14).

Christian maturity is still the goal and result when the Truth is spoken in love (v.15). Verse sixteen shows both numeric growth (maketh increase of the body) and spiritual growth (into the edifying of itself in love) when the body (church) is functioning properly.

In the Spirit inspired model for the numeric and spiritual growth of the church, one finds leadership charting the course of the local congregation in the vital areas of ministry prescribed by Christ, i.e., evangelism, edification and benevolence. Toward this end, leadership helps the individual Christian discover his or her God given talents for ministry, provides training for the

development and use of those talents then provides opportunities for those talents to be used in service to God.

When congregations operate on this level, growth is experienced numerically, (People want to be a part of a growing congregation) and growth is experienced spiritually (people want to be a part of a congregation where they can serve Christ). Today much of the work and development in this realm is established as a result of the Bible school.

Now that a simple working model for church growth has been established, let us turn our attention to the role of the education program in the overall working of the church.

In Acts 2:14 precedent is set at the onset of the Lord's Church for several teachers teaching the Word of God at the same time. In as much as God is not the Author of confusion and wants all things to be done decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40), it followed that the crowd was quite possibly divided and taught on that occasion. Whatever the exact scene was is irrelevant; the end result was "and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42). Also, these early Christians were "praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47). The early church grew exponentially in number and spirit. All this was fueled by the Word of God being taught! Consider now some specific ways in which the Bible school contributes to the growth of the local congregation.

When speaking of the Bible school the picture that comes to mind is the Lord's church engaged in a thorough and systematic study and teaching of God's Word. Many Bible school curriculums today contain way too little scripture and way too much "filler" and "feel good stories." There is no substitute for a thorough and comprehensive study of the entire Book - both Old and New Testaments. Many cringe at the thought of studying the Old Testament, especially the prophets or Leviticus. But one cannot understand God's complete story - His Plan of Redemption for mankind (which is the theme of the Bible) without understanding the Old Testament. Many New Testament doctrines such as blood covering sins, the atonement, the Passover and many more were first introduced in principle in the Old Testament. Some say that the Old Testament is boring and out of date. Nothing could be farther from the Truth. Many of the Old Testament stories come alive when presented by skilled and talented teachers. They are often chock full of spiritual truths ready for immediate application in today's world. For example, principles found in the story of David and Bathsheba in dealing with lust, passion, conspiracy, murder, cover-up and eventual repentance could very easily be found in Washington, D.C. today.

Micah of old asked the question, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:6-8). Has God changed His mind on these things? Wouldn't the application of these principles make any individual and any society much greater than it already is?

In the New Testament Jesus condemned the Pharisees by saying, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matthew 23:23). Couldn't the world stand more judgment, mercy, and faith? The Bible school serves to present the eternal truths in a "modern" package usable in today's culture.

One role of the Bible school is to convert the lost. It has been estimated that 80 to 90% of those converted to Christ first take part in the Bible school. The Bible school often serves as an easy "entry" into the church for the honest seeker of truth.

The Lord's church cannot compete with the entertainment industry or the sports world. But the "pillar and ground" of the Truth has that for which the masses are hungering and thirsting - God's Word. One main "product" we have to offer is the Bible program. Many are still thrilled to find that eternal truths are still being taught. There are many who are still diligently seeking God. It is the local congregation's obligation to provide an essential link in this chain of salvation by presenting God's Word in its purity and simplicity.

Another purpose of the Bible school is to train those who are already in Christ unto a full-grown knowledge of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13). The word edify literally means "to build" (Vines Expository Dictionary of N.T. words, Vol. 11, p.18). Every teacher has a responsibility to teach with this goal in mind. As well, each Christian has an obligation to grow spiritually. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18). "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Peter 2:1-2).

The local congregation experiences growth through the Bible school when she produces fully equipped soul winners who will be the salt and light of the earth, living epistles to those who do not yet know Him. "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:13-14). Just as the sunset follows the sunrise the church will grow when this type of servant is produced.

