

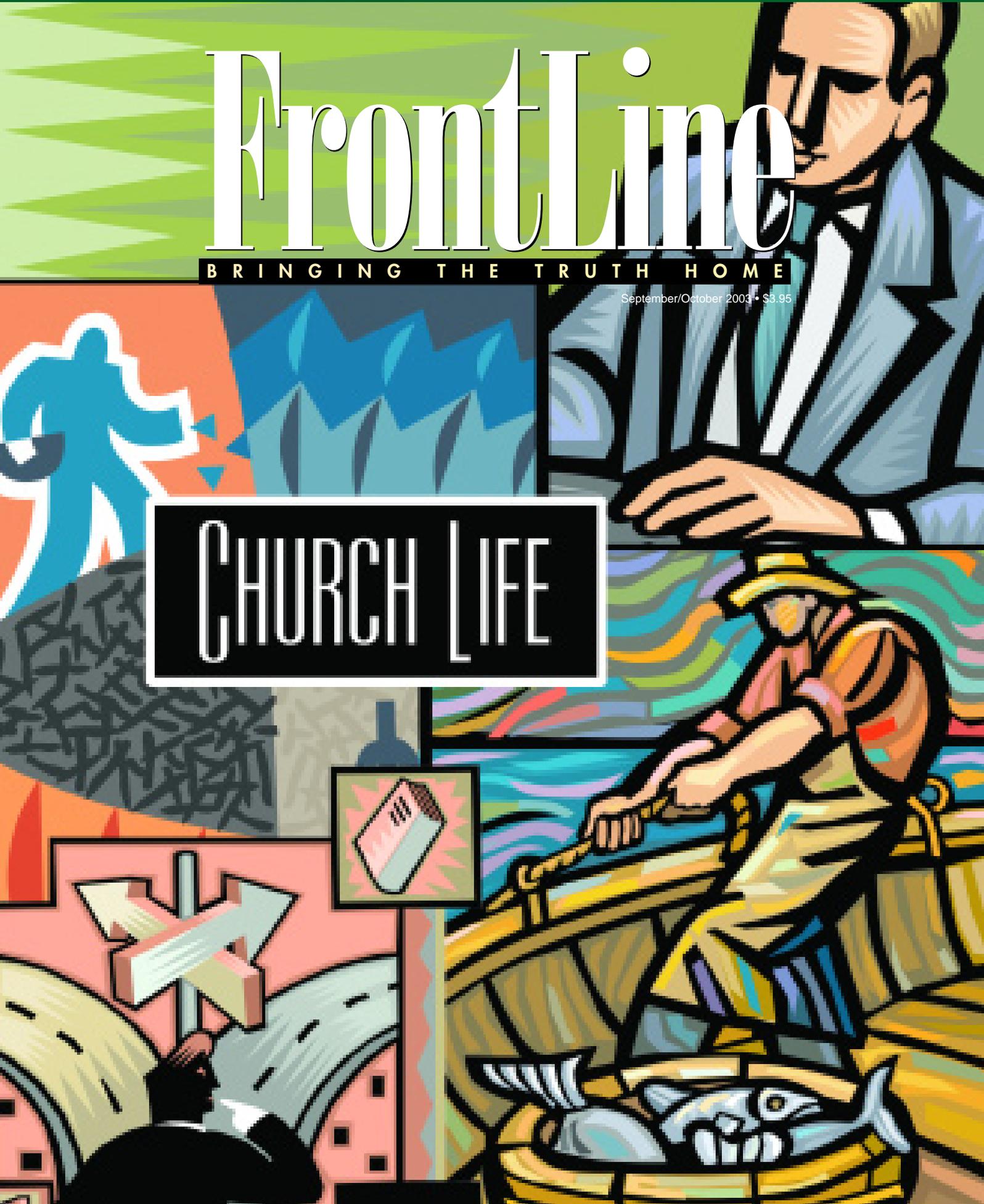
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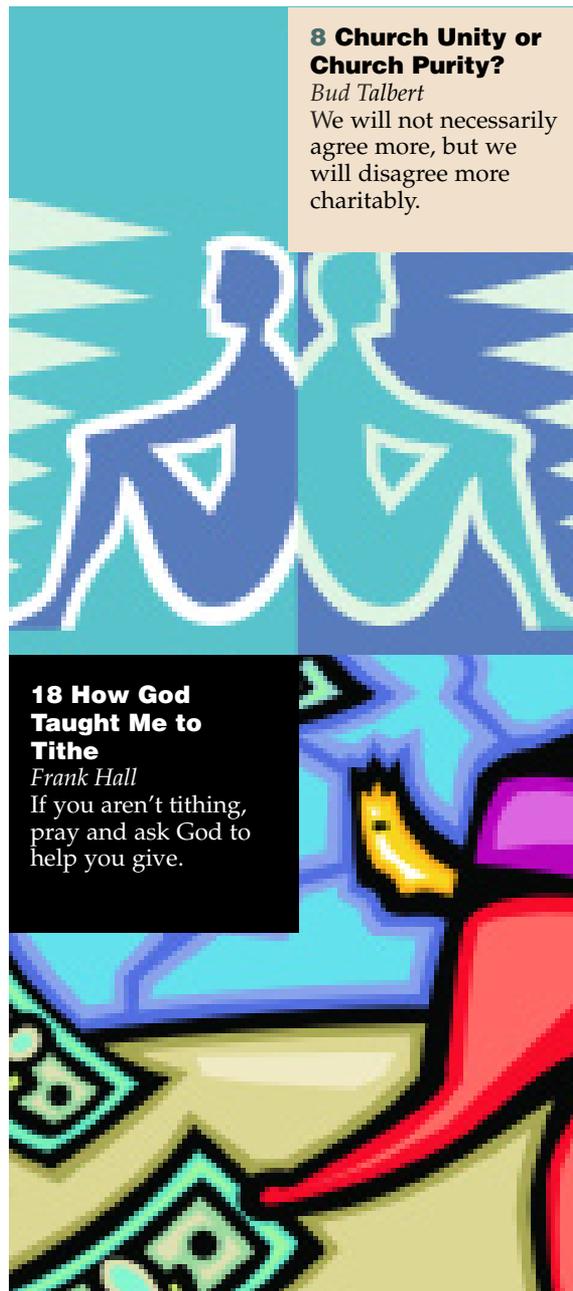
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RE: May/June 2003, Dr. Bell, "Charting the Course: More Dangers We Must Guard Against."

First Corinthians one says that the Gospel will always look foolish—no matter how intellectually presented—to those who hate it. Early New Evangelicals forgot this, often to their chagrin. However, the Gospel is intellectual, and ministers must give diligence to keep it from looking foolish to those who love it. . . . The motives for intellectual pursuit are pivotal. The mind of Christ ought to motivate us to intellectual fidelity and rigor.

*Mike Osborne
Greenville, South Carolina*

I was reading with interest the May/June issue of *FrontLine*. My interest peaked when I read Amy Cruce's name on page 34 in the article "Missionary Volunteers Die from Fall." Amy and her

family were members of the church that I pastored in Lithonia, Georgia, years ago. . . . I did not know anything about Amy's experience until I read it in *FrontLine*. Thanks for your fine magazine.

*Dr. F. D. Henzler
Perry, Georgia*

Thank you for informing us about the courtesy of Tabernacle Baptist Church in subscribing for us. Thank you for faithfully sending *FrontLine* magazine to us here in India. We are very grateful for this publication.

*Dr. Eric W. Franks
India*

I am writing to thank you for the magazine that I received. It was a blessing, as well as a surprise, since . . . it found where we live. Here in Argentina the postman knows us and brought it to our home.

*Charlie and JoAnn Smith
Argentina*

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Strengthen and Encourage the Pastor and People

Every year there are Fundamental Baptist Fellowship meetings in churches all over America and in several foreign countries. Pastors and their people are encouraged to attend, and the messages should always be a source of strength and encouragement to both. Anyone who hosts a meeting should ask the question, when selecting speakers or planning a theme, “What will be a blessing to those pastors and their people?” Of all the people who should be encouraged by such a meeting, the host church would be on the top of the list.

No host pastor should ever be ashamed to host an FBF meeting. No church member should be embarrassed to attend, or sorry that he brought a friend. Now, there will be truth preached and sometimes the truth cuts, but we need to make sure it is the truth doing the cutting and not the personality of the preachers. Even though the preachers are invited to speak in an FBF meeting, they are still preaching in a local church pastor’s pulpit and they should never abuse that privilege.

