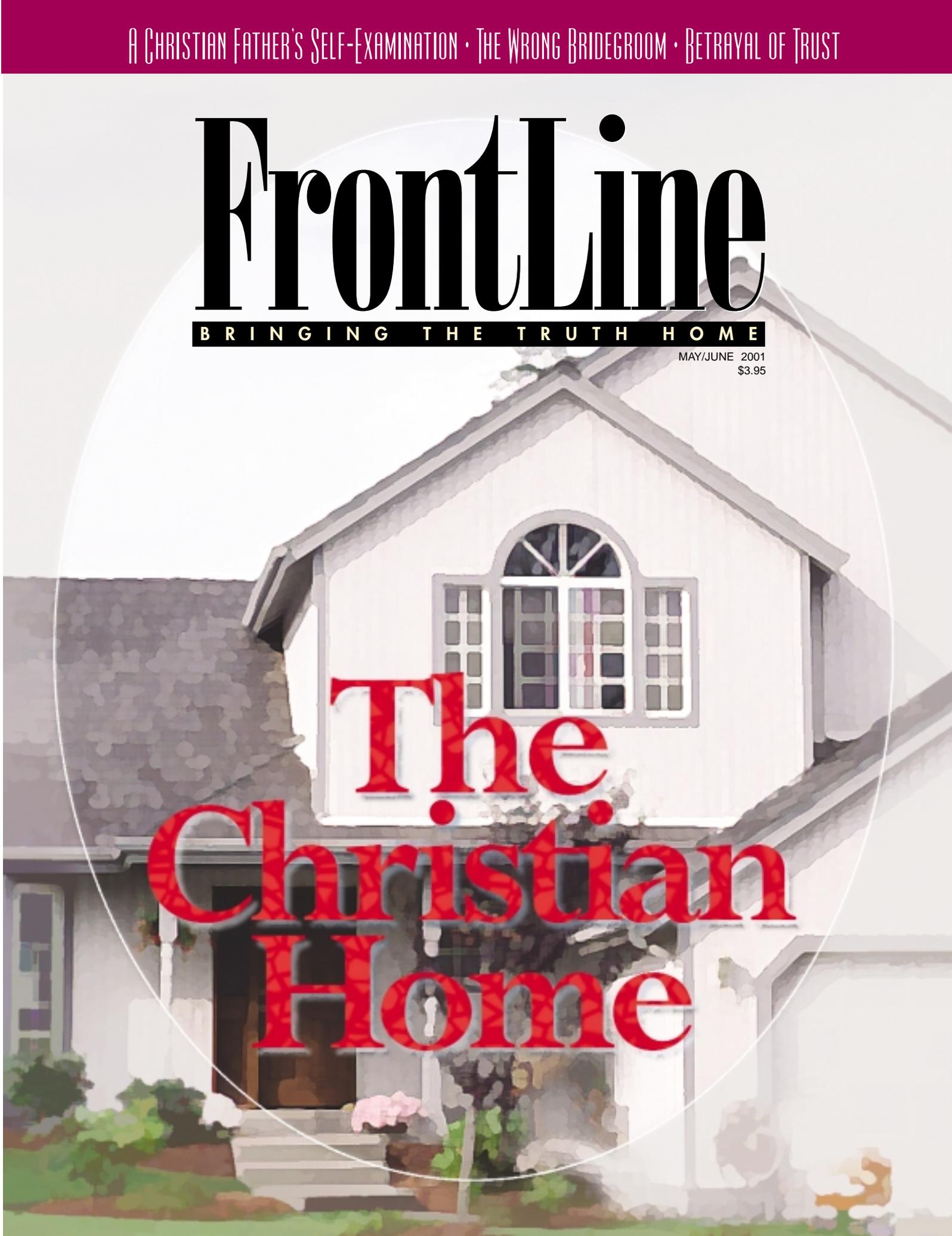


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I am so thankful for the revival attitude of *Frontline* magazine. Whenever I have opportunity to go through the pages of the magazine, many lessons are perceived in my heart. Especially the January/February 2001 article "How to Handle Suffering" gave me more food to go ahead in my ministerial path.

G. Raja Rajan
SOUTH INDIA

Being in full agreement with the doctrinal statement and practices of the FBF I am requesting a renewal of my membership. . . . In these days of compromise and weak convictions I am glad to be associated with Baptists who stand on the historical and Biblical standards of our heritage.

Evangelist Dan Souza
Wolcott, CT

Thank you for sending the January/February issue. . . . We appreciate the quality of your magazine, even though we can't receive it in a timely manner.

Elizabeth Hamilton
UGANDA

Last month's article on the blood of Christ ["Behind the Lines," March/April 2000] brought interesting questions to mind. If the exegesis of Psalm 16:10 is correct and the shed blood of Jesus never decayed, then we now have new light on other passages as well. For example, in John 9 Jesus spits. Shortly afterwards

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he sheds tears in the garden (Heb. 5). Blood, tears, and spit were all part of Jesus' body, all consisted primarily of water, and all were spilt on the ground. For consistency, should we now preach that the tears and spit of Jesus "did not . . . disappear into the dust of the ground," but was raised at the resurrection?

Pastor Kevin Schmidt
Sonora, CA

As a family we enjoy your magazine. We have one son in particular who feels the Lord is calling him into evangelism who literally devours *Frontline*. He has saved all for the past two years and frequently goes back and refers to them.

Steve Scroggins
Independence, MO

I have really enjoyed your magazine now for quite a while. I feel that it is one of the best Christian magazines on the market and I look forward to receiving it. Thank you for the great

Bible interpretations.

Herbert M. Curtis Sr.
herblesr@webtv.net

I think yours is the finest Baptist magazine to be found anywhere. May the Lord encourage your hearts, strengthen your hands, and enlarge your boundaries!

Habib J. Khoury
Fairport, NY

Thank you for your great publication. I look forward to reading it each month and am very grateful for your ministry.

Pastor Alan Beaulieu
Londonderry, NH

Thank you for a GREAT magazine. We always read it cover to cover shortly after it arrives.

Marcia Pearson
rgmrp@earthlink.net

We appreciate your ministry and also the position of the [Fundamental Baptist] Fellowship in these days.

Dr. Vaughn E. Sprunger
Berne, IN

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The Precious Blood of Christ

Part 5 of a sermon preached at the 1989 FBF national meeting at Bethel Baptist Church in Schaumburg, Illinois.

The precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19) is little esteemed and little estimated by carnal, wicked men. In his wickedness, sinful man would do away with the Biblical truth about the blood of Christ. Men have invented a bloodless religion, which they pretend is Christianity but which is in reality "another gospel, which is not another," (Gal. 1:7) but a perversion of the true gospel, and which therefore comes under the strongest and severest condemnation of God (Gal. 1:7-9). While perverters of the gospel speak of salvation by means of the example of Christ, or by the ethic of Christ, the Bible speaks of salvation by means of the blood of Christ. Though men usually pay scant regard to it, the Holy Ghost calls it "the precious blood of Christ."

Undoubtedly, the blood of Christ is the most precious thing in heaven, in earth, or in hell. There are sound Biblical reasons for so esteeming the blood of Christ. It is precious by the dignity of the Person of Christ. The value of the blood of Christ is determined by the value of the Person to whom it belongs. The fundamental question, then, is who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). This is the consistent testimony of the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word [Christ], and the Word was with God and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14).

He is expressly called "the Son of God" (John 10:36). God the Father testified of Him, "Thou art my beloved Son" Luke 3:22).

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, He is called God's "Son" (v. 2), "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person" (v. 3), and is addressed by the Father as God: "But unto the Son He saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever'" (v. 8).

Who can begin to understand the dignity of this unique Person? Who can calculate the work of eternal dignity? Put together all of the jewels and all the wealth of all the monarchs and the total is not worth mentioning when we talk about the value of the Person of Christ. That infinite worth is not in any way lessened by His taking a sinless, human nature into personal union with Himself.

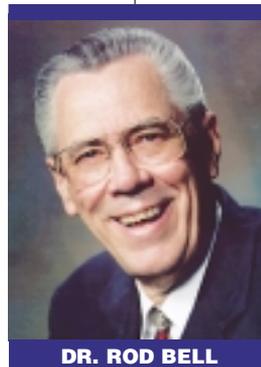
Peter was inspired to lay emphasis on the dignity of Christ's Person when he spoke to the Jews about their crime in killing Him: "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead" (Acts 3:14, 15). The Holy One, the Just One, the Prince of life. What titles! What dignity! What majesty! What God! Paul spoke in a similar vein. In 1 Corinthians 2:8, he called the Lord Jesus Christ "the Lord of glory." The blood of Christ is precious because it is His blood, and all the inestimable virtues and all the value of God manifested in the flesh are in it.

The blood of Christ is precious because of the depth of Christ's passion.

Was there any suffering and sorrow like Christ's (Lam. 1:12)? From the depths of Golgotha's darkness, the voice of our Savior sounded the deepest note of woe ever experienced on this old sin-cursed earth when He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Well did Ira Sankey put it in his immortal words:

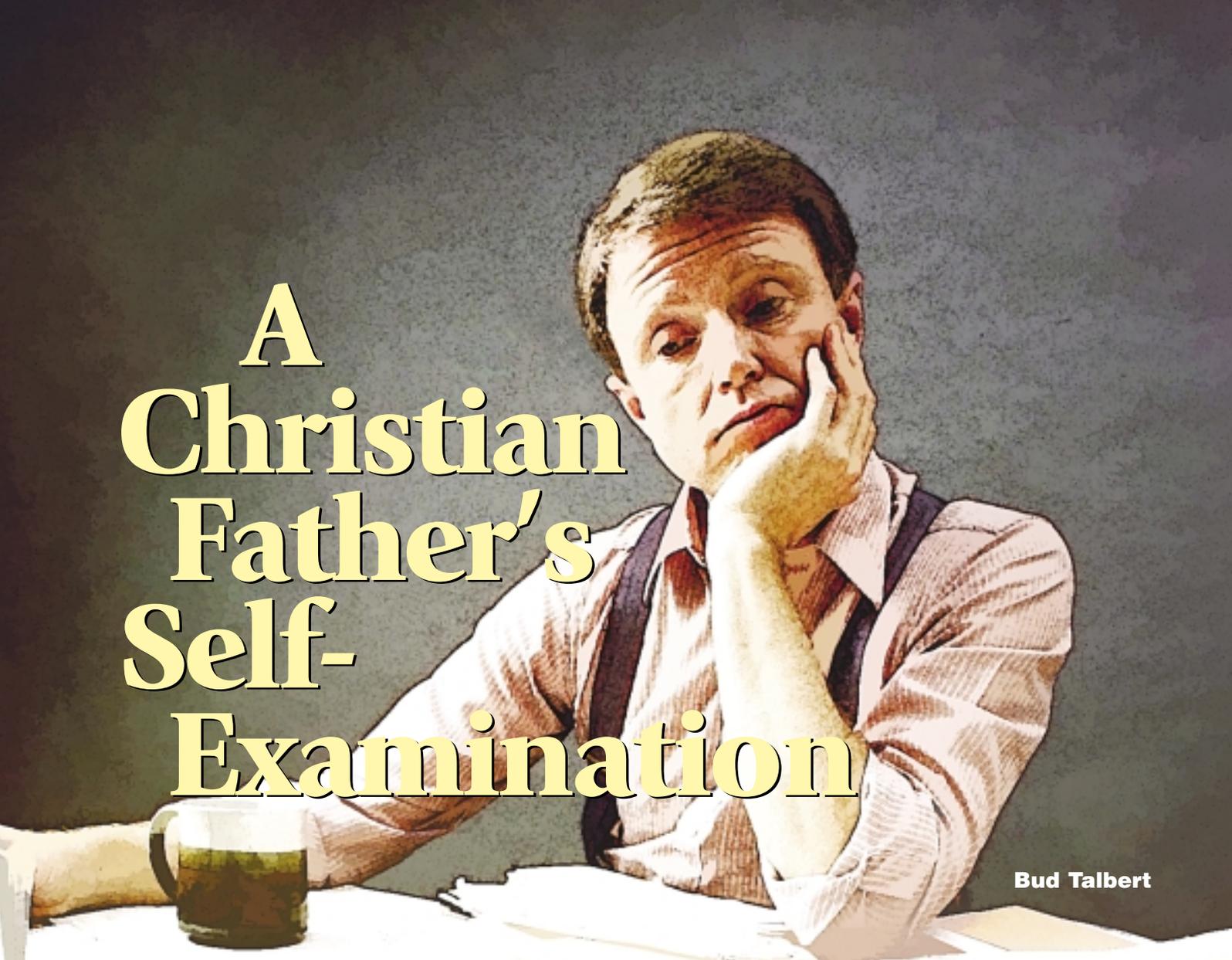
But none of the ransomed
ever knew
How deep were the
waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night
the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep
that was lost.

The blood of Christ is declared precious by the delight of Christ's people. Both on earth and in heaven, the redeemed of the Lord love to sing of the virtue, the value, and the victory of the blood of Christ. Nothing thrills the soul of a child of God more than to think upon the precious blood of Christ. Even eternity will not exhaust our praise for the shed blood of the Lamb. Nothing else can save souls here on earth. Nothing else can keep souls out of hell. Oh, that sinners would be able to see the preciousness of the blood of Christ and cry to Him for the application of it to their hearts in saving power.



DR. ROD BELL

Please note: Breaking up a long message such as this one into six brief parts was a challenge, and sections of Part 3 were inadvertently repeated in Part 4. We apologize for any confusion or misunderstanding that may have resulted. Dr. Bell's message will conclude in the next issue.



A Christian Father's Self- Examination

Bud Talbert

G Campbell Morgan (1863–1945), a great Congregational preacher, once said: “What I want my children to be, that I am!” The father’s example *is* his instruction.

The following series of questions is designed to help a Christian father evaluate his paternal effectiveness. After you have honestly and earnestly asked yourself these questions, then ask your family to answer the same questions about you. We tend to be dishonest with ourselves, so the objective and freely expressed opinion of family, especially our children, ought to be

appreciated. They are more likely to see us the way God sees us.

When we turn the searchlight of God’s Word on ourselves, we must remember two things. First, my reluctance to do it may indicate that I have something to hide. Nobody enjoys having his faults exposed, but that is the first and necessary step to correcting them. A failure in self-examination dooms us to self-deception. Second, failures need to be repented of and apologized for, and every effort made to remedy them. Otherwise we simply become forgetful hearers of the Word and not doers of it.

The Questions

The key question for every father to answer is this:
What kind of an influence am I exerting on my children?

- ◆ Do I know what goes on in my home? How? Do I know what goes on in the lives of my family members?
- ◆ How often do I speak with each of my children seriously and personally?
- ◆ Do I know what my children read (Prov. 4:43)? Do I know what kind of music my children listen to?
- ◆ Do I know what my children watch on television (Prov. 4:23)?
- ◆ Do I know who my children's friends are (1 Cor. 15:33)?
- ◆ How much time each week are my children alone (Prov. 29:15)?
- ◆ How much time do I spend with each of my children each week?
- ◆ Do I pray with my children personally? Do my children know that I pray privately? Do they know that I pray with their mother?
- ◆ Am I the head of my home? Do I assume the leadership of my home (Gen. 18:19)? If not, why not?
- ◆ Does my example and influence promote godliness in my home (Eph. 6:4)?
- ◆ How am I teaching my children to be holy? To be grateful? To be happy? To love and enjoy God?
- ◆ What are two specific things that I do in my home to promote godliness in my children?
- ◆ What are two things that I allow in my home that tend to hinder godliness?
- ◆ Am I allowing anything in my home that is destructive of my child's spiritual life?
- ◆ Is my job more important to me than my family?
- ◆ What kind of situation would it take for me to quit my job for my child's sake?
- ◆ Is any hobby or sport more important to me than my family?
- ◆ Do I have one testimony at church and a different one at home? Am I a hypocrite?
- ◆ Do I want my children to be like I am right now?
- ◆ Are my children proud of me? Why? Or why not?
- ◆ Do my children see any idols in my life (Exod. 20:2–6)?
- ◆ Have my children ever heard me take the Lord's name in vain (Exod. 20:7)?