It might be good now to note several suggestions for strengthening the Bible school. It would be good to have a comprehensive systematic study of the Word of God. At first the teachers and the congregation will be overwhelmed by the thought of preparing material and studying the whole Bible. After much encouragement and time they will begin to see the value of a complete understanding of God's Word.

The Bible School will be strengthened if the lessons are supplemented by expository preaching from the pulpit. This serves to reinforce the great truths taught in the classroom. Also, as the congregation becomes more Bible literate, they will enjoy and even demand expository preaching.

Encourage the entire congregation to read through the Bible at least once each year. Many schedules are printed which are readily available. The daily Scripture readings can also be run in the weekly bulletin.

The Bible School is strengthened when the teachers are trained and recognized. It is not only unscriptural but unwise to place a teacher in any classroom without adequate training. Many teacher training helps are available. Also, recognize and honor your teachers. They are at the very heart of the teaching program. Make sure they don't become weary in their well doing.

Recognize the importance of the Bible school. Make it a specific part of the overall work of the church. "Talk it up" from the pulpit and in private. Make everyone aware of the importance of the education program.

An extension of the Bible school would be our Christian Youth Camps. In most camps there is a tremendous emphasis placed on the teaching and practice of God's Word. Usually, for an entire week our young folks lives are saturated with Bible training. At All-Age Week of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp an average of four hours daily is dedicated to the teaching and preaching of God's Word. It is my studied opinion that more can be accomplished with our young folks during a week of Christian Youth Camp than can be accomplished in an entire year back home. For this, and possibly other reasons, our young folks should be encouraged to attend our youth camps. And, our camps should continue to provide sound, wholesome teaching from God's Word so that these young folks can be rooted and grounded in the faith.

This is just the proverbial "hem of the garment" of the importance of the local congregation's Bible program. If churches continue to systematically and comprehensively teach God's Word both numeric and spiritual growth will be the ultimate end result.

May God bless us in our efforts.

## HOW TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE CHURCH LIBRARY

David Kenney

In 1995, I preached at a congregation that had existed for over 100 years. I requested to see the church library, thinking it would have some very interesting books. I was saddened to find only a couple of old pew Bibles and a torn-up, incomplete set of Adam Clarke's commentaries. When I returned home, I immediately requested permission to purchase books for the church library.

When I approached the leadership of our congregation about expanding the library, the idea was enthusiastically supported. Even though the funds were limited, the main hindrance was someone willing to make the effort. We were convinced that even purchasing a book a month was a step in the right direction. Interest in the library grew among those seeking to study, but either did not have the resources or lacked knowledge of sound biblical reference materials. One of the results of the library program, we found, was that people's enthusiasm blossomed to where they purchased the same books for their personal library.

### *The Value of a Religious Library*

Guy N. Woods, in Questions & Answers, Volume 2, eloquently stated the value of good books when asked to comment on what good books meant to him:

A good library is truly a fabulous fairyland, a place of genuine delight, affording a happy haven from the swirling currents of restless world. In it we are in the intimate fellowship of the greatest intellectuals, the most profound thinkers and the greatest reasoners of all time. No barriers have been erected to exclude us; here is one of the few areas of human experience where the rich are at no advantage, rich and poor alike being privileged to drink at will from this ever flowing fountain. Into what other select company of distinguished scholars may one appear at will and there converse to his heart's content? How else may one in life associate with the spirits of the sainted dead and share in the intellectual and mental labors of their lives on earth? [pp. 327-328]

Focusing his attention on religious books, Guy N. Woods went on to write:

Were I, after a long and eventful life of intense activity as a gospel preacher asked to designate what, in my view, are the most vital aims which should characterize all who teach and preach the word, high on the list would be the accumulation of a useful library, the cultivation of

an affection for good books and the formation of regular habits of study. No day should be permitted to pass which does not provide for communion with good books. [p. 328]

Brother Guy N. Woods passed away on December 8, 1993. E. Claude Gardner, writing in the February 1994 issue of the Gospel Advocate, mentioned that Guy N. Woods had donated his library to Freed-Hardeman University several years prior to his death. In that issue of the Gospel Advocate is a photograph of the more than 7,000 volumes that Guy N. Woods had donated from his personal library.