As I wrote in *Charting the Course*, anyone who attends one of our meetings should leave challenged to greater obedience and love for the Lord. He should have a greater desire to pray, to win souls, to build churches. Everyone should be challenged to have a heart that burns for God and the pursuit of holiness. A Fellowship is built on love, and a Fellowship meeting should encourage love for God and for each other.

If we will keep this emphasis, we’ll have people lining up to host these meetings. Those who are coming to

them now know these blessings. We hear wonderful comments like, “This is just what I needed.” Our recent meeting in Alaska was not just one of the best we’ve ever had there, but one of the best we’ve had anywhere. The people were blessed, the preachers who came were blessed, even the speakers were blessed to be a part. All of us need the strength that comes from Bible preaching, and we need the encouragement that comes from real, loving fellowship.

I never leave a meeting without thanking the Lord for what He has done, or thinking of those who need to be there. If you find a good restaurant, you want to tell your friends about it. If you visit a beautiful place, you want your loved ones to share in it as you tell them about what you saw. If you’ve heard a good preacher, or visited a loving, witnessing, serving church, you have to share it with others. If you enjoy this magazine, you ought to share it with a friend. If you have enjoyed an FBF meeting, you ought to encourage someone else to go.

Our Regional Moderators have a real burden for this Fellowship. They want the preachers in their areas to know the blessings that they enjoy themselves. But, even they don’t know all the pastors in their regions. Those who come to the Regional Meetings should get in the habit of inviting a friend or two. Everybody’s busy, but that is not a reason to “forsake the assembling of yourselves together.”

That’s even more reason to go and get your batteries charged and your heart warmed. You’ll chop more wood if you take a break now and then and whet the edge of your axe.

This issue of *FrontLine* is about church life, and so is the FBF. We are not an association of churches, but a fellowship of individuals—individuals who will be strengthened to better serve their churches if they will take advantage of what the Fellowship has to offer. If you ever hear of anything in an FBF meeting that would weaken or undermine a local church, I want you to contact me personally about it. And let me say also how much we appreciate all the hard-working members of our host churches who give of their time, their money, their food, and their labors to make our meetings successful. When a church hosts a meeting that encourages pastors, the members themselves should be encouraged.

The reason we have our meetings in churches is not so we can take advantage of those churches, but so we can be a blessing to those churches—so we can lift up the hands of that host pastor as he and his people lift up the hands of the preachers and others who come. It would take many pages

to tell of the hospitality offered, the homes opened, the meals prepared, the fish caught, the stores shopped, the pictures taken—all to make an FBF meeting a blessing. Thanks to all for all you do and to those who haven’t gotten in on the blessings yet, “What are you waiting for?”



DR. ROD BELL

Is Your Church Traditional?



Dave Doran

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thess. 3:6).

Traditional versus nontraditional is a big debate in our day. Many churches promote themselves as being either a *traditional* church or, at the opposite end, a *nontraditional* church. Both kinds of churches assume something about the word *traditional*—that it is either good or bad, attractive or unattractive. In reality, the issue of traditions and traditionalism is more difficult than such blanket assumptions.

Biblically speaking, the concept of traditions is used both favorably and unfavorably. In the word’s most favorable usage it actually refers to teachings that the churches received from the apostles. This is what Paul refers to in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 (cf. 2:15; 1 Cor. 11:2). Tradition in this sense denotes Biblically mandated beliefs and practices that must be accepted. So, practically speaking, all genuine Bible believers must be traditional to some degree.

The Scripture also speaks of tradition that refers to the generally accepted practices of Bible-believing assemblies that are compatible with Biblical principles and customs. In other words, the practice itself was not handed down, but it is compatible with a Biblical principle. I believe an

example of this is found in the instructions regarding head-coverings in 1 Corinthians 11. Although this is a notoriously difficult passage, Paul ties his instruction to the Corinthians to the prevailing practice of the churches (v. 16). While we may debate the precise meaning of this passage, my point is simply to show that, for Paul, the customs of the churches affected his argument. This fact leads me to conclude that we should be careful not to adopt a radical anti-tradition stance.

On the other hand, the Bible also warns us about a dangerous kind of traditionalism. For example, the Lord Jesus confronted the Pharisees of His day about elevating their own traditions to a place of higher authority than the Scriptures. In Matthew 15:3 He pointedly asks them, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” In this case, traditionalism resulted in disobedience because the tradition replaced the truth of Scripture. Later, the apostle Paul warned the Colossians about the dangerous potential of man-made traditions (2:8). By calling these teachings “your tradition,” he clearly indicates that these were not Biblical, nor did they spring from Biblical principles.

So the labels *traditional* and *nontraditional* in themselves are not as helpful as they seem. Bible-believing people are by definition traditional—we accept traditions recorded in the Scriptures that the apostles have handed down to us.

But at the same time, Bible-believing people by definition should oppose man-made traditions that rise to a place of authority that rivals or overrules the Scriptures. We must be committed to the concept of Scripture alone (versus Scripture plus tradition).

However, the Bible itself commands us to recognize and emulate the example of those who follow the teachings of Scripture (1 Cor. 11:16; Phil. 3:17). The customs and practices of Bible-believing people should not be discarded without careful consideration. After all, a complete rejection of all tradition (in the broader definition) is not only inconsistent with these Biblical exhortations, but it is not helpful to God's people. Constantly throwing aside practical applications of Biblical truth is an unwise path. We ought to learn from those who have gone before us and benefit from their wisdom, not thoughtlessly toss it aside.

On the other hand, we must also guard ourselves against uncritical traditionalism. Any tradition that started well could eventually lead God's people off course if its connection to Biblical principle becomes obscured through time or shifting cultural factors. Unless the tradition itself is explicitly Biblical, then it is simply an application of the Bible to a particular circumstance, time, and place. If the circumstance, time, or place warrant changes in the application, then our commitment to being Biblical requires that we be willing to change. Obviously, Biblical principles don't change, but their application does. Most *traditions* are

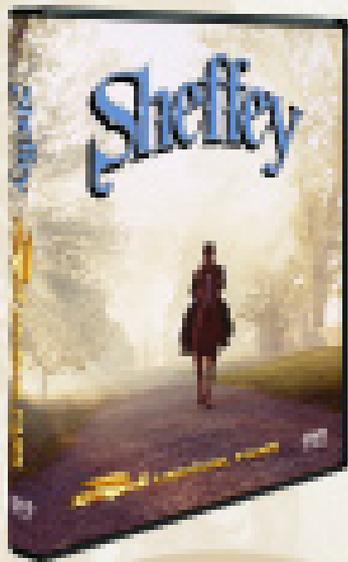
old applications that became fixed in place. A wise approach would be to acknowledge and affirm the principles upon which the tradition is built, but, if needed, to "update" the application (i.e., begin a new tradition).

We are unashamed to be called a separatist Fundamentalist church. As such, we are committed to perpetuating the apostolic traditions handed down in Scripture. Furthermore, we are cautious about the radical, anti-tradition mindset of our day. We don't believe that change for change's sake is good. Conservative, Bible-believing people have left us a great heritage, and we are not inclined to part with it recklessly.

However, we also recognize another danger. Some believers, claiming to represent Fundamentalism, are making their "traditions" equal to or greater than the authority of the Bible itself. But Fundamentalism does not exist to preserve traditional applications of the Bible. Rather, it exists to proclaim and perpetuate Biblical truth and to make fresh application of that truth in a 21st-century context. In other words, some traditions (those outlined in Scripture) can never change, while others (those that are applications of the Bible) must necessarily change in order to adjust to the differences in the culture around us. We must be committed to tradition, but without becoming traditionalists!

Dr. Dave Doran is the President of Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary and Senior Pastor of Inter-City Baptist Church.

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Church Unity or Church Purity?

Bud Talbert



It was June of 1962. The place? The legendary Westminster Chapel in London, England. The keynote speaker was the host of the Westminster's Ministers' Fellowship, Dr. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He began,

No question is receiving so much attention at the present time in all branches and divisions of the Christian church as the question of church unity. It is being written about, talked about, and preached about. Now we are all agreed, surely, that the Christian church should be one, that she was meant by God to be one. And therefore, we must agree, further, that it is a tragedy that division ever entered into the life of the church. In addition, we must all regard schism as a grievous sin. That is common ground, but having said that, one must also point out that there is obviously great confusion, and much disagreement, as to what constitutes unity, as to what the nature of unity is, and as to how unity is to be obtained and preserved.