*“What I
want my
children to be,
that I am!”
The father's
example is his
instruction.*

- ◆ Do I sanctify the Lord's Day (Exod. 20:8–11)? How? Do my children sanctify the Lord's Day too?
- ◆ Do I see to it that my children are in church? Am I faithful in my own church attendance? Again, if not, why not?
- ◆ Does my behavior make it easy for my children to reverence and respect me (Exod. 20:12)?
- ◆ Do my children see me honoring my parents (Exod. 20:12)?
- ◆ Do I expect my children to do what I am not doing?
- ◆ Am I trying to compensate for missed opportunities in my own life by forcing my children to do what they themselves don't want to or are not able to do?
- ◆ Do my children think that my anger is excessive? Sinful (Exod. 20:13)?
- ◆ Do my children know their father to be morally pure (Exod. 20:14)?
- ◆ Do they know that I love their mother?
- ◆ When was the last time they saw me being affectionate with their mother?
- ◆ Do my children know me to be honest (Exod. 20:15, 16)? Have they ever known me to steal? To lie?
- ◆ Do I keep my promises to my children (Exod. 13:5)?
- ◆ Do my children hear me complain about lack of money (Exod. 20:17)?
- ◆ Do they know me to be content?
- ◆ What am I doing to instruct my children in God's Word (Deut. 6:4–9)?
- ◆ Is Scripture a very common thing in my home? Do my children hear it from me? Do we have family devotions? Daily?
- ◆ What am I doing to ensure that my children are saved (Rom. 4:11)?
- ◆ Am I teaching my children to trust the Lord by my own testimony of faith (Gen. 22:7, 8)?
- ◆ Have I spoken to each of my children about salvation? About baptism? About serving the Lord?
- ◆ Am I instructing my family in the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19)?
- ◆ Do my children have their own convictions and standards, or are they just following me because I make them?
- ◆ Is my family close to me? Am I easy to approach and talk to (Rom. 8:15)?

- ◆ Do I provoke my children to wrath (Eph. 6:4)? How? Why?
- ◆ Do I “pity” my children (my boys as well as my girls) as I ought (Ps. 103:13)?
- ◆ Am I passing godly or “vain” traditions on to my children (1 Pet. 1:18)?
- ◆ Do I have a favorite among my children (1 Pet. 1:17)? Am I consistently more generous with any one of my children (Gen. 37:3, 4)?
- ◆ Is my love for my family obvious (1 John 3:1)? How?
- ◆ Am I a priest before God in behalf of my children (Job 1:5)?
- ◆ Do I pray for the future spouse of each of my children? What kind of spouse do I want for my child? What kind of spouse do I want my child to be (Gen. 24)?
- ◆ Is my home a place of peace (Gen. 27)?
- ◆ Do I discipline my children (Heb. 12:7; Prov. 22:6)? Do my children think that my discipline is fair?
- ◆ Am I training my children to be responsible (Prov. 22:6)?
- ◆ Am I training my children to love their father’s God (Gen. 32:9)?
- ◆ Am I restraining the sinful, selfish impulses of my children (1 Sam. 3:13)?

- ◆ Am I “displeasing” my children at appropriate times (1 Kings 1:6; Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 23:13)?
- ◆ How am I teaching my children to be modest (Gen. 9:22)?
- ◆ How am I teaching my children to serve the Lord willingly (Gen. 12:1; Matt. 4:22)?
- ◆ Which is more important to me—leaving my children a spiritual inheritance or a material one (Matt. 6:33; Gen. 31:1–16)? What is my greatest legacy to them?
- ◆ Are my children liable for the punishment of sins that I have committed (Exod. 20:5)?

Conclusion

Highlight those questions where you find yourself most wanting. Read the Scriptures associated with those obligations, and before God genuinely confess your failure. Genuine confession includes (1) a frank admission of personal guilt (not offering excuses and rationalizations for the wrong); (2) genuine sorrow that I have thus offended God by violating His holy requirements (not sorrow that I have been “caught” by God); and (3) a willingness to accept the consequences of my sin. Plead with God for His forgiving mercy, and for grace to forsake your failures and to be a more godly father.

Bud Talbert is pastor of Foundation Baptist Church in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

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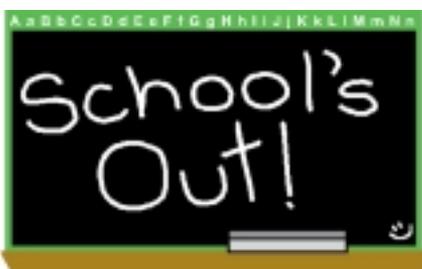
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Raising Children for the Lord *in a* *Single-Parent Home*



Sunday, December 3, 1995, was a Sunday that will forever be in my heart and mind. It was a wonderful Lord's Day at our church. My husband and I had just taken on a position as Sunday school teachers to a group of boys and girls in the fourth through sixth grades. We had worked hard at preparing our first lesson together. I watched as he taught the lesson, and I was so blessed to see that he was making an impact on the children's hearts with God's Word. We closed the class singing the wonderful hymn "Blessed Assurance." The message the pastor brought that day was also a blessing to our hearts. He spoke on being face to face with Jesus and what a day that would be. My husband leaned over, took my hand, and whispered, "I can't wait to see Christ face to face."

After the service was over we went home and had lunch. It was not unlike our son to ask his dad to shoot some basketball with him because his dad was also his coach for the junior varsity basketball team at his school. My husband was tired, I could tell, but he agreed to go back to the church's gym and shoot some ball for a bit. As he kissed me goodbye, I tried to persuade him to say no this time, but he said it was okay and he wouldn't be long.

As I had some spare time, I called my sister who lived a few streets away just to chat for a few minutes. While talking with my sister we were interrupted by her call-waiting feature, and she excused herself to answer the incoming call. A few seconds went by, and she came back on the telephone to say that it was my son calling trying to get in touch with me to let me know that my husband had just had a heart attack in the gym while playing. My husband died in the gym that day. But we had the assurance from God's Word that he was now face to face with Christ. We had that to celebrate.

God has been so faithful to His word, for "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation" (Ps. 68:5). As I cried out to God for His help the day that He allowed my husband to go home, He has been faithful to undertake all our cares and has directed our paths in His ways.

It has been a challenge to raise an only son. I would never have

Gayle Thompson

chosen this walk, but now that I can look back over these past five years I see God's goodness in our lives.

I had to obey God at times when I didn't have the strength emotionally even to think clearly. But I knew that the consequence of disobeying Him would be worse than a little discomfort at the time. I had to make a choice to leave a church and school that I felt would not be the best for my son and me. It was one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make. I agonized over the decision, but I knew from God's Word that I had to get my son in a ministry that had solid leadership and godly standards if I was going to raise him for the Lord. We found a Christian school and church that was over an hour away from our home. I prayed that the Lord would give me the strength to go forward with this decision.

He did, and we started our journey that took us driving back and forth for a year at 1000 miles a week. We were involved in church and school activities, and many days we would leave in the dark of the morning and not return until the dark of the night. After a year, the Lord saw that it was the right time for our house to sell. God provided a job at the school for me and a place to live within walking distance to the church and school. The year that my son and I spent in driving was one that we will always cherish. At the time it seemed like a burden, but it brought us closer in prayer with the Lord and closer in our relationship as mother and son.

I knew that this move to the church and school was right, and the men in leadership there helped my son to grow in his walk with the Lord. I couldn't be both Mom and Dad, and the Lord knew that my son needed godly men for examples in his life.

My son graduated last year, and he is studying to be a pastor at a fundamental Christian college. It hasn't been the easiest job to raise a son for the Lord without my husband. But God has been our guide and protector. He has not let us go without anything that we needed. When our hearts were (and still can be) filled with longing for our loved one, God was there to comfort us. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3, 4).

We whom the Lord has allowed to be single and raising children have to understand that this did not come into our lives by chance. We do not need to go about our lives in sorrow, feeling that we are left all alone. God is our helper! He is our focus. He will sustain us through all that He allows for us to go through. Our children need to see on whom we are depending and to whom we go for our strength. Mothers raising children alone need to be moms and not overcompensate and become harsh, trying to rule like a man. God will supply the godly man for our sons. He knows

what our children need. We need to trust Him in all that He has given us to do. We may sometimes feel overwhelmed at the job set before us, but God has promised to be the "father to the fatherless." We must be strong, but strong in the Lord and not in ourselves.

As my son has seen my struggles to be a single parent, he has also seen that I depend on the Lord. That has given him strength to go on with his life without his earthly father.

I do want to encourage single parents, especially Christian women. God has given us our children as a blessing from Him. We have them for such a short time. Let us be thankful to God for them and commit our children unto Him. I have found 1 Peter 5:7 to be a faithful promise: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

As my son is now preparing for the ministry, I am humbled by the loving care that God has shown to us since the death of my husband. There were times when at the eleventh hour God saw to it to meet a need in our lives so we

could see His care for us. God's care for His children is so tender and loving. He disciplines in love and watches over us in love. This single-parent life that God has allowed for me has taught me a great lesson on depending upon my Savior. Before the death of my husband I said I knew God, and I did through His Son's salvation. But I can truly say that I now know God through His loving watch care these past five years. To be able to have joy and comfort through the death of a loved one is something that can come only from our gracious and loving Father. He is truly a God of all comfort.

Gayle Thompson is employed by Bethany Christian School and is an active member of First Baptist Church of Troy in Troy, Michigan.

Our children need to see on whom we are depending and to whom we go for our strength.

Kids, get your Bibles!" They come from the corners of the house, ready to sit down and go through our almost nightly ritual.

When I was growing up, I didn't know what family devotions were. I knew in my immature mind that they had to be something good because they had to do with "family." It was the "devotions" part that kind of threw me. I understood vaguely that it had to do with God, but what did the family do? What was the purpose?

I had no experience from which to draw, so when my husband and I had a family of our own, we had to start from scratch, since he was not used to them either. Now that we have had family devotions for years, I can affirm that they are *very* good and that they have everything to do with family and everything to do with God.

Everything About Family

When we initially held that bundle of blankets that cocooned our first child, a powerful feeling of responsibility overcame us. God had entrusted us to rear that child for Him! Part of that child training has to do with their knowing who God is, comprehending what He has done in the past, what He is doing right now, and what He will do in the future. Family devotions provide the meeting time to come together to talk about God and His precious Word, pray, and sing. It is really the only time of the day, other than at supper, that we are all together long

enough for any meaningful discussion to take place.

The children see our seriousness about serving God. Even when we don't "feel" like it, we still make it a priority in our weekly schedule. This is that old-fashioned concept of discipline—doing it when it's not convenient, doing it because it's the best thing for you and the children, and doing it because God tells us to. Colossians 2:6, 7 say, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Devotions with the family will help your children see your love and devotion for the Lord. If you don't have enough love for Him, but want to, your love for Him will multiply if you just put forth the effort.

Children grow up so quickly. Parents grow old quickly. We can maximize the years we have together by weaving principles from the Bible into the fabric of our lives.

One evening when my husband had to work late, I said, "Kids, get your Bibles," and we proceeded to have devotions. I had each one of the children give a testimony. My heart was touched when all of them stated, without prompting, something about God—not about themselves. They are not spiritual giants, but God is working, leading them to a greater relationship with Him. Family devotions has a part in that. It provides a time that they (and we) can voice what God is accomplishing in our lives.

One Mother's Perspective on Family Devotions



Bonnie Oberg

I do admit our times are not always so spiritual. Our boys might contend over a certain chair, or we might not be in the greatest mood. Occasionally we might be restless and impatient to “get it over with.” One of us might not be feeling well. We sometimes digress into talking about unimportant things and then have to refocus on the job at hand. Sometimes we will wander off the pathway and end up talking about Bible translations or some other subject and never even open the Scriptures!

As the children mature, they are also developing their values about a lot of different subjects. Taking this opportunity to mold and shape them into Christ-honoring, God-fearing adults is not only our privilege, it is our duty (Ps. 119:4).

Everything About God

The purpose for coming together is to concentrate on God. The material that we have used has varied over the years, but it is secondary to the reality of having the devotions. The main book, of course, is the Bible, God’s communication to us. You can take other books and supplement, but it is essential that you keep the emphasis and focus on the Bible.

We have had such rich times dipping into a commentary, or maybe my husband had prepared something special for our time. When the children were younger, we used printed materials that were on their level. It’s sometimes good to diversify and have just a prayer time or a testimony time. Right now our family is reading through the Bible, and we are in Numbers. Yes, we made it through Leviticus, and we were able to derive many things that would help us in our Christian walk. Remember, “All Scripture is given by God, and is profitable . . .” (2 Tim. 3:16). We read the chapter out loud, with each person taking a verse in the order we have set up. This helps with several things: concentration, increased reading ability, comprehension and participation, not to mention familiarizing ourselves with the Word of God. We talk about the chapter when we are through reading, and you wouldn’t believe some of the stimulating discussions we have had! Our children are learning about God, and their parents are too!

Family devotions can be a forum for correcting and adjusting attitudes as well as for God using providential verses in our lives. Recently I was getting frustrated and annoyed with the children because of their griping spirits and complaining tongues. Instead of doing what I knew to do and properly disciplining them, I kept letting it go. I was irritated and disgruntled, and I asked my husband if he could please give the kids “a talking to” right before devotions. He did, and they responded well. But we all about dropped out of our seats when our daughter started to read Numbers 11:1: “And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.” A hush settled in the room. Was this verse for us? Yes, a thousand times, *yes!* I said, “I don’t think this is coincidental.” I tearfully

apologized that I had failed my children in not properly correcting them earlier, and they apologized for complaining against God and displeasing Him. Give God the opportunity to correct and adjust your spirits and to work providentially when your family’s Bibles and hearts are open.

Music is an integral part of family devotions. The children learn about notes, words, pitches, melody, harmony, and composers’ stories—not to mention truths taught in the songs themselves. So much doctrine can be taught through good hymns. We have memorized many hymns and songs because of our time together as a family. My husband has even written a couple of songs that would help reinforce a certain principle. Those songs will probably never be heard by anybody else, but they are meaningful to us, and they bolster what we are trying to teach.

Prayer is a major part of our time together. We all love our children, and a wonderful way to show it to them is to pray over them in their presence. We pray that they will never go astray, that they will always love the Lord and grow up to serve Him, for their daily struggles and needs. This makes a penetrating impression on their young hearts. If they are even tempted to get out of line or make wrong choices, they will have to think twice because we have communicated our prayers and desires for their lives.

Prayer for other people also has an impact. All those prayer-dependent missionaries on the different fields are counting on the Christian families like us to lift them up to the throne of grace! If the child learns how to pray for someone else’s needs, the selfishness of his own heart tends to melt away for the time being. He learns that he is *not* the center of the universe.

Some things come up regularly that need our prayers. Someone had an accident or is sick, someone is going through a difficult time, someone needs to be saved. Once our son prayed that he would really remember what he learns about God in school, camp, and at home. I know God will answer that prayer!

We have three kids. You might be just a couple. Or perhaps you have six children, and two of those are under the age of three. You might have stepchildren, foster children, or your parents living with you. The important thing is that you draw together for this important task. The old adage says it best: Families that pray together stay together. It is also my observation that the families that habitually persevere with devotions serve the Lord with their whole hearts as well.

From this mother’s perspective, there is nothing negative connected with time around God’s Word. God is honored and glorified when you assemble for family devotions. He is pleased that you make the effort to carry out this family time. It is not a drudgery; it is a privilege and a blessing! My hope and prayer for you is that you keep at it, even when it’s very difficult to do so.

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The Wrong Bridegroom

The Associated Press carried this story from the *Times of India*: It was a double wedding. The beautiful brides were veiled. The traditional Hindu ceremony of circling a fire seven times with the groom was carried out in a lawful manner. But when the veils were lifted, the brides realized to their horror that each had married the wrong man. The story goes on to say that the authorities determined that the vows were sacred and that the wedding was valid. How sad! Each bride had her vision impaired by a veil!

But sadly enough in many Christian marriages today when the veil is removed, many brides and bridegrooms find they have married the wrong person. What veils today's vision?

A common veil is a false concept of "romance." Are you in love with that person, or are you in love with love? Does the romance and beauty of the wedding gown and the excitement of leaving home and its problems obscure your intellectual, spiritual, and emotional view of the beloved one? Marriage will never solve your problems. You take your problems into a marriage and add them to the problems of your partner.

Another veil that impedes vision is the illusion that you can change your husband or wife to be what you want him or her to be after marriage. No, you can't. A man comes into a marriage to "love . . . as Christ loved



Doris Fisher Harris

the church." That must embrace the unlovely. A woman is to "honor and obey." That includes the less-than-lovely aspects. Only true love, a love that overlooks the frailties, can see and desire to share all that is beautiful.

Before planning for a wedding, take some time to observe how the object of your affection relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. Daily consistency in the Christian life is an indicator of future consistency in a relationship to a marriage partner.

Take some time to observe your special one's relationships with those who love him or her. How does he relate to his mother? Is he kind, thoughtful, tender, helpful? If so, he'll be more likely to

show those qualities in his relationship to his wife. How does she relate to her father? Is she obedient? Is she respectful? Watch the relationship your beloved one has with mother, father, siblings, teachers, and pastor, and you will have a sound indicator of what the relationship may one day be with you.