### ***Principles In Building An Effective Church Library***

These principles are ones that I use when purchasing books, whether for the church or my personal religious library.

***Appoint Someone Who Loves Books.*** Ideally someone other than the preacher, perhaps a deacon, should be appointed to the service of maintaining a library. This is not to say the preacher would not be an excellent source of information. One reason is to ensure the work continues when the preacher departs from the local congregation. Another reason is the preacher, if he is worth his salt, already has a love of good religious books. Working among good religious books is contagious and should be allowed to infect others as well. Whoever the person is who is appointed should be the type of individual who shares his experiences with others who may pick up the work in case he has to relinquish it.

***The One In Charge Should Be Accountable to the Leadership.*** Books are inanimate objects and can communicate things that are both good and not so good. The elders are the ones responsible for the shepherding of the flock; it is imperative that they oversee this work. If the congregation does not have an eldership, then the leaders of the congregation should monitor what is being purchased. There is a two-fold purpose of overseeing this work. First, to ensure the content is worthy to be added to the church library. Second, to ensure that funds are not either misappropriated or that there is no opportunity for the appearance of inappropriate behavior.

***Determine the Focus.*** There are nearly as many topics as there are books, so one must determine the parameters of the library. Will it focus only on adults? Will it only contain commentaries? Will it only contain brotherhood material? Will it include videos, audio tapes, or computer programs? Will it include counseling or psychology materials? Will it contain programs of wholesome secular entertainment? These parameters need to be defined early on to avoid getting off track.

***Have a Designated Area.*** Spacing does not always permit a separate room; however, it would be best to have an area that is not part of the preacher's office. The area needs to be one that is accessible to all people at all times the building is open. One of the reasons not to use the preacher's office is to avoid disrupting other church business that is typically done in this office. Another reason is to ensure that the preacher's library does not end up being mixed with the church's library. A preacher's books are his tools and are needed by him. We must respect the preacher's personal property as we would our own (Luke 6:31). The same is true for preachers and members to respect church property. It is sad that such would need to be said, but problems in these areas have been known to occur.

***One Does Not Have To Start Big, But One Has To Start.*** Guy N. Woods' library was not accumulated overnight. He was over 85 years of age when he died and had devoted the majority of his life to tools of study. When we began the building of the library where I attend, we had only one small shelf of books. Starting with an original commitment of adding at least one book a month, over six years the congregation has added far more than just seventy-two volumes (which would be praiseworthy in and of itself). In February of 2001, the church purchased three software programs that have expanded the library by over ninety volumes. The point is that a library does not have to start out big, but it can grow incrementally and exponentially. The key is to start.

***Learn What Books Are Especially Good.*** Many books exist on any given subject and some books are better than others. Guy N. Woods estimated that there are over 3,000 books on Romans alone. You want a library that is strong; however, one does not need 3,000 commentaries on Romans. How does one learn what books are good? First, ask your preacher (or other preachers, teachers, or authors). It takes effort to get the recommendation of good books from others; you must take the initiative to do so. Second, study the reference works cited by books that you have greatly profited from. Third, read periodicals that provide book reviews. Fourth, become familiar with catalogs and those who publish them. For example, if I were searching on a topic involving Christian Evidences, one of the first places I would go would be Apologetics Press' catalog.

***A Note About Commentaries.*** This writer has heard grown men (who should know better) criticize commentaries as if they were creed books. Such broad criticisms of commentaries are not a sign of steadfastness but of ignorance. It thrills me to study of the experiences of Alexander Campbell who was one of the leaders of the Restoration Movement. If he wrote his thoughts about the book of Acts, would it not be grand to know what his studies led him to conclude? Well, he did write a commentary on the book of Acts. Will I ignore this book because it is a "commentary"? Why some think it is any different to go ask a preacher a question rather than look in a commentary for an answer puzzles me. When you consult a commentary, you are consulting the study of

the one who wrote the commentary. The commentary is no better than the one who prepared it. Not all of us have time to obtain multiple doctorates in Archaeology, Geography, Restoration History, Greek, Hebrew, Jewish History, Early Church History, Reformation History, etc. Why not read from those who have? Incidentally, one of the men I have heard criticize commentaries is now an elder and values good commentaries now that he recognizes that it is not enough to be persuaded himself but that he must also persuade others (1 Peter 3:15-16).