Then Dr. Lloyd-Jones proceeded to expound John 17:20–23.¹

For some, it can be rather shocking to have person introduced as a Fundamentalist. The term, to most people, indicates at the very least some sort of extremist. But the term *Fundamentalist* has been used for more than a century to refer to someone who believes in and stands uncompromisingly for the essential truths of Christianity.

He believes that the basis of all truly Christian fellowship is an agreement on these essential doctrines.² Put simply, Fundamentalists are Christians who are endeavoring to do what the Bible says.

However, the Fundamentalist finds himself living in an age that is ecumenical. Here is a second term. The word *ecumenical* means “universal” or “worldwide,” and it refers to people who wish to lay aside their differences—even in important doctrinal matters—for the sake of a broader religious unity. The Fundamentalist says that doctrine is most important, while the ecumenist believes that unity is most important. And the ecumenist enjoys a strangely persuasive dominance in the world today, even among non-religious people.

John 17:21 (“that they all may be one”) has been used, especially in the past century, as the justification and defense of ecumenical unity. “We must set aside our differences for the sake of unity,” they say. Or, “We must set aside our differences for the sake of evangelism.” But using John 17:21 to defend this position is another lie of Satan to give credibility to his movement. The reader must examine the text in an effort to answer three questions.

For Whom Does Christ Pray?

Verse 20 begins this third section of Jesus’ high-priestly prayer. He says to His Father, “Neither pray I for these alone”—i.e., “I am not just asking for the eleven disciples here with Me”—“but for them also which shall believe on

me through their word." So Christ is praying for those who had already started believing in Christ, and all who would yet believe in Christ as a result of the apostles' message.

Jesus had sent out the twelve to preach, and many had given themselves to Christ as a result of their message. Jesus was praying that they would be one. At Pentecost Peter preached (Acts 2), and 3000 believed through his ministry. Jesus was praying that they would be one. Paul sent his epistle to those in Rome during his third missionary journey. Likewise, those in Rome who were converted as a result of hearing Paul's epistle were the ones Jesus was praying would be one. Young John Wesley heard a Moravian read Martin Luther's introduction to the Epistle to the Galatians, and "felt his heart strangely warmed" as he affirmed that he did believe in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. Jesus was praying here in John 17 that Wesley would be one with other believers.

Is it legitimate, then, for the ecumenist to point to this passage in order to justify his unity? No. Why not? Because to the ecumenist, believing in the apostolic doctrine is secondary to unity. Jesus is not praying for all religions to be united. He is praying for all genuine believers to be united. This prayer excludes all non-Christian religions, and it even excludes professing Christians to whom real faith in Christ is not essential. Jesus never prayed for religious unity . . . only for Christian unity; not for unity among professing Christians, but only among possessing Christians.

For What Does Christ Pray?

John 17:21 says, "That they all may be one." The word *one* refers to a single thing, in contrast to many things. One Greek-English lexicon defines it as the whole "in contrast to the parts, of which the whole is made up."³ Jesus Christ is praying that we would be one in the same sense that a husband and wife are one (Matt. 19:5), or that a physical body, consisting of many parts, functions as a single unit (Rom 12:5). The single term that best suits this expression is the word *unity*. Jesus prays "that they all may be unified," of one heart and mind, functioning with a single purpose, united together in a common fellowship.

He goes on to explain that this unity is like that which He has with His Father (v. 21), that it can be maintained only as believers are in fellowship with God (vv. 21, 22), and that it is His desire for it to be perfected (v. 23), or developed to the point of maturity.

Probably the most common misuse of this Scripture is the teaching that it refers to organizational unity, as though Jesus asked, "I pray that they may all be members of churches that are members of denominations that

are members of ecumenical organizations." But that kind of unity is essentially physical. The unity Jesus prays for is essentially spiritual. Even if all true Christians could meet in one location, that gathering would not fulfill His prayer here. They would all need to be united in purpose, in love, in hope, and in function in order for this prayer to have been answered.

Genuine Christians may be tempted to join these ecumenical organizations for the sake of unity. But when a believer does that, he is lending the credibility and godliness of his own testimony to an organization that is otherwise ungodly and not credible. He is unwittingly helping to perpetuate a lie. Believers should not help the ungodly and love those who hate the Lord (2 Chron. 19:2), and participating in an ecumenical organization does exactly that. It is ironic that the New Evangelicals sought unity with ecumenism in order to gain credibility for themselves. Instead, it was ecumenism that gained credibility, not the New Evangelicals.

Consider the following illustration: Ontario is the geographical center of Canada. Suppose all Canadians were told to go to central Ontario. What would happen to them as they neared their destination? They would be drawing closer to each other. So Christ prays that the Father would draw all Christians to Himself, and as we get closer to Him, what happens? We become more and more unified with each other.

Has the Father answered this prayer of Christ's? He certainly answered the first (John 17:1-5), and we agree that He did indeed keep the apostles (vv. 6-19). But has He unified the Church (vv. 20-26)? On the surface, appearances would cause us to conclude that this prayer has not been answered over the last two millennia of church history. But two things must be kept in mind. First, Jesus did not pray this prayer on behalf of professing Christians. Rather, He asked for unity among those who believed on Him through the apostolic word. Once all non-genuine Christians are removed from the picture, most of the disunity evaporates. Remember 1 Corinthians 11:19: "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." However, there has been disunity among genuine

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Christians. Yet it is not a condition with which God has been complacent. In answer to the prayer of His Son, He is ever working to repair every breach.

Why Does Christ Pray for This?

Here the heart of Christ is laid completely bare. Verse 21 says, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," and verse 23 adds, "that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." The unity is not an end in itself. It is the means to bringing lost people to saving faith. It is one of the church's greatest tools in evangelism.

Here are some concluding lessons:

1. The reader cannot answer for nor repair the broad lack of unity among believers in our day. But he can take to heart the lessons in this passage, and he can adjust his personal behavior so that as much as possible he is keeping the spirit of Christ's prayer. Remember, this is Jesus asking His Father to unify Christians. Can you say "amen" to this prayer? Any believer who does not desire unity with other believers has a serious problem.

2. This unity does not preclude individual and personal convictions and interpretations. Paul said that each Christian should be "convinced in his own mind." However, believers who differ in their convictions can still experience prevailing unity. We can disagree (over non-fundamental issues) charitably. As we grow closer to God, we will not necessarily agree more; rather, we will disagree more charitably.

3. The Christian gains nothing—and loses much—by compromising doctrine for the sake of some kind of unity.

The ecumenical movement has not impressed the world, nor has it brought unbelievers to the faith. It has simply united unbelievers. As a movement, it has failed to accomplish any Biblical good. Charles Spurgeon once said, "The world is persuaded that God had nothing to do with that great, crushing, tyrannous, superstitious, ignorant thing which called itself Christianity; and thinking men became infidels, and it was the hardest possible thing to find an intelligent believer north, south, east, or west."⁴

4. The Christian can become so suspicious for error that he utterly fails to represent the true spirit of Christ's prayer here. The single thing He prayed for us is that believers would be united. Do you want what He wanted? The phrase "That they all may be one" cannot be deleted because of its misuse. There is a proper sense for it, and the Christian must embrace that application.

5. Brethren, are you doing your part for the evangelization of the lost by being united together? Psalm 133:1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Genuine, Biblical

unity is both good for the lost and pleasant for the brethren.

Bud Talbert is pastor of Foundation Baptist Church in Canada.

Genuine Christians may be tempted to join these ecumenical organizations for the sake of unity. But . . . he is lending the credibility and godliness of his own testimony to an organization that is otherwise ungodly and not credible.

¹ Lloyd-Jones, David Martyn, *Knowing the Times*, Banner of Truth, 1990, p. 118.

² Sidwell, Mark, *The Dividing Line*, Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1998, p. 177.

³ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 230.

⁴ *Spurgeon's Sermons, II*, p. 199.

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Consumers or Committed Christians?

Paul W. Downey

These days one can find on the shelves of any Christian bookstore all manner of volumes offering to explain how to build larger churches. Depending on the author, churches are urged to employ various techniques to entice believers and unbelievers (often referred to as “seekers”) to fill their pews. Marketing the church has become a hot topic, usually emphasizing some appeal to the tastes and interests of the Baby-boomers, the Generation X-ers, or some other demographic group.