Marriage is for life. Even divorce will not erase its consequences. Be sure you enter this life-altering arrangement fully aware of your beloved's strengths and weaknesses.

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Solomon's Three Steps to Financial Freedom

Steven Owen



With the worsening of the American economy, many of us are just scraping by, or worse. Indeed, U.S. bankruptcies are at an all-time high. This ungodly way out of debt should never be considered by Christians. And yet, what are we to do if we have too much month left at the end of the money? We are supposed to tithe; it's wrong to steal, and we should pay our bills on time. How can we make ends meet in a godly way?

God's book of wisdom, Proverbs, speaks extensively on the subject of money. One hundred of 898 verses deal with its acquisition and use. It is not God's will for His people to labor in financial misery. Proverbs 22:4 says, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life." The Lord tells us how we can acquire this wealth, keep our testimony ("honor"), and enjoy real living ("life").

Step One: Examine Our Motives for Wanting More Money

This first consideration regards our attitude towards money. Are we really sure that we need and want more money? Perhaps we are asking money to do something it cannot do. The natural man thinks "money is the answer to everything" (Eccl. 10:19). Proverbs tells us there are many things more valuable than money. No amount of cash can purchase a godly wife (31:10), true friendship (19:4), a godly heritage (13:22), or real security (11:4). Money is far less valuable than your loving family (15:17), your reputation (22:1), your walk with Christ (15:16), your character (19:22), your integrity (16:8), or the wisdom that God gives to the humble (20:15). Money is also very dangerous. Money fosters pride (18:11, 23), the sin that caused the highest angel, Lucifer, to fall from his exalted position in heaven (Isa. 14:12-15). Pride causes the Lord to resist us and withhold His grace (James 4:6). Money lies. It convinces us that our life is secure and blinds us to our spiri-

tual needs (11:28).

Materialism was the great sin of the Laodicean church (Rev. 3:14-22). It deceived the people into thinking they were spiritual Christians (v. 17), when in reality Jesus Christ was not even among them—He was on the outside seeking entrance to His own church (v. 20)! Our attitude toward money must be "give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (30:8, 9).

We need to face the truth: if we want more just for the sake of having it, we are materialistic. If we are willing to sacrifice those things that God says are more valuable than money, we're greedy. If we are looking to purchase happiness with cash, we are idolaters (Col. 3:5), because happiness comes only from the hand of God (Ps. 1:1-6; Eccl. 5:18-20). Let's be honest: do we want the money for godly reasons?

Step Two: Find Out Why We Do Not Have Enough

If our attitude toward money is right, then we must next consider why we cannot seem to make ends meet. Solomon gives us an exhaustive "checklist" for us to measure ourselves. These proverbs are designed to expose for us the underlying cause(s) of our hardship so we can address a remedy. They require that we be absolutely honest with ourselves.

Ninety percent of the verses in this category address a single cause. The overwhelming reason we cannot make ends meet is our own laziness. Laziness takes many forms. One form is the failure to care for what God has already provided us, either through neglecting routine maintenance (10:4), or, when we do maintenance, doing it poorly (18:9). Improper maintenance forces us to repurchase items that should have lasted.

Laziness takes other forms. Procrastination is a great destroyer (10:5). Many of us simply enjoy too much leisure; we do not work often nor hard enough (20:13; 19:15; 24:30-34). Perhaps we spend too much time talking instead of working (14:23), or we pamper ourselves with excuses for not working harder (20:4). Some of us are relying on foolish and sinful "Get-Rich-Quick" schemes that in reality lead only to poverty (12:11; 28:19).

If laziness is not the cause, Solomon points out that perhaps the fault lies in our spending habits. Maybe we are living "too high on the hog" (21:17, 20), or maybe we make impulsive decisions instead of really thinking a proposed purchase through (21:5). The excellent housewife is a careful shopper who seeks out bargains (31:14).

Sin leads to financial hardship. God's chastening for disobedience can reach into our pocketbook (13:18). The immoral or carousing lifestyle also brings one to poverty (29:3). Greed has a way of leading not to riches but to want (22:16). Greed blinds and causes us to make foolish investments (28:20).

Solomon's checklist teaches us that financial hardship is usually self-inflicted. He lists only one cause outside of ourselves: governmental injustice (13:23). Whatever the case, if Solomon's checklist has exposed the underlying reason for our lack as self-inflicted, let us repent. Let us realize that God has provided for us, but we have not been good stewards for the Lord.

Step Three: Follow the Path to Financial Freedom

The Lord shows us how to be both truly happy and truly rich. First, we must accept our present circumstances as God's will for us at this time. In other words, be content. Contentment is freedom from want and worry. It is the Lord who makes rich (10:22) "and he adds no sorrow to it!" All this hurry to become rich is evil and actually leads only to poverty (28:22). Money runs when you chase it (23:4-5). Let us remember that God gives money to people who can handle it. It is a reward to the righteous (13:21). The Lord will meet your every need; doing His will does not result in want (13:25; Matt. 6:33).

Secondly, let us work (13:11). Let us take the talents and opportunities that God has given us and use them to the full. We must be good stewards for Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, we must carefully man-

age the assets God has given us (27:23-27). This, too, is part of stewardship.

Finally, and most importantly, do not forget that your mastery and obedience to the Scriptures, True Wisdom, is the path of prosperity (24:3-4). Riches are found along the path of your walk with Christ! If our attitude toward money is right, and our labor and spending are right, and our walk with God is right, our pocketbooks shall be right. Indeed, "by humility [accepting God's will for your life] and the fear of the Lord [your reverent walk with Christ], are riches, and honor, and life"!

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Betrayal of Trust

Jeff Straub

It's probably a church's worst nightmare. The phones begin to ring throughout the congregation as word travels that the pastor has been caught in a moral indiscretion. He will not be preaching on Sunday because the deacons have called for or accepted his immediate resignation. He will clean out his office, pack up his house, and move to another community in shame. His wife is broken and humiliated, his children are devastated, his neighbors are shocked, and the flock he cared for sits in the service in stunned disbelief. Anger, frustration, grief, pain, and *betrayal*—these thoughts flow together in the hearts of church members as they try to come to grips with the overwhelming news. A successful ministry is destroyed with this grievous revelation.

How did it happen? How long did it go on? Why did we not see it coming? These are some of the questions a congregation will ask in the weeks following the disclosure of pastoral infidelity. For a while, the church will simply tread water as other pastoral staff or lay leadership attempt to fill the void left by the departing pastor. Attendance may suffer, the offerings may drop, and unsaved visitors—forget it! And if the church is in a smaller community, there is the gossip, the speculation, the rumors. Why go to church when Christians—no, when pastors—are such hypocrites? The entire ministry receives a black eye.

This seems like a “worst case” scenario, but in the day of the “information superhighway” with its immediate access to pornography and sexually motivated chatrooms, a cancerous spiritual tumor can grow within the heart of a seemingly good man in the privacy of his home or office long before the problem manifests itself publicly. “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” (Prov. 6:27, 28).

What can be done to ensure that this situation does not happen in your church? Can a congregation do anything to protect its pastor and church against pastoral infidelity? And what if there is a betrayal of trust? How then does a congregation pick up the pieces? What's a church to do? These questions need to be considered forthrightly and Biblically if the work of the Lord and the pastor are to be protected in this sin-cursed world.

Emergency Surgery

Hopefully your congregation will never need the counsel offered here, but some will. What should a church do if a pastor falls? How can it hope to recover? Will people ever respect the pastoral ministry again? Sadly, some men will be overtaken by sin; when they are, the following steps will help the church recover and heal. How a church responds in this test will be crucial to the long-term health of the church and its community witness.

1. Seek mature spiritual help.

If the incident involves a pastor in a church without other pastoral staff, it may be helpful to secure the counsel of another senior pastor in the area or an older man in ministry whom the congregation respects. “In the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

2. Do not sweep moral failure under the carpet!

This point cannot be overemphasized! The tendency of church leadership may be to keep things quiet to protect the reputation of the church or the man's family, but the Bible very clearly addresses what must be done. Paul told Timothy not to receive an accusation lightly against an elder, but if there is sufficient proof, then a public rebuke is warranted. First Timothy 5:19, 20 say: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” Consider the example of Nathan after David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12). Follow Matthew 18 carefully if there is no repentance. Public censure is mandatory if the Biblical requirements are to be followed.

3. Do not immediately shift the blame to an inadequate wife or a sultry temptress.

Blame-shifting is endemic to the human race. Adam and Eve both failed to accept their guilt in the original transgression, yet God held them fully culpable. No matter what external circumstances may have been present, the pastor who sins bears the entire guilt for the transgression. He is held to the highest of standards in the Scripture and must not shift the blame. Only by accepting full responsibility for his actions can he find God's forgiveness. The pastor who sins must evidence the pattern of David's confession in

Psalm 51. The church may unwittingly abet his blame-shifting by focusing on someone else when a pastor sins.

4. *Do not withhold forgiveness if repentance is forthcoming.*

The Biblical pattern must be followed carefully if the church is to recover. Sin acknowledged and confessed is painful, but repentance requires forgiveness. Though the pastor has wounded the church deeply, he must be permitted to make it right publicly. An angry church that withholds forgiveness broadens the sin by acting in an unbiblical manner. As painful as the meeting might be, a man who has wounded the testimony of the church and the reputation of the ministry must publicly go before his church to make things right. Ephesians 4:32 says, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

5. *Do not forget the pastor's family.*

The church leadership must exercise great care over the pastor for the sake of his family. Consider the sin's devastating consequences on his wife and children. They will probably lose their home and their security. They will likely be forced to move, maybe in the middle of the school year. The wife may be forced into the workforce, especially if the pastor abandons his family. The church should do all it can for the sake of the pastor's family, no matter how devastated the church feels. This may mean financially supporting the family through a transition period and helping them relocate. The temptation will be to cut the pastor's salary immediately, but first consider the family's needs.

6. *Do not attempt to restore the pastor to his ministry.*

No matter how sincere the repentance seems or how minor the sin may be when compared with others' failures, the pastor should not remain in his leadership position after a moral failure. Some churches may be tempted to rationalize away the seriousness of the sin ("He's only human!" or "It only happened once" or "a few times"). If his reputation has been damaged by a public, moral indiscretion, he has violated the Pauline requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2 to be "the husband of wife," or "a one-woman man." He needs to step aside and allow the church to find a "blameless" pastor. Whether he can be restored to ministry at some time in the future should be left out of the immediate situation. What is important is that the man and his family get counseling and the church gets spiritual care. To restore the pastor immediately allows for neither.¹

We have thus far considered the church and pastoral immorality from two standpoints: prevention and recovery. Now we need to consider pastoral moral failure from the standpoint of the pastor. Men in the ministry need to be regularly reminded of the terrible consequences of pastoral immorality. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Nowhere is Paul's exhortation found in 1 Corinthians 10:12 more fitting than in this matter of pastoral personal purity. This is one of the most serious sins that a man of God can commit, and while it is as forgivable as any other transgression, it leaves scars that do not quickly heal, not simply in the man's own life but in the lives of many others. Those in the ministry need to

weigh carefully the high cost of sinful behavior as an aid to avoiding moral sin.

1. *Pastoral immorality is a betrayal of trust.*

When a man in ministry commits a sexual sin, he breaches the high moral standard of the ministry. Many people are affected by the sin because it is, in its essence, a betrayal of trust. The man who would serve God must live above reproach, and if he fails, a sense of trust is shattered and confidence in the ministry suffers. Consider those with whom trust is broken when a pastor sins.

His wife. A man breaks the covenant of "forsaking all others" made with his wife on their wedding day and breaks a sacred trust with her.

His children. The man who sins morally has failed miserably in this charge with his children and breaks a trust with them. A powerful Biblical example would be David's sin with Bathsheba and the example he set before his children. How sad that David "reaped the whirlwind" in his immediate family for many years after his sin.

His church. A pastor is to be "blameless" as a shepherd of the flock (1 Tim. 1). As he stands in the assembly week by week, he implies that he is. Yet if he commits a moral sin, he lives a lie. He breaks the trust the church placed in him when they called him to be their pastor.

His immediate neighbors. A man of God tries to reach the world around him with the gospel, but if he sins morally, he plays the hypocrite. He breaks a trust with his neighbors as a representative of God in their midst.

His wider community. The pastor is not simply a spiritual leader in the church but in the wider community. By engaging in immorality, he may have soured the community toward the pastoral ministry, his particular church, or worst of all, Christianity.

His ministerial colleagues. A man of God is a part of a community of men whose calling and reputation often are viewed collectively. When Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart were exposed, their respective denominations were not the only group of ministry men to feel the scorn of the world—all men in the ministry shared their humiliation to some degree, especially with the lost who make few denominational distinctions. When one man falls, all become suspect. An implicit trust with ministry colleagues is ultimately broken.

The lost. The unsaved as a group may be included under "neighbors" or "community," but ought to be here considered separately as a distinct group—for the damage done to the cause of Christ among the lost can only be calculated in eternity. A God-given trust to serve as an evangelist among the lost is fractured, perhaps with eternal consequences.

His partner in sin. The pastor ought to be the one individual in the church who relentlessly fights sin in his own life. When he succumbs to sexual temptation, he sets a terrible pattern before the one with whom he sins. He has played the hypocrite, and she knows it. What good is Christianity if a pastor lays the Bible aside to participate in sordid sin?

His God. No greater trust is laid upon a man than the calling of God in his life. They are "counted faithful," being placed into ministry. But if they sin morally, the vows of consecration made to God have been broken and the trust with our Sovereign Lord has been grievously ruined.

2. Pastoral immorality is an abuse of power.

In addition to pastoral moral failure being a serious breach of trust, this kind of serious sin is also an egregious abuse of power. The secular world has often suggested that sex cannot be consensual when one of the participants is in a position of power or authority over the other. For this reason, sexual contact between officers and enlisted personnel in the military is forbidden. This relationship is implied between a university teacher and a student, a boss and an employee, and between a pastor and a congregation. The pastor's position over his flock places him in a position of power or authority, and by its very nature sexual sin violates the relationship of pastor and people. Churches have been sued under such circumstances.²

3. Pastoral immorality results in permanent disqualification from pastoral ministry.

Some have argued that, based on David and Samson, men can be restored in ministry following a serious moral failure if genuine repentance is forthcoming. After all, it is argued, all are "sinners saved by grace" and "no one is perfect." Yet the New Testament is clear—the fundamental qualification for pastors is "blamelessness." Most Christians can think of nationally known men who have succumbed to temptation and have returned to the ministry. Yet the first thing that comes to mind when these men are mentioned is their past moral failure. The man becomes known by his sin, even though it may be forgiven. Can that man ever again be morally blameless once he has a serious moral failure? Some men have succumbed to lesser sexual sins than adultery and wished to return to the ministry; yet if a man has been involved with "another woman," can he be said to be a "one-woman" man?³

Preventive Medicine

It has been said "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." This aphorism was never truer than in the matter of the pastor's moral life. Ultimately only the man himself and God can keep a pastor from the "snare of the Devil," but there are practical things a congregation can do to help protect their pastoral staff from this personal and public tragedy.

1. Be committed to regular intercession for the men of God.

They often face a lonely battle as they minister before the congregation week in and week out. Encourage them often by praying for them and with them. Institute a men's prayer meeting and make the pastors' moral integrity a matter of fervent prayer. Encourage and support their wives. Do not be critical of flaws in their families, but bathe them in prayer. They minister as a family team, and if their relationship fails, it will impact the entire church.

2. Be realistic in your expectations of pastors.

They cannot be "married to the church" and happily married to their wives at the same time. Something will have to give. Respect their day off and time away as a necessary part of their relationship with their families, especially their wives. Encourage your pastors to get away with their spouses periodically to keep the romance alive. Send them away to a nice place to relax so that their own relationship may stay strong.

3. Be careful to protect them at all times

Do not make it easy for them to be in a compromising situation. The staff offices should be open and visible so that their good will not be evil spoken of. A simple window in a door can alleviate suspicion and offer protection for a man's reputation.

Do not expect a pastor to carry on a counseling ministry with distraught women in the church. A kind and gentle man may become the amorous target of an emotionally burdened woman, especially if her own marriage is suffering. If such a woman needs counsel, an older Christian woman, perhaps the pastor's wife, should meet the long-term need, or the pastor and his wife can counsel her together, or the woman and her husband can come in together to see the pastor. Do not expect the pastor to counsel off church property or outside normal office hours without the greatest protection for his reputation and his person. The counseling ministry must be highly regulated so as to maintain the strictest Christian decorum at all times. Many men have opened themselves up to temptation through poor counseling procedures.

If the church has access to the Internet, be sure that it has software that filters out the filth or has a service provider that does the filtering. Indeed, the pastor may have the spiritual conviction to voluntarily abstain from sinful sites, but why put him to the test? Protect him before he is tested! This is a small expense for an important means of protection.

