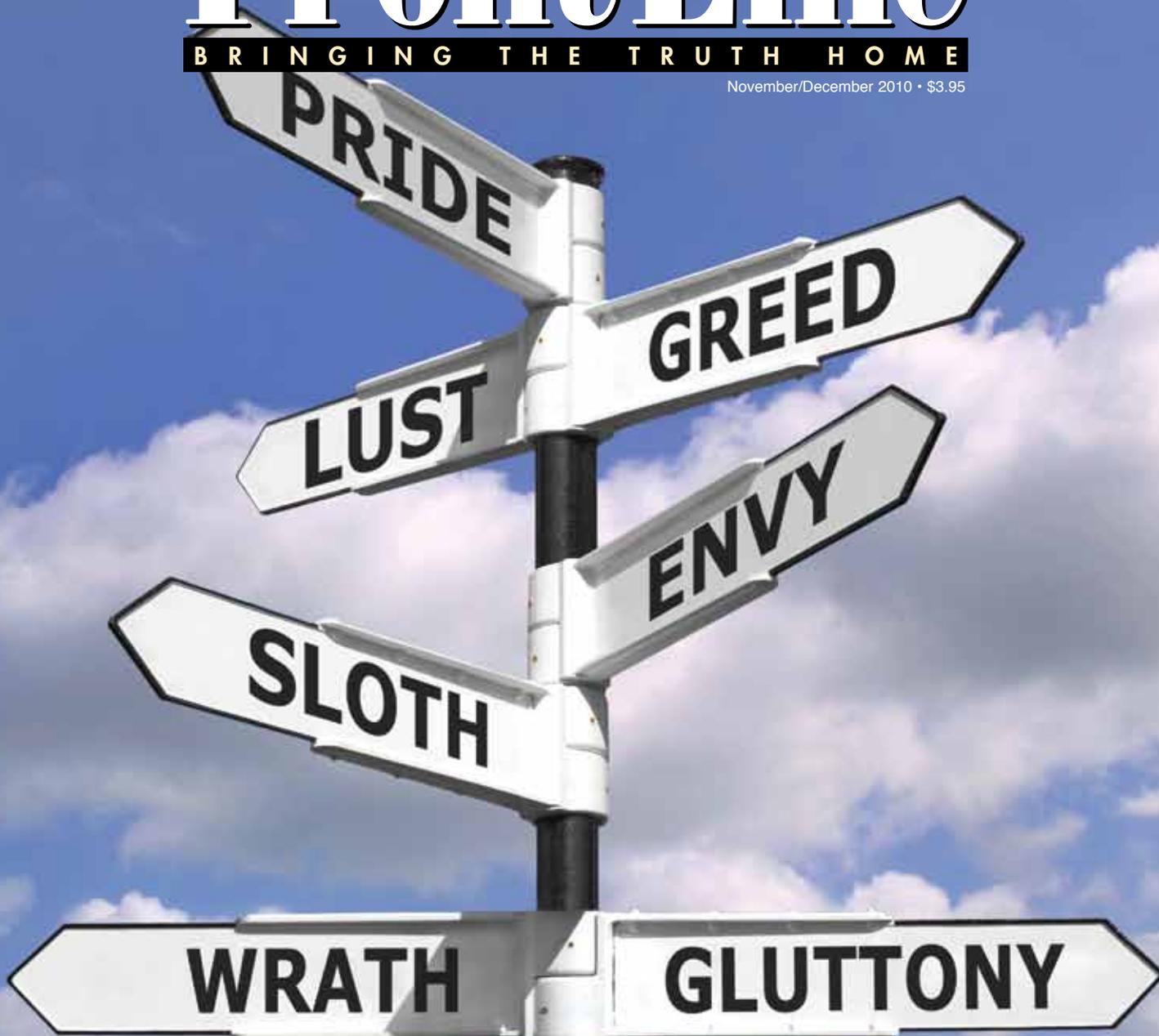


A SCRIPTURAL LOOK AT LUST · THE SIN OF SLOTH · LIVING IN A WRATH-FILLED WORLD

FrontLine

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Contents

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010

FRONTLINE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 20 • NUMBER 6

6 A Scriptural Look at Lust

Tom Farrell

Either you will control your lust or your lust will control you.

8 Gluttony

Robert Condict

At the very least, the gluttonous individual lives a foolish life.

10 The Sin of Sloth

John R. Van Gelderen

The “sloth” makes excuses for not exercising due diligence, pampers self, is apathetic to his real needs, and arrogantly rationalizes his own foolish ways.

14 Taming Envy

Dave Barba

Envious folks say to themselves, “I want your talent, your good looks, your job, your wealth, your church, your husband, your wife, your life.”

18 Never Satisfied

Tim Potter

Even before the foundation of the world was established, greed existed.

Special thanks to Dr. Mike Stalnaker, pastor at Community Baptist Church, Spring Hill, Tennessee, for his help with this issue.

12 Living in a Wrath-Filled World

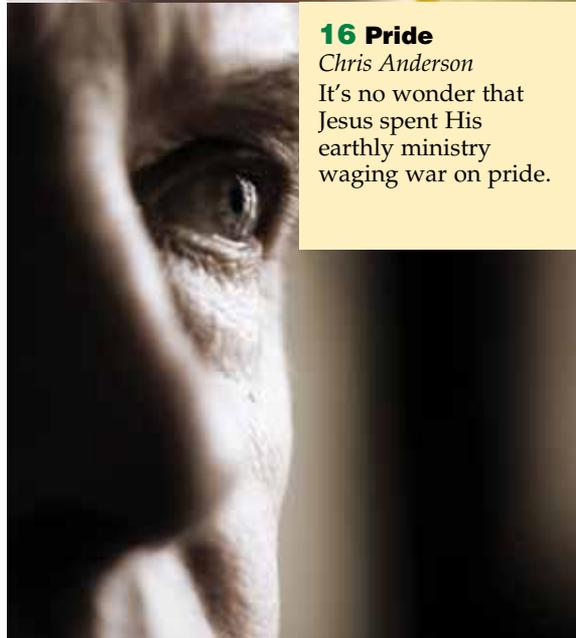
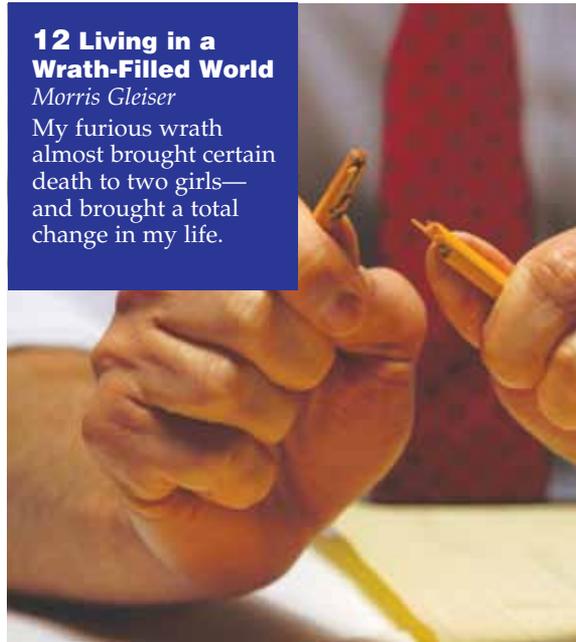
Morris Gleiser

My furious wrath almost brought certain death to two girls—and brought a total change in my life.

16 Pride

Chris Anderson

It's no wonder that Jesus spent His earthly ministry waging war on pride.



Departments

4 Mail Bag

5 On the Front Line

The Seven Deadly Sins
Mike Stalnaker

20 On the Home Front

24 Cogitations

On a Third Realm
Warren Vanhetloo

26 Ladies' Circle

Jordan
Nancy Hamilton

27 Wit & Wisdom

David Atkinson

28 Regional Report

Earl Barnett

29 The Evangelist's Corner

Gratitude
Jerry Sivonksty

30 At a Glance

The Song of Solomon (Part 2)
Layton Talbert

33 Newsworthy

Robert Condict

35 Global Focus

The Small Church
Pearson Johnson

37 Chaplain News

Joe Willis

39 Behind the Lines

Our Problem
Mike Stalnaker

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The articles on dispensationalism [July/August 2010] are outstanding! Every area of interest as it relates to dispensationalism was addressed in such a Scriptural manner. I basically feel the same about the article on "new Calvinism" in the previous issue as the two writers appearing in the *Mail Bag* for this issue. I thought the article was very weak and was almost supportive of Calvinism. The teaching and practice of this so-called "new Calvinism" is really causing great harm to Biblical Christianity and in the churches of faithful, Fundamental pastors. I really would love to see the FBFI do a strong, clear, uncompromising exposure of the position and teaching of this "new Calvinism."

I sincerely commend you for allowing God to use you in providing a library of Biblical information, both on the issues facing the Fundamentalist and also the needs that we experience in our daily walk with God.

*Dr. Roy R. Wise
Heritage Baptist Church
Mount Laurel, NJ*

We have been enjoying *FrontLine* magazine for several years. I was encouraged to see the recent articles on modesty entitled "The Believer's Adornment" by Terry Hamilton and "Modesty—A Lost Cause?" by Kim Melton.

I have been very disappointed by the obvious change in dress standards amongst independent Baptists. I was saved at the age of eighteen while visiting BJU. I had absolutely no dress standards when I got saved. It was then that I started looking at what the Bible taught and came to some convictions about how God would have me dress. I am sad, confused, and frustrated with the changes I see in those who were my godly examples when I got saved. I have started studying more on this subject as I see a big shift and I am convinced even more now that God wants Christian ladies to look like ladies, act like ladies, and be an example to the world of the distinctions God set forth for us.

It is much more than "wear this and don't wear this." It is a matter of the heart. We should

Continued on page 38

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The Seven Deadly Sins

Mike Stalnaker

With this issue *FrontLine* concludes its twentieth year of publication. If you were to reflect on the various topics that have been addressed over the past twenty years, I believe that most of them could be boiled down to those that are addressed in this issue.

The idea for this month's theme came from my study of sixteen pastoral books dealing with the ethics and behavior of pastors. After much reading and categorizing I concluded that the top five struggles and pitfalls that pastors faced were, in order, pride, coveting/finances, immorality, laziness, and jealousy/envy. *Discipleship Journal* asked its readers to rank the areas of greatest spiritual challenge to them. The results came back in the following order: materialism, pride, self-centeredness, laziness, anger/bitterness, sexual lust, envy, gluttony, and lying.

The issues above are very similar to what have been known historically as the Seven Deadly Sins. Wikipedia states that the Seven Deadly Sins may be considered "a classification of the most objectionable vices that has been used since early Christian times to educate and instruct followers concerning fallen humanity's tendency to sin. The final version of the list consists of wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony." (As believers we reject the teaching that the sins should be divided into venial [minor] or mortal [major] sins. Also, sacraments do not absolve the minor sins, nor do [only] capital sins destroy the soul.) Throughout the centuries 1 Corinthians 10:13 still rings true when it states, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." It is amazing how consistent our temptations have been from the very beginning of human history when Adam and Eve were tempted

and fell in the Garden of Eden.

This issue's articles have been written by various men whom I respect, and the articles deal with the challenges that all people face no matter their gender, age, race, or profession. Sin is sin, and we all must address sin as we come into contact with it. Spurgeon states that we are to "watch constantly against those things which are thought to be no temptations. The most poisonous serpents are found where the sweetest flowers grow. Cleopatra was poisoned by an asp that was brought to her in a basket of fair flowers. Sharp-edged tools, long handled, wound at last."

In a devotional entitled "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices," Thomas Brooks writes,

Satan has his several devices to deceive, entangle, and undo the souls of men. Satan has . . . snares for the wise, and snares for the simple; snares for hypocrites, and snares for the upright; snares for brave, and snares for the timorous; snares for the rich, and snares for the poor; snares for the aged, and snares for youth. Happy are those souls which are not captured and held in the snares that he has laid!

The magazine noted above also stated that the respondents' temptations were more potent when they had neglected their time with God (81 percent) and when they were physically tired (57 percent). Resisting temptation was accomplished by prayer (84 percent), avoiding compromising situations (76 percent), Bible study (66 percent), and being accountable to someone else (52 percent).

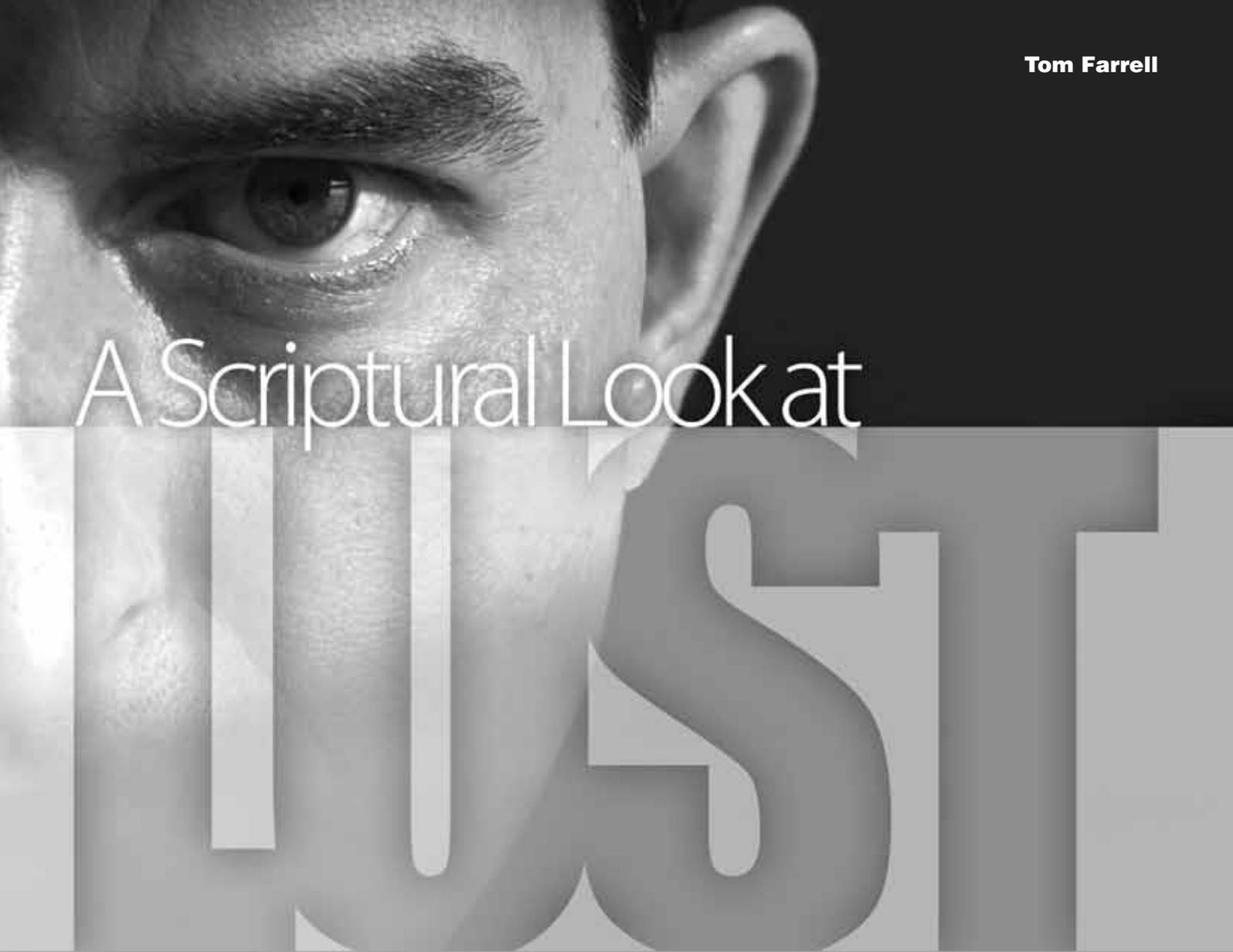
James Stalker states in his book entitled *Seven Deadly Sins* (1902),

Augustine was, in his unregenerate days, held captive by this sin, and in his *Confessions* he has told the story of his miserable bond-

age and his ultimate and complete emancipation. At the crisis of his conversion he was plunged in horrible distress between the force of inclination on the one hand and the call of conscience on the other; but it was a power far above his own that rescued him at last. He was sitting in a garden with his companion, Alypius, when he suddenly rose to seek a lonely place, where he might give way, unobserved, to his emotion. As he went, he heard a voice, as of a boy or girl playing, which said, "Take and read," "Take and read." He turned back, and, lifting a book, which happened to be the Epistle to the Romans, from the table at which his companion was still seated, he let his eye fall on the first words which met him, and they were these: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." These were God's own words, and in them the hand of God gripped him. He felt that the long struggle had been taken in hand by One mightier than himself. Christ had redeemed him; and from that time forth, in union with Christ, he became a holy man. When Christ is in the heart, no sin can permanently abide in it.

First Corinthians 10:13 concludes by teaching us that God is faithful to make temptations predictable, to keep temptations limited, and to provide a way out of temptations. I trust that you will look to Christ no matter what might be your struggles.

Dr. Mike Stalnaker planted Community Baptist Church in the spring of 2008 in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where he resides with his wife, Deena, and their four children.



A Scriptural Look at

LUST

One of my saddest memories in over thirty-five years of ministry occurred some time ago when I met with five fallen pastors over a two-month period. These were all men with whom I had gone to school and/or with whom I had held meetings. As I talked with each preacher individually, I asked the same question, not condemning but curiously: "How did this happen?" As my brokenhearted brethren responded, two things became obvious. First *they left their intimacy with God*. In every case Bible reading, fervent prayer, and genuine love for God had waned. Every man continued his pastoral duties of ministry, but he had ceased his personal devotion to Christ. Second, *they left their integrity for God*. The discipline of their eyes, ears, and minds was almost nonexistent. In short, they left the Lord for their lusts. *My friend either you will control your lust or your lust will control you.*

Uncontrolled Desire

There are five Hebrew and five Greek words that are rendered "lust." Most often in the Scripture lust has a bad connotation and means a strong desire, an abnormal appetite, a passion for a forbidden pleasure, or a longing for

the unlawful. *Succinctly defined, lust is an uncontrolled desire.* Desires under control are helpful, but desires out of control are harmful. The desire to eat is natural and helps keep us alive, but the uncontrolled desire for food produces obesity and many health problems. The desire for sleep, when disciplined, yields rest that the body needs, but the uncontrolled desire for sleep makes a sluggard out of a man.