In order to develop this user-friendly atmosphere, a more casual approach to worship is being encouraged, with emphasis on activities and programs and an accompanying de-emphasis on expository preaching of the Word of God. However, this is producing a generation of professing believers who practice what could be thought of as “Lite Christianity,” a nominal form of Christianity that approximates the *flavor* of the genuine, but has little of the *substance*. We see churches filled with people who have no Biblical understanding of what constitutes true worship of a holy God and who see no Biblical imperative for their own personal holiness. It is this attitude that Paul described as “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5).

Shifting Emphases

Due to the visibility of high-profile Christian speakers, writers, and entertainers, the average Christian has begun to question the relevance of the ministry of his local church. Too often the local church is perceived as little more than a social club whose purpose is to provide a forum for its members to meet to discuss the latest recording by their favorite musician, the newest trend in church growth, the currently popular ideas of their favorite Christian spokesperson, or to organize trips to the next big rally. It’s a valid observation that, while the postmodern church in America has become quite adept at creating *celebrities*, it has forgotten how to make *saints*. This movement is even evident in popular terminology as people are called to *celebrate* God rather than to *worship* Him.

In many circles the focus of local church ministry has shifted. A great deal of money and effort is being expended to attract and keep church members by entertaining them as opposed to training them. For example, concerts and drama have replaced preaching services. Literal Bible study, where the goal is to discover the actual meaning of a Biblical passage in order to apply it to personal Christian growth, has been displaced. Instead, what passes for Bible study in many churches is little more than speculative commentary, in which people gather to express personal impressions about what any particular passage “means to me.” This exchanging of Biblical exegesis for practical existentialism has elevated *feeling close* to God higher than *knowing the truth* of God. For many Christians, the authority of the Word of God has been usurped, with personal experience becoming the primary measure of truth.

Shifting Loyalties

Another problem is that the potential effectiveness of the local church pastor is being eroded. Any pastor who dares to challenge the views or the methods of an especially popular radio or television preacher or of an admired writer may well find himself without a pulpit. Unintentional though it may be, celebrity-status Christians have become the modern equivalent of Absalom to the local church’s David. They are charming the local congregation’s loyalty and support away from their duly appointed and God-ordained leader.

Also, far too many professing believers are opting to be church *goers* rather than church *members*. The trend seems to be for people to shop around for a church that pleases them, rather than to search out a sound church in which they can serve.



Regaining Perspective

Part of the solution to these growing problems is for pastors to guard against the temptation to adopt a consumer mentality to market their church. When a church's primary purpose becomes the development of programs targeted at the perceived needs of a community, we make our practical theology man-centered rather than God-centered. However, Christ did not found the church for the purpose of entertaining believers. The commission of the church is to glorify God by evangelizing the lost and discipling believers by the proclamation of the truth, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

In the church where I pastor, I decided that I needed to remind my congregation of the promises they had made to one another and to God when they joined the church. Therefore, I spent several months preaching a series of messages on the themes addressed in our church membership covenant:

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale of, and use of, intoxicating drinks as a beverage; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian

sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to seek it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

I believe it was crucial for my congregation to consider carefully the Biblical basis for who we are as a church and to examine our obedience to the Biblical model. The crying need of the church is not more celebrities, more activities, or more programs to entertain us. *What we need are more saints committed to obeying their Lord, whatever the cost*. We will not develop righteousness in the lives of believers by pandering to their every desire, as if that were the Biblical meaning of the exercise of "Christian liberty." If we want the righteousness of Christ to be seen in us, we must emphasize Christian responsibilities.

This article is adapted from the introduction to the book *More Than Spectators: Fulfilling Your Role in the Local Church*, Greenville, S.C.: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2002. For information on how to order this book, contact the author via e-mail at pwdortbc@bellsouth.net.

Paul Downey is pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia.

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How to Listen to Preaching

As a pastor, I teach and preach from God's Word numerous times weekly. Each time I stand before my people I pray that the Lord will give them listening ears and humble, teachable spirits. But when Christians listen to preaching, or for that matter read Christian books, they must possess not just a humble and teachable spirit. They must also employ a discerning spirit.

Obviously, it would be wonderful if every sermon from every preacher and every book in Christian bookstores were guaranteed to be driven by the text of Scripture. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Men whose preaching is not governed by their text sometimes occupy pulpits across the land, even Fundamental Baptist pulpits. And sadly, the shelves in Christian bookstores contain heresy as well as help. So what are we to do? When my people sit in church next Sunday, what are they responsible before the Lord to do? As Christians listen to preachers and teachers, read books, and even engage in conversation, what are they to do with the ideas they encounter?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:20–22 Paul supplies the answer to that question. He writes, "Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil." Paul's point in these verses is that God's people must listen to preaching with eager and discerning ears. Each believer today should take Paul's challenge to heart and become an eager and discerning listener to the proclamation of truth.

Taking a Closer Look

But what does Paul mean here by "prophesying"? The early church included both apostles and prophets. A prophet, by definition, is one who foretold and forth-told God's revelation. In other words, a prophet received direct

revelation from God and communicated it to God's people—foretold the future when God wanted him to and preached God's message as he received it. This is exactly what Paul means. In the church at Thessalonica prophets received direct revelation from God and preached that truth to those in the church. Remember, the New Testament had not been written yet, and most believers did not possess those portions that did exist. So, in the words of Ephesians 4:11, God "gave some [to be] apostles, some [to be] prophets, some [to be] evangelists, and some [to be] pastors and teachers." Paul is saying to the church in Thessalonica, "Do not despise the Word of God when it is being proclaimed by God's prophets."

This word "despise" is especially strong. It means "to treat with contempt" or "to see something as of no account." Apparently some people in the church were disregarding the proclamation of God's truth. They heard God's message proclaimed, but they disregarded it. They viewed it as insignificant and tossed it aside.

The question arises, "Does this command have any application for today?" We must never disregard the proclamation of God's Word. So let's ask the question, "In what ways do God's people toss aside the proclamation of God's Word today?"

Skipping Church

One way in which some people disregard God's Word is by not attending church services where it is proclaimed. The church exists to glorify God by edifying Christians, evangelizing the lost, and expanding the Lord's work. One of the chief ways the church accomplishes those goals is by preaching and teaching God's Word. That's a primary task of the pastor—to preach the entire counsel of God faithfully. However, one of the primary tasks of a

church member is to be in church when the doors are open in order to hear that preaching.

I can't recall how many times someone has said to me, "You should preach a series on such-and-such. That would really be interesting . . ."

Frequently I've had to respond, "I just preached on that two Sundays ago," or "I just preached an entire series on that topic during the Sunday evening services," or "I taught that in Sunday school." In other words, I preached on their topic, but they weren't there to hear it. What benefit is the preaching of God's Word if we are not in church? What are we communicating when we treat church attendance flippantly? Aren't we saying that the preaching of God's Word is of no account to us?

Wandering Thoughts

Another way in which some people disregard the proclamation of God's Word is by not paying close attention to what is taught. What do we do as we listen to preaching? Do we daydream? Do we plan the next meal? Or do we listen closely? Do we take notes so that we can better remember what is taught? The average adult attention span is six minutes. That's why the *Tonight Show* has a commercial break about every six-to-eight minutes! We need to develop our attention span when it comes to God's truth.

Tuning Out

Likewise, we disregard the proclamation of God's Word when we listen selectively. Evidently there is a hearing disorder called "selective hearing." It infects all children of all ages. It also infects most husbands when their wives hold a "honey-do list" in their hands. The story is told of Franklin Roosevelt, who often endured long receiving lines at the White House. He complained that no one really paid attention to what he said in those lines. One day, during a reception, he decided to do an experiment. To each person who came down the line and shook his hand, he murmured, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." The guests responded with phrases like, "Marvelous! Keep up the good work," and "We are proud of you. God bless you, sir. It was not until the end of the line, when greeting the ambassador from Bolivia, that his words were actually heard. Unaffected, the ambassador leaned over and whispered, "I'm sure she had it coming."

"Selective hearing" is a choice people make not to listen to something being said. Some people develop selective hearing the minute they step into a church auditorium. Maybe they hear something that steps on their toes, and they choose to tune it out. Or perhaps they don't appreciate a particular doctrine and opt to let it pass unheeded. But the Bible is not a smorgasbord meal where a person can pick and choose only what appeals to him. When a spiritual meal is laid out during a sermon, we have no choice but to listen, absorb, apply, and humbly submit to it.