**Kick Aside the Bad.** No book made by man is perfect. As my father was told by the senior Tom W. Butterfield in reference to the use of religious books, "You must have the sense of a chicken--to pick out what is food and what is not." It is up to the leadership of each congregation to determine the contents of its library. I would encourage congregations to support brotherhood printed material whenever possible. It is also important to realize that some of the best material on a subject may not even be among the writers of the brotherhood. Avoid the extreme that only brotherhood material will be part of the library. One would eliminate many Bible translations deemed reliable with such a restriction since those among denominations have had part in the work (e.g., KJV, NASB, NKJV, etc.). Also be careful about using material by wolves among us in sheep's clothing. Just because a book is written or published by someone that we think is reliable does not make it true. Not all works in a library necessarily have to teach the truth. Some books may be from a false teaching; e.g., Book of Mormon. No one who is true to the Bible can accept the Book of Mormon, but it may be in a church library for reference. If something is glaringly wrong with a book, then maybe adding a note card to the front inside cover detailing the error may salvage otherwise good material. We should examine it before adding it to the church library (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

**Keep the Congregation Informed.** Where I attend we do this in two ways. First, a series of articles is written for the bulletin that tells the congregation about books in the library. Second, whenever someone asks me a religious question I make a determined effort to take them to the library and answer the question using the library rather than my own knowledge. Remember that the concept that the brotherhood should know less than the preacher is the fundamental reason the falling away after the first century occurred and led into Catholicism. Train members to use the library and not to be dependent on you for the answers. Remind them that they will never learn all there is to know from a preacher and teacher, no matter how good they are.

**Encourage Participation.** Always ask for feedback and suggested topics that could be incorporated in the library. Be careful of requesting specific books because some are still babes and may suggest a work that should not be part of the library. Seeking topics rather than titles would help avoid a hurtful situation. Also, remind the congregation that books can be added to the library in other ways than from the treasury. Remind the congregation that they could



purchase a book in honor or memory of someone (provided it is first approved by the leadership.) If someone is not familiar with books then they could donate funds to have the person in charge of the library purchase the books. A sign in the book should reflect this dedication. It is a simple gesture, but a high honor. I came across a book dedicated to the memory of Olive Hill whom I have never met. She used to date my grandfather, George W. Kenney, whom I also never met, so I had an interest on what made that book unique. This dedication was actually my introduction to one of the preachers I admire the most - Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

### ***Conclusion***

The work of building an effective church library is measured in two ways. The first measurement is the resourcefulness of the contents of the library. A good way to test this is by going to the library to answer questions people ask. Many of the ideas for the church's library are not from suggested books but from people's questions that the library did not have sufficient materials to answer readily. The second measure of effectiveness is the actual use of the library. Some way of determining the utilization of the library would assist in the justification for continuance of the program. One does not need to over engineer the transfer of books which may stifle the traffic to the library, but some sort of measurement of its use would reinforce the need for such a resource. We have a simple sign out form on which members write their name, title of book, date checked out, and date returned. Periodically, we put a reminder to the entire congregation that an inventory is being made of the books and to return any they may have signed out. If a book is lost, then we simply replace it. If someone has the book in their personal library and has not returned it, then what is the real harm just replacing it? The point is to get as much valuable religious material into the hands of the brotherhood as possible. It is their responsibility to read it (1 Timothy 4:13). Finally, keep in mind that books convey messages long after we have passed from this life. The earthly investments today may reap heavenly dividends after we have departed and until Christ returns.



## **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

**Margie Overton**

We certainly can make a difference. We can change the world to make it better. People are watching what we do. There is never a time that we are not an influence. Either we are a good influence or we are a bad influence.