In 1 Peter 2:11, the apostle Peter pleaded, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Notice the fervent appeal of the old fisherman to God's people who would hear or read his epistle. He warned them first about *the invasion of lusts*. He said lusts war against your soul.

What are the main lusts or uncontrolled desires of man? They are normally the desire for possessions, position, or pleasure. Achan lusted for possessions (Josh. 7:20); Lucifer coveted position (Isa. 14:14); and Amnon craved pleasure (2 Sam. 13:1, 2). These illicit passions still assault God's people today. We are at war with the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

The longest building project demanding the largest amount of money and manpower in history was the Great Wall of China. It was built to keep enemy warriors,

particularly the Mongols, out of China. The height and thickness of the wall made it virtually impossible for the enemy to invade the country. Depending on who you read, it is reported that in the first one hundred years of the building of the wall, China was invaded at least three times. How? On all three occasions the invaders paid off the gatekeepers!

Fleshly lusts war against you daily and will seek to pay off the gatekeepers of your soul, your ears and eyes. They whisper, "Look at this, listen to this, long for this. You want it, you need it, you can have it, and you can have it now."

The apostle James details the invasion process in chapter one and verses fourteen through fifteen of his epistle: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Notice the details James gives: (1) desire, (2) deception, (3) deed, (4) death.

Because of our depraved nature we live with illegitimate desires (lusts). James uses two vivid pictures to illustrate the deception of sin and Satan. "Drawn away" speaks of baiting a trap. Eskimos trap wolves by coating a knife blade with blood and freezing it layer after layer. The shaft is put in the ice. Wolves can still get the scent of that blood, and they begin to lick the blood Popsicle. As their hot tongue continues to lick the frozen blood, it begins to melt, while making the wolf's tongue insensitive. It is not long until the wolf is licking the bare blade of the knife. Slicing his own numb tongue, he literally licks himself to death while the Eskimos looking on wait to take their prey.

James also uses the word "enticed," which refers to baiting a hook. The skilled fisherman continues to experiment with varying lures until he finds one that attracts the fish. Satan, though not omniscient, is certainly observant and continues to, through different types of bait, lure us away from the safety of the will of God. His traps are baited with beautiful and exciting things to see, do, and have.

When James speaks of lust *conceiving*, he is picturing marriage, which produces a baby. When your want prevails over your will, a baby called sin is produced. That baby, which may be cute at birth, will grow up and execute you one day. The teaching is plain: "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Desire, deception, deed, and death . . . it has been the same sinful cycle since the beginning of time. The lusts that destroyed the first man and woman are still destroying people today.

Hope for Victory

What trap has Satan set for you? What bait is he throwing your way? What craving inside you is looking and longing for the fleshly dainties of this wicked world? Is there any hope for victory? Peter says yes! He not only speaks of the invasion of lusts but he proclaims an *injunction against lusts*. His inspired counsel is blunt, bold, and brief: ABSTAIN! The rugged fisherman leaves no leeway for either excusing or negotiating with lust. He uses a radical term—ABSTAIN. It means to avoid, hold yourself from, or to resist. Remember this is a war and we are soldiers, not sissies. *The army of God today has too many sensual, irresponsible wimps who surrender to their lusts and claim to be victims. What the King's army needs are spiritually responsible warriors*

who stand against their lusts conquer as victors (Gal. 5:16)!

But how are we to abstain? Peter gives us two powerful concepts for our conquest. First he reminds us of *who we are*. In verse 11 we are called "beloved," "strangers," and "pilgrims." In the word "beloved" he reminds us that we are *family*. Yes, we are members of the family of God. We have been redeemed, reconciled, and regenerated and are no longer children of the Devil but children of God (John 1:12).

When he calls us "strangers and pilgrims," he reminds us that we are *foreigners*. We don't belong to this world. We are aliens headed for our eternal home. Everything here is temporary. We are on a mission and have no time to live for earthly pleasures but only for eternal prizes (Phil. 3:14). Status, substance, success, and sex are all temporary fleeting fancies that amount to nothing (1 John 2:17). But our sacrifice to do the will of God is permanent. As Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said, "Never sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate."

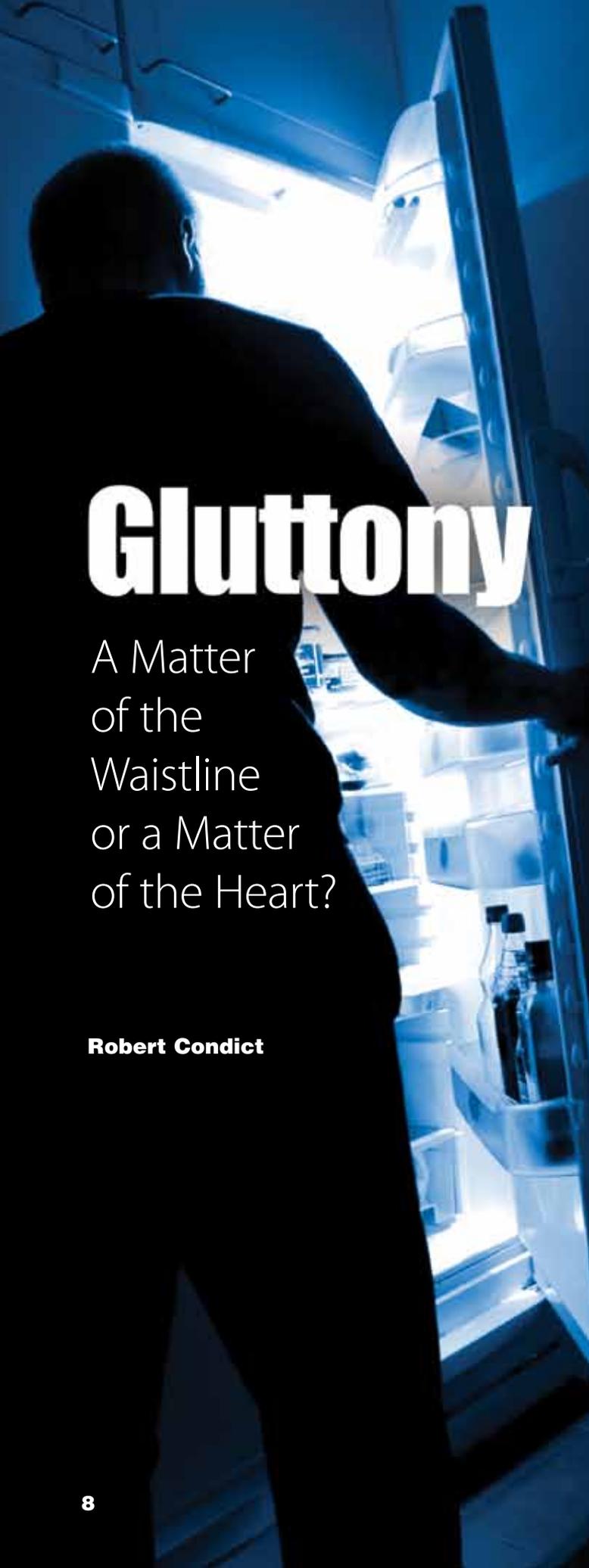
Peter further taught us how to abstain by telling us *why we're here*. Our "conversation," or behavior, is to be holy and honorable so that the pagans of this world who watch us pilgrims of another world will glorify the God who saved us. In other words, we are responsible to live such a godly life that those who observe us will want the God of our life. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

My friend, we are respectable people who have in us the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11). We are responsible people placed in this foreign world not to fulfill our desires but His desires for us (Eph. 2:10). Joseph refused Mrs. Potiphar, the seductress, acknowledging his respectability and accepting his responsibility. He declared in Genesis 39:9, "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Repeatedly I said to my children, "Be respectful and be responsible." A child of God who respects Jesus Christ as both his Savior and his Sovereign will, like Joseph, say "NO" to sinful lusts. A responsible blood-bought believer will be consumed with his mission of glorifying His Father instead of gratifying his flesh. God has equipped us with His Scripture and His Spirit so that we are able to "stand against the wiles of the devil" and to "withstand in the evil day" (Eph. 6:11, 13). Out of a heart of love and loyalty for the Lord Jesus Christ, we can and we must "abstain from fleshly lusts." The apostle Paul exhorts, "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Dear reader, you will control your lust or your lust will control you. Don't be tragedy of disgrace but a trophy of God's grace (2 Cor. 9:8)!

Dr. Tom Farrell has been traveling in evangelism since 1979. From 1974 until 1990, Tom and Regina faithfully served on the staff of the Wilds Christian Camp and Conference Center in Brevard, North Carolina. Eleven of those years, Dr. Farrell led the Wilds Evangelistic Team in revival meetings across America. In 1990 he formed Tom Farrell Ministries. Dr. Farrell served as vice president of Heart of America Seminary from 1995 until 2008. In 2009 he founded Advanced Ministry Training, a one-year internship program for young preachers.



Gluttony

A Matter
of the
Waistline
or a Matter
of the Heart?

Robert Condict

Perhaps you come to this article with a little reticence. If weight and health are issues for you personally, you may fear that this article was written by some kind of health nut with a supercharged metabolism who is eager to heap shame on top of your lifelong struggle. If weight is a problem for someone you love, you may wonder whether this article will contain some inspiration and conviction that will give your friend a boost. If weight is not a problem for you or someone you love, you probably haven't even read this far! A little self-disclosure may settle some of your concerns as we reason together what God's Word teaches us about gluttony.

First, I have no supercharged metabolism. I effectively killed my metabolism through poor eating habits during college and my early days of marriage. Second, like many of you, I struggle to find the time to exercise as regularly as my body requires. I love to cook, and I love good food. With what you have learned so far, it should not surprise you to know that I am obese by legitimate standards of measure.

A person is defined as obese if his body mass index (BMI) is thirty or higher. Our body mass index is determined by multiplying our weight (in pounds) by the number 705. Then divide that number by your height (in inches) two times. For example, a man may be six feet tall and 240 pounds. He would multiply 240 by 705. The result is 169,200. He would then divide that number by 72 to get 2350. He would divide that number by 72 to get his body mass index. In his case the number would be 32.64. That man is obese (BMI over 30). To deal with the excess weight, that man must start a regimen to burn more calories than he is providing his body in his daily diet.

This article, however, is not about obesity. I personally know many gluttons who are not obese. I know some people who have complicating factors—such as medicines—that affect their weight and their ability to lose that weight. Their present eating habits may not be considered gluttonous. For many of us, our obesity is the result of past or present gluttony. Obesity is not a sin—it is a consequence. If we focus on the consequence rather than the root cause, those with no visible consequence will be tempted to ignore what God says about gluttony and those with obesity may continue to feel guilty about something they have corrected by God's grace.

God does have something to say about gluttony. In His wisdom literature He says, "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Prov. 23:20, 21). Proverbs 23:2 says, "And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." Ecclesiastes 10:17 says, "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!" We acknowledge that these portions of Scripture are not commands per se, but as wisdom literature they establish life as lived according to divine wisdom. At the very least, the gluttonous individual lives a foolish life. Deuteronomy 21:20 describes a rebellious son over whom the parents have no power of discipline. He was to be brought to the elders for a very severe discipline. His lack of discipline

is described as drunkenness and gluttony. Again, while no explicit command is given, gluttony is mentioned as a perverse description.

These verses do little to teach us what gluttony is. The contexts show us that it involves food and that the person in question has exceeded the amount of food he should have consumed. But they do not give us any divinely prescribed limits.

A little more light is given to us as we consider a Biblical example. Psalm 78:17, 18 reveals God's view regarding His people and their attitudes toward food. "And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust." This psalm reflects on the Israelites' rejection of God's provision of manna for something that better suited their palates. They wanted more. They wanted different. They wanted better. Driven by their lust, they complained and eventually indulged.

The *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines a glutton as "one given habitually to greedy and voracious eating and drinking." For the sake of clarity, gluttony should be understood as *the sin of being controlled by the lust for more and different food and drink than what is personally needed*. Three aspects of this definition need our attention.

Desire

First is the aspect of desire. Desire for that which is personally delightful is part of the image of God in man. But all desire should have limits. If desire controls a man, that desire becomes a god. The creation becomes valued above the Creator. This is a serious offense. God gave us sleep for rejuvenation. But to idolize sleep is to be lazy. God created intimate pleasures within the context of the marriage relationship. But to idolize those pleasures leads to a myriad of perversions and sensual vices. God created wealth to meet our basic needs. But to idolize that wealth is to become covetous, greedy, or stingy. God created food and drink for our nourishment. But to idolize these things leads us down the path of gluttony.

Paul addresses this issue to the Philippian believers about certain enemies of the cross of Christ: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18, 19). The desire of the Christian ought to be to delight in God above His creation.

Limits

Second is the aspect of limits. The Bible does not seem to offer practical limits for food and beverage intake. It simply warns us against consuming too much. I believe that we receive good help from our medical and health communities. Consult your family doctor. Read health and nutrition magazines. One way to set appropriate limits is to consult a calorie counter. Services such as a calorie counter are avail-

able online (such as at <http://nutrition.about.com/od/changeyourdiet/a/calguide.htm>). A calorie counter takes into consideration your age, weight, fitness goals, etc., and advises you on how many calories are needed to maintain your body weight. Advice is also given on how to lose weight. As you count calories you can come to a determination on how many calories are advisable for you. It is important to note that this will not look the same for each individual. A sedentary person would need significantly fewer calories than would an athlete. Practical wisdom will guide you in answering the question, "How much is too much?"

This is not simply a bandwagon approach to health. Each believer must remember that his body is a stewardship. Paul commands believers to offer that body as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). Not only is our body a stewardship, but it is the temple of God. First Corinthians 6:19, 20 says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Control

Third is the aspect of control. Each believer is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit and not by his base appetites. Self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). The believer is to add self-control to knowledge in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Second Corinthians 10:5 teaches the believer to "[cast] down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and [bring] into

GOD CREATED FOOD AND DRINK FOR OUR NOURISHMENT. BUT TO IDOLIZE THESE THINGS LEADS US DOWN THE PATH OF GLUTTONY.

captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Every thought—this includes our impulses and desires. Romans 13:14 teaches us to "put . . . on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

For each of you who struggle with the sin of eating more than is appropriate, please embrace this summary:

First, *gluttony is a sin*. Acknowledge that your overeating is a sin and that those desires have been given too much obedience from you.

Second, *prayerfully make a plan*. Consult your doctor or other health specialists for an eating plan that is healthful and appropriate for you.

Third, *make your food consumption a matter of your daily conversation with God*.

Fourth, *make yourself accountable (honestly and completely) with a willing friend who desires your spiritual success*.

Finally, *intentionally choose to fast and give the food you would have eaten to someone in need*.

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The Sin of Sloth

John R. Van Gelderen

In the animal kingdom there is a thought-provoking creature named a sloth. This little animal is so named because of its proneness to sleep, its slowness of speed, and its rather large stomach compared to the rest of its body. This often-overlooked creature pictures the often-overlooked sin of sloth.

The Book of Proverbs continually urges diligence and, in contrast, speaks of “the slothful man” and “the sluggard”—phrases most often translated from the same Hebrew word. A classic passage is Proverbs 26:13–16:

The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

In these four proverbs “the sloth” makes excuses for not exercising due diligence, pampers self, is apathetic to his real needs, and arrogantly rationalizes his own foolish ways. Plainly the slothful man is one who is lazy and sluggish regarding his own responsibilities. Slothfulness is the opposite of diligence and industriousness. The slothful man possesses a disinclination to work and either chooses no work or only “easy” work.

The sin of sloth may occur in two major realms: physical

and spiritual. First, slothfulness in the physical realm refers to shirking one’s responsibilities in the matter of working. But 2 Thessalonians 3:10 states “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” The issue is not the rare case of a man who “could not” work, but who “would not.” This issue is so important regarding the testimony of the church that separation is to be applied to the unrepentant slothful man. While no one should begrudge help to those in real need because they are actually not able to work, it is another matter for those who will not work. This is the sin of sloth.

Slothfulness in the spiritual realm refers to neglecting one’s responsibilities in the matter of his walk with God. One’s walk with God includes one’s personal growth and home responsibilities as well as his service in the work of the Lord. In fact, someone who may be diligent in the physical realm may be slothful in the spiritual realm.

Spiritual slothfulness describes believers who are slow to cultivate a vibrant relationship with God. They want to be spoon-fed rather than to seek and find the Bible way. They may neglect reading and studying the Word of God, or they may go through the motions of reading the Scriptures without listening to the Spirit to speak the truth to their hearts. They may neglect church and, therefore, the preached Word; or they may sluggishly hear the Word preached without mixing it with faith and, therefore, not

profit from it (Heb. 4:2). They may neglect their prayer life, or they may practice the ritualism of prayer without any real communication with God.

Spiritually slothful believers may ignore their home responsibilities. Husbands may ignore the command to love their wives, often living selfishly and not taking into account the “help meet” supplementation of their wives’ perspectives. Spiritually slothful wives may not cultivate submission.

Slothful believers may be sluggish to serve the Lord, especially in the vital area of declaring the gospel. Often this slothfulness seeks cover, using a variety of excuses from practical issues to theological paradigms. The list of ways in which spiritual sloth manifests itself in our lives could continue. But what is the Biblical solution to this sin?

Following a confession of the sin of sloth that makes no excuses and then taking by faith the cleansing power of the blood (1 John 1:7, 9), there must be a surrender to God’s plan of diligence. This is a part of discipleship. In Luke 9:23 Jesus teaches, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Here the Lord Jesus delineates three aspects of discipleship that apply to diligence versus sloth.

First, you must deny the self-life. The issue is not denying yourself things, but denying *your self*. Slothfulness pampers self, whereas diligence denies self.

Second, you must embrace the cross-life. Based on the power of the Atonement, the believer in the spirit part of his being has been separated from (has died to) indwelling sin and has been joined to (has been made alive to) the indwelling Christ (Rom. 6). Therefore you must embrace the power of this reality as the dynamic to face daily issues, including the temptation to sloth.

Third, you must trust in the Christ-life. Following Jesus involves looking unto Jesus, that He might author faith in your heart by the Spirit’s convincing you of the sure promises of God. As you depend on the reality of those words, the Spirit finishes faith by enabling you through the life of the Living Word according to the promises in which you are trusting. As you access the life of Christ in you, He imparts to you His life, and you discover His diligence and victory over sloth.

Victory over sloth is a matter of faith. It is not sheer self-determination. Self-dependent diligence is “wood, hay and stubble.” Even though at times self-dependence may rest in “consecrated self,” it is nonetheless *self*, which falls short of the glory of God. In contrast, victory by faith is God-dependent, Spirit-enabled diligence. It is not passivity (no steps of faith), nor is it self-dependent activity. It is God-dependent activity where the appropriate steps of faith are taken. Faith then accesses grace (Rom. 5:2).