Excuses, Excuses

Harboring an attitude of skepticism is another means of disregarding God's Word. For instance, certain people cling to a favorite excuse for ignoring

Biblical preaching. They may justify their contempt for Biblical preaching by mentally attacking the preacher. They think, "He's not perfect; why do I have to listen to him?" "He sins too, so why should I submit to what he says?" Of course, no preacher or Bible teacher is void of sin. But we cannot disregard God's message simply because the messenger is flawed. As long as the messenger is preaching God's message and not his own, we must not dismiss it. Those who preached in Thessalonica were flawed. They were sinners. But nevertheless Paul commanded the believers in Thessalonica, "Despise not prophesyings."

Content to Be Shallow

Sometimes we disregard the proclamation of God's Word when we are concerned only with general truth and not the deeper issues. I personally know a person who, whenever doctrinal discussions come up, responds, "Let's not talk about these kinds of things; I have a simple faith." That's a veiled way of saying, "I'm not teachable" or "I'll be the judge of how much of God's truth will control my life." In other words, "Even though God thought these harder doctrinal truths were important enough to reveal to me, I don't believe they're important." When harder, deeper, truths are preached, it's not time to take a nap. Instead, that's the time to lean forward and listen more intently.

Elevating Entertainment

Knowingly exchanging Bible-based preaching for entertainment is also disregard for the proclamation of truth. Many churchgoers would prefer to have entertaining stories, drama, music, or secular psychology instead of detailed Bible exposition. Noticing this tendency, C. H. Spurgeon once commented, "Do not go where it is all fine music and grand talk and beautiful architecture: those things neither fill anybody's stomach, nor feed his soul. Go where the gospel is preached, the gospel that really feeds your soul, and go often."

In Proverbs 2:1-5 Solomon provides a graphic description of the eagerness with which a child of God should seek an understanding of God's truth. He wrote,

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

Next Sunday, when your pastor opens his Bible to proclaim God's truth, be there with ears ready to hear and a heart eager to submit to God's truth. Be on time. Be attentive. Listen with humility. Attend to the teachings of God's Word no matter how deep and mind-stretching they might be. But above all, never despise, disregard, or toss aside God's truth—not for any reason.

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The Importance of Worship

Today's world is characterized by hustle and bustle. Everyone, it seems, is in a hurry to get somewhere or do something. This is the age of the "instant." Microwave ovens, personal computers, e-mail, the Internet, and other "get-it-quick" time-savers have only increased our desire for instant gratification. And when delays keep us from receiving what we want instantly, we often find ourselves frantic, with our nerves frayed and our tempers short.

Unfortunately all of this "instantness" has created a problem. That is, it's affecting us spiritually. Many people expect spiritual growth to be instantaneous too. We want to grow in the Lord, but we are often too impatient to let Him achieve that growth in His time.

Perhaps nowhere is this sad state more obvious than in our practice of worshiping God. Modern Christianity, like the lost world, has come to equate worship with works. We "worship" God by serving Him; so we reason that the more we work (i.e., the busier we are in "the work of the Lord"), the more spiritual we must be.

Years ago, famed teacher and author A. W. Tozer referred to this problem as "the lost art of worship" (*A Treasury of A.W. Tozer*, Christian Publications, 1980). He briefly explained himself by writing, "God wants worshipers before workers; indeed, the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the lost art of worship."

Is worship really an art? At first, this statement might appear to be a misconception, but a careful analysis of Tozer's thesis reveals that he was right on target. The idea deserves our consideration and could revolutionize our Christian lives—if we are willing to take the time without expecting instant results!

If Worship Is Not Work, What Is It?

Webster's Ninth New World Dictionary defines worship as "extravagant respect or admiration for or devotion to an object of esteem." *A Dictionary of the Bible & Christian*

Doctrine (Beacon Hill, 1986) hones this basic definition a bit, offering insights into the means of worship: "People worship God through adoration, prayers, thanksgiving and preaching. People also worship God by singing hymns. . . . Public worship prepares people to serve God in the world."

If acceptable service is preceded by worship, then service without worshipful preparation is unacceptable. Rather, it is a mere spinning of wheels. Even worse, as Puritan author Thomas Watson frequently noted in his works, it is sin!

There is that in the best actions of a righteous man that is damnable, if God should weigh him in the balance of justice. . . . The regenerate have a will to obey God's law perfectly, but they want strength; their obedience is weak and sickly (*A Body of Practical Divinity*, 1692).

Worship that precedes service, on the other hand, establishes the proper motives, direction, and attitude toward our service and sets the parameters to assess the results. It permits our service to become a means of properly worshiping God.

The Bible provides the best source for discovering what the art of worship involves. Early on, its pages command us to worship "no other god" than the true God (Exod. 20:3, 4; 34:14). It also tells us that worship includes some degree of fear as we recognize both God's holiness, which is the core of true worship (2 Kings 17:36), and the utter unworthiness of who we are and what we do.

Tozer wrote, "The One who made us to worship Him has decreed how we should worship Him. He accepts only the worship which He Himself has decreed." Applying this principle to modern living, what ingredients should we expect in true worship?

The Ingredient of Prayer

The first ingredient is communion with God. Prayer is not something that we can mix in a glass in the morning and drink quickly for “instant fellowship.” It requires time and thoughtfulness. It requires our being still, listening for God to speak to our hearts before we rush to Him with all of our needs and requests.

But we are so busy! We have to rush off to work, or we’ll never get everything done! How can we afford to take time to pray?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon warned, “He who rushes from his bed to his business and waiteth not to worship, is as foolish as though he had not put on his clothes . . . and as unwise as though he dashed into battle without arms or armor.” When reformer Martin Luther was overwhelmed by daily tasks, he declared, “I have so much to do today, I must spend five hours in prayer.”

How much of our worship is devoted to prayer? Even the average church’s “prayer meeting” includes only a token gesture toward prayer. When public prayer is offered, are we really praying with the person at the podium? How much private praying do we really do? Are we content to pray only before each meal or whenever we get into a bind? When we do pray, do we rush through, thoughtlessly rattling off hackneyed clichés, without waiting for God to speak to us?

We are to seek God’s face (pray) continually (1 Chron. 16:11), always (Eph. 6:18), and without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). The results will be strength (1 Chron. 16:11), answers from God (Matt. 7:7), and help in resisting temptation (Matt. 26:41). Through prayer we will be prepared to enter into God’s presence in true, acceptable worship.

The Ingredient of Bible Reading

Closely associated with prayer in worship is Bible reading, examining God’s Word to discover what He wants us to know, do, and be. This, too, requires time. We cannot grow in the art of worship—or in any other spiritual area—without feeding on

His Word regularly. One veteran missionary was so profoundly influenced by the realization of his need for God’s Word that he made his motto “No Bible—no breakfast!”

If prayer is our method of talking to God, our reading of the Bible is God’s way of speaking to us. Worship is a dialogue, not a monologue. We are to take time not only to communicate to God, but also to let Him speak to us.

God’s Word is the source of our faith (Rom. 10:17). It is the food for our souls, more important than even our daily bread (Deut. 8:3; Job 23:12). It is the weapon in our daily spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:17) and our encouragement in times of trial and disappointment (Jer. 15:16). Also, it is the heart of our worship of God.

The Ingredient of Singing

Another ingredient of worship is singing, the expression of our joy, praise, and adoration of God. The Psalms are replete with injunctions and examples of singing in worship. Psalm 100, for instance, tells us, “Come before his presence with singing” (v. 2). Likewise, Ephesians 5:19 instructs that we should be “speaking to [ourselves] in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in [our hearts] to the Lord.” For those of us who lack the ability to sing with quality, God tells us to “make a joyful noise” (Ps. 100:1)!

In too many “worship” services, however, the singing has become more a form of entertainment for the congregation than a method by which we worship God. Contemporary Christian music (CCM) has begun to creep into otherwise Fundamental churches, substituting emotion, sensuality, and “vain repetition” for spirituality. God has specified principles for the use of music in our worship of Him, and we must not violate them if we want Him to accept our worship.

The Ingredient of Giving

Giving is another integral part of worship. Old Testament law commanded the giving of tithes and offerings in the worship ceremonies. Both in the early church and today, giving to meet the needs of others—especially of fellow

believers—and to spread the gospel message is considered part of worship. Certainly, all that we have belongs to God, but He desires that we voluntarily present offerings to Him in worship.