We must constantly try to be a good influence if we really want to make the right kind of difference. "You are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16.)

In order to be a shining light our lives must be filled with good works, and this is because we want to glorify our Father in heaven. Keep in mind that the brighter a light shines at its source, the farther it shines from its source!

### **We Must Have Faith That We Can Make a Difference**

What is Faith? "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1.) Faith is the design of the Christian plan of redemption to help us escape eternal damnation. It is the foundation of all Christian virtues (2 Peter 1:5-11.)

How does one acquire the faith that is needed to make a difference? There is only one way, and that is clearly taught in the New Testament. "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17.) Therefore, we must hear the divine message before we can have the faith that leads to salvation. This shows us the importance of the message and the fact that we are converted by the truth of God's word. No other way!

This truth comes by Jesus Christ. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:17.) "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." (John 17:17.)

After having heard the truth and obeying it, we are then ready to meet the challenge of making a difference. (Romans 6:17,18.)

## **I Must Have The Right Attitude If I Plan To Make A Difference**

I will work each day on my attitude. The slogan, "a better world begins with me," is certainly true.

"I am only one, but I am one, I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I ought to do. What I ought to do, I will do, so help me God." That should be our motto!

### **If I Want To Make A Difference, Then It Is Imperative That I Begin In My Own Home**

1. I will work at being the best wife that I can be. I must practice Philippians 2:3.
2. I have prayed that I would never be a hindrance to my husband in his great work of preaching the gospel.
3. God ordained that the wife be an helpmeet. That simply means someone suited to his needs!
4. Wives must realize that we are to be in subjection to our husbands. (Ephesians 5:20-33.)

True, some husbands do not act as they should, and it would be hard to show such a husband proper respect.

It is easy to be in subjection to a man who loves his wife as Christ loved the church. This kind of love is a self-sacrificing love. Love is doing, sharing, communicating, etc.

5. The good wife is not lazy. She keeps herself attractive, her house and children clean. She will not waste too much time with T.V. She will prepare good meals. She will try to cook foods that please her husband and children.

Learn to accept your husband. Dwell on his good qualities. Magnify them! If he thinks you believe in him, he just might try to measure up to your standards!

"Don't treat him as he is, treat him as he can be."

"The best way to compliment your husband is often."

### **To Make A Difference We Must Take Time To Train Our Blessed Children**

One of our great blessings and grave responsibilities as mothers is that of rearing children.

A godly mother can make a difference. Augustine said, "Give me mothers that are mothers and I will change the world." "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." (William Wallace) An old Spanish proverb says, "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy." Someone said, "The greatest gift a father can give his children is their mother's time."

When mothers will realize what God has entrusted to them by placing children in their arms, and when they work at bringing those precious ones up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, then we will see a change in the world. It will make a difference!

Oh how we need godly mothers who will take time to properly train their children!

**We Can Make A Difference By  
Being A Good Worker And Encourager  
In The Lord's Church**

There are many things that we can do as women. We can teach classes for children and ladies. We can do many good works by visiting the sick and taking food to those in need. We can send cards to the sick or bereaved. We can write letters of encouragement to missionaries. The list of good works goes on and on. Look around and see what needs to be done; then get busy. Don't wait to be told what to do!

**We Can Make A Difference  
In Our Neighborhood**

Try to be the very best neighbor that you can be, always looking for ways that you can help others. Be a caring, sharing, giving, helping neighbor. Always be a good example of Christ.

We all know ladies who have made a difference. Oh, they might not have been a public figure, perhaps not known by many. Maybe some would not stand in front of a ladies class and teach, but they were meekly going about their daily activities of service to others, personal evangelism, and bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**"I'm Just A Housewife"**

What am I doing with my life?  
Well - I am only a housewife.  
I'm a homework helper, expert on spelling,  
The keeper of secrets without telling;  
A Band-Aider, a hurt feelings mender,  
A peanut butter-jelly sandwich vender.  
I'm a bedmaker, laundry supervisor,  
Child disciplinarian, a chastiser;