Finally, guard his reputation from gossip and slander. Salacious gossip can harm a reputation even if no improper behavior is evident.

4. Be supportive of the pastoral ministry.

Take some of the stress off your pastoral staff by being faithful yourself to the work of Christ and carrying your part of the load of the local church ministry. Ministry burnout can lead to high-risk or careless behavior. Support the pastor long before he is tempted to engage in sinful behavior.

When a man of God sins, he spreads havoc in the church of God and those around him. Indeed, forgiveness is possible when repentance is present. Thankfully the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cleanse from all sin, even sexual moral failure. But forgiveness does not guarantee that the legacy of the sin will be cancelled. God's law of sowing and reaping often means that while the sin may be forgiven, the seeds that are scattered during the sin may reap a harvest of heartache for years to come. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

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¹ The Scriptural requirement of "blamelessness" would suggest permanent ministry forfeiture in the event of immorality or public moral failure. An excellent book on this issue is John H. Armstrong's *Can Fallen Pastors Be Restored?* (Chicago: Moody, 1995). The book has been reprinted as *The Sin That Stains*.

² For an excellent book that addresses this aspect, consult Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell, *Betrayal of Trust—Sexual Misconduct in the Pastorate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

³ Cf. John H. Armstrong, *Can Fallen Pastors Be Restored?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).

Mid-Atlantic Meeting Report

Though the temperature was below freezing and the National Weather Service was calling for snow to sweep the eastern seaboard, none of this seemed to hinder the attendance of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Meeting held March 5-6 at Troy Baptist Temple in Troy, Ohio. Thirty-three registered delegates from six states attended, in addition to many others who attended the evening sessions.

Drs. Ron Comfort, Tim Jordan, and Bennie Moran, along with pastors Phil Golden and Tim Coley, delivered excellent messages. The theme was taken from Habakkuk 3:22, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years." Added blessings were a men's quartet from Ambassador Baptist College and the music under the direction of Alton Beal. Everyone enjoyed the fellowship with like-minded fundamental Baptists.

The 2002 Mid-Atlantic Meeting will be held March 4-5 at Upper Crossroads Baptist Church in Baldwin, Maryland. Rev. Bob Conduct is the host pastor.

Southeast Meeting Report

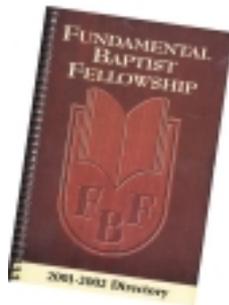
Record warm temperatures greeted more than 110 registered attendees at the Southeast Regional Meeting April 9-11 at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Archdale, North Carolina. Stirring messages and practical seminars were enhanced by the fellowship and gracious hospitality of the host church. Many of those attending remarked that they had made new friends at the meeting and renewed old friendships as well.

A highlight of the meeting was a

commendation presented to Mrs. Lenore Bell honoring her for her faithfulness and service to the FBF in her ministry to her husband, Dr. Rod Bell.

The 2002 Southwest Regional Meeting is scheduled April 8-10 at South Charlotte Baptist Church in Pineville, North Carolina.

FBF Directory Available



The 2001-2002 FBF Directory will be available at the national meeting June 12-14. All members can pick up a free copy there, and members who are unable to attend will receive their directory in the mail sometime after the national meeting. Non-members who would like to purchase a directory for \$12 plus \$1 postage may do so by calling 1-800-376-6856.

FBF Web Site Down

In mid-March a fire at the FBF web site's location made the web site inaccessible for several weeks. This came at an especially bad time because of the April 1 deadline for renewing membership. We trust that by the time you read this, the site will be back online.

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2001 Meetings

June 12-14

National Meeting
First Baptist Church of Troy
2601 John R Road
Troy, MI 48083
(248) 689-4555

July 26

Satellite Meeting
First Baptist Church of Elma
1301 Bowen Road
Elma, NY 14059
(716) 662-7692

July 31-August 2

Alaska Region
Soldotna Baptist Church
223 East Redoubt Avenue
Soldotna, AK 99669
(907) 262-4618

October 1

Northeast Region
Trinity Baptist Church
80 Clinton Street
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 225-3999

October 8-9

Satellite Meeting
Grace Baptist Church
Box 333
East Flat Rock, NC 28726
(828) 692-4312

November 8-9

Northern California Region
Calvary Baptist Church
1900 Highland Avenue
Hollister, CA 95023
(831) 636-9733

For the most up-to-date information on future meetings, see the FBF web site at www.f-b-f.org.



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**-Steven Mock,
'00 missions grad,
'96 Australia Mission
Team member**



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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

A Ministry of Necessary Controversy

Lying here open beside me is a precious volume published in 1694. *A Golden Mine Opened* contains 40 stirring messages on the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. My volume has passed through many hands over the last 300 years, including several generations of Halls, an 18th-century English family who on one of the book's blank pages trace their ancestry back to a forefather who knew John Bunyan. I delight to read the things they've entered in the margins in ink now brown with age. But most of all, I feel privileged to possess a first edition not only authored by but possibly even held in the hands of the early Baptist pastor Benjamin Keach.

In an era when nonconformist congregations generally averaged fewer than 50 souls, this dear brother sometimes ministered to upwards of a thousand people. Self-taught, devout, fearing no man, and living to preach, he eventually attained a stature among Baptists that paralleled in his generation that of the more famous successor to his church, C. H. Spurgeon, 200 years later.

There would be several good reasons for resurrecting Keach's memory. None could be any better, however, than the one which I've chosen to emphasize—that of his example as a ministerial controversialist. It is an uncomfortable role in even the best of times, but in 17th-century England it was often disastrous. Nevertheless, here was a courageous pastor who bore its consequences unflinchingly. I want to recover his example because some of our own ministerial liberties are due, in part, to his sacrificial struggle for those free-

doms centuries ago. But more importantly, his life teaches some things about why and when a ministry may be necessarily controversial.

"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"
(2 Tim. 2:6)

Forging a Controversialist

Keach was born February 29, 1640, and baptized as an infant by pious but impoverished parents. While still a boy, his formal education was terminated and he was sent to work for a tailor. But the precocious teenage tailor still found ways to study, and careful reading of his Bible convinced him that his infant baptism into the Church of England was without any Scriptural foundation.

Contradicting popularly held but unscriptural traditions inevitably puts a man over a barrel with his times. In the first of these instances for Keach, the result was that at the age of 15 he had himself immersed by a Baptist pastor named John Russel upon the profession of his faith in Christ. The times being what they were, immersion of a believer was popularly construed to be a rebaptism! Being rebaptized branded a convert (falsely but unavoidably) as one of the widely despised Anabaptists. Thus, from almost the day of his conversion, the boy's faithfulness to Scripture left him inescapably stigmatized. But it is in such heat that God forges His tools.

Even though England's 1650s were a decade of comparative liberty under the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell, the largely Presbyterian-controlled state church kept up a running verbal attack on Baptists. Even Richard Baxter, generally a model casuist, stooped to accusing them of baptizing their converts naked.

When a man is persuaded that Scripture teaches a thing, nothing so motivates him to confirm it further than having his conviction ridiculed. And by this means God entrenches men in Scriptural positions. Accordingly, putting all to the test of infallible Scripture, Keach by the age of 18 acquired a knowledge and godly character so noteworthy that his older brethren called him to the ministry. From that time

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until his homegoing more than 40 years later (1704), he preached, taught, wrote, and debated the issues of his time with the patience and persuasiveness that characterizes a man whose conscience is captive to the Word of God alone.

Tempering the Metal

Although experiencing little trouble initially, the young Baptist preacher drew the government's ire soon after the restoration of the English monarchy in the person of Charles II. Upon discovering the place where his small assembly gathered, troopers violently broke it up as he preached. Swearing they would kill the minister, four of them bound him on the ground and prepared to trample him to death. Just as they were about to spur their horses to the mad design, an officer appeared to prevent the murder. Keach was still carried off to prison, however, and suffered considerably before obtaining freedom. But these hardships were just the beginning.

Soon after being released, Keach published a little children's catechism titled *The Child's Instructor; or a New and Easy Primmer*. At several points it contradicted official positions of the Church of England, including its doctrines of infant baptism and amillennialism. For instance, to the question, "Who are the right subjects

tute. But Jane proved to be as resolute as her husband. Instead of tempting him to yield, she actually encouraged his stand, calling it an honor done to them both that they were called to suffer for Christ's sake.

On the appointed day, the bold preacher's head and hands were fixed fast in the public pillory at Ailsbury. A writ of his crimes was glued to his head. But no sooner was the humiliating ordeal commenced than Keach began to preach. "Good people," he said to the curious bystanders, "I am not ashamed to stand here this day with this paper on my head; my Lord Jesus was not ashamed to suffer on the cross for me, and it is for his cause that I am made a gazing-stock."

Although threatened by the jailer, Keach not only continued to speak but somehow managed to get one hand loose. Pulling a small Bible from his pocket, he insisted that what he had written was contained in this very book and that he could prove it if but given opportunity. The angered sheriff then threatened to gag him. But throughout the entirety of his ordeal Keach continued to break the silence with an occasional testimony or Scripture quotation. The officers found it impossible to keep him from converting his pillory into a pulpit.

"I hope the Lord's people will not be discouraged at my suffering," he pled. "Oh!" he continued, "did you but experience the great love of God and the excellencies that are in Him, it would make you willing to go through any sufferings for His sake. And I do account this the greatest honour that ever the Lord was pleased to confer upon me."

Once the sufferer was freed from jail he commenced a four-year itinerant ministry, preaching both publicly and privately as safe opportunities afforded themselves. The trial and public sentence had made him so notorious, however, that he was night and day a special target to informers hungry for reward. As a result, the hounded preacher determined to move to London.

Perseverance Under Pressure

Almost immediately upon his family's arrival in the capital in 1668, Keach was ordained the elder of a small Baptist assembly. The new pastor soon discovered that conditions in London were little better than they had been in the countryside. His assembly held services but their locations had to be changed weekly. Even then they were sometimes discovered.

Once when meeting in a private house down an alley, six of their number were seized and tried. Another time, gathered in a widow's home, they made the mistake of singing too loudly. The sound betrayed their presence to the authorities, and it was only by escaping through a back door that they avoided capture.

The church was forced to divide into even smaller groups. Keach would hurry from one meeting place to another, thus having to preach numerous times on the same day. It was an additional fright when even his own landlord turned out to be a noted informer. It was during these trials that Jane, his faithful wife for ten years, died at the age of just 31. It was a sore blow to the hard-

When a man is persuaded that Scripture teaches a thing, nothing so motivates him to confirm it further than having his conviction ridiculed. And by this means God entrenches men in Scriptural positions.

for baptism?" Keach's primer answered, "Believers, or godly men and women, who make profession of their faith and repentance." And in answer to the question, "How shall it go with the saints when Christ cometh?" it cheerfully replied, "Very well . . . they shall reign with Christ on the earth a thousand years."

Almost immediately Keach was imprisoned again and all his books seized. The young pastor (barely 24) was tried and found guilty of writing a "seditious and schismatical book." His sentence was to stand locked in the pillory for two hours in both Ailsbury and Winslow, the town of his residence. His book was to be burnt openly before his face by the common hangman, and he was to pay a fine of 20 pounds. Thereafter he was to be kept in jail until such time as he renounced his doctrines. Keach replied simply, "I hope I shall never renounce the truths which I have written in that book."

The severity of the sentence was daunting. Not only did it mean the discontinuance of his ministry for as long as he refused to yield his positions, but it left his young wife, Jane, and their children effectively desti-

pressed preacher; one which he overcame, in part, by writing a poem which he titled "A Pillar Set Up" after Jacob's example of erecting a pillar to commemorate Rachel at her death. "She was of an heavenly conversation," he wrote, "her discourse was savoury, and for the most part about divine things." The grieving husband also paid special tribute to the comforting help his wife had been to him during his suffering in prison for Christ's sake.

Two years later Keach remarried, this time to a widow named Susanna Partridge. By God's grace theirs was to be a marriage of 32 years and blessed with five daughters. Even more significant, in the same year as Keach's marriage (1672) Charles II granted an indulgence to dissenters. The relieved pastor and a few like-minded believers seized the opportunity to begin a Particular Baptist work on the lower side of the Thames in a squalid section of the city called Southwark. Its quaint address reminds us not to despise the day of small beginnings: Goat's Yard Passage, Fair Street, in Horse-lie-down. It would be from this base that Keach, now a well-tested 32, would take on issues affecting generations of Baptists right down to the present time.

Issues

Thomas Crosby, who married Keach's youngest daughter, is our primary source of information about his father-in-law. He wrote of the challenge of restoring Scriptural positions, "It must be confessed, that reformation is, and ever was, an hard and difficult work; and no easy thing to restore lost ordinances, especially such as have been for many years neglected, and strangely corrupted."

We are grateful that Keach was courageous to restore lost ordinances, since one for which he successfully argued was the duty of churches to support their ministers adequately.

The title page to my book, *A Golden Mine Opened*, states that it was "Printed, and sold by the Author at his House in Horse-lie-down"—a notice encouraging me to think that he held this particular book in his own hands, but also reflecting the well-known fact that he himself, though at times pastoring hundreds of people, was constrained to supply his family's needs by running a press and bookshop out of his home.

In *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*, issued just prior to the famous 1689 Assembly of Baptists in London, Keach used reason, wit, and most of all, Scripture, to convince the Baptist churches that some of their pastors were laboring "under unsupportable burdens" and that it was the duty of their people to free them to devote their time to "careful and diligent study" and the "great duty" of pastoring. So helpful was this book to the churches that nearly 30 years later they were still officially recommending it to one another.

One of the greatest controversies among early Baptists was over the neglected practice of congregational singing. Only a few Baptist churches in England allowed singing of psalms or their paraphrases in public worship. None seem to have approved of singing hymns

of uninspired composition. Keach was again Scripturally compelled to swim upstream.

Beginning soon after the founding of the work in Horse-lie-down, he introduced the practice of singing a single hymn at the conclusion of the Lord's Supper. Crosby wrote that "he laboured earnestly, and with a great deal of prudence and caution, to convince his people thereof." For six years the church allowed only this minimal practice, until at last the people consented to adding an additional hymn to their stated thanksgiving days. For 14 more years Keach contented himself with this arrangement lest he offend by further reformation. Then, after these 20 years of almost inconceivable patience, he proposed that his church sing the praises of God every Lord's Day. Most approved. A few objected so strenuously, however, that they not only fled the church themselves but soon influenced others to leave as well. This group subsequently formed itself into a separate assembly at Maze Pond, subscribing in its constitution to the exact same principles as Mr.

Although threatened by the jailor, Keach not only continued to speak but somehow managed to get one hand loose. Pulling a small Bible from his pocket, he insisted that what he had written was contained in this very book and that he could prove it if but given opportunity. . . . The officers found it impossible to keep him from converting his pillory into a pulpit.

Keach's church with the single exception of singing, which they called a gross error.

Adding to Keach's burden during this period was the fact that just a year or so before this split he endured his greatest health crisis. So bleak was the outlook that physicians pronounced his case terminal and friends gathered to bid last farewells. But Hanserd Knollys, a fellow Baptist pastor, felt constrained to offer an extraordinarily earnest prayer for his friend's recovery, asking God to grant him the same number of additional days that he had given to Hezekiah. So certain was he of being heard that as soon as he had ended he said to the dying man, "Brother Keach, I shall be in heaven before you." Remarkably, Knollys died within two years. Keach recovered and lived exactly 15 more years—years during which he was forced to continue in the role of controversialist.

The hymn-singing debate divided London's Baptist churches for the whole decade of the 1690s. Keach was

called divisive. Isaac Marlow, a prominent member of the Mile End Green Baptist Church wrote some 11 books arguing pragmatically against his position (it smacked of formalism, compromised the purity of the church when unbelievers joined in, violated the Scripture's prohibitions against women speaking in worship, etc.) and accusing him of undermining the Reformation. Others who did not openly attack Keach nevertheless urged the status quo for the sake of unity.

To the further objection that believers could not be sure that the translations they had were “well and honestly done,” Keach responded, “The Word of God is the doctrine and revelation of God’s will, the sense and meaning, not barely or strictly the words, letters, and syllables.”

In response, Keach did what his opponents did not. He exegeted Scripture faithfully (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13), showing that what he practiced was commanded. Among other works in which he proved this was a book published in 1691 under the title *The Breach Repaired in God’s Worship: or, Singing of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, proved to be an Holy Ordinance of Jesus Christ*. The title page quoted Job 6:25, “How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?” In the end, careful exegesis of right words proved truly forcible, doing what it will always do when ministers fear God more than one another; it turned the tide. Even Maze Pond learned to sing.