God freely gives to us salvation, daily life and provisions, plus abundant blessings. Every good gift comes from Him (James 1:17); the least we can do is give back a portion to Him. He provides for us not only to meet our own needs but also so that we, in turn, can give to help others (2 Cor. 1:4). Such giving is also the method that He has established for the furtherance of the gospel and the maintenance of the local church (1 Cor. 16:2).

But none of our giving will be acceptable worship if it represents less than our whole selves. We must, like the Macedonian believers (2 Cor. 8:1–5), first give ourselves to the Lord before our other gifts—whether money or talents—are acceptable in God’s worship.

The Ingredient of Service

Service is an important, although often misunderstood and misapplied,

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form of worship. Although some people have mistakenly used visible service activities (“works”) as indicators of one’s inner spirituality, that is no reason to ignore its importance as a means of worship. We are not saved by works but by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:9). The measure of our spirituality is not what we do, but what we are in Christ. So if we truly are believers, we will express our thanks to God by voluntarily serving Him.

Believers and society at large will benefit from such service. The history of the United States is replete with examples of how working and witnessing Christians have brought God’s blessings upon not only the church but also upon our fellow man in the United States.

Results of True Worship

What are the results of true worship? We will know God’s will and obey it (Rom. 12:1, 2). We will love and have genuine fellowship with the brethren (1 John 4:21). We will serve God with our daily lives. We will be salt and light in the world, witnesses who are showing others the way to Christ (Matt. 5:13, 14). Also, our worship will be acceptable to God because our lives will be holier, our motives purer, and our worship “in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 29:2).

True worship is indeed a lost art. But it is not impossible to cultivate that art if we sincerely want it and are willing to slow down and take the time necessary to practice it.

Dennis L. Peterson is a graduate of Bob Jones University working as a freelance editor and writer. He lives in Powell, Tennessee.



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How God Taught Me to Tithe

Frank Hall



“Me, tithe?”

I stared at Bob, the guy who had led me to the Lord less than a week earlier. “You’ve got to be kidding! There’s no way I can give anything to my church, Bob. I’ve got a wife and four kids. I make \$2.54 per hour. That’s \$101.60 per week, only \$80 of which is take-home. [Wow, have times ever changed.] Every dime I make is already spoken for. I have a house payment, a car payment, insurance . . .” I stopped because Bob wasn’t listening. He was thumbing through the pages of his Bible.

“Here it is,” he said. He showed me 2 Corinthians 9:7, 8: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” Bob let me read it out loud twice before he continued.

“You see, Frank, in Old Testament times people had to tithe. It was the law, and the law prepared them for the coming of Christ. But now that Jesus has come and died on the cross for our sins, it’s an absolute disgrace if we don’t give at least a tithe. Not giving says the purposes of our heart aren’t right. It says we don’t care about the most important things, like if God’s gospel message gets delivered to the lost, like if other people get saved. It also says we don’t believe God when He says He will see to it that we have all sufficiency in all things so that we can abound to every good work.”

I shut my mouth and hung my head in shame. I wished I could take back all my words. Yet I still believed that tithing, for me, was probably impossible.

“Pray about it,” Bob concluded. “Tell God you would love to give a tithe, even more than a tithe. Ask Him to help you. Then do whatever He tells you to do. Okay?”

“Okay,” I responded halfheartedly.

That night I did pray and asked God to help me tithe. I

knew that people said prayer changes things. The first thing it changed was me. I found that I now had an intense desire to give, but every item in our budget was already trimmed to the bone. I got out my checkbook, paper, and pencil and went over every detail of our family finances. It still looked impossible, but I was no longer willing to accept that as final.

Suddenly a brilliant idea struck me. Even though I lived only three miles from my job, traffic was so congested that driving to work took forty minutes. I burned thirteen to fifteen gallons of gas per week, and I had budgeted five dollars for gas and oil. If I were to walk to and from work, I would be able to give five dollars each week. That amount wasn’t quite a tithe, but it was a start in the right direction. I glowed with joy as I dropped my five dollars of gasoline money into the offering plate on Sunday.

Monday morning I still had a third of a tank of gas in my station wagon, so I decided to drive to work one more time before I started my walking ritual.

About 9:00 that morning I was walking down the hall at work when I heard someone call my name. “Frank, wait up. I’ve been looking for you.” It was Jerry, an inspector with whom I had worked years previously at an aircraft company.

“What’s up, Jerry?” I said. “Long time no see.”

“Yeah, too long,” he agreed. As he approached, I noticed he was holding out a five-dollar bill. “Here’s that five dollars I owe you.”

I threw up my hands to hold him at bay. “Jerry, you don’t owe me any money.”

“Yes, I do,” he insisted. “Don’t you remember? Two

years ago you loaned me five so I could buy some parts for my boat. I won five hundred at the boat races yesterday, and I want to pay you back before I blow it all."

I laughed cynically. "Jerry, for the past two years I've been so broke so continually that I didn't have a dime I could lend to anyone. I know I didn't lend you a fiver."

"Yes, you did," Jerry insisted. He stuffed the bill in my coat pocket and went on his way.

For a long minute I stood there, shaking my head and wondering which of us had the bad memory. Then I said, "Thank You, Lord. At least I won't have to walk this week." This was only my first glimpse of the miracles God works as He answers prayer that is aligned with His will.

Back at my desk, I found a message for me to call someone named Dale. "Frank, you don't know me," Dale began, "but I live in the yellow house two doors up the street from you. Did you know that we have a car pool from our neighborhood?"

This was my second glimpse, and I was so thrilled I could hardly talk. "How much does it cost and when can I begin?" I managed to ask. It cost a dollar a week, and I began the next day, Tuesday. Now I had at least four dollars per week I could give without affecting my ability to pay any other bills. Imagine my delight!

On Friday Dale pulled me aside. "Frank, you have a station wagon, don't you?"

"Yes," I replied, wondering what direction this discussion

might take.

"I'm leaving on vacation tonight after work. Would you take the car pool for the next two weeks?"

"Sure," I said, grinning from ear to ear. God had given me another glimpse at His provision. This meant five people would be paying me a dollar apiece to ride to work with me. The route to the car pool parking lot was not congested. I could drive all week on three gallons. I could tithe for the next two weeks. I was so excited that I must have looked like a kid on Christmas morning.

"You know," Dale continued, "I've had that car pool for at least ten years, and I'm sick of it. If you want it, I'll give it to you permanently."

I'm not bragging about these events. I did not in any way deserve the blessing that God engineered on my behalf. That's what grace is, the unmerited, undeserved blessing of God. If we are saved, we are saved by God's grace. If we are sustained, we are sustained by God's grace.

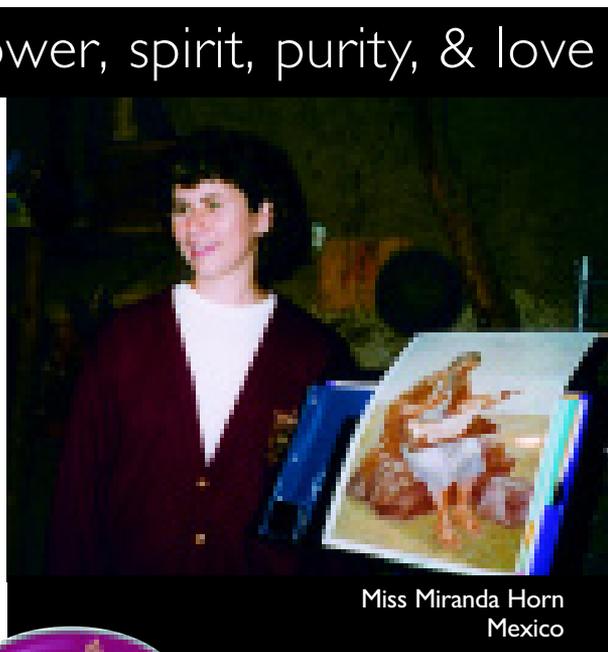
If you are a child of God and you aren't tithing, I recommend that you pray and ask God to help you tithe. He'll help change your heart so that you will want to tithe. He won't answer your prayers exactly the same way He answered mine, but if you're serious with Him, He *will* answer your prayers.

Frank Hall is a professional writer who works for BJU Press and resides in Greenville, South Carolina.



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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Theology Matters

I may not even know what a “theology” is, but I can’t avoid having one. That’s because “theo-logy” is a “word” (*logos*) about “God” (*theos*), and everyone, even an atheist, has something that he believes and says about God. He has a theology.