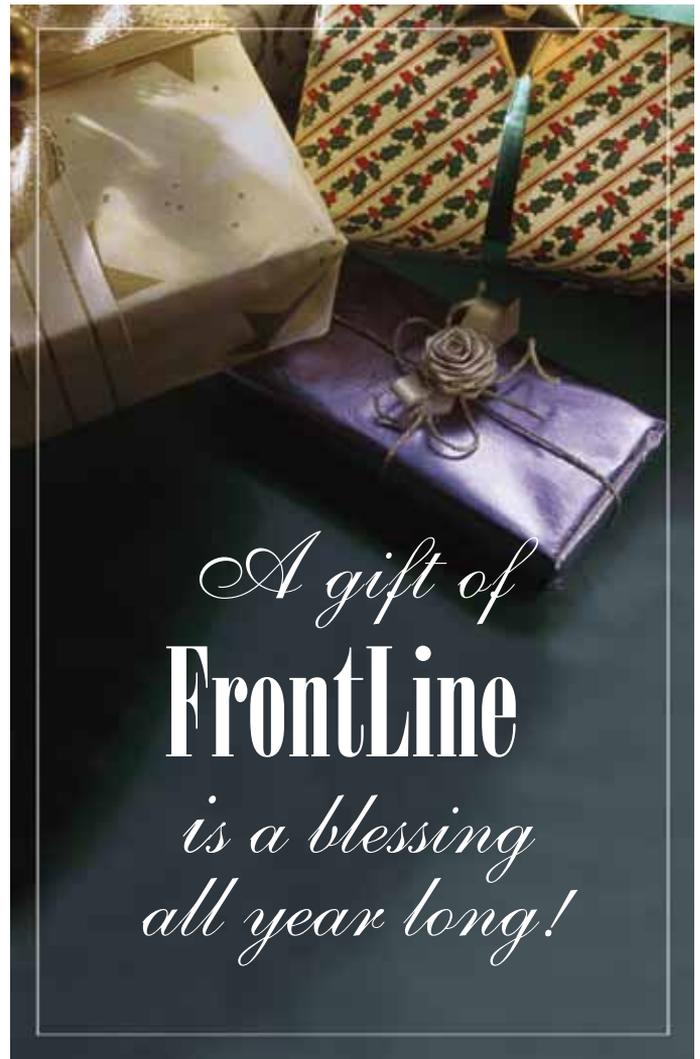
For example, a man once asked Andrew Murray to pray for him because he had great difficulty rising in the morning in time to fellowship with the Lord. So he asked Murray to pray that God would help him get out of bed. Murray replied that if the man would put the first leg out, he would pray that God would help him put the second leg out!

Murray’s answer addresses a common deception. People want to be spiritually “zapped” so that *they* become spiritu-

ally strong and, in the case of the story above, “bound out of bed.” But that misses the point of faith. Faith trusts God to work regardless of how you feel. The Spirit-filled life does not consist of you becoming strong. It consists of you recognizing that you are weak (and always will be this side of Heaven) so that you trust Christ for His strength. In the matter of rising out of bed, it is a matter of saying, “Lord, I feel tired, but I’m taking Your strength to get up” as you actually move your leg to get up. Then God’s grace enables you to actually get up. This is trusting to obey.

Duncan Campbell, who was used of God in several revivals, understood the danger of sloth and the necessity of diligence. His biographer states, “At the break of day he could hear the crofters harnessing the horses to the plough to turn the sods and sow the grain in anticipation of harvest. If men could rise early and work hard for earthly gain, he could not understand why Christians could lie in bed with a harvest of souls to be reaped, and obstacles to be removed by prayer” (Andrew Woolsey, *Channel of Revival: A Biography of Duncan Campbell*, p. 156). May we reject sloth and work for the night is coming “when no man can work.”

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Living in a Wrath-Filled World

Morris Gleiser

I had my whole night planned out. I would finish work at the pharmacy, get home around 7:15, eat and get whatever schoolwork I had to do, then sit back and watch *Monday Night Football*. It couldn't get any better for me at this time of my life, I thought. Being a senior in high school and having a job allowed me the opportunity to save for college. My involvement with my church youth group had given some leadership opportunities, and it appeared the Lord was leading me in some sort of ministry direction for the future. Then it happened: someone called in a last-minute prescription that had to be delivered to a customer's home far away from the pharmacy. It was almost closing time, and my schedule just got thrown out the window. I was furious. Driving like a madman across town I fussed and fumed the whole way. After the delivery I drove furiously from the home of the customer, all the time complaining about how dark it now was and how late I was to accomplish all my plans for the evening. Practically blind with rage and continuing to drive with fury, I heard someone scream out in fear just ahead of the company truck. I stomped with all of my might against the brake and came within inches of hitting two girls that were crossing an intersection before me. It was then I realized that I had failed to turn on my headlights when leaving the customer's home just a minute ago. My furious wrath almost brought certain death to two girls and a total change in my life.

Wrath, anger, fury, and bitterness all seem to simmer within the heart of every one of us. It just takes the right circumstances to trigger them. King Saul had just returned from the battlefield when he heard the poetic song of the women who rejoiced at the victory over the Philistines: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). Raging fury boiled within his breast and dominated his life and kingdom from that point on.

Are you an angry person? Do people "get to you"? Do you find yourself getting mad at problems? People? Past mistakes? Successes of others? How about anger with God—ever felt that one creep in your heart? It's hard to stay calm in a world filled with wrathful events all around us. Yet we've been commanded to "put [wrath] away from [us]" (Eph. 4:31).

The Expression of Wrath

Ecclesiastes 7:9 says "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."

Usually the expression of wrath is demonstrated with the loss of temper. However, it can be demonstrated in several other ways too. The question has to be first asked, how often do you lose your temper? Is it once a month, week, day, hour—more frequently than you used to?

Some people *blow up*—they lift their voices in rage in order to communicate to others that they are angry with certain events and happenings. Wrath is used to intimidate others in the office; to make the wife stop nagging the husband; to control loud and unruly children (wonder where they learned that?).

When a person blows up, it shows itself with statements

of self-centered words. Yelling, spreading slander and gossip, or slamming a desk or wall with a fist is often a part of the regime.

King Saul actually threw his javelin at David twice and once at his own son, Jonathan. It is often true that those who are the closest to us receive the brunt of our raging wrath.

Sometimes people don't just blow up, they *clam up*. We sulk, brood, and mope around feeling sorry for ourselves and wanting others to notice. A person gets angry and simply closes off the world around him. I suppose we think that we will eventually cool off. This kind of action makes everyone around feel uncomfortable. No one knows how to approach us. Wrath is an evil killer of a joyful home and testimony.

Finally one of the worst expressions of a wrathful person is simply the use of old-fashioned griping. Some *blow up*, others *clam up* and there are those who *belly ache*.

You can see this temperament from King Saul in 1 Samuel 22:6–8. Saul started complaining to his servants and soldiers, stating that they had become followers of David instead of him. He said in verse 8, "There is none of you that is sorry for me." What a pathetic attitude coming from the King of Israel.

I suppose one of the biggest killers of vibrant ministries is the cancer of complaining. It eats away in the heart of many congregations and, sadly, sometimes in the heart of the pastor.

The Expansion of Wrath

Wrath and anger never sit dormant; they always grow. If not dealt with Biblically, wrath will intensify (Prov. 29:22).

The yelling will get louder; the pounding will become more frequent; the expression will clearly expand. Here's the reason: people get used to a certain level of wrath's expression and therefore cease to respond as they used to. A mother can't get her young child to respond to her scream anymore, so she has to intensify the volume in order to get the needed response. A husband can't get his wife to leave him alone about some project; therefore, he starts swinging, hitting, or at least threatening to do so. Just ask King Saul. He eventually threw his javelin at his own son, Jonathan.

The Expulsion of Wrath

Plainly this kind of subject matter is sometimes difficult to swallow. It is a lot easier to blame our anger on someone else—our parents; the military; a bad teacher/coach; abuse from others, etc., ad infinitum. There is a way to deal with wrath and to live in victory over it, but it starts with:

Recognition

There must not be any more excuses for our wrath. Paul told the Ephesian believers to put away wrath from them (4:29–32). In the same context he makes this bold statement, "Neither give place to the devil" (v. 27). Friend, the first step to victory over any sin is the recognition of the issue. There is to be no excuse for wrath!

Repentance

Proverbs 14:17—"He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly."

Repentance will occur when you recognize what you have received from your Lord and then reflect on what you deserve. When we see ourselves in sin then we will respond as James says, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep. . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord" (4:9, 10). In other words, James is telling us to stop playing around with sinful attitudes/actions in our life and take sin seriously.

Is there someone you can't talk to? Is there someone who so angers you that the very mention of his or her name turns a wrathful spirit loose in your heart? *Recognize* it, then *repent* of it . . . then . . .

Return to the Bible

The best solution to an angry, wrathful spirit is to return to God's Word and to find those passages that deal with wrath, fury, anger, and bitterness. As we have told others to do, we must hide God's Word in our heart in order to turn away the temptation to explode when things don't go our way. What one verse have you hidden in your heart to strengthen you when tempted to anger?

An unsaved twenty-one-year-old girl was introduced to me several years ago in a revival meeting. She was filled with bitter wrath—and that is putting it mildly! She had been abused by both parents as a child. She had been removed from her home at the age of seven and had gone to live with her equally wrath-filled grandmother. This girl had never been exposed to genuine love and care; therefore, she matched it in her own life. She didn't like anybody to get in her way, and she didn't mind telling you. She expressed to me that she didn't really believe in the existence of God. As I quoted Scriptures to her about the love of God for her life, she softened under the power of God's Word. After a lengthy explanation of the gospel, she wept and received Christ into her life.

The next night she attended the revival meeting, Bible in hand and a smile upon her face. It was then that she explained that she had been reading her Bible, memorizing passages that she had read, and one more item had been taken care of that day: she had gone to her father's place of employment, sought him out, and asked for forgiveness for her anger toward him over the past many years. She was going to go see her mother the following day to express the same to her. Here was a girl who had learned how much she was loved by the Lord; who had received full pardon for her wicked heart, and who saw the need to place aside her angry, wrath-filled heart.

How are you handling things that are going in a way that you don't like? Are you living in peace or frustration? Are you filled with contentment or wrath? Do not, my friend, allow yourself to become controlled by wrath and anger. It's all about what you dwell on Scripturally, not what you're going through.

King Saul needed to deal with his wrath; how about you?

Morris Gleiser entered Bob Jones University in 1972 and graduated with his undergraduate degree in 1975. God has given him and his wife, Lynn, two sons who have dedicated their lives to serve the Lord in the ministry. In the summer of 2000 Brother Gleiser entered full-time evangelism/revival work as the staff evangelist of the Burge Terrace Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana.



His name is Mr. Grinch—incurably green with envy, that unlovable Dr. Seuss character who cannot bear the sight of someone enjoying himself. *When that happens, he bites himself.*

Envy is a sin of the emotions. According to the dictionary it is “a feeling of discontent and resentment aroused by a desire for the possessions or qualities of another.” Envious folks say to themselves, “I want what you have—your talent, your good looks, your job, your wealth, your church, your husband, your wife, your life.” They are upset when something good happens to the one they envy and happy when something bad happens to him.

First Corinthians 13, the love chapter, says “charity envieth not” (v. 4). Love doesn’t boil or seethe, but envy leads to evil, “steamed-up” actions. Cain’s envy of his brother Abel turned to bitterness and “Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (Gen. 4:8). In Acts 17 the Jews were envious of Paul and Silas. They got all steamed up, assaulted the house of Jason, and threw the preachers out of Thessalonica (Acts 17:5).

Unlike gluttony or evil speaking, envy is an invisible sin. Scottish preacher Andrew Bonar wrote, “This day twenty years ago I preached for the first time as an ordained minister. It is amazing that the Lord has spared me and used me at all. Envy is my hurt, and today I have been seeking grace to rejoice exceedingly over the usefulness of others, even when it casts me into the shade. Lord, take away this envy from me!”

Envy is also a subtle sin. Some years ago when I preached at a Christian high school, a teacher approached

me after a service and confessed, “I sure spend a lot of time criticizing a certain teacher. Tonight I see my problem. It is envy.”

The fable is told of a demon who found a Christian hermit in the desert. The demon tempted him to sin with greed, lust, doubt, and fear. Nothing worked. Then the devil himself stepped in and whispered to the hermit, “Did you hear this news? Your brother has been made the bishop of Alexandria.” Immediately, a scowl of envy appeared on the Christian’s face.

This invisible, subtle attitude of envy is *the mother of other sins*; it is a *common sin*; but it is a *sin that can be managed*.

Envy Is the Mother of Other Sins

Envy gives birth to compromise, lying, disrespect, gossip, and slander. Envious folks often question God. If not curbed, envy can produce irrational behavior, rage, even murder.

Jacob, father of twelve sons, “loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours” (Gen. 37:3). Joseph then had dreams indicating that his brother and others would eventually bow down to him. Enraged by envy, his brothers almost killed him, but instead they sold him as a slave to the Midianites (Gen. 37:28). Next they killed a goat, put the blood on Joseph’s coat, and lied to Jacob about Joseph’s death.

In 1 Kings 21, King Ahab looked with envy on Naboth’s fruitful vineyard, next to the king’s palace. Ahab asked Naboth to sell it to him, but Naboth refused. King Ahab

went home, “laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread” (v. 4). “Naboth won’t sell me his vineyard,” whined the great King Ahab, “so I’ll just go to bed, sneer at the wall, and refuse to eat my lunch!” Envy turned the king into a pouting child.

In the Book of Esther Haman was promoted to second in the kingdom and invited to attend the queen’s banquet. But eaten up with envy, he said, “Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate” (Esther 5:13). Envy soon brought Haman to hang on his own gallows.

King Saul was upset when the women praised David by comparing him to Saul—“Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). Fueled by envy, Saul chased David around the country and tried to kill him. Saul’s envy eventually led to his own death. Someone said, “Envy shoots at another and wounds himself.” Envy always hurts the envious one.

Envy causes you to question God. Like covetousness, envy says, “God, why didn’t You make me smart like him, or talented like her? Why does she resemble Sleeping Beauty and I the Wicked Witch of the West? Why am I so tall, or short, or shy? God, why did You make such a mess when you created me?”

The fable is told of the little snail who envied the lobster with his big beautiful shell. “What a grand palace he carries on his back,” said the snail. “If I lived there, my friends would be so impressed!” The lobster shed his shell to grow a larger one, and the animals and birds watched as the little snail crawled into the empty shell of the lobster. The air was very cold in his new grand palace, and that night he died. The wise old crow observed the sad scene and said, “See, that’s what envy does. What you have is enough. Be yourself and save yourself from a lot of trouble. How much better to be a little snail in a comfortable shell than to be a little snail in a big shell and freeze to death.”

Envy Is a Common Sin

In the workplace you may envy someone who has more skill than you. She may be faster at the computer keyboard or more effective with customer communication. Do you rejoice when she makes a mistake? That is envy. What about the guy who was given the position you wanted? Do you secretly hope he fails?

Envy is common in the home. Husbands and wives envy each other’s personalities, intelligence, or even knowledge of the Bible. Dads often envy new babies who steal Mom’s time and attention. Brothers and sisters envy each other’s ability to learn, skill in sports, or popularity. Culture-controlled teens envy friends whose parents provide all their wants without restrictions.

Sad to say, envy is alive and well in the church. The following sentiments are commonly found in the minds of church members:

“She gets more attention than I do.”

“More people talk to her than to me.”

“Why aren’t my children like hers?”

“I wish I had his spiritual gifts.”

“If only I had his job, his car . . . or his wife.”

“He has it made. He never has any trials.”

It is Sunday morning. Rushing off to church, you may see your neighbor sitting in his front-porch rocker, sipping iced tea, reading the newspaper. Like Mr. Grinch, do you want to bite yourself? Proverbs 23:17 says, “Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

Envy Can Be Managed

Though you will fight this sin until death, envy can be managed. First, admit that envy is a rotten sin. Envy eventually led to the crucifixion of Christ. Pilate said the Sanhedrin’s motive for delivering Jesus was envy (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10). Also, a heart that continues to be full of envy may reveal that one is without the Savior (Gal. 5:19–21). Envy is a serious offense.

Second, pray for those whom you envy. This may soften your heart toward them. When F. B. Meyer held meetings in Northfield, Massachusetts, large crowds thronged to hear him. Then the great British Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan came to Northfield. Soon people were flocking to hear his brilliant expositions of Scripture instead. Meyer confessed at first he was envious. He said, “The only way I can conquer my feelings is to pray for Morgan daily, which I do.”

Third, look for good in the one you envy. Work to encourage and praise him for his positive contributions to the kingdom of God. Someone noted that the man who keeps busy helping those below him won’t have time to envy the man above him . . . and there may not be anyone above him anyway.

Fourth, accept yourself as God made you. Envy is a symptom of lack of appreciation of your own uniqueness and self-worth. Do really believe that God is only good?

THIS INVISIBLE, SUBTLE ATTITUDE OF ENVY IS THE MOTHER OF OTHER SINS; IT IS A COMMON SIN; BUT IT IS A SIN THAT CAN BE MANAGED.

Psalm 139:14–16 says that God created you with all the intelligence and ability you need to do His will. Be grateful that His works are perfect.

Finally, envy the right things. Paul exhorts you to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Cor. 12:31). Covet holiness, righteousness, godliness, and practical spiritual gifts that will most benefit the church and the kingdom of God.

Pause and thank God for who He is and all that He has graciously given to you. Be grateful that you are divinely equipped to do whatever He calls you to do (1 Thess. 5:24). Say no to envy.

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“There is no surer mark of backsliding and falling off in grace than an increasing disposition to find fault, pick holes and see weak points in others.” So said J. C. Ryle in his classic book *Holiness*. His words are devastating, for if there is a besetting sin in the pulpits and pews of Fundamental churches, it’s pride. We hunger for recognition. We congratulate ourselves for our faithfulness. We look down on other people, families, and ministries. If perchance someone outside our immediate fellowship does something commendable, we look for a thread to pull. It’s disgusting, and I include myself in that indictment. I’m proud. I delight in accolades. I fault-find, both to my right and to my left.