As we near the close of considering this noble brother, we must ask ourselves what it was that gave him such confidence, even when having to differ with brethren. He himself provided the answer in an extended testimony to his personal persuasions about the Bible (“The Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures”), first issued in the 1680s during the maturity of his ministry. In 17 precisely reasoned points he ably defended the inerrancy and all-sufficiency of Scripture. But as in our day, so in his—unbelievers mocked such confidence with cleverly crafted objections. Keach responded with the same factual and believing considerations Bible believers continue to argue three centuries later.

To the objection that the Hebrew and Greek manu-

script texts might have become untrustworthy, corrupted through centuries of transmission, he argued that this was “to blaspheme the providence of God, and also lay an insufferable scandal on the Church” to whose care the Scriptures were committed to guard lest any part of them be lost or corrupted. The Old Testament, he pointed out, was transmitted with strict care by the Jews who “took an account how oft every letter in the alphabet was used in every book thereof.” As for the New Testament, Keach acknowledged that “it is true, there have in ancient manuscripts some various readings been observed.” “But,” he contended, these were “not such as to cause any dispute touching the sum or substance of the doctrine therein delivered, or considerably to alter the sense of the text.”

To the further objection that believers could not be sure that the translations they had were “well and honestly done,” Keach responded, “The Word of God is the doctrine and revelation of God’s will, the sense and meaning, not barely or strictly the words, letters, and syllables.” This message of the doctrine and will of God, he wrote, “is contained exactly and most purely in the originals, and in all translations, so far as they agree therewith.” He continued reassuringly that “though some translations may exceed others in propriety, and significant rendering, the originals; yet they generally, (even the most imperfect that we know of,) express and hold forth so much of the mind, will, and counsel of God, as is sufficient, by the blessing of God upon a conscientious reading thereof, to acquaint a man with the mysteries of salvation, to work in a true faith, and to bring him to live godly, righteous, and soberly in this present world, and to salvation in the next.” And to the objection that some translators might have slyly slipped denominational bias or even gross error into their work, he asked tellingly, “Now if we consider how many men of different persuasions, have translated the Bible, and harmoniously agree in all things of moment, is it possible to imagine that they should all combine, so impertinently, as well as wickedly, to put a fallacy on mankind, which every one, that has but bestowed a very few years in the study of the languages, can presently detect?” “All who are really converted unto God, by the power of the Word,” he concluded, “have that infallible evidence and testimony of its divine original, authority, and power in their own souls and consciences.” So, Keach is telling us, it was his conviction about the Bible, confirmed by its power over his own soul, that sustained and fueled him through his many troubles.

One last, but not least, aspect of his example in controversy that we must note is that in all these conflicts the embattled pastor maintained, for the most part, an exemplary spirit. His son-in-law wrote of this, “How would he bear the infirmities of his weak brethren! That such as would not be wrought upon by the strength of reason, might be melted by his condescension and good nature.” Certainly it is this spirit, as much as his Scriptural stand, which we must emulate if we are truly to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in the heat of necessary controversy. ☞



Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

Bring . . . the Books

David Livingstone: Missionary Statesman

Some years ago I became committed to the idea of selecting one great missionary figure a year and reading one or more good biographies on his life and ministry. This practice has been a rich source of information and has had a profound spiritual and devotional impact. This year I selected David Livingstone. J. E. Chambliss's *The Life and Labors of David Livingstone* (published in 1875 and now out of print) gives a detailed account of Livingstone's travels. Focusing more on Livingstone's spiritual endeavors is the short popular biography in the Heroes of the Faith series written by Sam Wellman, *David Livingstone, Missionary and Explorer*.

The best biography on Livingstone is W. Garden Blaikie's *The Personal Life of David Livingstone*. Originally published in 1880, Blaikie's work is currently out of print. I purchased my copy at a very reasonable price from one of the many Internet websites dedicated to out-of-print or hard-to-find titles.

Blaikie employs extensive quotations drawn from Livingstone's journal and correspondence. He weaves Livingstone's own words into the narrative so skillfully that the reader is drawn into the story, as though one were standing next to Livingstone and hearing him speak.

During his first two years of ministry in Africa, two events occurred that profoundly impacted Livingstone for the rest of his ministry and in many ways served as the impetus for a life-long commitment to reaching Africa for Christ. While visiting with the Bamangwato tribe in the great Kalahari Desert, he witnessed a gruesome lion attack on a native woman.

It was most affecting to hear the cries of the orphan children of this woman. During the whole day after her death the surrounding rocks and valleys rang and re-echoed with their bitter cries. I frequently thought as I listened to the loud sobs, painfully indicative of the sorrows of those who have no hope, that if some of our churches could have heard their sad wailings, it would have awakened the firm resolution to do more for the heathen than they have done.

Livingstone himself would suffer a severe injury from a lion attack later on in his ministry that would maim his arm and mark him for life. The second event took place when the chief of the tribe, Sekomi, paid him a visit in his hut.

On one occasion Sekomi, having sat by me in the hut for some time in deep thought, at length addressing me by a pompous title said, "I wish you would change my heart. Give me medicine to change it, for it is proud, proud and angry, angry always." I lifted up the Testament and was about to tell him of the only way in which the heart can be changed, but he interrupted me by saying, "Nay, I

wish to have it changed by medicine, to drink and have it changed at once, for it is always very proud and very uneasy, and continually angry with someone." He then rose and went away.

“. . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books”
(2 Tim. 4:13)

Blaikie recounts Livingstone's many expeditions. You will see Victoria Falls through Livingstone's eyes—the first time they were ever seen by a white man. You will sense the exhaustion and physical weariness that was his constant companion for the almost 40 years spent in Africa. You will meet his wife and come to know his children.

For several years he was presumed lost until an American journalist undertook an expedition to settle the matter. The famous meeting between Stanley and Livingstone is worth the price of the book. His final days and the discovery of his body kneeling by his bed in prayer evidence Livingstone's undying passion for missions. His heart was buried in Africa, but his body was embalmed and transported back across the African continent and then on to England where he was given a state funeral and buried at Westminster Abbey. Perhaps no passage better depicts the motivation that fueled Livingstone's passion for reaching Africa, for Christ than the following account of a discussion he had with Sechele, one of the more powerful village chiefs early on in his ministry in Africa:

"Since it is true that all who die unforgiven are lost forever, why did your nation not come to tell us of it before now? My ancestors are all gone, and none of them knew anything of what you tell me. How is this?" "I thought immediately," says Livingstone, "of the guilt of the church, but did not confess. I told him that multitudes in our own country were like himself, so much in love with their sins. My ancestors had spent a great deal of time in trying to persuade them, and yet after all many of them by refusing were lost. We now wish to tell all the world about a Saviour, and if men did not believe, the guilt would be entirely theirs."

These words penetrated my heart and reflected my own guilt in failing to tell those that God has called me to reach. The reader is confronted with a soul-searching question—what would God have me to do about reaching the world for Christ? Perhaps another Livingstone will be stirred and produced by the reading of his life story. ☞

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin..

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death (Phil. 1:19, 20).

As the apostle Paul writes from a Roman prison, he expresses great hope that even this difficult circumstance is being and will be used by God to assist the greater progress of the gospel (1:12). He expects that the general advance of the gospel through his circumstances will be accompanied by the specific work of God in his life so that he will be vindicated and Christ will be exalted through his life and ministry. What gave Paul so strong an “expectation and hope”?

The answer to that question is found in these words in verse 19, “through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The apostle’s “salvation” will come through the prayers of God’s people and the provision of the Spirit. The first part is clear enough that it needs no explanation, but it serves as a powerful reminder of the effectiveness and importance of intercessory prayer. The instrument that God would use to deliver Paul is the prayer of the saints in Philippi. Paul was totally committed to the efficacy of prayer as the divinely ordained means of accomplishing God’s purposes. The same principle is taught in passages like 2 Corinthians 1:8–11 and Romans 15:30–32.

More difficult, however, is the meaning of “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The language Paul uses could be taken to mean that the Spirit is either the subject or the object of the provision. In other words, is the Spirit the one who supplies us with something or is it the Spirit who is supplied to us? While some translations and a number of commentators take it as subjective, the objective actually fits the vocabulary and grammar better.

The word translated “provision” means “assistance, support” and is used only here and in Ephesians 4:16; but the verb form is used five times in the NT (2 Cor. 9:10; Gal. 3:5; Col. 2:19; 2 Pet. 1:5, 11). Both noun and verb always require an object; that is, they communicate the idea of supplying or providing something. Since nothing other than the Spirit is mentioned as a possible object, those who view the Spirit as the subject must “supply” an object. This is most often done by adding the word “help” in the transla-

tion or explanation of the text (e.g., NIV: “the help given by the Spirit”).

However, this is an unnecessary addition to the language—an interpretation that seems controlled by a theological desire to avoid the prospect that Paul would suggest that he would receive the Spirit in answer to their prayers. The logic seems to be that since Paul, as a believer, already has the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:14), how can he speak of the Spirit being provided in connection with their prayers? On the basis of this theological assumption, it seems to me, the text is not allowed to speak for itself. The natural way to read the text seems clearly to be that it is the Spirit Himself that is supplied in connection with their prayers and is the reason Paul will not be put to shame in anything.

In fact, on the theological level, this understanding of the phrase is paralleled in Galatians 3:5. In that text the apostle Paul argues that it is by the hearing of faith (not by the works of the law) that God “ministereth to you the Spirit” (NASB: “provides you with the Spirit”). “Ministereth” is the verb form of the noun used in Philippians 1:19 translated “supply.” It is in the present tense, so it speaks of an ongoing provision of the Spirit. Galatians 3:2, where Paul clearly states that they had already “received” the Spirit by the hearing of faith, confirms this.

Paul is comfortable with using both “having received” the Spirit and “receiving” the Spirit. The former refers to their conversion to Christ, and the latter addresses provision for ministry on behalf of Christ. The correlation with Philippians 1:19 seems clear. Paul is confident that God will hear the prayers of the Philippians and give him a fresh supply of the Spirit in answer to those prayers. That fresh ministry of the Spirit will enable him to magnify Christ.

This understanding of the text provides great incentive for believers to intercede for fellow believers, and it calls for a fresh sense of dependence upon the Spirit Himself as the source of our empowering for service and witness. It seems, at times, that we have allowed those with false teachings about the Spirit to rob us of what the NT actually teaches. Specifically, their excessive emphasis on the Spirit too often leads us to depersonalize the work of the Spirit (focusing on the help He provides) and to ignore the Helper sent to us by our Lord. This text, with many others, reminds us that we are called into a living relationship and that we are greatly in need of His empowering presence in our lives. 

**“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)**

The story is told of a young man who was living a rebellious life and longed for his personal freedom from authority. One day in great anger he cried out, “I’m tired of my parents telling me what to do. I want to run my own life.” So, he joined the Marines.

We are living in a day when authority in every realm is being rejected in the name of personal liberty and individualism. The late Vance Havner rightly said, “Our world is fast becoming a madhouse, and the inmates are trying to run the asylum. It is a strange time when the patients are writing the prescriptions, the students are threatening to run the schools, the children to manage the homes, and church members—not the Holy Spirit—to direct the churches.”

While the Bible is clear that in the last days there will be a universal casting off of restraints, God’s people have a compelling need to return to the understanding and practice of His principles of authority.

All Authority Originates with God Himself

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1).

To discuss the authority of Almighty God seems a bit meaningless, and to question it would be absurd. Can we imagine the Lord God of Hosts having to request permission of anyone or to apply for anything to a higher body? To whom would God go for permission? Who is higher than the Highest? Who is mightier than the Almighty? Whose position antedates that of the Eternal? At whose throne would God kneel? Where is the greater one to whom he must appeal? . . . Every soul belongs to God and exists by his pleasure. God being who and what he is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full lordship on his part and complete submission on ours. We owe him every honor that it is in our power to give him (A. W. Tozer, from Edythe Draper, *Draper’s Book of Quotations for the Christian World* [Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992], entry 4955).

God has ordained three primary institutions of authority for the good of man and the glory of God: the family for the propagation of life through a husband and wife; the state for the preservation of life through the enforcement of just laws; and the church for the proclamation of life through the gospel of Jesus Christ. God designed these institutions for the temporal restraining of evil and the functioning of men in a structured, civilized society, and for His eternal purposes in working in the souls of men.

The Family

Ephesians 6:1 states, “Children, obey your parents in

the Lord: for this is right.”

The parent who does not teach his child to obey is doing the greatest disservice to his child. The habit of implicit obedience to authority is the foundation of good citizenship, and more importantly, the foundation of future subjection to God’s authority.

The State

The Lord Jesus commended submission to secular government as a quality necessary for true spirituality when He spoke with the centurion who called himself “a man under authority” (Matt. 8:9). Why did he not say a man with authority? The reason was that above the centurion was the senior centurion; above the senior centurion were the 60 centurions of the Roman legion; above those 60 centurions were the six tribunes; above the six tribunes, the two consuls; and—in the imperial system of Rome — above the two consuls, the Emperor himself (*Tan’s Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*, entry 12342, “A Man Under Authority”).

The Church

The writer of Hebrews states, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (13:7).

When I first enrolled in Bible college, I approached my spiritual authorities with faulty reasoning. In the denominational system in which I had been raised, I was taught to follow my own convictions instead of my authorities—a perverted sort of “we ought to obey God rather than man.” Any rule I agreed with, I obeyed. Any that I took issue with as being “extra-Biblical,” I ignored. Needless to say, I ended up having to deal with some sin in my life. God eventually brought me to Hebrews 13:7, and the matter was settled. God’s will for my life relating to spiritual authority was surrender and obedience, because all authority comes from Him!

Our Response to Authority Is in Reality Our Response to God

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God (Rom. 13:2a).

“Submit” is not a word that means that an individual becomes a non-person, gives up all rights and responsibilities, or always agrees with his authority. In fact it was a word used in the Roman military to describe the relationship between a colonel and a general. The general had ultimate responsibility. The colonel had responsibility and was a highly respected individual, yet he deferred overall and ultimate authority to the general (*Tan’s*

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, entry 12367, “The Real Meaning of Submission”). Oswald Chambers wrote, “Independence is not strength but unrealized weakness and is the very essence of sin. There was no independence in our Lord, the great characteristic of his life was submission to his Father” (*Draper’s Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, entry 6414).

Andrew Murray gives us sound counsel in this regard.

The true pupil, say of some great musician or painter, yields his master a wholehearted and unhesitating submission. In practicing his scales or mixing the colors, in the slow and patient study of the elements of his art, he knows that it is wisdom simply and fully to obey. It is this wholehearted surrender to His guidance, this implicit submission to His authority, which Christ asks. We come to Him asking Him to teach us the lost art of obeying God as He did. . . . The only way of learning to do a thing is to do it. The only way of learning obedience from Christ is to give up your will to Him and to make the doing of His will (and the will of His authorities) the one desire and delight of your heart (Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Obedience*, quoted in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 30, No. 13).

Rebellion to Authority Brings God’s Disfavor and Judgment

And they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation (Rom. 13:2b).

The word “damnation” means condemnation with resultant punishment, the consequences of rebellion in our lives. King Saul suffered the consequences of his rebellion against the authority of God in the matter of Agag and the Amalekites. Samuel’s message of judgment was clear to the anointed king of God’s people: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Sam. 15:23).

Godly Authority Is Designed for Both Reward and Punishment

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Rom. 13:3, 4).

Authority Should Create an Environment for the Praise of Those Who Do Good

The goal of good and godly authority is always twofold, according to the writer of Hebrews:

(1) Doing what is right before God. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow,

considering the end of their conversation” (13:7). A Yugoslavian proverb says, “If you wish to know what a man is, place him in authority.”

(2) Doing what is good for the person under their authority. “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (13:17). The Lord Jesus Christ always did that which pleased His Father and brought blessing to those under His authority.

Concerning the balance of authority and shepherding oversight in the ministry of our Lord, Oswald Chambers wrote,

Jesus Christ exhibited a divine paradox of the lion and the lamb. He was the Lion in majesty, rebuking the winds and demons. He was the Lamb in meekness, “who when he was reviled, reviled not again.” He was the Lion in power, raising the dead. He was the Lamb in patience who was brought “as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” He was the Lion in authority, “Ye have heard that it hath been said . . . but I say unto you.” He was the Lamb in gentleness, “Suffer the little children to come unto me” (*Draper’s Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, entry 6425).