Why Theology Matters

Theology matters, therefore, in the first place, because it’s about God. Since nothing matters more than He does, it follows that theology matters infinitely.

Theology matters, secondly, because it’s about the whole Bible. That’s announced by its first words, “In the beginning God . . .” Since everything after that is His story, to study anything the Bible says is to study theology, the story of God’s being, thinking, and ways. Hence multivolume works called “theologies” systematize not just what Scripture teaches about the doctrine of God proper, but about every other doctrine as well. All of it is God’s thinking and therefore “theology.”

Thirdly, theology matters because it rules over all. At the end of the day, whatever people really believe about God decides everything—their values and morals, their use of time, possessions and abilities, their relations to all other beings, circumstances and events (including their heroes and villains), where and how they work, whom they marry (and whether they stay married), for whom and what they vote, how they react to trouble or loss, and what they feel and say when dying. You name it, in the end, it all comes down to their theology. “The fear of the Lord [a theology] is the beginning of wisdom.” About what? About everything! Both in this life

and the next (read Proverbs). On the other hand, “The _____ of the Lord [fill in the blank with any rival theology you wish] is the beginning” of all things. No one can escape the comprehensive consequences of the theology with which he begins and negotiates life.

All people at all times in all things are ruled by their theology. That is, people *practice* their theology. Theology, therefore, is practical for all of life, not merely theoretical in books and classrooms only. I’m not arguing, of course, that any of us always acts consistently with what we believe. We all recognize that that’s not the case. But that very recognition is itself one of the surest proofs that a governing theology exists in our hearts. Otherwise we wouldn’t instinctively feel that certain things are out of character for us. Our governing theology pronounces them so, thus persisting in its reign regardless of our resistance.

To summarize, theology matters because it’s about God, Scripture, and life. Since there are no more important, no more universally comprehensive studies than these three, and because it is theology which governs our every belief and action regarding these, a rigorously right theology is the ultimate good which can be acquired. To know God truthfully, to understand the Scripture comprehensively, and to live life rightly is the greatest conceivable human blessing.

On the other hand, no greater disaster for a human being can be conceived than to live and die with an untruthful theology. Not knowing God as He actually is, not understanding what the Scripture definitely teaches, not living in this world and the next as they really are is the ultimate catastrophe.

No one therefore, least of all faithful preachers, can safely dismiss theology or its attendant issues. We, more than any class of men on earth, are by virtue of our calling required to be theologians of the first rank. Our

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

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responsibility for this surpasses that of even the formal class of teachers professionally called “theologians.” They’re called to be masters in narrowly circumscribed spheres. Though this ministry is critical to the health of the Church, it is by its very nature a role specialized and therefore confined and repetitive.

But we preachers are called upon to minister not merely the next semester’s subject matter, but the whole counsel of God. Our preaching must range over the entire landscape of Scripture. It must do it for the sake of every class among the people of God. For children and for teens and adults. For men and for women. For church leaders and for new converts. For young couples

To summarize, theology matters because it’s about God, Scripture, and life. Since there are no more important, no more universally comprehensive studies than these three, and because it is theology which governs our every belief and action regarding these, a rigorously right theology is the ultimate good which can be acquired. To know God truthfully, to understand the Scripture comprehensively, and to live life rightly is the greatest conceivable human blessing.

grieving over their first miscarriage, for middle-aged widows caring for aged parents in the last stages of Alzheimer’s disease, for elderly couples when one partner is stone blind and the other is a helpless invalid. To all of these we minister theology in public and in private, in the pulpit and in the counselor’s chair, at the hospital bed and by the graveside.

God, Scripture, life—these are the domains of theology. All conceivable sorts of believers and unbelievers—these are the learners of theology. And preachers are its foremost teachers. No wonder the New Testament speaks so frequently and forcefully to preachers about it.

- 1 Timothy 4:6—“a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words . . . of good doctrine.”
- 1 Timothy 4:13—“give attendance to . . . doctrine.”
- 1 Timothy 4:16—“take heed . . . unto the doctrine.”
- 1 Timothy 5:17—“they who labour in . . . doctrine.”

- 2 Timothy 3:16—“all scripture . . . is profitable for doctrine.”
- 2 Timothy 4:2—“exhort with . . . doctrine.”
- Titus 1:9—“able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”
- Titus 2:1—“speak thou the things which become sound doctrine.”
- Titus 2:7—“in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.”

How to Check Our Theology

Given the magnitude of our theological ministry, we preachers must willingly submit our teaching to a rigorous Scriptural scrutiny. Not that we turn our people into critics, but that we be ourselves Bereans. To evaluate ourselves objectively, however, we’re going to have to abandon what are far too frequently the most widely used tests, or at least acknowledge their limitations.

My family lived for the better part of one school year with my mother’s parents in a little farming community in Kansas. Never before or after did we eat so well. Since my grandfather owned the local grocery store, he brought home the best cuts of meat. Pork and beef especially. Lots of it. We ate like kings. Everyone was full, happy, and returned every day for every meal. There was no table like grandma’s. Especially for fried meats.

I loved my grandmother for her cooking, but today, from the vantage of a daily fight with middle-aged mortality, I cringe at the fats and grease on which we binged then. Our diet must have been practically suicidal. My grandmother, in fact, was alarmingly overweight and died relatively young. Though my grandfather lived long, various abdominal disorders plagued him for decades.

It’s apparent to me from personal experience that the fact that someone is a popular cook doesn’t necessarily mean she’s a safe dietician. The very opposite may be the case.

Preachers, too, must genuinely, humbly, *accept* that visible results, large crowds, or even a full outside speaking itinerary don’t necessarily mean that we’re always safe theologians. Those aren’t very good tests (as we all caution regarding wildly popular Evangelical or Charismatic leaders). What are?

The first test of our dogma (great word!) must be that of theological category. We must judge whether preaching (counseling, writing, etc.) falls into the category of what theologians call *Biblical* theology or what they term *systematic* theology. We all have systems of theology, be they denominational, soteriological, eschatological, or whatever. We assume that our systems are at the same time Biblical. In other words, we presume that our systematic theology is, in fact, Biblical theology. But it’s critical that we continually test that assumption. Here’s how.

The simplest example of citing strictly Biblical theology is when a child confidently sings, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” The Bible *tells* me so. That’s Biblical theology. It’s whatever the Bible says

clearly, expressly, and unmistakably. “God is love.” “God so loved the world.” “The Son of God loved me.” These and similar statements are the Bible’s theology of God’s love. It’s entirely safe to preach them dogmatically.

But let’s proceed. Let’s say we’d like to know not just part but the entirety of the Bible’s theology about some subject. That requires gathering every single statement it makes about that topic.

For instance, in the 1980s most of us were compelled to educate our people about Charismaticism. I decided to preach a series on spiritual gifts. I ransacked the Scripture for references to the Holy Spirit until I had compiled an exhaustive list of every single thing I could find that the Bible explicitly said about Him. This was doing purely Biblical theology. I could have preached through that list dogmatically, confident that my theology was entirely Biblical. No Bible believer could have argued with my theology legitimately. It was all strictly Biblical.

But a list like that has limitations. For one thing, the material isn’t usefully categorized. The mind needs compartments, like those in a fisherman’s tackle box, into which to sort various kinds of scriptural statements about a subject. So we find ourselves making lists (compartments) labeled, “The Identity of the Holy Spirit,” or “The Relationship of the Holy Spirit to the World,” or “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit,” and so on. Now we’re systematizing. We’re gradually transitioning from a strictly Biblical theology to one that requires additional conclusions (these compartments) formulated by our own minds.

As long as these compartments are unarguably Scriptural they’re still a refined form of Biblical theology even though we’ve begun systematizing. But let’s say the compartments call for even further subdividing. Maybe they’re still too big and unwieldy, like the category about God called “Attributes.” Try taking your people through that without subcategorizing!

So we hunt for ways to categorize even further. In the case of my study on the Spirit, for example, I discovered that I was looking at nineteen separate gifts (maybe even twenty if I counted celibacy in 1 Cor. 7:7). So I inserted a little partition into the compartment called “His Gifts.” Now I had two small cubicles instead of one large one. One of these small ones I labeled “His Permanent Gifts,” the other I labeled “His Temporary Gifts.”

Sometimes this kind of subcategorizing is still entirely safe. That’s because, again, the smaller divisions are either expressed or implied by Scripture itself or else they’re so general that there’s really no Scriptural reason for rejecting them. In other words, my systematic theology is still pretty undeniably Biblical theology.