Such pride is a deadly thing—and can be a damning thing—because it denies our need of Christ and thus undermines the gospel. It’s no wonder that Jesus spent His earthly ministry waging war on pride. Nowhere is His warning against pride more aggressive than in Luke 18:9–14, where he contrasts the prayers of a self-righteous Pharisee and a self-loathing publican. The parable was addressed to those “which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (v. 9). Christ concludes it ominously: “For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (v. 14). This is no trivial matter. In the parable the exaltation of the humble publican was his justification and the abasement of the proud Pharisee was his condemnation. Again, pride is a *damning* thing.

Now be careful from the outset. We’re all prone to define pride in a way that denies its existence in our own hearts. We can read Luke 18 and respond ironically by thanking God that we’re “not as the Pharisee.” Our pride denies our pride. But if we’re humble enough to read with an eye on ourselves instead of others, Christ’s teaching will unmask the pride in our own hearts. Our Lord teaches us that pride is essentially

Pride

our self-delusion that we are superior to fellow sinners and equal with God Himself. Pride skews everything.

Pride Skews Our View of Sin

The Pharisee began his prayer by boasting that he was “not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers” (v. 11). Though thanking God is a good thing, he reserved his praise mainly for himself. His prayer quickly turned to confession—of others’ sins. We’re all proficient at that. We have no reason to doubt that he genuinely avoided the sins he lists, at least outwardly. But he revealed the condition of his heart by being scandalized only by external vices and only by the sins he saw elsewhere, which he arbitrarily deemed to be greater than his own.

The response to such judgmentalism cannot be to shrug off the seriousness of sin. The gospel never minimizes sin. But the genuine believer is scandalized first and most by his own sins. Paul, for example, called himself the chief of sinners in 1 Timothy 1:15, just a few verses after recording one of his depravity lists in verses 8–10. Having addressed such sins as homosexuality and murder, Paul *still* claimed to be more grieved by his own sin than what he saw in the wicked world. That’s gospel-based humility: being more aware of our own sins than of others’ and more aware of God’s grace than either.

Pride Skews Our View of Sinners

Moving from generalities to specifics, the Pharisee looked condescendingly on a nearby publican, probably amazed that such a man would even hazard a visit to the temple. “I thank thee, that I am not as . . . this publican” (v. 11b). Nothing serves our pride more than comparing ourselves to those we consider our spiritual inferiors.

Remember, Christ was addressing people who in their spiritual smugness “despised others” (v. 9)—who disdained

and dismissed them. Luke draws our attention to such pious condemnation of fellow sinners often in his Gospel (5:29, 30; 7:34; 15:1, 2ff; 16:15; 19:1–7). We know what that looks like. Indeed, we know what it *feels* like. It's the sense of superiority we have when we see the addict on the corner, the pregnant teenager at the supermarket, our tattooed neighbor in his yard, or, frankly, the church down the street. I'll not forget seeing what I can describe only as hatred in the eyes of a man in our church when he saw and heard the praise band of another church in our community. It wasn't righteous indignation; it was hatred. His spirit reeked of pride. Such disdain for others—for brothers!—is unjustified even when they're mistaken, and even when we cannot cooperate with them.

According to Luke 18, such a spirit is more obnoxious to God than whatever failing may cause it. It's a sign of great pride and perhaps even of our lost condition when we delight to magnify the real or perceived problems of other men and ministries, straining at gnats in the lives of others even as we swallow camels in our own. We would do well to heed the words of Bishop Ryle with which we began: fault-finding reveals backsliding, at best.

Pride Skews Our View of Ourselves

The Pharisee continued by rehearsing his own virtues: "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (v. 12). Again, he probably did these things. But even if we grant his sincerity, his list of accomplishments (all of which were external) made it clear that he was trusting in himself (v. 9). He had no sense of spiritual need, and he made no request. His prayer amounted to "I am worthy" rather than "Thou art worthy." Indeed, he spoke as if God owed him something for his hard work—a sure sign of pride and the essence of true legalism. Again, resist the urge to excuse yourself.

Do we not tend to pray with greater confidence when we've been faithful in our Bible reading? Are we not prone to think that God will bless us more because of our giving? Do we not assume that God is pleased with our lives and ministries because of our high standards? Do we not imagine that God plays *our* music on His heavenly iPod? Like Hans Christian Andersen's fictional emperor, when we rely on such supposed virtues as the basis of our favor with God, we naively assume that we're dressed to kill, even as we stand utterly naked. Such misplaced confidence is a denial of the gospel. What the Pharisee needed—what we need—is what the Reformers called "an alien righteousness." The merits of Christ imputed to us is our only hope and must be our only confidence (Phil. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:21). We must repent of our virtues, not just our vices; our righteousness, not just our unrighteousness (Isa. 64:6).

Pride Skews Our View of God

What is particularly shocking about the Pharisee's boasting is that it was addressed to God, not fellow Pharisees: "God, I thank thee." The prayer reveals much about his theology. He spoke as though God were his peer. He and God were assuredly agreed in their condemnation of *real* sinners, he thought. And surely God would offer an "Amen" to his self-congratulations. Even sinless angels

have the sense to bow in reverence before the thrice holy God (Isa. 6:2), but the Pharisee was oblivious to the infinite chasm that separated him from God, both as a creature and as a sinner. Such is the essence of pride—his and ours.

The Pharisee thought he didn't need God. He didn't need salvation. Thus, he went home lost, not because God offered no grace but because he never requested it. He, like many in our churches, was left spiritually sick because he didn't recognize his need of a Healer (Luke 5:29–32). Pride is deadly specifically because it denies our need of the gospel and its saving benefits.

The Gospel Is the Only Cure for Pride

The publican in Luke 18 is the polar opposite of the Pharisee. He displayed humility, and his humility was justified. He and his fellow publicans were greedy, thieving traitors, essentially engaged in organized crime. Thus, the word "publican" became justifiably synonymous with the word "sinner" (Luke 5:30; 7:34; 15:1).

The publican, unlike his religious counterpart, acknowledged his unworthiness. He spoke of himself as a sinner, not as a great faster or giver. He didn't compare himself with others; he was too overwhelmed by his own sin. He approached God not as a peer or favorite but as a penitent. Condemned by his guilt, he couldn't even lift his eyes to Heaven but kept them riveted to the ground. In abject shame he asked God for mercy (v. 13). And he found it. He went home justified—declared righteous based solely on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (v. 14).

The lesson of the parable is not merely that we should pity sinners and thus demonstrate humility. Rather, we must identify with them: *We are publicans*. Until we see ourselves as needy as the most despicable sinners in our society we'll not cry out to God for mercy—not genuinely and not humbly. Pride drives us from the cross of Christ because it denies our need. Humility drives us to the cross, begging "God be merciful to me a sinner." No prayer is more honest, more desperate, or more certain of an answer. We are sinners in need of mercy—not just at the point of our conversion, but every moment of our lives. The publican's prayer is a model for both the lost and the redeemed. It's what we mean each time we pray in Jesus' name—that our only merit is our union with Christ. We won't stop needing mercy until we stop sinning.

The reality of our condition as finite creatures and as filthy sinners screams to us that we should be humble. But beyond being a senseless denial of reality, our pride is deadly, and even damning. It's past time for us and those under our spiritual care to forsake the spirit of the Pharisee and embrace the spirit of the publican. The most humble among us is still a pompous sinner. We need to deal ruthlessly with our pride by gazing on the cross of Christ and letting it affect our view of sin, of sinners, of ourselves, and of God. There alone will we see "the wonders of redeeming love and our unworthiness." There alone will we despair of any merits save those of the Lord Jesus. There alone will we find God's mercy dispensed for sinners like us.

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Never Satisfied

Rockefeller said, “How much is enough?” Answering his own question, he replied, “More than I presently have.” The sin of greed (also known as covetousness) in the Bible has always been a part of the dark side of every culture since the fall of man into sin. Greed and covetousness are simply identified in Scripture. Satan is the most “glamorous” example of greed. Isaiah 14:12–14 describes Lucifer’s lust to “ascend above the heights of the clouds.” He proclaimed, “I will be like the most High.” So, even before the foundation of the world was established, greed existed.

Lust to have is clearly seen with the fall of man into sin. Genesis 3:6 explains, “And when the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food, and that it was *pleasant to the eyes*, and a tree to be *desired to make one wise*, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” The result was deadly. Spiritual death would be passed upon all men at birth because of the greed in the garden (Rom. 5:12).

Greed is simply inordinate desire to acquire and possess. The Lord Jesus identified the *origin* of greed when He taught the crowd in Mark 7:21–23.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts [deeds of coveting], covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

The sin of greed, among other sins, dominates the heart of an unbeliever. In Romans 1:28, 29 Paul relates the sin of greed to unbelieving hearts. He states that those who would not “retain God in their knowledge” were “filled with all . . . covetousness.”

Greed Past, Present, and Future

Whole cultures in human history have been labeled as greedy or covetous. Sodom was greedy for sensuality (Gen. 19). Israel was politically greedy, longing to have a monarchy (rule by man) rather than a theocracy (rule by God). The ancient empires of human history demonstrated

greed in their desire to rule the world. The “one worldism” of Babel (Gen. 11) and of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon illustrates man’s insatiable appetite to be the world’s religious and political totalitarian (Dan. 2–4).

For certainty in the eschaton we see the natural, dark forces of the infernal “trinity” of Satan (the Dragon), the Antichrist (the Beast), and the False Prophet (the lamb with two horns) unifying forces for a final time with the purpose of religiously and politically ruling the world that is rightfully Christ’s.

In our own culture we see the consequences of man’s inordinate desire to acquire and possess. Our national debt now stands at \$14 trillion. Our per-capita debt per household is nearing \$40,000, which is equivalent to a debt of \$120,000 per taxpayer. Some states are declaring they are on the brink of bankruptcy. And yet our nation and others still desire to have “more than they presently have.”

Where do we see obvious signs of greed in our culture? While there is nothing wrong with shopping or strip malls, they illustrate for us the never-satisfied lust of our society to consume. More retail stores exist now than at any other time in our nation’s history. In addition to meeting mere basic needs (food, education, and medical care), communities are built around the opportunity to consume. Real-estate brokers will always tell you when you purchase, “Remember, location, location, location.” Yes, they want you to be close to necessary things, but the big sell typically seems to be access to consumer opportunity.

Greed in the Local Church

Our culture is not the only victim of greed, however. The local church is not immune to this sin either. While greed is what governs the lifestyle of the unbeliever (Eph. 4:9), the Christian is compelled by the love of Christ to steer his heart from it.

The leadership of a local church is to be first in winning the battle with the consumerist lifestyle. Leadership in the local church is to be free from greed (1 Tim. 3:8). If pastors and deacons take their rightful position in leading the con-

gregation properly, then the flock typically follows their example. Paul tenderly reminds the Thessalonian believers of his own character in this regard upon his initial visit to the church. He states, "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness" (1 Thess. 2:5).

Paul led by his example in Philippians 4:11 as well. He writes, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." These three Pauline references among others remind the leader to set the example for the flock not to live a life of greed. Ultimately the flock will be protected when they follow their pastoral example of contentment.

The example of godly leadership confronting greed is necessary—because there will always be false leaders among us who don't confront it. It is clear in Peter's writing that false leadership, which may be a part of any local congregation, is compelled to live for greed. In his second epistle Peter writes, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2:3). He continues later in the same chapter by instructing his readers about false teachers:

Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children (2:13b, 14).

Simply put, pastoral theology of the New Testament teaches that when the pastor leads well and teaches well, the flock remains protected from within (Acts 20:26–31). So addressing the sin of greed in a local church begins with the pastor as an individual who then instructs his flock by his own personal example and the Word of God.

Of course, the saint that is not part of formal leadership has responsibility as well not to live a greedy lifestyle. The New Testament comprehensively addresses the matter of greed in various contexts that deal with covetousness, lust, and envy (James 4:2; Rom. 7:7, 8; 1 Cor. 5:11; 1 John 2:16; 1 Tim. 6:6–10; Heb. 13:5). A student of the Word of God will know his own responsibility toward the sin of greed while he follows living examples before him through the leadership of his local church.

Greed and the Great Commission

Hopefully you have seen the real or potential historical, global, cultural, and ecclesiastical influences of greed; now consider some practical, local-church conclusions.

How much more effectively could local churches pursue the Great Commission if their constituents were not governed by greed? Statistics vary, but most say that only five to seven percent of church members actually tithe, while most remain simply "cheap tippers." Churches seem to exist financially based on the giving of a remnant of faithful folks who consistently give.

Other obstacles to local church giving exist besides consumerism. Possibly your area has a Christian school. Many Christians consider their tuition payments partial or even full tithe. Of course, this is a shame, but it remains true.

Consider how many members of our churches may give

more faithfully outside their own local church. Parachurch organizations, Christian colleges and universities, and even foreign missions agencies may receive more "tithe" money from some Christians than even their local church. This also is a shame. Of course, giving to these organizations is not inappropriate, but it certainly is shameful if the local church priority is lost when it comes to sacrificial giving.

Imagine if Christians in local churches were actually good stewards with God's money and not consumer driven. They would live their lives according to a God-honoring budget which would include first giving to their healthy local church. Since their budget would include a Biblical approach to debt, they would have discretionary funds above and beyond their sacrificial giving to their church to give even more to their local church's mission to fulfill Acts 1:8.

Many feel that the church's ability to fulfill the Great Commission is over or nearing its end. Many local churches are just coasting along or blaming certain things for their lack of "growth" or "success," all the while forgetting that Christ promised that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against" His church.

Greed has affected the local church in many ways, but its consequences are ultimately the enemy of God's command for local churches to reach their area and the world with the gospel! Satan is crafty. If he can persuade us to govern our lives by impulse, he knows that that ultimately affects our ability to reach the world for Christ through our local churches.

At Grace Church of Mentor we have implemented a comprehensive, Biblical discipleship process that includes addressing the sin of greed as we purposefully pursue fulfilling the Great Commission. It has been hard work, but God has blessed. Even in the worst economic times in five decades in our country, we have seen the Lord increase our budget nine to fifteen percent each year over the last five years, and this year we are running currently with a surplus which will be dedicated to building expansion because the Lord has blessed us with growth from new birth.

Now that is not boasting—all glory goes to the Lord! For those who feel like "throwing in the towel" because our world is just too wicked, or Christians are just too carnal, or because you feel you aren't growing because of stands you have taken for the Lord in the past, know that God is still working through His Word (Heb. 4:12), and He always stands behind His people who stand behind the Great Commission with godly character: "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20b).

The Scripture is sufficient to address any spiritual issue. That's a given. But Christians need to spend some time in personal ministry and evaluate their own lives when it comes to the sin of greed. Someone once said, "Sin seldom strides into our lives announcing its hostile intentions. It prefers stealth, camouflage, or, even better, to appear friendly." This is the deceptive nature of greed. But the Christian maintains victory over greed's temptations by closely living by the Word of God.

Tim Potter pastors Grace Church of Mentor in northeast Ohio, where he was the youth pastor for fifteen years before becoming pastor in 2006. He and his wife, Ronda, have four children. Tim has an MA in Bible from Bob Jones University and an MDiv from Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

2011 Meetings

January 21, 2011

Rocky Mountain Regional Fellowship
Faith Baptist Church
833 Fifteenth Avenue
Longmont, CO 80501
303.776.5655

March 7-8, 2011

South Regional Fellowship
The Wilds
1000 Wilds Ridge Road
Brevard, NC 28712-7273
864.331.3293

March 12-16, 2011

Northwest Regional Fellowship
Lincoln Park Baptist Church
286 Crawford Avenue
Wenatchee, WA 98801
509.662.5500

June 14-16, 2011

91st Annual Fellowship
Crosspointe Baptist Church
220 North Country Club Road
Indianapolis, IN 46234
317.271.1600

June 21-23, 2011

Pacific Rim
Harvest Baptist Church
PO Box 23189
Barrigada, GU 96921
GUAM
671.477.6341

July 25-27, 2011

Alaska Regional Fellowship
Hamilton Acres Baptist Church
138 Farewell Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99701
907.456.5995
<http://home.earthlink.net/~akbeb/akfbf.html>

October 17-18, 2011

Central Region (North)
Faith Baptist Church
1001 Scenic Drive
Manhattan, KS 66503
785.539.3363

October 24-28, 2011

Caribbean Regional Fellowship
Calvary Baptist Tabernacle
PO Box 3390
Carolina, PR 00984
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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

A Fire Inextinguishable

Then it pleased God to kindle a fire which I trust shall never be extinguished. John Wesley

Looking back on the spiritual condition of his native country in the eighteenth century, the Welsh evangelist Christmas Evans remarked,

At this period nothing was to be seen in almost every parish but young men and young women flocking together into the churches and church-yards, and engaging in different gambols and pastimes, such as ball-playing, foot-ball, leaping, fighting, and such like frolics, as if Wales had been changed into an Olympic mountain, and old paganism restored again. It is true, there were some preachers and churches, both Congregationalists and Baptists, then existing in the principality; but their talents, their spirits, or their magnanimity could not storm such a fortress of impiety.¹

Evans's bleak assessment of conditions in Wales was mirrored by observers of the British Isles in general. In the very year of the conversions of John and Charles Wesley (1738), George Berkeley, Church of England Bishop at Cloyne, vainly attempted to arouse the alarm of public officials. In a message entitled "A Discourse to Magistrates and Men in Authority," he lamented that *the prevailing contempt of God's word, and estrangement from his house, [was] to a degree that was never known in any Christian country.* He continued,

Our prospect is very terrible, and the symptoms grow stronger every day. Things make a shift to sub-

sist for a time on the credit of old notions and dying opinions. But the youth born and brought up in wicked times, without any bias to good from early principle or instilled opinion, when they grow ripe must be monsters indeed. And it is to be feared, that age of monsters is not far off. . . . Many things look like a prelude to general ruin.²

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

Berkeley's warning that England's spiritual condition, that of its young people in particular, was threatening the very survival of its entire society, may seem melodramatic. But we must remember that similar conditions right then in France were key ingredients in the noxious stew that boiled over into the ghastly French Revolution just a generation later.

This is the third in a series of articles that began by surveying the spiritually dark condition of Europe, the American colonies, and England in particular during the first half of the eighteenth century. My reason for opening the series so bleakly was actually to establish for our hopefulness that what we now call that century's Great Awakening was preceded by almost impenetrable spiritual darkness—one not unlike that which is increasingly smothering our own troubled nation.