Authority Should Create an Environment for Punishment of Those Who Do Evil

Shortly after the Sioux had massacred General George Armstrong Custer at the battle of Little Big Horn and had fled to Canada, the Northwest Mounted Police were charged with the task of controlling the Indians. There were only five Mounties stationed in the same area as the vast Sioux tribe. Consequently, the Mounties thought they had better seize the initiative. The five law enforcement officers and two guides rode directly into the Sioux camp and headed for Sitting Bull’s tent. They laid down a list of rules for Sioux behavior if the tribe expected to be allowed to stay in Canada. Then, spotting an Indian sitting on a stolen horse, they arrested the Indian and rode quietly out of the camp (Richard Wokomir, “Mounties Forever, But These Days Rarely on Horseback,” *Smithsonian* [February 1989], p. 82). The very boldness of the Mounties’ actions conveyed to the Indians that here was an authority to be obeyed. If authority would be Biblically effective in its societal role, it must communicate and practice swift punishment for those who practice evil.

Modern America follows a philosophy of popular leadership based on opinion polls, finding out which way the parade is going, and then getting in front of the parade. In such a world we need to live by God’s authority principles as taught in Romans 13. The German legislator F. J. Stahl, at the 11th sitting of the Volkshouse of the Erfurt Parliament, was presented a cup by his adherents with these words engraved upon it: “Authority, Not Majority” (*Tan’s Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*, entry 6823, “Authority, Not Majority”). Such a theme would suit God’s people well in 2001. ☞

I opened the Sunday school door and crossed the room. Clusters of chatting teens suddenly stopped talking. Every eye swiveled my way. I scanned the room and prayed for an empty seat or a hole to swallow me—whichever came first. No need to worry about sneaking into the back row—it was totally occupied by teen guys, their long forms draped over the chairs, arms folded across chests. Inwardly sighing, I approached the vacant front row, and sat down alone as the class began.

Maybe you have never been in a situation exactly like this one. But you have had visitors at your church, and you have most likely been a guest yourself. Which would you rather be, the “visitor” or the “visitee”? Probably not the visitor, right? Why? “I’d feel self-conscious.” “I wouldn’t know where to go.” “Everyone is so busy . . . who would I ask for directions?” This is probably how your visitor is feeling. But maybe you could help. Do you see yourself in one of the following scenarios?

“It’s not my table!” Have you ever been frustrated in a restaurant because you couldn’t find your own waitress, and no one would help you? Visitors at church may feel that way too. People power-walk by them, jaws clenched, brows furrowed, trying to get from point A to point B by 11:00 A.M.

If you see that visitors are alone and you are too busy for even a quick handshake and a “Glad to have you here,” maybe you could point someone else in their direction. It’s good to have greeters, committees, and even the more gregarious among our number, but let’s not get so dependent on them that we cannot break out of our Sunday mold.

“Bashful blues.” Picture this. You’re a visitor, standing in the church foyer. You may or may not be conversing with the person beside you. A third person approaches, beginning to chat loudly with the person next to you. She realizes you are there but totally excludes you from any conversation.

Many people don’t like to be put on the spot by greeting a visitor. A few try to hide their shyness by speaking loudly near the visitor without speaking to him. Others reason that because they wouldn’t want to be recognized as a visitor, no one else would either.

“Class act.” Some people feel insincere about smiling and shaking hands and view it as putting on an act. “I’m tired and I don’t feel like talking to anyone.” “Greeting

visitors—that’s not me. They’ll just have to accept me for who I am.” “They don’t know me from Adam and won’t remember my name two seconds from now, so what’s the use?”

Don’t leave yet. Let’s start by zeroing in on our attitude. Your greeting isn’t a farce if you put the visitor’s feelings ahead of your own. Don’t miss an opportunity to receive a blessing. “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). “Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:9, 10).

Then, after an attitude adjustment, take action: Maybe it’s time to plan a systematic way of choosing people to be greeters. Some churches ask husbands and wives to take turns. And don’t forget the kids! Let everyone from teens on down be involved, but start by choosing someone who feels comfortable around new people, then send a shyer person with him.

This might be a good time to brush up on some good, old-fashioned etiquette: speaking clearly enough to be understood, standing without slouching, shaking hands, smiling without a grimace. Make sure that the visitors know where to sit, where the nursery is, and the myriad of other things that we know and take for granted. Hand them a hymnbook. Make room for them on the end of the bench—don’t make them crawl over you. Think of yourself as the visitor. How would it change what you say and do?

Avoid the “attack dog” approach. Some people, in an attempt to be friendly, accost the visitor, monopolize him, and then talk until the church is locked up. Again, let’s think about the other person. Is he sending out signals (looking at his watch, fidgeting, glancing around, fainting from starvation)? You may be having a great time, while he just wants to beat it to the nearest door.

Jesus, Others, You—just like the song says. Let it be part of your ministry. And, remember Hebrews 13:2: “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Bring on the visitors!

Marilyn Janke and her husband, David, are missionary church planters in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. You can read more of Marilyn’s articles at www.ribtickler.org.

Don't Look Now But I Think We Have Visitors

Marilyn Janke

Roots of the First Amendment

David L. Cummins

It is well that we understand the background of the First Amendment to our national Constitution. How tragic that the current Supreme Court members no longer seek to understand the Constitution with the use of “original intent.” The hermeneutical system of the justices is surely pedantic and panders to the liberal, left leaders of our once-proud republic.

The First Amendment originated at the insistence of the Baptists in Virginia. Reverend John Leland debated the matter with James Madison. Ultimately Leland obtained a promise from Madison that the First Amendment would be as it is written to this day, a guarantee that a national state church would not be established. As we know from history, nine of the 13 original colonies had “state” churches. Baptists were fined (as epitomized in the case of Reverend Isaac Backus in Massachusetts), beaten (as demonstrated in the case of Obadiah Holmes in Massachusetts), and imprisoned (as observed in the cases of 44 incarcerated Baptist preachers in Virginia). The First Amendment did not abolish “state” churches in individual colonies. In fact, there were established state churches in America until 1833—almost 50 years following the ratification of the Constitution!

In 1801 the Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut, objected to the established state church of Connecticut, which was Congregational. Knowing that President Thomas Jefferson had led in the disestablishment of religious favoritism in his home state of Virginia, they were desirous that he intervene for them in Connecticut. On a recent trip to Danbury, I had access to the minutes of the Danbury Baptist Church, which was founded in 1790. The minutes make clear that the members were chafing under the arrangement that forced them to pay taxes to support the Congregational state church.

Although President Jefferson favored the Baptists’ position, he explained that the Constitution forbade the federal government from intruding in state matters. That was the famed “wall of separation” to which he referred in his return letter to the Danbury Baptist Association.

In 1947 the liberal justice Hugo Black came upon the quotation from Jefferson in the Danbury Baptist Association, and he misconstrued its meaning completely. Since that time, the liberal justices have so distorted the amendment so as to reverse its original intent totally!

Daniel Drisbach, American University professor, in the *Journal of Church and State*, points out that the “wall of separation” has “less to do with the separation of church and civil government than with the separation between state and federal governments.”

While serving as governor of Virginia, Jefferson had declared religious days of prayer and thanksgiving, but as president of the United States he would not do that. He understood that the First Amendment restricts the federal government and president, but not individual states and governors.

Thomas Macaulay, British historian who died on the eve of the Civil War, wrote a warning to America: “Your republic will be fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the Twentieth Century as the Roman Empire was in the Fifth, with this difference: that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without and your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country, by your own institutions.”

Is there any hope for America? The answer is to be found in a genuine spiritual revival that will send believers into the land as voices of righteousness. Shall genuine Christians exert a godly influence in the political arena of our day? If we answer this question in the negative, all hope is gone. But, one with God is a majority. While local churches are not constituted to participate in politics, surely individual believers must make their voices heard just as our Baptist forbears did before us.

Whittier wrote:

Is the old Pilgrim spirit quenched within us?
Stoops the proud manhood of our souls so low,
That Mammon’s lure or Party’s wile can win us
to silence now?
Now, when our land to ruin’s brink is verging.
In God’s Name let us speak while there is time:
Now, when the padlocks of our lips are forging,
Silence is a crime.

May God light a flame of patriotism anew in the hearts of each and every one of His children. Surely it is not too much to expect that Fundamentalists stand up and be counted in these desperate days of our American republic.

Dr. David L. Cummins is Deputation Director of Baptist World Mission in Decatur, Alabama.



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Fathering is a marathon, not a sprint. —Paul Lewis

One father is worth more than a hundred schoolmasters. —George Herbert

You don't need to be right all the time. Your child wants a man for a father, not a formula. —C. D. Williams

One of the best legacies a father can leave his children is to love their mother. —C. Neil Strait

It doesn't take much to make him happy, and it takes even less to make him unhappy. —Unknown

Let us at least give according to our income, lest God make our incomes match our gifts. —Financial Advisor

Satan, like a good fisherman, baits his hook according to the appetite of the fish. —Unknown

Here is the Christian's way and his end. . . . His way is holiness, his end is happiness. —John Whitlock

The Holy Spirit knows how to interpret our prayers. Many dumb beggars have been relieved at Christ's gate by making signs. —William Secker

One way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayers, show Him His handwriting; God is tender of His Word. —Thomas Manton

When you are accustomed to anything, you are estranged from it. —George C. Lodge

The devil's name is Dullness. —Robert E. Lee

Power over a man's subsistence amounts to a power over his will. —Alexander Hamilton

I live and love in God's peculiar light. —Michelangelo

Sudden friendship, sure repentance. —English Proverb

The errors of faith are better than the best thoughts of unbelief. —Thomas Russell

Doctrine is the framework of life—the skeleton of truth, to be clothed and rounded out by the living grace of a holy life. —A. J. Gordon

Worldly faces never look so worldly as at a funeral. —George Eliot

Christ has made of death a narrow, starlit strip between the companionships of yesterday and the reunions of tomorrow. —William Jennings Bryan

Gospel duties are to be performed with a Gospel temper. —Stephen Charnock

Satan is not like God. He never warns before he strikes. —Vavasor Powell

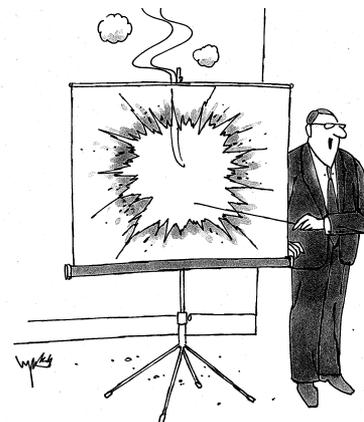
You believe in a God who plays dice, and I in complete law and order in a world which objectively exists and which I, in a wildly speculative way, am trying to capture. —Albert Einstein to Max Born

Living for his own pleasure is the least pleasurable thing a man can do; if his neighbors don't kill him in disgust, he will die slowly of boredom and lovelessness. —Joy Davidman

Praise is the rehearsal of our eternal song. By grace we learn to sing, and in glory we continue to sing. —Charles Spurgeon

I won't be able to attend your final ball game. I'm giving a speech on family values. —Father to his son

Never let a computer know that you're in a hurry. —Unknown



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Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

Come Home

Martha Mazzaferro

Princess! Where are you? Please, come home!" My sobbing voice echoed through the acres of woods on our property and into the expanse of the heavens until it reached the ears of my God (2 Chron. 30:27).

I had come home from grocery shopping and learned that when my husband started to get the dogs their supper, he noticed that our little Shetland sheepdog was missing. It had been a few hours since he had last seen her near the road, barking and protecting our property from some unknown danger. I dropped the groceries on the counter and went to look for her. We all loved this little dog, but she was very special to me.

Five years earlier, Mark, our youngest son, left for college, and we experienced the "empty nest." Our once-busy household of four children then seemed lifeless. My husband was often away. I felt alone and did not yet know how God wanted me to use my time.

I looked forward to Christmas when the whole family would be together again. During the Christmas school break Mark and I went to the pet store. He encouraged me to get a puppy to keep me company. There we saw the smallest, cutest Shetland sheepdog I had ever seen. When we came near her cage, she leaped into my heart. I went home and prayed about buying her. She was expensive. My husband said to get her, so we did.

God used this puppy to teach me many lessons. One of the first was patience—I soon realized how much work this area of my life needed. Teaching her to be obedient showed me many parallel responses we give God when God desires us to be obedient. How patient He is with us!

Soon after we moved to our property, Princess was attacked by a bear. She had wandered off into the woods. I heard her begin yelping and then suddenly stop. Quickly I ran out of the house, calling her name. There she was on our dirt road that went into the woods. She was dazed and bleeding with four large puncture wounds in the throat. The veterinarian said it must have been a large animal like a bear. (We counted six on our property that year.) Princess's head must have been in its jaws. How many times has our Savior, with His call, rescued us from the "jaws" of Satan? During the next two months, this little one hid in the safety of the corners of our house, but soon she forgot and was out roaming. Another lesson: how soon do we forget about that from which we have been rescued?

Now Princess was gone again, and my heart was breaking. It was dark and getting very cold. If she were in the woods, the ice-crusted, deep snow would be a hardship for a little pup. I continued to call out to the

Lord to send her home. I called our daughter-in-law who lives next door and our daughter, Kathy. My husband called the dog catcher, who said some dogs had recently been seized. Fear was setting in. Where was she? Had she wandered into the woods, or had someone snatched her away? I could not eat and went to bed in tears. After sleeping a few hours, I awoke and began to pray again. Freezing rain was now coming down. I begged God, again and again, to bring her home, producing my cause and bringing forth my strong reasons (Isa. 41:21). I "reminded" Him that I bought her and had paid a lot for her. I had loved and cared for her. All I wanted was for Him to bring her home. If she was snatched, I asked Him to help her escape.

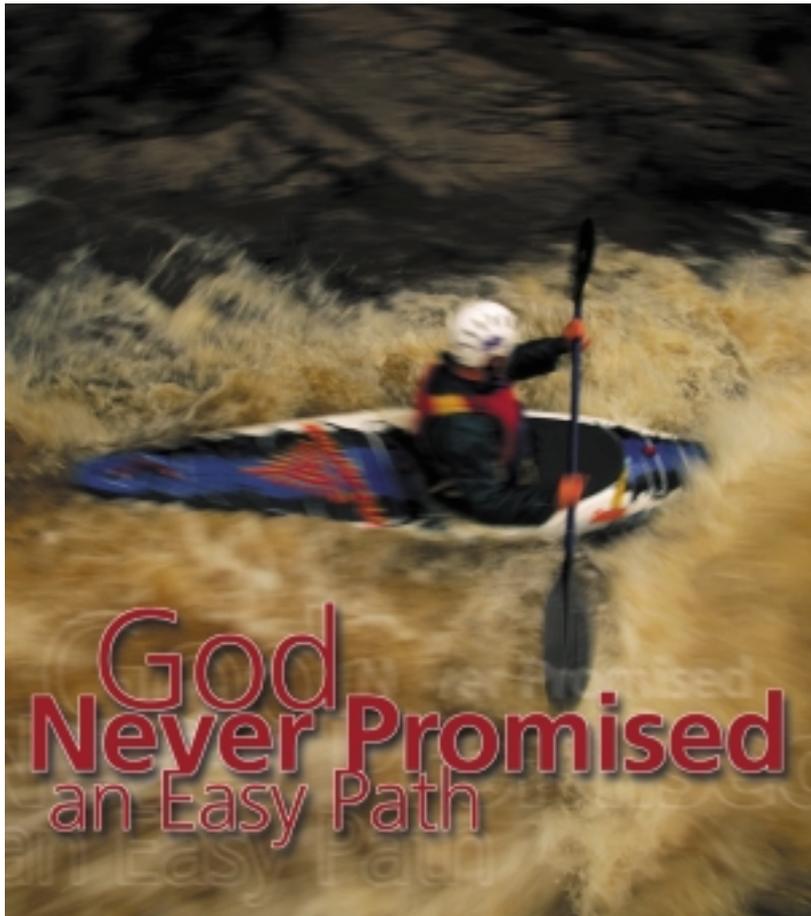
It was now around 1:30 A.M. Suddenly, in the middle of my pleas, the Lord reminded me that He paid a great price for His children with the precious blood of His Son, Jesus. When we wander off or are snatched in the snare of the enemy, His heart grieves more than we can know. All He wants is for us to come back home to Him. Shouldn't we also grieve for those we know who have wandered? Shouldn't we earnestly, with heartfelt sobs, plead to the Lord to bring them back home to Him? I understood. The pleading changed, but the sobs intensified. I released the fate of Princess into His hands and quickly asked Him to keep her from suffering. And then, I began to pray and beg for those I knew had wandered away and were caught in the enemy's snare.

The phone rang at 2:00 A.M. It was my daughter-in-law. She said, "I have Princess!" She explained that she had woken up and let her dog out and had seen Princess standing in her driveway. She'd brought her in and wrapped her in a towel. She asked, "Do you want to come get her or shall I keep her here?"

I said, "I'll be right there." I hopped in the car, praying I would not slide down the steep hill of our icy driveway. When we came back home, Princess could only lie quietly. She had been gone for about ten hours. Where had she been? We didn't know. All we knew was that she was safely home.