The contention of the last article in the series was that God may employ various means by which to explode light into a nation's night, but that His chief means is a return to a certain kind of preaching. J. C. Ryle's assessment of that kind of preaching, a powerful proclamation that suddenly dispelled the darkness of the eighteenth century, bears close scrutiny. Writing in 1885, Ryle observed,

The instrumentality by which the spiritual reformers of the last century carried on their operations was of the simplest description. It was neither more nor less than the old apostolic weapon of **preaching**. The sword which St. Paul wielded with such

Inside

Bring . . . the Books—Key books for the pastor's study 5
 Straight Cuts—An exegetical study 6
 Windows—Themed sermon illustrations 7

mighty effect, when he assaulted the strongholds of heathenism eighteen hundred years ago, was the same sword by which they won their victories. . . . They wisely went back to first principles, and took up apostolic plans. They held, with St. Paul, that a minister's first work is "to preach the Gospel."³

Preaching the Gospel

This installment of the series continues the focus on the Great Awakening as it came to England. Its primary agents were the two Wesley brothers, John and Charles, and their friend from the days when the three were students together at Oxford, George Whitefield.

It seems inconceivable to us that the Wesleys were born into the home of a conservative Church of England clergyman, were trained from an early age by a mother whose Scriptural childrearing is to this day proverbial, and prepared for and entered the Christian ministry as exceptionally devout young adults, but somehow did not understand the gospel. Incredibly, it was only after each had served a turn as a frustrated missionary to the Indians of America that the brothers were enlightened to justification by faith alone.

Their ignorance seems to have been due largely to the absence of gospel preaching in English pulpits, including, evidently, their father's. This is confirmed by a paragraph from a letter John Wesley sent to Moravian acquaintances in Germany in September, 1738, just four months after his conversion. *Ten ministers I know now in England, who lay a right foundation, "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," he informs his friends. Over and above whom, he continues, I have found one Anabaptist, and one, if not two, of the teachers among the Presbyterians here, who I hope love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and teach the way of God in truth.*⁴

There were other faithful gospel preachers unknown to Wesley at this earliest stage in his Christian life. But the fact that he knew nothing of them underscores emphatically how appallingly few or else astoundingly ineffectual they were within just a generation after the Puritans. Evidently both deficiencies were true. Speaking of both the Church of England and those denominations differing from it, William Jay, minister at Bath, noted, *The Establishment was asleep in the dark and the Dissenters were asleep in the light.*⁵

When God opened John Wesley's eyes, He also opened his mouth. But what was it that Wesley began to preach? Defining this is critical to understanding the Great Awakening.

Within just eighteen days after his conversion John Wesley stood in St. Mary's, Oxford, before the university faculty and staff and took as his text, *By grace are ye saved, through faith* (Eph. 2:8). His first major point distinguished the faith that saves from one that stops short and is thus redemptively impotent.

Saving faith, Wesley clarified, *is not barely the faith of the heathen . . . "that God is."* Nor, secondly, *is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much further than that of*

a heathen. For the devil believes . . . that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Savior of the world. Thirdly, saving faith is not barely that which the apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to "leave all to follow him." The faith that saves, Wesley declared, *is a full reliance on the blood of Christ,—a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection,—a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, as given for us and living in us; . . . or, in one word, our salvation.*⁶

Wesley's own previous struggles to understand justification by faith alone shaped these clarifications unmistakably. He was clearly assuming that what he himself had failed to grasp was also the case in general at Oxford. He was therefore zealous to spotlight and expose this ignorance. Herein lies a very significant fact for our instruction: Wesley's preaching not only communicated the gospel, but it also clarified exactly what it was. In addition, his preaching discussed at length what constitutes the only effectual *response* to it. These kinds of explanations required differentiating between what is true and what is spurious about the gospel and about faith. It was these differentiations that became the hallmark of both his own and his brother Charles's preaching.

In his *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, penned ten years after this sermon at Oxford (in 1748), Wesley defended the laser focus both he and his brother put upon these issues from the very outset of their post-conversion preaching. His explanation, though lengthy, is critical, I believe, to identifying the key elements in not only their preaching but also that of Whitefield—elements that turned the light on in England and resulted in its awakening.

We had no view therein, but, so far as we were able . . . to convince those who would hear what true Christianity was, and to persuade them to embrace it. The points we chiefly insisted upon were four: First, that orthodoxy, or right opinions, is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all; that neither does religion consist in negatives, in bare harmlessness of any kind; nor merely in externals, in doing good, or using the means of grace, in works of piety (so called), or of charity; that it is nothing short of, or different from, "the mind that was in Christ;" the image of God stamped upon the heart; inward righteousness attended with the peace of God; and "joy in the Holy Ghost."

Secondly, that the only way under heaven to this religion is, to "repent and believe the gospel;" or, (as the Apostle words it,) "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thirdly, that by this faith, "he that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, is justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ."

And, Lastly, that "being justified by faith," we taste of the heaven to which we are going; we are

holy and happy; we tread down sin and fear, and “sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.”⁷

In drawing those kinds of distinctions, John Wesley was doing for the eighteenth-century Church of England exactly what the apostle Paul found it necessary to do for the first-century churches of Galatia: he was correcting misconceptions. For instance, Wesley recognized that in the Church of England as a whole, as had been true of himself, faith *alone* had not been sufficiently isolated as the sole means of obtaining God’s salvation in Christ. In his own case, that defect had resulted in years of agonizing struggle to discipline himself more and more exactly in holy living in order to achieve at last an inner assurance of salvation. But in the case of the majority of English clergy, who had little or no inclination to holiness, the defect had resulted in a contentedness with dead orthodoxy and externalism. That kind of unappealing Christianity had habituated the populace to religious sterility and led, in turn, to a wholesale abandonment of all pretext to being genuinely religious.

God had corrected John (and Charles too) by a lengthy process that included both his own personal failures and the gentle challenges to his erroneous positions issued by Moravian friends. But the dawning of light had occurred when in the evening meeting of May 24, 1738, someone had read Luther’s preface to the epistle to the Romans. In it the reformer had not only been communicating the gospel but also correcting mistaken notions of faith.

Faith is not that human notion and dream that some hold for faith. Because they see that no betterment of life and no good works follow it, and yet they can hear and say much about faith, they fall into error and say, “Faith is not enough; one must do works in order to be righteous and be saved.” This is the reason that, when they hear the Gospel, they fall to and make for themselves, by their own powers, an idea in their hearts, which says, “I believe.” This they hold for true faith. But it is a human imagination and idea that never reaches the depths of the heart, and so nothing comes of it and no betterment follows it. Faith, however, is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God (John 1); it kills the old Adam and makes altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers, and brings with it the Holy Ghost. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith; and so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly.⁸

It was when Wesley heard and finally accepted these kinds of differentiations that he found his heart strangely warmed that night in Aldersgate Street. And it was these same corrections that he felt himself ablaze to proclaim to others. And it was when he (and his brother Charles and George Whitefield) preached them that God awakened the nation. Writing in 1746, Wesley related,

From 1738 to this time—speaking continually of

Jesus Christ; laying Him only for the foundation of the whole building, making Him all in all, the first and the last; preaching only on this plan, “the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the Gospel,” the Word of God ran as fire among the stubble; it was glorified more and more; multitudes crying out, “What must we do to be saved?”⁹

Clarifying Truth/Correcting Misconceptions

Before proceeding further, it might be beneficial to attempt to draw from this aspect of Wesley’s ministry a principle for preaching the gospel effectively to a Christianized but benighted society. It is the simple principle of *the necessity of negatives*. When one reads the preaching of the Wesleys, he’s struck immediately with the fact that they did not only proclaim what is true. They labored to expose and correct what was not. But this can’t be done, of course, without negatives. Consider, for instance, the way he spoke to a room full of friends just a few days after his conversion. A Mrs. John Hutton wrote to his eldest brother, Samuel, and reported her offense over the way John had spoken to her and others gathered in her home.

Mr. John got up and told the people that five days before he was not a Christian, and this he was well assured of as that five days before he was not in that room, and the way for them all to be Christians was to believe, and own that they were not now Christians.

She went on to relate that at supper he “made the same wild speech.”¹⁰

John Wesley’s sermons are full of these kinds of negatives. In fact, they are distinct points in his outlines. One can pick up nearly any of his messages and find them easily. For instance, here are examples from the next four sermons (after the one already quoted earlier in this article¹¹) in the first published volume of Wesley’s sermons.¹²

Let no man deceive his own soul. It is diligently to be noted, the “faith which bringeth not forth repentance” and love, and all good works, is not that “right living faith” which is here spoken of, but a dead and devilish one. . . . The right and true Christian faith is . . . “not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ.” . . . Are not many of you conscious that you never came thus far? That you have not been even “almost a Christian”? . . . Much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works, your business, studies, diversions to his glory.¹³

On the authority of God’s word and our own Church I must repeat the question, “Hast thou received the Holy Ghost?” If thou hast not thou art not yet a Christian. . . . Thou art not yet made

a partaker of pure religion and undefiled. . . . Thou hopest to be saved. But what reason hast thou to give of the hope that is in thee? Is it because thou hast done no harm? Or because thou hast done much good? Or because thou art not like other men, but wise, or learned, or honest, and morally good? Esteemed of men, and of a fair reputation? Alas, all this will never bring thee to God. It is in his account lighter than vanity.¹⁴

Although some rare instances may be found wherein the term “justified” or “justification” is used in so wide a sense as to include sanctification also, yet in general use they are sufficiently distinguished from each other both by St. Paul and by the other inspired writers. Neither is that far-fetched conceit that justification is the clearing us from accusation, particularly that of Satan, easily provable from any clear text of Holy Writ. . . . Least of all does justification imply that God is *deceived* in those whom he justifies; that he thinks them to be what in fact they are not, that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are.¹⁵

The folly of those who still trust in the “righteousness which is of the law” . . . may appear abundantly from hence. They set out wrong. Their very first step is a fundamental mistake. . . . Neither do they consider . . . what manner of obedience or righteousness that is which the law indispensably requires. It must be perfect and entire in every point, or it answers not the demand of the law. . . . You should further consider that the righteousness of the law requires, not only the obeying every command of God, negative and positive, internal and external, but likewise in the perfect degree. . . . Who then can appear before such a Judge, who is “extreme to mark what is done amiss?”¹⁶

Only space prevents my continuing with many more examples. But these are sufficient to illustrate the point: Wesley’s preaching included many pointed negatives. He exposed and corrected error as an indispensable necessity to establishing the truth. What’s more, he did so concretely and personally. In other words, he doesn’t speak of the errors abstractly or at a distance, as though they were the mistaken views of others whom both he and his listeners were observing from afar. He speaks to his listeners as if he believes that they were the very ones guilty of holding these faulty views. His use of the second person personal pronoun, “you,” is frequent. He moves in close to his listeners, taking them by the throat as it were, and confronting them boldly with their errors and deceptions.

I wonder if the present condition of American Christianity isn’t due, at least in part, to the deliberate omission of these kinds of negatives in contemporary preaching. As early as 1971, David Martyn Lloyd-Jones conjectured that this might prove to be *the most vital*

point in the dispute between evangelicals who are adhering to the old position and those who are tending to depart from it at the present time. He viewed the difference as being so defining that he immediately continued, *One of the first signs that a man is ceasing to be truly evangelical is that he ceases to be concerned about negatives, and keeps saying, We must always be positive.*¹⁷

Negatives do not make a man popular. To the contrary, they madden people. And it is because of this that we preachers deliberately omit them. Granted, Wesley was an itinerant evangelist who could level a broadside at a congregation and leave them behind. Pastors cannot do that. Whatever we stir up we have to face again week in and week out. Or, even worse, the people whom we’ve offended with plain speech simply don’t return. No problem if you’re an itinerant and there’s another church or another outdoor congregation around the next bend of the road. But in the pastorate, one simply doesn’t get the opportunity to preach again, or at least not to preach again to the same crowd, if one runs them off with a single sermon.

Nevertheless, even our pastoral preaching could do with more plain spoken, pointed differentiating of truth from error, of misbehavior from holy conduct, and of foolish vanity from sober, Scriptural living. Undoubtedly, there will be little widespread change of people’s beliefs or behaviors until more of this is done to the point that people are deeply convicted of their wrong thinking and wrong doing.

To be continued. ☞

¹ David Phillips, *Memoir of the Life, Labors, and Extensive Usefulness of the Rev. Christmas Evans*, 126.

² *The Works of George Berkeley, D.D.*, 429–430.

³ J. C. Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*, 23–24.

⁴ Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*, I, 206.

⁵ Quoted by David L. Larsen in *The Company of the Preachers*, 338.

⁶ “Salvation by Faith,” *The Works of John Wesley*, I, 119–21.

⁷ *The Works of John Wesley*, VIII, 248–49.

⁸ Martin Luther, “Preface,” *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, xvi–xvii.

⁹ “The Principles of a Methodist Further Explained, Occasioned by The Rev. Mr. Church’s Second Letter to Mr. Wesley, in a Second Letter to that Gentleman,” *The Works of John Wesley*, VIII, 468–69.

¹⁰ Quoted by A. Skevington Wood in *The Burning Heart*, 73.

¹¹ “Salvation by Faith,” preached at Oxford just eighteen days after his conversion.

¹² Printed in 1746 under the title *Sermons on Several Occasions*.

¹³ From “The Almost Christian,” *The Works of John Wesley*, I.

¹⁴ From “Awake, Thou That Sleepest,” *The Works of John Wesley*, I.

¹⁵ From “Justification by Faith,” *The Works of John Wesley*, I.

¹⁶ From “The Righteousness of Faith,” *The Works of John Wesley*, I.

¹⁷ *What Is an Evangelical?*, 37.

Bring . . . the Books

Praying Hyde, Apostle of Prayer

After hearing so much about the powerful spiritual impact of the life story of John Hyde, I determined to read his biography for myself. One of the most readable biographies of his life is *Praying Hyde, Apostle of Prayer: The Life Story of John Hyde* edited by E. G. Carre. Originally printed in 1982, the work was reprinted by Bridge-Logos publishers in 1992. The first three sections of the book are actually portraits of Hyde's life written by close friends or ministry partners. The final section is a brief selection from Hyde's personal correspondence.

Lloyd Hildebrand observes in his introductory comments, "This book is a challenge to believers everywhere—a call to intercessory prayer. John Hyde entered a spiritual realm where few men have been, that 'place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God.' Hyde's story is an invitation into his prayer closet. As you read, you will learn how to be 'shut in with God, in the secret place'—and you will desire a deeper life of prayer for yourself."

The son of a Presbyterian pastor in Carthage, Illinois, Hyde first learned about prayer during his youth by observing the passionate praying of his father. After his conversion Hyde enrolled in M'Cormick Seminary in 1892 to study for the ministry. During his senior year he surrendered to missions and determined to journey to India to serve as a missionary. In 1904 he and two other men began a series of meetings in Sialkot for the encouragement of pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and lay workers. God's reviving presence was evident at each convention.

The secret was the prayer work done in advance by Hyde and his small band of prayer warriors. For thirty days prior to the conference, these men prayed around the clock, beseeching God to bless the conference and send revival. Hyde's band covenanted together in what became known as the Punjab Prayer Union, whose principles were set forth in five questions to which each member signed his agreement.

- Are you praying for the quickening (revival) in your own life, in the life of your fellow-workers, and in the Church?
- Are you longing for greater power of the Holy Spirit in your own life and work, and are you convinced that you cannot go on without this power?
- Will you pray that you may not be ashamed of Jesus?
- Do you believe that prayer is the great means for securing this spiritual awakening?
- Will you set apart one half-hour each day as soon after noon as possible to pray for this awakening and are you willing to pray till the awakening comes?

Hyde increasingly sensed that his real ministry in India was to be one of prayer. As effective he was in the pulpit, his real power and ministry lay in the unseen ministry of the prayer chamber.

In the early years of his prayer ministry not all understood his call. Some, feeling that he was not sharing the load of ministry duty, grew critical of the time spent in his room praying while others were laboring in the work. However, in time these questions were put to rest by the evident power upon all ministry endeavors for which Hyde prayed. Hyde rarely *talked* about prayer. Instead he *prayed*. The secret to his prayer life was that his life was prayer! A coworker, J. Pengivern Jones, once inquired as to what had led Hyde to so consecrate his life to prayer. Hyde explained that two related incidents led him to this ministry. First, shortly after he had surrendered to be a missionary to India, a close family friend left a letter in his cabin on the ship taking Hyde to India. He promised to pray until Hyde had been filled with the Holy Spirit. Initially angered by the implication, he commenced a three-day battle with God, finally surrendering all ambitions and dreams of success as a missionary and asking for the Spirit's empowering at any cost. The second event took place in the first month of ministry in India. After hearing a missionary preach on the power of Christ to deliver from sin, a well-dressed, educated Indian man asked the speaker whether he himself had thus been delivered. This question penetrated Hyde's heart, for he knew he was still in bondage to certain sins. He returned to his room determining that he would not preach deliverance to others until he had first experienced it personally. He spent the rest of his life convinced that the secret to his deliverance and the power on his ministry was due to the victory God gave him during this season of prayer.

Hyde's ministry in India lasted only nineteen years. Eventually the extended fastings and long night vigils took their toll on his body. He died on February 17, 1912, and is buried at Moss Ridge cemetery in Carthage, Illinois. His earthly life may have ended, but his prayer ministry continues to have effect to this day. Those who read his life's story will be challenged to become modern partners with him in the labor of intercessory praying. ☞

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

Dr. Sam Horn is vice president of Ministerial Training at Northland International University in Dunbar, Wisconsin, where he and his wife, Beth, have served since 1996. He also serves as senior pastor of Brookside Baptist Church in Brookfield.

Many times throughout my years growing up in Sunday school, youth group, and church services, I have heard a familiar little chorus entitled, "This Is the Day." It is based on the text of Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." I have even occasionally heard one believer admonish another to cheer up based on a quotation of this verse. Usually it is understood to be an injunction to be thankful for today and every day the Lord has given us life. But as good as thanksgiving for life is, there is a greater reality that should be our grounds for rejoicing based on this verse.

Psalm 118 is part of a group of Psalms (113–18) known as the *Hallel* because they are filled with the injunction to *praise the Lord* (from the Hebrew *Hallelu Yah*). These Psalms were used formally in worship during Israel's festivals. Psalm 118 calls on the nation to praise the Lord for His delivering them from the nations, giving them victory, and saving them. The key attribute of God in Psalm 118 that calls for His people to praise Him is His enduring mercy. The word translated "mercy" is a very common word (*chesed*) in the Hebrew Bible that refers to God's faithfulness (Koehler & Baumgartner, 1:336–37). Throughout the psalm the nation of Israel is exhorted to praise the Lord because His faithfulness never fails.

Verse 24 occurs in a section of the psalm that focuses on the rejected stone (vv. 22–24). The language used in this section functions on the metaphor of a building, a great building, probably the temple. The key feature of this building is the "head stone of the corner." The exact meaning of this phrase is difficult. It basically means "cornerstone" (literally: the head of the corner) (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2:944–45). The Hebrew word translated "corner" (*pinnah*) is used metaphorically of leaders in several other places in the Old Testament (Judg. 20:2; 1 Sam. 14:38; Isa. 19:13). The psalmist has the leader of the nation in mind. Exactly whom this refers to is not clear in the immediate context, but it is a king of Israel. We are, however, not without resources in determining who the cornerstone is. Psalm 118 is quoted many times in the New Testament. Jesus quotes this passage in His parable of the tenants, an indictment of the Pharisees and Scribes for their rejection of Jesus, their Messiah (Matt. 21:33–44; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–18). In this context of the

Jewish rejection of Jesus Christ as their Messiah, Jesus applies Psalm 118:22, 23. Peter and John apply Psalm 118 the same way in their defense before the Sanhedrin. Peter says in Acts 4:10, 11, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of

Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." Peter also references Psalm 118 in 1 Peter 2:7. In that context he links Psalm 118 with Isaiah 28 where the reference to a cornerstone is messianic. Throughout the New Testament, then, Psalm 118 is interpreted as a reference to Jesus the Messiah.

The section of the psalm immediately following verse 24 (vv. 25–29) is also quoted frequently in the New Testament. Upon Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the people shout Psalm 118:25; "Hosanna" is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word that means "save now" in Psalm 118:25 (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9; John 12:13). The New Testament makes a clear link between Christ and the king of Psalm 118.

Understanding the context of Psalm 118:24 brings into focus what "day" the psalmist believes should elicit great thanksgiving in believers. It is the day that the rejected stone becomes the chief cornerstone. It is linked to Christ and the gospel. Its fulfillment is eschatological, but its foundations were laid by the work of Christ on the cross. This is a "day" when Christ is exalted. (The Old Testament often uses the word "day" to refer to a period of time other than an exact twenty-four hours, giving a meaning such as "the time.") It is ultimately the consummation of Christ's work as Messiah.

What should elicit rejoicing in believers is Christ's ultimate triumph based on His work on Calvary. We *should* be content and joyful people each day, but that is not the meaning of Psalm 118:24. Ultimately, the common interpretation of Psalm 118:24 unwittingly robs the passage of its greater, gospel significance. It boils down Christian joy to a cliché, and it replaces gospel grace with moralistic happy sentiments. The rejoicing of any Christian is not a mere sentiment to be happy today. It is based on the universe-changing work of God's chosen Messiah, Jesus Christ. This is surely our basis for joy and rejoicing! ☞

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

The “sudden” failures that appear in the lives of some ministers are never really sudden but are the surfacing of long-standing deficiencies in the hidden person of the heart. In keeping with the theme of this issue, I have collected illustrations and quotations that reflect the articles that have been written. May God help us to guard our hearts with all diligence!

Envy

- “You will find in your ministry that an evil temper can make you blind. You will find that jealousy can scale your eyes until the heavens give no light.”¹
- “This day twenty years ago I preached for the first time as an ordained minister. It is amazing that the Lord has spared me and used me at all. I have no reason to wonder that He used others far more than He does me. Yet envy is my hurt, and today I have been seeking grace to rejoice exceedingly over the usefulness of others, even where it cast me into the shade. Lord, take away this envy from me!”²
- “I hope I can rejoice in the Lord’s blessing the labors of other good men. It is indeed a sad spirit when ministers are jealous of each other, and would rather cavil and find fault with each other, instead of desiring that the blessing of God might rest upon them and their labors. Oh that miserable spirit of detraction and envy, which would gladly pull others down, that we might stand as it were, a little higher upon their bodies! Where is there any . . . true humility of mind, simplicity of spirit, brotherly love, or an eye to God’s glory, when this wretched spirit is indulged?”³

Gluttony

- An old English proverb says, “Gluttony kills more than the sword.” Another maintains, “There are more gluttons than alcoholics in the grave.” This certainly seems true today. Sales of oversized coffins at the nation’s largest casket company are up twenty percent. Why? Both men and women are getting fat in epidemic proportions. Well over half of all American adults—about 63 percent of men and 55 percent of women age twenty-five and older—are overweight. In a special issue devoted entirely to obesity, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported new statistics that are nothing short of astonishing for a nation seemingly so obsessed with health and fitness: The rate of obesity—18 percent—has soared from 12 percent since 1998, making the United States now secure in its position as the fattest nation in the developed world.

Greed

- “It is not an orthodox creed that repels the masses, but an orthodox greed.”⁴

- “The principal hindrance to the advancement of the kingdom of God is greed. It is the chief obstacle to heaven-sent revival. It seems that when the back of greed is broken, the human spirit soars into regions of unselfishness.”⁵
- “When money is sent to me for my own use, I pass it on to God. As much as five thousand dollars has thus been sent at one time; but I do not regard such gifts as belonging to me; they belong to Him, whose I am and whom I serve. Save for myself? I dare not save; it would dishonor my loving, gracious, all bountiful Father” (George Mueller).

Lust

- “What young minister does not aspire to lead and have confidence of his followers? However, some men lust after bigger churches and honored positions within the denominational framework of ministry. *While the desire to achieve is commendable, that drive must be tempered with ability and experience.* Prominence, position and prestige entice some men to do whatever’s necessary to accomplish their goals.”⁶
- In a death-row interview, Michael Rodriguez, a member of the “Texas 7” who broke out of jail and were later captured, reflected on why he arranged to have his wife killed. He stated in that interview that it was “the lust of a coed” he met at what then was Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos. “My wife was a wonderful person and didn’t deserve this. I fell for a coed. It was stupid. I sit in my cell and think: How did I get here? . . . I was a willing participant—you can call it lust.”
- An excellent book entitled *Lust—The Other Side of Love* was written in 1978 by a man serving on the staff of a faithful, well-known Christian pastor. The book traces the theme of lust throughout various Bible characters and offers Christ as the only answer. It is difficult now to find reference to this book in web searches because the author, Mel White, lost the battle with his own lust, divorced his wife, entered a homosexual relationship, and pastored the nation’s largest gay-lesbian congregation (the Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church in Dallas). Mr. White is still a defender and advocate of homosexual rights. May God help us to deal with the sin in our own hearts—lest we be deceived and bring shame to the name of Christ.

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

Charles Spurgeon

Pride

- “How many of us who are engaged in the Lord’s holy service are secretly cherishing some proud aspiration of excelling other men, of making a name for ourselves, of securing money or fame! We will use the pulpit as a pedestal for the adulation of the world, and the cross for a post on which to hang garlands to our own glory. How often do we preach sermons, or make addresses, and attend meetings, with no other thought than to secure the recognition and praise of those to whom we ‘minister.’ All of this must be laid aside. We must have no selfish, prideful ulterior motives to serve Christ.”⁷
- “When Robert Murray McCheyne went through times [of blessing], he would kneel down and symbolically place the crown of success on the brow of the Lord, to whom it rightly belonged. That habit helped save him from assuming the glory for achievement that belonged to God alone.”⁸
- “The prime enjoyment of Satan is to allow a young man to succeed, so he can destroy him.”⁹

Sloth

- “The preacher must be given to hard, hard work. And that is what I think is the great problem with preaching today—homiletical sloth. Possibly this is because some believe that the homiletical payoff does not merit the added work. It is God before whom we all will stand; it is God before whom we must not be ashamed. This command draws the picture of a workman who has done his work well and therefore can submit it to his superior without hesitation or embarrassment.”¹⁰
- “Give him a chapter and order him to walk around it, camp on it, sup with it, and come at last to speak it backward and forward, until all he says about it rings with the truth of eternity. And when he’s burned out by the flaming Word, when he’s consumed at last by the fiery grace blazing through him, and when he’s privileged to translate the truth of God to man, finally transferred from earth to heaven, then bear him softly. Place a two-edged sword in his coffin.”¹¹
- “Lazy and disorganized people never rise to true leadership. . . . The young man of leadership caliber will work while others waste time, study while others snooze, pray while others daydream. Slothful habits are overcome, whether in thought, deed, or dress. The emerging leader eats right, stands tall, and prepares himself to wage a good warfare.”¹²
- “Sloth, or laziness, seems to be the worst of ministerial sins. This evil spirit may brood over the hours in a man’s study. Who but God knows how the pastor spends his time when alone with books? . . . The favorite device of this tempter may be procrastination. Repeatedly

the demon insists, ‘Never do today what can be put off till tomorrow!’ That [day] never comes.”¹³

- Pastors “are peculiarly beset by that most subtle form of slothfulness, namely, the inclination to undertake the easiest things first, to the neglect of the more difficult and more important. Some of the laziest men in the world are the busiest; every hour is crowded with worthless trifles, while grave responsibilities are shirked or unworthily performed. The faithful pastor . . . must harbor his resources, must plan his work wisely, must utilize the fragments of his time, and must train himself to constant and strenuous endeavor.”¹⁴
- “We are all tempted to be lazy. It is possible to spend two or three hours in the study, surrounded by books, flitting like a butterfly from one to another, but girding ourselves to no great effort of thought.”¹⁵

Wrath

- “A man of God must watch his heart. He must never for one moment lower his guard. He must forever realize that there pulses within him a hydrogen bomb of potential damage, a serpent of wrath, a worm of disease, a package of disaster.”¹⁶
- “Angry people are seldom reasonable and reasonable people are rarely angry” (source unknown). 

¹ J. H. Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 84.

² Andrew Bonar, “Envy.” Available at <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/e/envy.htm>.

³ J. C. Philpot, *Letters and Memoirs of Joseph Charles Philpot* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 392.

⁴ Ernest Gordon, *Adoniram Judson Gordon* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), 167.

⁵ O. S. Hawkins, quoted in R. T. Kendall, *Tithing: A Call to Serious, Biblical Giving*, 27.

⁶ Charles R. Erdman, *The Work of the Pastor* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1924), 8, emphasis added.

⁷ F. B. Meyer. Available at http://www.gracegems.org/3/serving_with_ulterior_motives.html.

⁸ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 158.

⁹ David Joslin, “Paying Your Dues,” *Contact*, July 1990, 9.

¹⁰ Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 210.

¹¹ John MacArthur Jr., *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Waco, TX: Word, 1992), 348.

¹² Sanders, 52–53.

¹³ Andrew W. Blackwood, *Pastoral Work* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1945), 32, emphasis added.

¹⁴ Erdman, 17.

¹⁵ F. B. Meyer, *Hints for Lay Preachers* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, n. d.), 117.

¹⁶ John B. Wilder, *The Young Minister* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 56.

Dr. Mike Stalnaker planted Community Baptist Church in the spring of 2007 in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where he resides with his wife, Deena, and their four children.



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On a Third Realm

Editor's Note

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

On the Lord's Day, October 31, 2010, Dr. Warren Vanhetloo passed peacefully from this life into the presence of his Lord. "Dr. Van," as he was known to generations of seminary students, will be truly missed. But none of us mourn. He will always be remembered as a true gentleman who could express the most complex Bible truths with remarkable simplicity. We are thankful for having been able to learn from him, and we now rejoice with him as he sees his Savior face to face.

"Well done."

—Kevin Schaal

It is an oversimplification to speak of this world as consisting of two distinct realms of reality: matter and nonmatter, material and nonmaterial, physical and mental, flesh and mind. Most of us do think, however, of life as roughly so differentiated. Our sense organs convey to our minds the sight and sounds and smells and feel of the physical realm. Our minds accept and interpret such information, consider possible rearrangements or improvements, make plans, speculate, and dream dreams. These are the two realms in which we live and move.

Jesus predicted to His disciples that, coming at Pentecost, a third realm would be introduced, somewhat different from previous works of God. What He taught about that third realm is exceedingly important. We may not comprehend all that He taught, but we who have been born anew can be just as sure of that realm of reality as we are of the two in which all men consciously live and move. Various portions of the Gospels record the attempts of Jesus to clarify this third realm for His disciples, but one in the Gospel of John seems to be of special importance.

Chapter fourteen of John begins with Jesus assuring His disciples that our future heavenly dwelling will be ample for all who assemble there. He will be going there further to prepare residences for His own (John 14:2, 3). His oneness with the Father assures the certainty of what He is explaining (vv. 9, 10). And then He clarifies an important truth: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (v. 10). Jesus was, here on earth, a separate, independent person, but so submitted to the Father that God could direct His every word and action. All that He spoke was the Word of God.

That relationship was unique. Only the incarnate Son of God experienced the fullness of the indwelling of

the Father. Then Jesus announced to His disciples that a similar indwelling awaited them! After His return to the Father, He and the Father would send another divine Person to dwell with believers. He calls this coming One a Comforter, or sometimes translated an Advocate (vv. 16, 26). As Jesus has been a divine Teacher for them, the coming Holy Spirit will "teach you all things" (v. 26). As Jesus has lived with them day and night in the flesh, the coming Holy Spirit will abide with them forever (v. 16).

This divine indweller soon to come, Jesus declares, is the Spirit of truth (v. 17). Jesus had earlier taught them that as the divine Son of God, He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6). The coming indwelling Comforter is eternal divine truth, just as Jesus is. He will discern truth here on this earth. He will guide believers into personal knowledge of the God who is the truth (v. 26). He will grant understanding of the Word of God so that believers comprehend what God has revealed. He will teach believers concerning spiritual realities. He will call to remembrance teachings of Jesus and the Bible for instruction and guidance.

All this which Jesus is explaining to His disciples is hidden from those who are not born again (v. 17). The unregenerate of the world cannot see the residing Comforter. Unbelievers do not receive this coming indwelling Guide. They can see and comprehend the reality of the physical and the mental, but not the spiritual. That realm is not discernible to them. The Creator of the universe will be inaugurating a Church Age spiritual relationship with Himself of which most of humanity will remain totally ignorant. They will see some of the outward results of this different realm, lives changed, congregations gathering, prayers answered, but they will have no genuine comprehension of God's special work among them.

Jesus declared, "ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (v. 17). Only a few could be in close proximity to Jesus during His public ministry. The coming Comforter will be alongside every single believer to comfort and encourage, to instruct and direct, to guide and to teach. Believers today have a closer relationship with God's revealing Agent than the disciples did as they daily walked with Jesus, saw His miracles, and heard Him teach.

Physical proximity is limited. During His public ministry, people pressed to be near the Lord Jesus. Houses were so filled that on one occasion some folks tore up the roof to let down a friend. Jesus often departed from the public to pray alone. Not so with the coming Comforter. His new dwelling will be within each believer. There is no time

Continued on next page

that He is away. He dwells within and remains within.

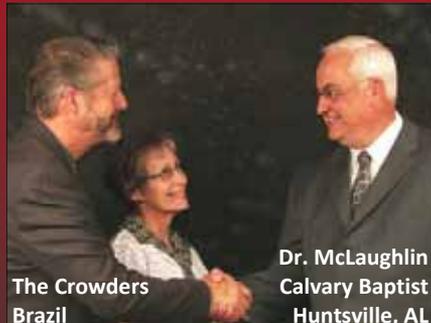
Twelve men were chosen to walk closely with Jesus and learn eternal truths from Him. They had a special privilege we can justly admire. Our closeness, however, is even greater than that of the twelve. Every single born-again believer has an inner Comforter constantly abiding within. That's far greater a privilege than waking with a physical Redeemer. And, of course, with greater privilege comes greater responsibility.

Jesus promised those who follow Him, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). The cogitations of great theologians through the centuries have helped us to appreciate the reality of this. God is one. The Holy Spirit indwells us in a special fashion. The Lord Jesus Christ is as equally and genuinely present with each believer. God the Father is also in us and with us. Let us walk as children of the light.

Warren Vanhetloo, AB, BD, ThM, ThD, DD, was adjunct instructor in and professor emeritus of Systematic Theology at Calvary Baptist Seminary in Lansdale, Pennsylvania.



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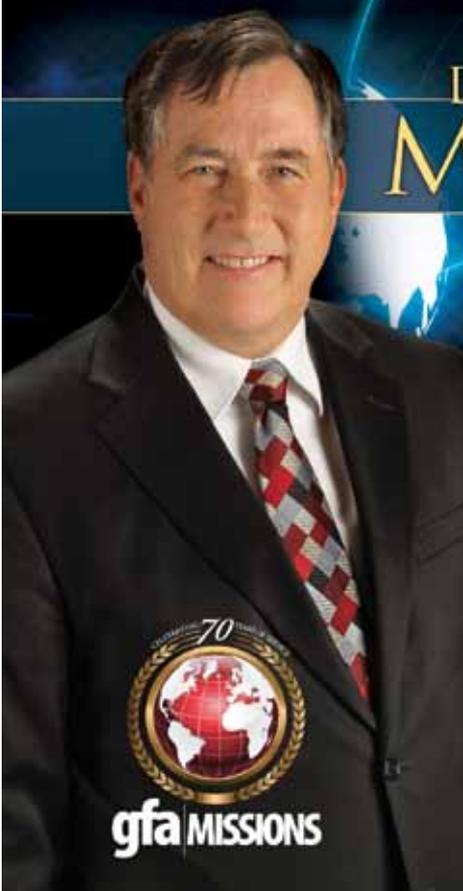
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Jordan

Nancy Hamilton

Do you remember when your first child was born? Do you recall the anticipation, the dreams?

I envisioned my firstborn son would be the next Charles Haddon Spurgeon—the “prince of preachers.” Thousands would come to Christ through his ministry. He would have the boldness of an Elijah tempered by the meekness of a Moses. It goes without saying that he would be a straight-A student, a brilliant musician, and a loving husband and father . . . all of this because I willed it so.

I had big plans for this child I carried in my womb and, with God’s help, someday I hoped to stand before my Heavenly Father and hear, “Well done, Nancy; many mothers have done nobly, but you excel them all.”

That was a long time ago . . .

My dreams died abruptly the day our son was born. God’s vision and mine were at major variance!

Jordan wasn’t going to be a great orator. As a matter of fact, people would strain to understand his every word. A straight-A student? He’d never read beyond the level of a third grader. He’d *like* to be a great musician, but the truth of the matter is, he can’t carry a tune.

Jordan has Down’s syndrome.

Am I disappointed? Should I be? Is my ultimate vision not still attainable? Do I not still have the opportunity to stand before my Lord and hear Him say, “Well done, Nancy! Many mothers have done nobly, but you excel them all. You have fulfilled *My* vision?”