I also knew that God answered prayer and taught me a lesson I will never forget. His heart breaks over the one who has wandered from Him, and who, while wandering, has been caught in the enemy's trap. All He wants is for that one to come home to Him. May we plead with Him for those that break His heart—and may we never be the one to break it.

Martha Mazzaferro is a freelance writer living in Chester, Massachusetts.



God
Never Promised
an Easy Path



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Not for Sale

Jack Shuler

Mark 8:36, 37: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Every commodity of earth has its worth. One article of merchandise exceeds another in value; the relative cost of real estate may vary; the rate of stock may differ on the exchange. Yet all these properties are bought and sold on the market, and to each is affixed a price.

Much of the territory now included in the United States once bore a price tag. The Louisiana Purchase found its way into our history books. California, Nevada, and Utah were purchased from Spain. It is assumed that we bought much of the nation from the Indians. And all this for a price. Indeed, even war is now being computed in dollars and cents.

We have become accustomed to evaluating almost everything with which we are acquainted on a strictly monetary basis. Whether it be an education, a country estate, or a trip abroad, we make the dollar sign the pivot point, and all else is made to revolve around it. But who can estimate the worth of a soul? Who can fix its price?

The human soul, of all God's vast creation, alone is priceless! All the earth's fabulous billions are not enough to buy a soul. Place on the counter the cities with their skyscrapers, hotels, and factories, and the sum would be inadequate. The earth with its mountains, plains and seas, its gold, silver and oil, its diamonds and pearls—even the staggering wealth of these could not purchase one immortal soul!

The majestic mountains that proudly overlook the plains might well relate their story of the rise and decline of untold civilizations, and yet the mountains are temporal and must pass away. The grand old seas have embraced in their chilling arms the progeny of centuries and covered them all with the same damp, cold blanket, and yet the seas are temporal and must pass away. The ancient stars in their courses saw the dawn of Creation, and still soar with lightning speed along their ethereal tracks, scarce diminished, and yet the stars are temporal and must pass away. But the soul is eternal!

Made in the image of God, the soul is ageless. When the hoary hills and seas have found their sepulcher, and the stars have dwindled like dying candles and been smothered in darkness, the soul will still be young. Endowed with perpetual youth and endless life, it shall abide the endless eons of the everlasting ages.

Of all creation, the soul is nearest to the heart of God. The venerable hills, the surging seas, the blazing sun, the dazzling Milky Way, our galaxy's 30 billion stars, the 100 million such systems within reach of the astronomer's telescope—none of these can compete with the place given the soul in the esteem of our Lord.

Christ did not come to earth for earth's treasures, though He who had power to make bread of stones need not have died poor. He did not come to gain worldly power, though the kingdoms of earth were offered Him from the Temple's pinnacle. He who veined the mountains with precious metals and strewed the valleys with fabulous gems, who set the stars in their places and holds the universe in the hollow of His hand, saw something more precious than material treasures. When He bade farewell to the heavenly domain and became flesh and dwelt among us—it was for the soul. It was of this precious article He spoke when He proclaimed, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Jesus scarcely took a moment from His busy day to seek enough money to pay His taxes, but He tarried long beside a water-well with a lost soul of Samaria. He sought an avenue of escape when they came by force to make Him king, but He ran not from their jibes and scoffings when He sat at meat with publicans and sinners. He would not court the favor of kings, but His whole attention was gained by a repulsive thief when He spoke of Paradise to one whom society had spewed out and nailed to a cross. What did He see? He saw the value of a soul! Do we?

Oh, the untold, the unimagined worth of one precious soul! In money it were better that one live a pauper and die penniless than lose his soul. In suffering it were better that one endure constant knifing pain all his years if by so doing his soul might be ransomed. In labors no task is too difficult or duty too severe or confining if in such pursuit one deathless soul might be saved.

Strange, there is no heavenly reward promised those who amass a fortune, or who build an empire, or who capture the plaudits of men. But the Word of God reads clearly, "He that winneth souls is wise. . . . And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and those that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Jack Shuler, evangelist for more than 25 years, died in 1963. His brother, Dr. Phil Shuler, is an evangelist based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. You can contact him by sending e-mail to philshuler@juno.com.

The confrontation between God and Satan at the opening of the Book of Job has often been described as a kind of “wager.” It really isn’t. By definition, a wager implies a level of risk and uncertainty. The confrontation actually takes the form of a confident assertion by God (of Job’s stellar character) followed by a challenge to that assertion by Satan. In fact, given the way the whole subject is brought up not by Satan but by God (“Hast thou considered my servant Job?”), it is not too much to say that God is the one who actually initiates the challenge, to which Satan retorts with a counter-challenge.

Job himself, then, becomes the battleground for a great cosmic struggle. The story of Job is the stuff of martyrdom. Job did not die as a martyr, but lived as one. Job’s response to the circumstances that follow determines, humanly speaking, the issues at stake. But what, exactly, are the issues at stake? What is really going on in the Book of Job?

The First Challenge and Counter-Challenge

It is easy to think that all Job’s problems were brought upon him by the devil. But remember, God spoke first, not Satan (1:7). God brings up Job’s name and character, not Satan (1:8). From the standpoint of what the narrative reveals, *none* of this would have happened to Job if God had not initiated it.

The sympathetic reader can hear the sneer in Satan’s counter-challenge (1:10). “Does Job fear God for nothing?” The last phrase (“for nothing”) means *without cause, without reason, or even without compensation*. Any of these will work, but the last fits the context most colorfully. For Satan’s immediate accusation is that, in exchange for Job’s worship, God essentially pays Job off with material blessings: “Have you not hedged [i.e., protected] him and his possessions, blessed his labors, and increased his wealth?” To prove his point, Satan proposes a simple test: remove the “compensation,” all the “stuff” God gives him for his worship, and see just how deep his devotion runs.

Three Key Issues at Stake

(1) *The genuineness of human faith in, fear of, and service to God*

The sincerity of man’s faith, Satan asserts, runs only as deep as his pockets, his material possessions, his

creature comforts, the guarantee of tangible blessing in return for service rendered. Granted, not many people I know could be accused of worshipping God because of what they get out of it materially. But there are other kinds of “benefits” one can attach to serving God. I remember one student’s admitted motive for attending prayer meeting: his grades had improved since he started.

But what is perhaps more common is a superstitious kind of faith that does what it does in order to avoid “bad things”—the notion that if we watch our religious p’s and q’s (go to church, have our devotions, etc.), dot our spiritual i’s and cross our external t’s, we can avoid calamity and adversity. This needs to be proven wrong because there are people who have a rabbit’s foot religion. The story of Job shatters that kind of religion. But there’s something even more crucial at stake.

(2) *The integrity of God*

Appropriately at that early stage of human history, Satan was given rein to test his slanderous accusation against the motive behind the devotion of God’s people. It was a trial of cosmic proportions and with profound consequences, for if God’s people relate to Him only when and because He prospers or protects them, then God is a favoritist who knowingly buys the worship of men in a sordid *quid pro quo* arrangement. A wink and a nod, a passing of hands under the table, and both sides get what they want.

This is the dark, ugly underbelly of Satan’s accusation. The Book of Job, then, is not really about Job or his sufferings. Job is not the one ultimately on trial. But why should God take the time and trouble to answer the accusations of a known rebel and liar and murderer (John 8:44) or feel obligated to prove anything to a rogue such as Satan? (The same question could be asked regarding the temptation of Christ through Satan’s challenge, “If you are the Son of God, prove it.”) That is where the third issue comes into play.

(3) *The celestial audience*

For whose benefit is all this going on? God’s? Satan’s? Job’s? Ours, the readers’? At the root of much of what God does is the desire to manifest things to an entire spiritual world which we never see and rarely consider.

A subtheme runs through the book of Ephesians which is designed to affect our perspective—“in the

(PART THREE): WHAT IS AT STAKE?

heavenlies" (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10). Notice, for instance, Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14. Who is doing all the praising? Just believers? Ephesians 2:7 declares that in the ages to come God will "show" (*endeiknumi*, prove, demonstrate, display) the exceeding riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ. Show to whom? Just us? Ephesians 3:8–11 opens a "wardrobe door" to a whole new world and begins to answer these questions. Verse 10 literally reads, "In order that now may be made known to the principalities and to the powers in the heavenlies, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God." God displays His wisdom not to the Church but through the Church . . . to whom? To *principalities and powers* (cf. 1:21), to spiritual rulers and authorities in heavenly places! *God is doing things to and for and in and through us in order to manifest to all His created spiritual intelligences (angels) His perfections, for their benefit and for His glory.* This is part of His eternal purpose (3:11, literally, "the purpose of the ages").

We think that because angels dwell in God's presence they must be privy to everything that God is doing and why He is doing it. But this is clearly not the case. Angels look with eager and quizzical interest into some of God's works and dealings with men (1 Pet. 1:12). They are His servants, just as we are. There are things God does which they do not understand, just like us. And there are things God does to reveal Himself to them, just as He does to reveal Himself to us.

First Corinthians 4:9 paints an even more vivid picture. The apostle affirms that God had "set forth" (*apodeiknumi*) the apostles—a fascinating technical term for bringing a person into an arena, in this case, for the grand finale ("last"). In fact, Paul says they are made a "spectacle." The Greek word is *theatron*, a theater! For whom? For the world, for men, and for angels! Shakespeare was right—all the world is a stage!

All this may be very interesting but what, you ask, does it really have to do with Job? Is there any concrete evidence of this celestial audience in Job? Their presence is, in fact, subtly but explicitly indicated in the text (Job 1:6, 2:1). The words of 1:7–12 were spoken in the presence of all the "sons of God" as they appeared before the Lord. The "test case" of Job, therefore, must take place in as wide an audience as the challenges. (Interestingly, the same truth is subtly suggested in the temptation of Christ as well. The celestial audience, stepping forward after Satan's departure, "came and ministered to him," Matt. 4:11.)

Practical Ramifications

We can easily become small-minded and man-centered in our theology when we think of God as acting almost solely for our benefit. We are not the center of the universe—God is. We are not even the center of God's redemptive activity—*God* is. This is not to minimize our genuine value and importance to God, but it is to maximize the all-importance of God Himself and the ultimate aim of His glory and preeminence (Col. 1:16–18). Further, it is to maximize our perspective on the real spiritual world around us, the presence of a multitude of beings other than us for whose benefit God does certain things. They too will share in glorifying God for what they learn about Him through His dealings with men (Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:8–14).

This is what is going on in Job. This is the celestial audience at the original live "production" of the drama of Job—all the spiritual intelligences in the heavenlies. God is concerned to display to *all* His created beings the mutual genuineness and mutual integrity of the relationship between God and man. If it were not so—if the faith of even the best of men could be shown to be insincere and rooted in self-interest and self-aggrandizement, if God Himself could be successfully maligned as a manipulating and deceptive deity who bribes man for worship—then the whole created order would plunge into meaningless chaos.

You can see what is at stake in Job's response. But what is the lesson in all this for us? Does this mean that when *we* suffer adversity, as Job did, *our* response determines the integrity of God in His relationship to man? No. Job's suffering has already authenticated the integrity of God's relationship to man. Job suffered to prove, among other things, that there *are* men who genuinely worship and serve God "for nothing" other than for who and what He is. What, then, do we prove when we so suffer? *We are proving that we are some of those people!* We are not proving anything further about the character and integrity of God. But we are proving a great deal about ourselves and about the integrity and sincerity of *our* faith in and relationship to God.

Every difficulty we or someone we love faces, every trial we endure, every loss we bear, every experience of the severest pain and suffering—and even the misunderstanding and rejection it may bring from friends or brethren—every one is a fresh opportunity to stand in the company of Job and to affirm that our faith in and our worship of and our devotion to God is rooted in soil far deeper than personal advantage or material blessing or physical well-being.



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Christianity: World's Largest Religion?

A Religion News Service report said that Christianity is the "most extensive and universal religion in history" and remains the world's largest religion with 1.9 billion adherents, according to the 1,700-page *World Christian Encyclopedia*, prepared by the Global Evangelization Movement research center in Virginia. A separate report in *Religion Today*, however, said that according to missiologist Ralph Winter 11.1 percent of the world's population, or 680 million people, are evangelical Christians who have had a personal conversion. (*Christian News*, 2/5/2001)

Bible Translations Added in 2000

In complete or partial form, the Bible is now available in a total of 2,261 languages, an increase of 28 during the year 2000, reports the United Bible Societies (UBS). The complete Bible is now available in 383 languages, 13 more than a year ago. And, in addition to complete Bibles, the New Testament has been published in an additional 987 languages. The region claiming the largest share of these is Africa, with 274 translated languages. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 3/12/2001)

The Bible: Bestseller in China

Although the government restricts the sale and

distribution of Bibles in China, some 25 million copies have been sold in the last 13 years. Churches have been the main source of sales because bookstores are not allowed to sell Bibles. (*Baptist Bulletin*, April 2001)

Ten Commandments Under Fire

Americans United for Separation of Church and State sued Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, over a Ten Commandments plaque in the county courthouse. The plaque has been in place since 1918. County Executive Jim Roddy said, "I don't think that we have the right to say those people 82 years ago didn't know what they were doing." He plans to raise money to cover fighting the suit. (*World*, 3/31/2001)

Bible Verse Ban Prompts Protest

Christians in Yuma, Arizona, took out a full-page ad in their local newspaper to protest the banning of a banner bearing a Bible verse in an annual city pageant. Members of The Door, an independent charismatic church, were told they could enter their Spanish ministry's float in the Silver Spur Rodeo Parade only if they removed a large sign bearing the words from John 3:16. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 2/20/2001)

Pastor Shortage

Mainstream denominations have seen an alarming drop in the number of young pastors, said St. Albans Institute, a Maryland-based congregational research center. (*World*, 3/10/2001)

University Professors Accused

Two University of Georgia professors, Russell Carlson and Henry Schaefer, were accused of violating "separation of church and state" because they invited students to an after-class discussion about faith and science. Both professors are members of the university's Christian Faculty Forum. (*What In The World!*, Vol. 29, No. 6)

Gambling's Toll

In a study produced in 2000 by the University of Southern Mississippi's University Research Center, "Gaming in the Mississippi Economy," the authors report that in compiling research for their study the team wasn't able to fully explore the social impacts of gambling in Mississippi because "the authorizing legislation for this study did not primarily focus upon such impacts." In all of its 67 pages, only three pages are dedicated to studying the ills gambling brings with it. Even so, the study finds that in 1996 nearly 5 percent of Mississippians could be classified as problem gamblers. That 5 percent equals some 150,000

fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, children, and friends who have the potential to slide out of control and gamble away everything they own. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission (www.ngisc.gov) reveals in its 1999 research there are heavy burdens, such as increases in crime, underage gambling, suicide, and divorce, placed upon communities when gambling comes to town. (*AFA Action Alert*, 3/7/2001)

Pornography a Growing Problem

In 1997 Americans spent \$8 billion on pornography, a thousandfold increase over 1973. This is more than rock and country music combined, and more than Hollywood's box office receipts. A Zogby poll sponsored by Focus on the Family found that 20 percent of Americans have patronized pornographic web sites, with that percentage holding true for both Christians and non-Christians. (*World*, 4/7/2001)

Yahoo and Porn

Attorney General John Ashcroft is being urged to prosecute Yahoo, Inc., one of the world's largest Internet companies, for its direct involvement in the sale and distribution of obscene material and child pornography. A letter written by AFA Director of Governmental Affairs Patrick Trueman, former official in the Reagan and

NOTABLE QUOTES

Bush Administrations who was responsible for the prosecution of illegal pornography, said: "News reports this week indicate that Yahoo has begun to offer thousands of hardcore pornographic videos and DVDs in its online store and receives 'a percentage of each sale' from merchants working with Yahoo. Because Yahoo has such a dominant presence on the Internet, it must not be allowed to flaunt federal law. To allow it to do so will surely encourage many more mainstream companies with a dot-com presence to also embrace the obscenity industry." Trueman also urged that Yahoo be investigated for its trafficking in child pornography. "Yahoo offers a substantial amount of child pornography, available on its own servers, through its web hosting service, 'Yahoo! Geo Cities'," Trueman said. (*AFA Action Alert*, 4/12/2001)

Public School Seeks Homosexual Advocate

The Madison, Wisconsin, School Board February 26 voted unanimously to hire a full-time advocate for homosexual and lesbian students in the school system. The district moved immediately to hire an advocate, with the goal of having the person in place before the end of the 2000-2001 school year. According to the resolution, the administration is "encouraged to work closely with GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning) community in developing the job description." Plans call for the homosexual advocate to be a teacher or guidance counselor who will be expected to "improve the academic achievement, emotional security, and personal accept-