When our son Jordan was born, God gave us grace to joyfully accept him in “as is” condition. Of course, there have been some heart-wrenching experiences over the years. As Jordan’s friends and siblings have all gone on to carve out meaningful “adult” lives, he has been left to grapple with a substandard uniqueness that precludes the norms of college, career, love, marriage, children, and . . . driving a pickup truck. This being said, our life with Jordan is not bad; it is different—an adventure, if you will. Expectations of a mundane existence are out of the question.

I wish I could say that we have always found Jordan’s antics to be humorous, but the contrary has sometimes been true. Once, when Jordan’s mischief nearly cost our second-born son, Seth, the love of his life, I feared for Jordan’s safety as well as Seth’s sanity. I’ll not relate the entire circumstance, only Seth’s wild-



eyed response: “Don’t worry, Mom, I’ll be acquitted—justifiable homicide!”

Over our thirty years in the ministry I have observed that a laughing parent generally breeds a content, confident child—regardless of the gifts and abilities of that child. Therefore, we have chosen to laugh, and as of a few years ago, share some of those “uncomfortable, embarrassing circumstances” with our friends and extended family.

Each year I end our Christmas letter with a “Jordan story.” The following is an excerpt from our 2004 little newsy gazette.

We now have three mentally handicapped adults in our congregation. Besides Jordan, there is Merrilee, a twenty-five-year-old young lady who was hit by a car when she was eleven and sustained brain damage, and Nathan, a twenty-seven-year-old young man who was born with mental disabilities. Although Jordan is more independent than Nathan and has better social skills than Merrilee, both of them are intellectually and academically Jordan’s superior. Given their gifts and disabilities, they all function on a fairly even playing field . . . at least in everyone’s eyes but Jordan’s. The only word I can think of to describe his attitude toward Merrilee and Nathan is “condescending” . . . “smug” also comes to mind.

Nathan has (much to his consternation) been adopted by Jordan as his “special project.” Jordan hovers over Nathan, telling him what to say and when to say it. If Nathan dares to speak without Jordan’s permission, he is chided by Jordan’s raised index finger and disapproving shake of the head. Most of the time when the two of them are together, Jordan sits with his “fatherly” arm around Nathan and with smiles and nods instructs him in “the way he should go.” This arrangement provides Jordan with a great deal of satisfaction . . . but is driving Nathan absolutely “buggy”! Nathan has wonderful parents who have worked very hard at teaching him to be polite, so the idea of his telling Jordan to “go take a hike” has never occurred to him.

Continued on page 38

There is no tragedy as tragic as combining high mentality with low morality. —Bob Jones Sr.

People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing. —Will Rogers

The continuance of anger is hatred. —Francis Quarles

Love can wait and worship endlessly; lust says, "I must have it at once." —Oswald Chambers

Lust and reason are enemies. —Solomon Ben Garbirol

Lust, at its height, does not know shame. —Marquis of Halifax

Live within your income, even if you have to borrow to do so. —Henry Wheeler Shaw

Likeness begets Love; yet proud men Hate one another. —Thomas Fuller

That people find it odd and surprising to be told that it is foolish to seek greatness; that is most remarkable. —Blaise Pascal

'Tis very hard to behold our own gifts without pride, and the gifts of others without envy. —Vavasor Powell

The angry man, like the two hot disciples that called fire from heaven, ordains himself the judge, and would have God become his executioner. —Thomas Adams

Real glory springs from the silent conquest of ourselves. —Joseph Parrish Thompson

Don't envy the man who has everything: he probably has an ulcer too. —Unknown

Envy is impotent, numbed with fear, never ceasing in its appetite, and it knows no gratification but endless self torment. It has the ugliness of a trapped rat, which gnaws its own foot in an effort to escape. —Angus Wilson

He that will be angry, and not sin, must not be angry but for sin. —John Trapp

If we did but know how little some enjoy of the great things that they possess, there would not be much envy in the world. —Edward Young

Contentment consisteth not in adding more fuel, but in taking away some fire; not in multiplying of wealth, but in subtracting men's desires. —Thomas Fuller

The only thing more disturbing than a friend with a noisy old car is a friend with a quiet new one. —Unknown

Envy eats nothing but its own heart. —German proverb

Envy is sin, and it punisheth itself like gluttony; for it fretteth the heart, shorteneth the life, and eateth the flesh. —Henry Smith

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

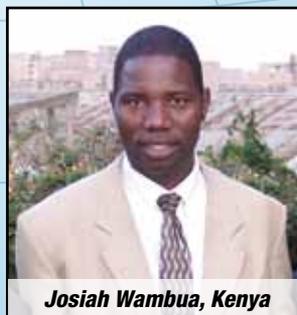
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Regional Report

Earl Barnett

Alaska Regional Fellowship

The Alaska Regional Fellowship had its first annual meeting at Hamilton Acres Baptist Church in Fairbanks in June 1991 as a fulfilled vision of Dr. Hugh Hamilton. This year the nineteenth annual meeting was held at Immanuel Baptist Church in Palmer on July 26–28. Pastor Ben Burch and the church family made everyone feel welcome with their warm fellowship and delicious meals. What a blessing it was to be at Immanuel and to meet in the new church facility.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Brian Green, who has pastored the Calvary Baptist Church near London, England, for the past forty-eight years. Dr. Green brought very timely messages and started our meeting with a powerful message on revival. Since this was Dr. and Mrs. Green's first time in Alaska, they were able to spend a couple of days after the meeting with us, getting acquainted with our great state.

This was Dr. John Vaughn's seventh time to be with us at our meeting. He is always a blessing as he ministers the Word, and he gave



great insight during the panel discussion time as to what is happening in the Fundamental arena.

Walt and Betty Brock from Ironwood Camp in California had been with us before and were a great blessing and encouragement to all who attended. Walt always has a session just with the men and Betty with just the women.

Rev. Larry Ball, director of International Baptist Mission in Chandler, Arizona, spoke at one of the morning sessions.

On Monday night the building was almost full with the folk from Immanuel and a good number of visitors, making this probably one of our best attended meetings ever. Including the speakers, twenty-nine preachers were registered, which was the most we have had in several years.

Earl Barnett serves on the FBFI Executive Board, the BJU Board of Trustees, and is the FBFI Alaska regional director. He is also the director of Midnight Sun Ministries and serves as field representative for Valley Independent Baptist Missions.

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Gratitude

In Luke 17 we have the account of the Lord healing ten lepers. We read in verses 12–18,

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

One out of ten! What a shame and disgrace. It is shocking to realize that the other nine men did not come back to even thank the Lord for what He had done for them.

Leprosy was an incurable disease during Bible times. The terrible condition of a leper is described in Leviticus 13:45, 46: "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be." As awful as the condition of these lepers in Luke 17, you would think that the other nine would have rejoiced at the miracle of being cleansed. You would think that they would have returned like the one leper did and thanked the Lord for what He had done. As pathetic as their ingratitude is, it is shocking to see how many of the Lord's people today are guilty of the same ingratitude.

Several years ago I heard a story of a Christian businessman who took three college students out for a meal and was considering paying for their four years of

education. Not one of those three young men wrote a thank-you note to this man in appreciation for the meal. This businessman was so disappointed by their lack of thankfulness that he decided not to give any of them any money for their education. What a blessing these young men missed!

It is alarming that many do not see the necessity of expressing gratitude for what people do for them. It seems that many feel it is their right or due to have things done for them. May I encourage parents to teach their children to always be grateful and write a thank-you note when someone outside or even inside their family does something for them? When grandparents send them gifts or money, immediately they should write and thank them. I would encourage teens and college students to express their gratitude to their parents or others who do things for them. First Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." The philosophy of the world today that says, "You deserve it!" has no place in the life of the child of God. Our lives must be characterized by gratitude. With this in mind, there is an area of ingratitude that I believe many of the Lord's people are guilty of, and that is that they have never written or expressed their gratitude to the person who was responsible for leading them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

One time a man was waiting for me on the steps of a local church. He said, "I have been waiting for three years to see you and tell you that I was saved because of your preaching." It would be wonderful if those who are reading this article would either write or call the person who had a part in their coming to Christ.

Remember, whatever another person does for us, whether large or small, we should be grateful.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjivn@aol.com.

Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL

The last column explored the function of this unique book in the Bible.* It displays the kind of passion that characterizes a healthy marriage relationship—a passion that is exclusive, pure, mutual, and intense. Above all, the passion that it models is *a passion for a person*. But it particularly highlights one side of that passion. The fact that the Shulemite speaks nearly twice as much as her beloved magnifies the intensity of her passion and preoccupation exclusively for him. But that model passion gives rise to a model contrast.

Viewed in its larger canonical context among the other books in the OT, the Song of Songs has a unique function. The Shulemite's clarion expressions of soul-passion for her beloved echo through the ages of Biblical revelation and the history of God's people. The OT repeatedly returns to marriage as God's metaphor of choice to portray His relationship to His people. Yet God's people so frequently betray that loyalty by their spiritual adultery. This theme emerges in every segment of the OT, beginning with Exodus (34:14–16), then Leviticus (17:7; 20:4–6), Numbers (15:38–40), Deuteronomy (31:16), and Judges (2:16, 17; 8:27, 33). It resurfaces in the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, and Ezekiel.

The Song of Songs has a very earthy message for men and women regarding the marriage relationship. But it also speaks eloquent practical theology. Throughout Israel's history of spiritual adultery, the Shulemite Bride portrayed the ardent devotion that God's people should have had for Him alone. When God charges His people with spiritual adultery, He is using immorality as a metaphor to illustrate how He views their defection from Him. They have betrayed His exclusive covenantal claim to their devotion and abandoned their calling to image His character and truth to the nations around them. In committing spiritual fornication, they *left Him and joined them*.

The last column ended with some questions. How does the kind of frenetic, obsessive, idolatrous, adulterous behavior described in Ezekiel 16 and 23 start? And what form, more precisely, does this kind of infidelity take in practical, behavioral terms? This column picks up with these questions.

Ezekiel 16 Revisited

The last column surveyed Ezekiel 16, with its graphic depiction of Jerusalem's fall from favored princess to fatuous prostitute. His people prostituted themselves to the

Egyptians (v. 26), the Assyrians (v. 28), and the Chaldeans (v. 29). They prostituted themselves to the culture and religions of these other nations with an obsessive, dysfunctional passion that sickened God and even disgusted those nations (16:30–38). God describes Jerusalem's insatiable lust to be like—and be liked by—the surrounding nations. It is a blunt sexual metaphor for a sin that is deeply religious and spiritual in nature. Love and admiration for the surrounding culture and love and admiration for God's culture cannot coexist. He will not have it.

Like adultery, idolatry begins with infatuation—and affection and admiration for the ways and values of a neighboring culture. It's really not about the idol; it's about the culture, the values, the lifestyle. Want proof of that? Look at Ezekiel 23.

Ezekiel 23

God tells a parable, an allegory, about two women named Aholah (Samaria) and Aholibah (Jerusalem): "Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours" (23:5). We use the word "dote" to suggest excessive fondness; that's not what the Hebrew word means. This verb (7x in this chapter) means to *have sensual desire, pursue one erotically*. The proper sense here is that she *lusted after her lovers*. Why? What was so attractive about them? Because they were

clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men [i.e., the choice men] of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted [for whom she lusted] (23:6, 7).

God judged Samaria for her spiritual harlotry, permitting Assyria to carry her off captive in 722 BC (23:9, 10). What was Jerusalem's reaction when they saw what Samaria did and God's response? She outdid her sister (23:11). Why? What was she attracted by? Not their idols.

She doted upon [lusted after] the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. . . . For when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion, Girded with girdles upon their loins [sashes around their waists], exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads [flowing turbans on their heads], all of them

ADULTERY: THE SONG OF SOLOMON (PART 2)

princes to look to . . . And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon [lusted for] them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them (23:12–17).

Provocative language. But it is God’s language. Again, God is not directly describing the sexual immorality of all the Israelites with their pagan neighbors. The language of immorality is God’s metaphor for how He views *their infatuation with the up-and-coming pagan culture*: their dress, their pomp, their style, their impressive appearance, their pride and security. In short, they idolized them and their lifestyle.

What did this *look* like? What form did this take? The fixation described here is focused not on idolatry proper, but on their seeing and lusting for the *people*, the *clothing*, the *status*, the *culture* of these nations. The desire to *be like the nations around them* that so frequently characterizes Israel is just the OT expression of a very familiar NT concept: *worldliness*.

Spiritual Adultery and Worldliness

Worldliness is not an idea invented by paranoid puritanical Fundamentalists; more and more Evangelicals are acknowledging that after fifty years of accommodation to the surrounding culture, worldliness is rampant in their churches. Worldliness is not a new concept even in the NT; it had been going on for centuries before that. Worldliness is simply siding and identifying with the world. Godliness is God-likeness; worldliness is world-likeness. The world is not just a planet, it is a realm—a kingdom of subjects governed and influenced by a spirit who is in declared and hostile opposition to God. Worldliness has external symptoms, but it is a profoundly internal, religious, spiritual issue. World-likeness is—in God’s eyes—idolatry, adultery, prostitution, and worse. Pagan religion is always an outgrowth and expression of the culture, and pagan culture an extension of its religion. All of life and culture are fundamentally religious, because all of reality is fundamentally religious and theological. That’s why the metaphor of marriage and spiritual adultery is so prominent not only in the OT but even in the NT.

Spiritual Marriage and Adultery in the NT

Numerous passages pick up this thread of spiritual adultery from the OT. In **Matthew 12:39** and **16:4** Jesus

referred to the Pharisees as “an evil/a wicked and adulterous generation.” Why “adulterous”? Did that word “adulterous” catch their attention and make them think of any OT passages? Paul was concerned to espouse the Corinthian believers to Christ as their husband “that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (**2 Cor. 11:2**). The classic instruction to wives and husbands, **Ephesians 5:22–33**, is grounded in this marriage reality between Christ and His Church.

James 4 most clearly affirms the connection between spiritual adultery and worldliness: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (**4:4**). Instead of reserving their love and devotion for Christ, these had, by their “affairs” with the world, put themselves on the side of God’s enemies. “Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (**4:5**). A better translation here is, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.” The verse again links jealousy to the marriage metaphor; it’s the same OT concept of God’s righteous claims on the singular devotion of His people (Exod. 34:14–16). The point is not that you can love only God, but only what God loves. All reality—from angels down to humans—is divided into two sides: those who are God’s and those who are in rebellion against Him. In the OT it was Israel and “the nations”; in the NT it is the Church and “the world.” To dote on and flirt with the world, let alone to pant and pursue and lust after the world’s culture, is to prostitute oneself as an adulterer or adulteress. If that analogy is offensive, remember that it is God’s analogy; and He uses it frequently.

The marriage metaphor that pervades both the Old and New Testaments comes to its consummation in the ultimate book of consummation—Revelation. **Revelation 17** depicts the world system of Babylon as the ultimate spiritual harlot. But against the backdrop of chapters 17 and 18, which record the destruction of the gaudy drunken whore dressed in scarlet, **Revelation 19:6–9** depicts the Lamb’s marriage to the pure and radiant bride dressed in white. This final marriage imagery echoes the beauty, the purity, the exclusivity of that relationship described back in Song of Songs.

Continued on next page

Finally, **Revelation 21** describes the new Jerusalem prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The Bible begins (in Genesis 2) and ends (in Revelation 21) with marriage—a metaphor chosen by God to bookend His revelation. In the midst of that revelation stands the Shulemite, the model bride, the model believer.

Conclusion

John echoes this theme when he exhorts, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). “More than our showing the world how ‘relevant’ the church can be, God wants us to show Him how much we treasure Him above all else” (Ray Ortlund, *God’s Unfaithful Wife*, 176). He wants us to show Him—and the world—whose side we are on, whom we love, where our loyalty

lies. The Shulemite models what we should be toward our divine Husband—delighting in the perfections of our Beloved, praising His qualities, expressing our single-hearted devotion to Him alone, forsaking all others and clinging to Him only. The Song of Songs’ praise of pure marital love cries out as a testimony against all spiritual adultery and prostitution, whether Israel’s or the Church’s, yours or mine. The Shulemite is the divine standard of passionate fidelity with the power to shame the nation for its debauched infidelity. And she remains the standard for the Church of exclusive loyalty both to one’s spouse and to one’s God.

* I will advocate, but not take time to defend or delineate, that the Song of Songs was composed by Solomon, not autobiographically but as a description of marital love between two other people (whether actual or fictional).

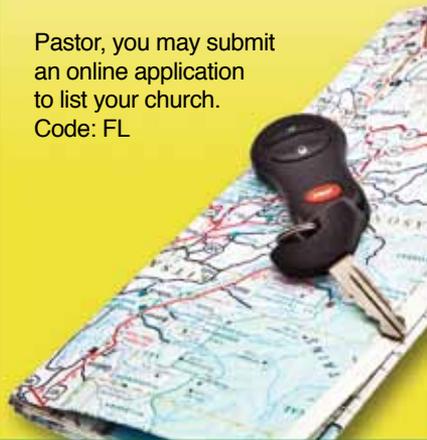
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Persecution in India

Pastor Billa Nelson Babu can testify firsthand of the persecution that many have faced in India. India has seen an uptick in riots and the persecution of anyone who counters radical Hindus.

In a personal letter Pastor Babu recounted evangelistic efforts in a slum area of India known as Ujjinipura. God granted success in their efforts as thirteen people received Christ as their Savior. Hindus responded with efforts to “reconvert” these new believers. Brother Babu was attacked and beaten as he left the area after a day of ministry. His assailants took his Bible, gospel literature, money, and cell phone. He subsequently has received death threats by telephone.

Separately he recounted that a youth worker named Anthony was imprisoned for violating the state’s “anti-conversion laws.” At the same event, Pastor Babu’s mother was attacked, and her left arm was broken. This information came to us through personal correspondence between Peter Maruyama and Pastor Babu.

Gideons Challenged

In Trenton, New Jersey, eight members of the Gideons International handed Bibles out on a public sidewalk in front of Nottingham High School. In the short time they were there, they were able to hand out over three

hundred Bibles. By the Gideons’ testimony, there were some who refused the Bibles, but many received them gladly.

Within forty minutes police officers from Hamilton Township arrived and ordered the Gideons to leave. The Gideons immediately complied with the officers’ orders but have subsequently insisted they were there legally and are continuing in legal counsel on the issue.

This article can be referenced in *Israel My Glory*, July/August 2010, in the article entitled “Police Hustle Gideons Off Street” (p. 41).

Reformed Merger

On Friday, June 18, the two largest reformed denominations—World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Reformed Ecumenical Council—merged to be called the World Communion of Reformed Churches. This merger now represents more than 80 million Christians.

A general uniting council was held in Grand Rapids with hundreds of delegates from around the world. At that council they formed a new constitution and by-laws. While the two groups have some things in common, they possess very different emphases. Their articles of union state, however, “that such an act of union is implemented not only to carry out the major aims for which both organizations existed separately, but also to respond to God’s call for service in the church and the world.”

This article can be referenced at <http://www.christianpost.com/article/20100619/reformed-bodies-sign-off-on-merger/>.

“Wannabe Cool” Christianity

Brett McCracken, a self-described twenty-seven-year-old Evangelical, wrote a response piece to the 2007 Lifeway Research poll on the patterns of young Protestant church-goers. The poll result concluded that seventy percent of Protestants between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two stop attending church regularly.

In the article McCracken outlines the several attempts that modern churches have made to appear relevant to the upcoming generations. Each example appeals to the carnal habits of a culture that rejects God and His Word. The conclusion he gives, however, is heartening. “Are these gimmicks really going to bring young people back to church? Is this what people come to church for? Maybe sex-sermons and indie-rock worship music do help in getting people in the door, and maybe even winning new converts. But what sort of Christianity are they converted to?”

This article can be referenced at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB1000142405274870411170457535531122648100.html>.

Not Willing to Change

In a recent Barna survey only seven percent of those surveyed indicated that they experienced any change in “religious beliefs,

practices, or preferences” within the last five years. This number is astounding when one considers that the believer’s sanctification is change.

Of those who indicated change in the last five years, fourteen percent indicated a positive change in commitment to Christ, twelve percent indicated that they have increased their “religious activity,” and nine percent indicated that they were more committed to God. But there was negative change as well. Sixteen percent indicated that they have left Christianity, eleven percent indicated they were less enthused about church, and eight percent have decreased their church involvement.

Not all of the changes indicated were reported in the article, but of those that were, thirty-seven percent were negative. Over one-third of the only seven percent who indicated any change was decidedly negative.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.barna.org/transformation-articles/433-survey-finds-lots-of-spiritual-dialogue-but-not-much-change>.

What Is Faithful Today?

A Barna poll in July attempted to identify what characterizes the habits of lay people who actively live their faith. The article offers several conclusions:

Women are more active than men.

Unmarried adults are the least represented group in active faith expression.

Older adults are the most active age group.

Culture deeply impacts faith involvement.

Catholics tend to focus on worship attendance while Evangelicals also are involved in other expression of group faith.

African-Americans are more involved statistically than any other racial group.

Personal Bible reading is more common among people who attend small-group meetings.

This article can be referenced at <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality/400-who-is-active-in-group-expressions-of-faith-barna-study-examines-small-groups-sunday-school-and-house-churches?q=active+group>.

Price for Supporting Israel

Canada lost its position on the UN Security Council on October 12 of this year. Even though Canada is a founding nation in the United Nations, and even though Canada has not failed to receive a seat on the UN Security Council since 1945, it failed to gather the necessary votes to maintain its seat. Portugal and Germany now hold the two seats that are reserved for “Western Europeans and other States.”

Since 2006, with the advent of conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Canada has been a strong ally of Israel. Such stands have garnered the strong rebuke of the United Arab Emirates by banning their presence from UAE’s Camp Mirage.

Lawrence Cannon, Canadian Foreign Minister, explained the defeat: “The

NOTABLE QUOTES

Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home.—C. S. Lewis

While the unenlightened ones believe that man is created in the image and likeness of God and that we are subject to His and to His nature’s laws, the enlightened ones *know* that we are products of evolution, driven by chance, the environment, and the will to primacy. While the un-enlightened are stuck with the antiquated notion that ordinary human minds can reach objective judgments about good and evil, better and worse through reason, the enlightened ones *know* that all such judgments are subjective and that *ordinary people can no more be trusted with reason than they can with guns*. Because ordinary people will pervert reason with ideology, religion, or interest, science is “science” only in the “right” hands. Consensus among the right people is the only standard of truth. Facts and logic matter only insofar as proper authority acknowledges them.—Angelo M. Codevilla, speaking ironically in *The American Spectator*, July/August 2010

Pride calls me to the window, gluttony to the table, wantonness to the bed, laziness to the chimney-corner; ambition commands me to go upstairs, and covetousness to come down. Vices, I see, are as well contrary to themselves as to virtue. Free me, Lord, from this distracted case; fetch me from being sin’s servant to be Thine, whose “service is perfect freedom,” for Thou art but one, and ever the same.—Thomas Fuller

Let us determine that we will not become subject to the vices of our own carnal nature. Our liberty in Christ is given to us that we might be free from the likes of pride, gluttony, and the rest, in order that we can serve Him more completely.—CH (CPT) Mike Barnette

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if each of us had Peter’s zeal? I’d rather work with ten other guys who are willing to “get out of the boat” and drown than the one who sits in the back and says “Well, I’m not sure that is a good idea.”—Craig Hartman

O what I owe to the furnace, fire, and hammer of the Lord.—Samuel Rutherford

principles that underlie the policy of foreign affairs, freedom, democracy, human rights and common law, are the foundation of each of these decisions. Some would say that because of our attachment to these values, we lost the seat. If that is the case, so be it.”

This article can be referenced at <http://frontpagemag.com/2010/10/13/punishing-israel%E2%80%99s-staunchest-ally/>.

Geert Wilders

In January of 2009 Geert Wilders was condemned by the Amsterdam Court of Appeal and prosecution was ordered for “incitement to hatred and discrimination.” Wilders has been an open opponent to the Islamization of the Netherlands.

On October 13 he received both good news and bad news in his trial. The good news is that it was duly noted his comments were against Islam and the Qur’an—not the Muslim people themselves. If this line of thinking prevails, he should receive at least a partial acquittal. The bad news, however, came from the chilling words of the prosecution: “You can expect a politician to be aware of the impact of his words and in any case the legal limit may not be crossed, no matter how important it may be to address supposed problems and contribute to matters of general interest.” In other words, truth or not, some things may not be said!

While this case should not be judged by American law, it is chilling to see where political one-world thinking is heading.

This article can be referenced and the video feed viewed at <http://www.jihad-watch.org/2010/10/spencer-wilders->

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI Executive Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the FBFI.

The Small Church: A Vital Force in Missions

“Your church does a lot with missions and missionaries. We are glad that bigger churches like yours can send out missionaries that we can support.” I have heard this type of comment a number of times, as God has blessed our church by calling a number of families from our church to plant churches in other cultures. Yet too often these comments belie a subtle attitude—that large churches or organizations can do what small churches cannot—they can play a *vital* role in the sending and supporting of missionaries. In the Scriptures and in my experience this is just not the case. I think we need to purposefully shift our thinking away from what one type of church can or cannot do to a more Biblical viewpoint that *all* churches are called to do the same task, and *all* churches can be vital forces in accomplishing God’s mission.

First, all churches—regardless of their size or budget—are commissioned with the task of planting churches in their surrounding areas and around the world. Many of the assemblies in the New Testament outside of Jerusalem were probably small. Most churches met in houses, yet the gospel spread from those churches, causing new bodies to be formed, leaders to be trained, and the mission to be shared. Small churches started and spread Christianity. The mission and expectation of every church was that they would be involved in planting other churches. Expensive and costly institutions with large budgets were unheard of in the early church era before Constantine. We see church planting movements like this in non-Western cultures. Every local church was, is, and can be a vital force in missions!

Second, and related, is that the local church is the center of God’s program for planting churches. Here in the West, we have allowed the corporate and bureaucratic mindset to transform our thinking regarding accomplishing God’s mission. We know where this thinking has gotten us in the secular world, and even more importantly, it has done harm in the spiritual world. With good motives, denominations, parachurch ministries, mission boards, and schools have risen as ministries of and alongside local churches. These

ministries have performed functions that are good and helpful to local churches. Many times they take on a life of their own apart from local churches and then try to accomplish the role of the local church. They cannot replace the local church as the primary means through which God’s mission is to be accomplished.

Third, every local church can and should send out church planters near and far. From childhood on, encourage your young people to consider serving God in ministry. Missionaries are called and confirmed primarily through the teaching and observation of the local church, not camps, colleges, or conferences. God can use other ministries and the preaching of His Word anywhere to stir a young person’s heart for the cause of missions. However, your church needs to observe a person’s fitness and giftedness for the work as he or she lives near and serves in your church before heading to the field.

Finally, every church can have a vital role in supporting church planters here in our country and around the world. Perhaps God has not called someone from your church *yet*, but He has given you the privilege of partnering with other churches through supporting missionaries and church planters. Smaller churches can give focus to missionaries that large ones sometimes neglect. I have seen this mindset wonderfully displayed by churches of all sizes who have partnered with workers we have sent out. Local churches are uniquely gifted with a variety of people who serve the mission of Christ in their support!

As you can tell, the focus of this *Global Focus* is not so much on the *size* of your church but on the fact that you *are* a church, and all churches are commissioned by God to accomplish His mission. In the next few articles I will flesh out some of the points made above, with Scriptural support, so that all of our churches can confidently and Biblically be a vital force in missions, according to God’s plan and thus for God’s glory!

Pearson Johnson is the pastor of missions and evangelism at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan. You can e-mail him with questions or comments at pjohnson@intercity.org.

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A Time of War and a Time of Peace

Editor's Note: FBFI Chaplain Willis recently participated in the dignified transfer of CH (CPT) Dale Goetz, the first chaplain to be killed since the Vietnam War. Chaplain Goetz was a graduate of Maranatha Bible College and was endorsed by the American Council of Christian Churches.

The dreaded notification came into the duty chaplain's office as he worked at his desk in the rear of the passenger terminal: "Soldiers killed in action and on their final journey home." Immediately, a volunteer team was notified which would participate in one of our most honored ceremonies—but one that most Americans will never have the privilege to witness.

Within minutes, these volunteers—the "dignified transfer team"—filed in from out of the darkness onto the brightly lit tarmac with their game face on and ready for action. Even at 2200 hours, the temperature outside on the tarmac was still over ninety degrees, but that didn't discourage these airmen that night, some of whom had already performed this honored duty multiple times. If you had asked them why they volunteer for this, their reply would have been, "It is the least that I can do for our warriors, since they have done so much for me."

Once the transfer plane was on the ground, there was a somber air of quietness among the crowd as the low whining of the engines came to a hush in the night air. Our small entourage headed out to the plane to greet the air crew. Then as we climbed the steps, we saw the caskets all lined in precise rows, the Stars and Stripes fastened

snugly around each container as a sign of honor and respect. If for a moment the flags could have spoken, I imagine they would have said, "I am wrapped firmly around one of America's finest tonight, and under my colors rests a hero who understands the true price of freedom."

Our team stood silently over the casket of Chaplain Goetz and the others while silent prayers were lifted heavenward for their loved ones who had recently been informed of the tragedy on the battlefield. As the tail ramp was lowered, the plane filled with even more volunteers and well-wishers who had given up their sleep on this late night to come and pay their last respects to these fallen heroes. As the crowd formed a circle around the flag-draped containers, the still night air was broken by the voice of the presiding chaplain, who asked if we could all have a word of prayer and then a moment of silence. After he had prayed and read Psalm 23, everything was silent again.

The presiding general broke ranks from the rest of us and approached the first container. He knelt, bowed his head, and caressed the flag as if he were softly patting the back of a good friend or teammate who had just come off the field after victory performance, repeating the same cherished action for each fallen soldier. As the other soldiers repeated the same action, the heartache each felt could only be imagined, but the evidence was clear on the cheeks of all who made their way off the plane's ramp.

The volunteers exited the plane and formed two smaller groups on each side of the tail ramp. Once again they

stood in the stagnant night air with the heat and the humidity smothering them—their discomfort only a small price to pay. As the presiding officer gave the command, the first team of pallbearers snapped to attention, ascended into the plane, lifted their prized possession, and descended the ramp to an awaiting transport van. As the containers filed past, the service men and women rendered a dignified three-second salute, and the first container was carefully placed into the van. On this night, this hallowed procedure occurred eight times. When the last container was loaded and the last door firmly but quietly shut, the crowd stood motionless, awaiting their next command.

The commander gave the final command of "present arms," and the vehicles drove off the tarmac one by one and disappeared into the distance. As the vehicles moved slowly across the asphalt, everyone came to attention and paid honor to our finest American heroes as they began the next leg of their final journey home.

In twenty-plus years of service, I have rarely witnessed such an amazing act of respect and dignity. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the fine men and women of the Air Force who perform this sacrificial service each day during these hard times of war. The world may not have witnessed that night's great deed, but then again, it wasn't for the world that they did it.

FBFI Chaplain (COL) Joe Willis serves as the Deputy Command Chaplain at US Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

be striving to be a lady with a humble heart, a heart that is submissive and sensitive about not being a stumbling block to others, especially men. We must not compare ourselves to the world but to the Bible and the many truths there are that show us how we should dress.

As a missionary in Kenya for the past ten years I have seen a big

shift in dress here also. I believe the shift is a result of Western influence and TV. Thank you for posting those articles. I personally feel that this is something that needs to be addressed and confronted more in a world that is seeking to break down all barriers and distinctions that God has set forth.

Tina Rains

Missionary wife in Kenya, Africa

Several months ago, after an evening service, Nathan's parents and I were involved in a meeting about the upcoming special-needs Sunday school class. The meeting ran late, and by the time we dismissed, Jordan and Nathan were the only ones left in the auditorium. When Nathan's parents and I emerged from the office, Jordan ushered Nathan toward us, one arm firmly planted around Nathan's shoulder and the other one embracing his large print, pulpit-sized Bible. Nathan seemed nervous and kept glancing back and forth between Jordan and us, while Jordan was absolutely bursting with exuberance. Then Jordan began to coax him with his most soothing, pastoral voice, "Go ahead, Nathan, tell them. It's OK, Nathan, I'm right here beside you." After another moment of uncertainty, Nathan finally stood up straight, squared his shoulders, and with a big smile blurted out, "I just got saved! Jordan led me to the Lord." At this point Jordan began nodding approval and patting Nathan on the back. When Nathan's mother responded with, "Why, that's very nice, Nathan, but I thought you were already saved," Nathan's chest fell and in an absolute panic of confusion the words started tumbling out, "Well, I tried to tell him, Mom, I really did, but he just wouldn't listen!"

Nathan's mother and I exchanged wordless smiles that communicate an emotion comprehended only by mothers of the truly unique.

To be continued.

Nancy is the wife of Terry Hamilton, who for the past twenty-one years has pastored Friendship Baptist Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Besides Jordan, the Hamiltons have five other children (four of whom are students at Bob Jones University) and two grandchildren. Their second son, Seth, is an FBFI chaplain candidate.

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Our Problem

Mike Stalaker

Our Problem Is Within

We have a problem with these “Seven Deadly Sins” because we have an evil heart. Someone once said that “the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart.” The greatest victories are won or lost in the human heart. Christ said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21–23).

The story is told about an older man who was called on to pray at the church prayer meeting. He always concluded his prayer with, “And now, Lord, clean all the cobwebs out of our lives.” The others knew what he meant—all the little unsightly words, thoughts, and deeds that we let accumulate in our lives. Finally, his prayer got to be too much for one of the brethren who had heard that prayer many times. So, on hearing it again, he jumped to his feet and shouted, “Don’t do it, Lord! Kill the spider!” How nice it would be if the “spider of our old nature were dead and we were free of all cobwebs!” Experience has taught me that “the ‘sudden’ failures that appear in the lives of some . . . are never really sudden but are the surfacing of long-standing deficiencies in ‘the hidden person of the heart.’”¹

This author acknowledges that he is “prone to wander” and “prone to leave the God I love.” We are not invincible—nor are we above doing wrong. The Spirit indeed is willing, but our flesh is weak. The best of men could do any dastardly deed if the circumstances were just so.

Our Problem Is Overwhelming

James Carter’s illustration in his book *The Gospel Message in Great Pictures* can help us understand how pitiful we are when we do not

understand that Christ sets us completely free.

Let us say that here is a man bound with seven chains, made fast to a great iron ring. He is weighed down with them, he cannot rise and walk and he calls aloud for help. What if I should offer him my assistance, and he should accept it gladly. I bring here a hammer and a chisel, and begin to cut at the rivets of his shackles. At length the first chain falls loose, and he is full of delight. I begin cutting at another, and that falls away. Another yields. We are working together, he and I, tho I am doing most of the work. Only two are left as the fifth chain goes clanking down on the floor. The man leaps with delight exclaiming “This is great. I never imagined that freedom would be anything as good as this.”

“Very well,” I remark: “now let us go at the other two.” Thereupon he gathers up the two remaining chains and holds them back, saying: “What! Are you not going to leave me anything at all? I can’t give up these.” “But I want to set you free. I thought that you wanted me to free you altogether.” “Of course I do; but you’re not leaving anything at all. It is too much to expect of me that I should give up all that I have had all my life.”

The man clings to his pitiful chains and acts as if the chains bring delight or freedom. God help us to allow Christ to set us free from *all* sin.

Our Problem Is Solvable

A well-known author stated, “Some people say that it is very hard. That is not true; the fact is, the Christian life is impossible!”² The Christian life is impossible—without Christ. Our hope of victory over the sins that have been discussed in this magazine (or any other sin) is not found in a

reformation or human effort. Kenneth Wuest describes the Christian life in relationship to the book of Romans in an article entitled “The Monkey Wrench in the Machinery.”

Romans can be likened to a great factory. The sixth chapter takes us to the floors where the machinery is located. There we have the mechanics of the Spirit-filled life, namely, the power of sin broken and the divine nature implanted. The eighth chapter ushers us into the basement where the power to operate that machinery is generated, the power of the Holy Spirit. Chapters twelve to sixteen take us to the upper floors of the factory where the finished product is on display. Chapter seven is the monkey wrench which, if it falls into the machinery, interferes with its working and this prevents the production of the finished product. That monkey wrench in the Christian Life is self-dependence.³

Someone once said that man’s way leads to a hopeless end—God’s way leads to an endless hope. As pastors we must remember that “Christ is the one great theme of the pulpit; around this all other themes gather as to their centre and end. . . . All true preaching, therefore, however wide the range of its topics, has a real relation to Christ; and no topic is fit for the pulpit which does not lead to Him.”⁴

God resists the proud but gives His wonderful grace to those who humble themselves. May we humble ourselves as we acknowledge that if it were not for Christ—for salvation and sanctification—we would be hopeless.

¹ Dallas Willard.

² Alan Redpath, *Victorious Christian Faith*, 32.

³ Kenneth Wuest in *Golden Nuggets*, 63–64.

⁴ H. Harvey in *The Pastor—His Qualifications and Duties*.

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