It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship.—Patrick Henry

The enemies of moral truth have an impoverished understanding of reality, of human dignity and the human drama. They declare (implicitly or explicitly) that there is nothing worthy to which we should give allegiance; nothing deserving of our reverence; nothing elevating for which to live; and nothing—not family, country, faith, honor, or truth—for which to sacrifice or even die. Theirs is a world that cannot celebrate human excellence or heroism, for it is a world where everything is equally good, equally bad, equally meaningless. The real stuff of life—its vividness and grandeur, its joy, majesty, and beauty—is thought to be illusory.—William Bennett

God's law will be publicly acknowledged in our court. [It is my duty] not only to maintain the honor and integrity of the court system and the judicial branch, but to restore and preserve the moral foundation of our law.—Judge Roy Moore, Alabama's Chief Justice

Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there contained! Every member would be obliged in conscience to temperance, frugality and industry; to justice, kindness and charity towards his fellow men; and to piety, love and reverence toward Almighty God.—John Adams

Of all the dispositions which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who would labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness. . . . The mere Politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them.—George Washington

At one time, black Americans didn't enjoy constitutional protections. Today, we do. As such, the civil-rights struggle is over and won. That doesn't mean that there aren't other problems, but they are not civil-rights problems. If we diagnose them incorrectly as civil-rights problems, however, their solutions will remain illusive.—Walter Williams

ance," of students, while being a source of information about homosexuality for staff as well. The vote makes Madison the ninth school district nationally to add such a position, according to information on the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's Internet web site. (*Baptist Press*, 2/27/2001)

Christian Victim of Hate Crime

Three young men in Wisconsin have been charged with committing a hate crime against a Christian. The three were provoked by a religious yard sign and decided to attack the residents of the house. When a man answered the door, one of the young men sprayed him in the face with pepper spray and yelled, "Satan rules, Jesus will not prevail." (*Baptist Bulletin*, March 2001)

President Bush Reinstates Reagan Policy

In an unpublicized move, President Bush signed a special memorandum March 28 that will withhold U.S. foreign aid to family planning groups that advocate abortion. The quiet action is a procedural step designed to preempt pro-abortion forces in Congress who had hoped to overturn Bush's decision to reinstate the Reagan-era policy. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 4/6/2001)

Unborn Victims Bill Proposed

Republican South Carolina congressman Lindsey Graham is renewing his push to establish federal legal status for unborn children when their pregnant mothers are the victims of violent crime and says he's optimistic the bill will survive the legislative

process this year, after having been defeated in Congress in 2000. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 2/13/2001)

Bill Asks FCC To Ban Violent TV Programming

Two southern Democrats are teaming up to create what they call a "safe harbor" of television programming for kids by forcing the federal government to crack down on violent TV shows. The Children's Protection from Violent Programming Act would require the Federal Communications Commission to prohibit the distribution of violent television programming during times when kids are most prone to watch TV, according to Rep. Ronnie Shows. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 2/13/2001)

Pastor Criticized Over Clinton Speech

Dick Bernal, a leading charismatic pastor in California, has found himself in hot water for his part in a fund-raising

event that raised more than \$2 million for earthquake relief work in India. Bernal was bombarded with complaints after hosting former President Clinton at a gala program at the church. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 3/22/2001)

U.N. Policies Undermine Traditional Families

United Nations-sponsored committees are pushing an agenda that counters traditional, moral, and social norms regarding the family and religion, according to Patrick Fagan, a Heritage Foundation expert on family and culture. Some feminist policies being pushed through the U.N. High Commissioner's Office for Human Rights are so radical they violate the U.N.'s own founding documents and undermine nations' rights to determine their domestic policies, Fagan said. The United Nations also is rewriting school textbooks to promote the new definition of gender, and fighting traditional sex roles. Countries

that have constitutional bans on abortion are regarded by the U.N. High Commissioner's Office for Human Rights to be in violation of the rights of women, according to the moral doctrine of the international feminist movement, Fagan noted. In recent years, the United Nations has urged countries to put in place legal structures that would allow children to take their parents to court when they disagree about the content of sex education. U.N. agencies also seek to give prostitutes the legal rights afforded other professions and have criticized conscientious objection clauses in laws for doctors who oppose abortion. In many cases, social policy officials on U.N. committees advise nations to decrease the emphasis on marriage, parental authority, and religious beliefs. Mothers are encouraged to enter the workforce, and legal restraints on sexual activity among adolescents are targeted for removal. (*Baptist Press*, 3/2/2001)

American Students Face Prison Over Tract Distribution

Three Americans arrested in March for distributing evangelistic material in the United Arab Emirates could face up to ten years in prison. Two of the three were college students on a missions trip. One man, 28-year-old Charles Girling, faces formal charges of proselytizing, which carries a five- to ten-year sentence on conviction. (*Maranatha NewsWatch*, 4/10/2001)

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The Greatest Gift Parents Can Give Their Children

This issue coincides with Mother's Day and Father's Day. As you can see, there are a number of articles of interest to parents. In addition to these and some recent helpful books on parenting, there is an increasing body of literature to provide guidance for new or would-be parents and even those who have been in this status for years. (My wife and I are learning that even grandparents still need to develop their parenting skills!) But, helpful though these resources are, nothing is more valuable than the Bible.

There can be no doubt about the meaning of "parent." Our English word means exactly the same thing that the Greek word it translates means—"to beget, to bring forth, to give birth to." If you have one or more children, it is apparent that you are a parent. The Bible makes it clear that parents have duties to children, just as children have duties to parents. Examples of duties to and from parents are throughout the book of Genesis, and in Exodus, the fifth commandment made devotion to parents a religious duty. As the Old Testament law unfolded, these duties were more clearly defined.

Unger's Bible Dictionary has an interesting article on "Parent" that you may want to read. It reminds us that cursing or striking a parent was punishable by death. Disrespectful, disobedient sons were to be tried and stoned. We don't have many records of these severe punishments actually being applied. Perhaps their stern warnings were a sufficient deterrent. Jewish rabbis amplified and explained every detail of the Law, and their writings provide rich

insights into the Jews' understanding of God's laws of parenting.

When a son was able to make a living, he could become independent of his father, but a daughter remained under her father until she married. This principle is explained in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 7. Several Old Testament references reveal that a father could marry his sons and daughters at will, but the rabbis held that if a daughter was of age, she could not be given in marriage without her full consent. Chastisement of a child was enjoined, but only when the child was young. It was not to be done in a manner that would destroy the child's self-respect. As Paul told the Ephesians, fathers were not to provoke their children to wrath. Using corporal punishment on a grown-up son was grounds for excommunication.

The book of Genesis demonstrates the value of a parent's blessing and the shame of a parent's curse. Proverbs tells us of the treasure of having obedient children and grown children who continue to honor their parents. Parents who look will find enough Scripture on the subject to provide a lifetime of challenges to growth. We can't afford to waste time brooding with regret that we didn't know what we should have when we first became parents. The best parents, with the best children of any age, will tell you how the Lord's mercy continues to lead them along in the pilgrimage of parenthood. We must keep growing.

It is too easy to be reductionists about parenting—to convince our-

selves that parenting can be done Biblically with attention to just a few simple truths or even truisms. Who hasn't heard, "The greatest gift a father can give his children is to love their mother." There is a lot of truth in that statement, of course, for a father does demonstrate practical love to his children by loyalty and tenderness to his wife, but is that really the "greatest" thing he can do? Isn't the first and great commandment to "love the Lord?" I wonder why no one has produced a little plaque that says, "The greatest gift a father can give his children is to love the Lord." If we get that right, our other duties will fall in line. Loving God with all our hearts is the greatest gift parents can give their children.

Last year my wife and I closed a chapter of our lives, finishing 18 years of caring for invalid parents in our home. This year our youngest of five is 18 and finishing high school. All this time we have been trying to learn how to be good parents to our children while increasingly becoming parents to our parents. Both of these duties provided helpful pressure to focus on our own spiritual lives along the way. Whether we try to simplify our parental duties by reducing them to a simple set of guidelines or whether we become rabbinical in trying to anticipate and explain every contingency ahead of time, we will miss the mark unless we get the main thing right. After all, how can an earthly father hope to fulfill his role unless he knows and loves his Heavenly Father?



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

Janet Reno said that anyone who believes the Bible is a dangerous cultist. Procter & Gamble's CEO is a satanist. Scientists somewhere in Siberia drilled a nine-mile-deep shaft and heard human screams emanating from the hole. What do all three of these statements have in common? They are all false! Yet stories such as these, called *urban legends*, are often forwarded around the Internet without anyone checking them out.

When alarmed Christians act upon false information, they are often made to appear foolish and may harm the cause of Christ. For example, according to *Focus on the Family* (August 2000), in 1974 two men filed petition asking the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) not to grant educational broadcasting licenses to religious organizations, claiming it violated the separation of church and state. The FCC rejected the petition, but somehow Madalyn Murray O'Hair's name got connected with the petition. By 1995 the FCC had received more than 30 million pieces of mail along with innumerable faxes and e-mails from concerned Christians opposing Mrs. O'Hair's efforts to remove religious broadcasting from the airwaves. (To see the FCC's ruling, go to www.fcc.gov/mmb. Scroll down to "Other Web Pages." The last entry there is about the supposed Madalyn Murray O'Hair petition.)

How can we avoid being duped by these urban legends? The following web sites can help. The first is the Urban Legends Reference Pages (www.snopes.com), maintained by the San Fernando Valley (California) Folklore Society. It catalogs urban

legends under many topics, including religion. There you will find the truth about such urban legends as "NASA scientists discovered a lost day in time" and "Alabama redefined the value of *pi* to 3 bring it in line with Biblical precepts." It also discusses the three examples given in the first paragraph of this article.

The second web site is the AFU & Urban Legends Archive (www.urban-legends.com). It too is a secular site containing a category on Religion. It has information on a story about Shakespeare and the King James Bible.

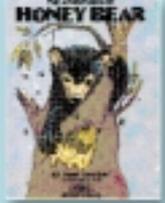
The third web site (www.truthor-fiction.com) is by talk radio host Rich Buhler, who has been researching Christian urban legends for years. There you can check the truth behind rumors, inspirational stories, and prayer requests that you receive via e-mail.

Two other sites that should be useful to pastors and teachers deserve at least a brief mention. A reader recommended Lycos Zone (www.rhyme.lycos.com), where you can search to find rhymes, definitions, antonyms, synonyms, homophones, and related words for any word you choose. You can also search quotations by famous people, various American historical documents, the works of Shakespeare, and more. The other site I want to mention is The Bible Gateway, where you can search for words or passages from nine different Bible versions. With the passage lookup, you can choose to show footnotes and cross-references. Either of these sites should prove useful to those who prepare sermons or Sunday school lessons.

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Permanently Placed

Linda Turner

Everything's in order, but before you take the eight-year-old home there is one more thing I want you to do." Grandma Hill's heart sank as Mrs. Lund, the orphanage official, spoke. The massive amount of paperwork was finished, and the lengthy waiting period had finally been completed so that she could adopt a girl to be a companion for her lonely granddaughter. Nine-year-old Patti needed someone closer to her age as she grew up in the loving home of her grandmother and two bachelor uncles. Grandma Hill listened anxiously as Mrs. Lund went on.

"There's someone else I want you to meet first. As much as your eight-year-old needs a home, this little one needs one more. I admit it is hard to place older children into families. We are grateful to you. However, little Linda needs love now or she won't make it. When she turns two in July, we have to put her in a ward with the older children. There's so many. We won't be able to give her the individual attention she needs. She is not thriving now." Mrs. Lund knew that this little one would not survive in the orphanage. "I'm not trying to alarm you. Don't feel you have to see her."

"Oh, don't worry. I understand. It's all right." All the while Grandma Hill calculated in her head that when that two-year-old became a teenager, she herself would be 71 years old. She would probably be in her 80s before Linda would marry.

It was a difficult undertaking to adopt an eight-year-old along with caring for the nine-year-old. How could she manage a two-year-old instead? When the little girl was placed into her arms, Grandma Hill knew she would find a way.

She did. And God placed me in a unique family of Grandma Hill, Patti, and two uncles. Because in the 1950s this grouping was not considered a normal family, I was not allowed to be adopted into it. The judge called it being "permanently placed."

Grandma Hill loved flowers and trees. Every place she lived she planted what she called her "English flower garden" with roses and lilacs and shrubs for Uncle Gerald to mow around. I remember her flower gardens as pleasant places where pansies smiled and sweet williams danced. I recall being intrigued by rose arbors and flower-scented paths. When I think of her flowerbeds, I think of rainbow smells and of bird symphonies. Most of all, I am vividly reminded of a day when I was just four years old—the day that I knew I was a sinner.

"Don't you touch this bush," Grandma sternly warned me, knowing my curiosity could be fatal to the small rhododendron. She tenderly patted the dirt around the freshly planted bush. She had worked hard that day pruning and tending her flower garden. After cautioning me about the new plant, she went inside to get cleaned up. Later, I did not just touch it; I ate the bitter bush. Immediately, I knew I deserved not only death but also eternal punishment. I

had disobeyed. I had sinned. I needed help—God's help.

Quickly, I got my Bible. I could not read it, but I knew it was God's Word. "Oh, God. Please help me. Please love me," I prayed. My Bible on my lap helped me remember the Bible words I learned in Sunday school. "I have loved you with an everlasting love." "Christ died for our sins." With all my heart, I told God "I'm sorry. Forgive me. I want to be Yours."

And God placed me in His family. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13).

At that time, I was aware only that God loved me and forgave me. I belonged to Him. Everything was good. I was at peace and ready to go play. Well, not quite. First I had to tell Grandma about her bush.

I was older when I learned the wonderful truth of that day more fully. I learned of Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Jesus promises in John chapter 10, "I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish." What a great and gracious God! I am permanently placed in His family also.

That day at the orphanage, I clung to Grandma Hill with all the strength my slight toddler arms could muster. It was she who secured me in her love, though. It was the judge who permanently placed me in her family, and God who put me in her heart. Two years later, God permanently placed me into His family, and I was born again. God promised to supply all my needs.

Years later something seemed missing. I needed a family of my own. God brought a Christian farmer into my life. "Go ahead. Marry him. If it doesn't work out, you can just get a divorce." That advice came from someone who thought he had my best interests at heart. God said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." His ways are best. With the exception of death, marriage should be thought of as an enduring relationship. So, once again, I was being permanently placed.

Larry and I were married on June 17, 1972. Proverbs 10:22 says, "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." God has since given us a daughter and two sons. An added joy was that Grandma Hill lived to be 91 years old. She got to know all three of my children. Our youngest child turned three years old the same year Grandma Hill died.

Sometimes I wonder about that eight-year-old girl who almost went home with Grandma Hill. Then I thankfully remember that God is the One who plans our lives. He had a different plan for her. He has a purpose for your life, too. Perhaps you are lonely and discouraged. Take heart. I know for a fact that God "setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. 68:6).

Linda Turner and her husband operate a dairy farm in Greenville, Pennsylvania.

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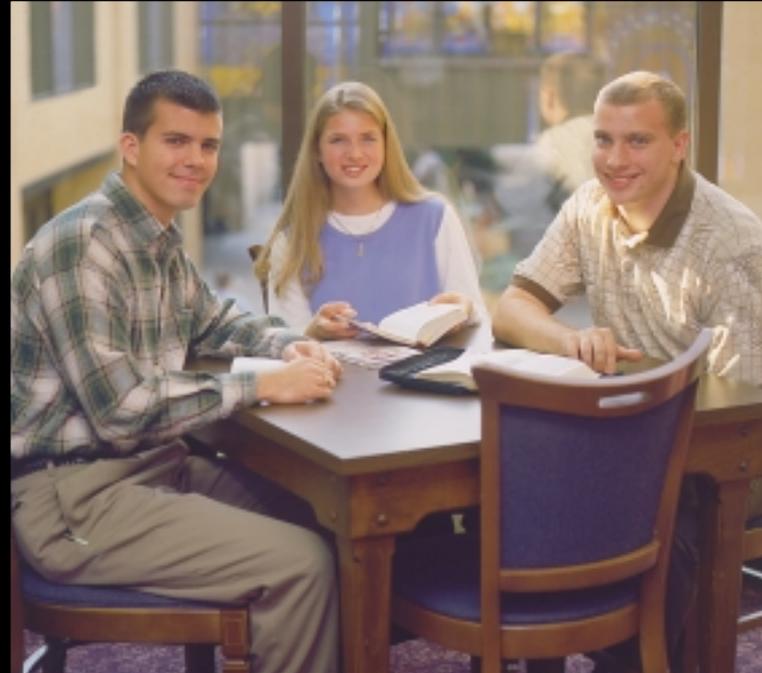
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