But in this case I’d systematized to the point where I knew I was going to spark controversy with some Bible believers. They would point out that the Bible itself didn’t actually *say* that some of the Spirit’s gifts are temporary. In other words, that I had no Biblical

theology for that subcategory. They would dismiss it by saying, “That’s just his system,” or “He has no Bible for that.” Well? Did I?

That’s the really critical question at any point in developing theology where we encounter the objection of other Bible believers. Are they overlooking some of the Bible’s explicit theology? Or am I inserting into the theological box something systematic that the Bible doesn’t actually teach?

No pastor can afford, now or eternally, to be careless about this. We’re the world’s foremost theologians. We must—we must—test our teaching by these theological categories (Biblical and systematic), especially if what we’re teaching arouses the suspicions or outright objections of other Bible believers.

Testing this out is absolutely fundamental to staying sound and avoiding unnecessary controversy. No pastor can afford, now or eternally, to be careless about this. We’re the world’s foremost theologians. We must—we must—test our teaching by these theological categories (Biblical and systematic), especially if what we’re teaching arouses the suspicions or outright objections of other Bible believers. The more sound these believers are, the more cautious I should be before digging a foxhole to defend my position.

If I can show the objectors that they’re missing something the Bible actually says, that ought to settle the argument—provided, of course, that we agree on definitions. Word meanings are a second critical test of a theology, but more on that later. On the other hand, if the objectors are right, that the Bible doesn’t dogmatically state what I’m teaching, then my subcategory may not be theologically safe. Yet . . . it may. Let me illustrate.

I had to agree with Charismatics that I couldn’t say, “Gifts have ceased, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” I take that back, I could say it. In fact, I probably had said it. But now I knew that I couldn’t say it truthfully. I couldn’t say it from a strictly Biblical theological standpoint. It wasn’t actually Biblical theology.

There were, however, certain Bible statements that led me to the *logical* conclusion that miraculous gifts have, in fact, ceased. Passages such as Paul’s description of the “signs of an apostle,” for instance (2 Cor. 12:12). After carefully studying these, I came to believe that they almost certainly led inductively to the conclusion that some of the gifts were temporary. But, someone objects immediately, isn’t it dangerous to develop theology by logic? It can be.

The most conspicuous examples of the fact that reasoning may be terribly wrong-headed are the fourteen instances in which Paul reacts against a perfectly logical conclusion with a horrified, “God forbid!” (“May it never be!”). It’s true, he teaches, that wherever sin has abounded grace can super-abound. But “may it never be” that you should take the logical step of concluding that we might as well live in sin so that God’s grace can abound even more (Romans 5:20–6:2). Again, it’s true that the nation Israel lies under the judgment of God and that He’s offering His salvation to the Gentiles. But “may it never be” that we should conclude that God has totally and finally cast away the Jew (Rom. 11:1ff).

In spite of this danger, Scripture itself teaches the legitimacy of logical, theological reasoning. Our Lord was using it when arguing for bodily resurrection (Matt. 22:32). He reasoned with the Sadducees from the Divine assurance to Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (cf. Exod. 3:6). Obviously, there’s no explicit affirmation of resurrection in that statement, but what is its implication? That the Patriarchs were still living since “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” When Christ reasoned this way, He was going beyond strict Biblical theology into the realm of logical reasoning. He could, of course, have answered entirely as a Biblical theologian because there are explicit Bible statements affirming bodily resurrection. My point is simply that, for whatever reason, He chose on this occasion to reason logically.

So it’s apparent from the Bible itself that systematic theology may appropriately refine and advance Biblical theology through the use of logic. To the extent that it does so with strict Scriptural accuracy the system can in turn be properly called “Biblical.” Nevertheless it’s crucial to recognize that there’s a difference between express Bible statement and additional logical conclusion. Whatever the Bible says is so. Whatever logic concludes may or may not be so.

In the case of spiritual gifts, therefore, I concluded that the little “temporary gifts” compartment in my theological tackle box was justifiable. Not, of course, to the same degree that the larger ones labeled “Jesus’ Deity” or “Blood Atonement” are. But nevertheless it was, to my mind, defensible. Yet integrity would now compel me to acknowledge that it hadn’t been constructed on the basis of a precisely Biblical theology. It was more systematic in its nature.

The value of differentiating these two categories of theology is almost self-apparent. The categories sort out

what we can be most dogmatic about from, on the other hand, what we might be free to agree to disagree about. G. Campbell Morgan had a happy way of tipping his people off to the latter. When he came to the parts of his sermon that were very much his own systematic conclusions he would say, “Now put your pens down. What I’m going to say next is sanctified speculation.”

That’s not a bad approach to use, even if nowhere else but in the privacy of our study. Go ahead, italicize, underscore, highlight and print in bold what the Bible actually says. No problem! But when, by deduction or induction, we’ve systematized a step beyond its explicit statements, we ought to at least back off the “bold.” When we’ve systemized even further, we probably ought to eliminate the highlight as well. And at some point some parts of the system need to be written in smaller point type, or even punctuated with a “?” rather than a “.”.

Before leaving this first important test of our theology—namely, its category (Biblical or systematic)—I’d like to suggest that it might be helpful if theologians would agree to change the names of those two categories. They’re confusing to our ears because they aren’t describing things of the same sort. We hear the one, Biblical, and tend to hear “content.” The content is Scriptural. We hear the other, systematic, and tend to hear “method.” The method was systematic.

Further confusion arises when one of the terms qualifies the other, like “Biblical systematic theology,” or “systematic Biblical theology.” This confusion is apparent within theological literature. Various authors nuance the categories somewhat differently or with varying degrees of overlap. Nearly all seem to wrestle with the same problem of keeping them distinguished, both definitionally and methodologically.

The approach I’m taking is that of keeping the Bible’s express statements (its theology) distinguished from what we begin to do with those statements (systematizing them). The one is content. The other is something we’re doing with it.

This approach enables conscientious preachers to trace the stages at which their theology branches out of objective Divine revelation into more subjective logical conclusion. They can literally diagram their system, like sketching the growth of a tree, and differentiate what limbs can be labeled safely “this is what the Bible says,” from those that should be labeled only “this is what seems to be true.” They can more easily see that the latter stem either from interpretations of the first (I hope to explore this in a further column) or are refined systematizations based upon them. In either case, it ought to be apparent that the merely systematic branches should flex a bit more freely than the trunk during any storm of debate between Bible believers. ☞



Dr. Mark Minnick is pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

I was introduced to Charles Hodge for the first time during a seminary course on Romans where his commentary was the textbook. I can still remember my professor holding up his well-worn copy and exhorting us to read every word devotionally. My copy as well has become well-worn in its own right and still challenges and blesses me with each new reading. I encountered Hodge again in a systematic theology class through the assigned reading from his massive three-volume *Systematic Theology*. Later, as a professor I looked to Hodge for help in teaching the Corinthian Epistles, and as a pastor preaching through Ephesians, I found great benefit in his commentary on Ephesians.

My exposure to Hodge left me impressed with his prowess as a theologian; but perhaps more importantly, I was impressed with the devotional flavor within much of his writing. I knew the basic facts of Hodge's life and his ministry at Princeton, but I was relatively uninformed as to the depth of his life or the breadth of his influence on American society in the mid 1800s. I gained new appreciation for this man when I picked up a copy of a new work on his life entitled *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work* (Eerdmans, 2002). Initially I had no intention of reviewing this work on Hodge. Written by recent scholars and theologians (many of them connected to Princeton), the contributors by no means embrace Hodge's conservative theology. In my opinion, a much better introduction to Hodge is the only complete biography of his life written by his son, Archibald Alexander, in 1880 entitled *Life of Charles Hodge*. However, with each passing chapter of this recent work I became more deeply affected by the power of Hodge's life and the lasting influence of his theology beyond his lifetime. While distancing themselves from certain aspects of Hodge's theology and attempting in places to recast Hodge in more moderate and less militant terms, the contributors all concede the significance of Hodge and his belief that theology was to be deeply practical for every area, both in private life and in society as a whole. One of the contributors observed,

Hodge the professional theologian, the theologian that tackled just about every big issue of nineteenth-century theology, was, in both history books and theological polemics, pushed into the tight boundaries of the Darwinian and infallibility debates. When viewed in the broader context . . . , Hodge exemplified the nascent ideal of the professional theologian as an incisive and broad-ranging thinker, able to comment on any question of theology that might arise.

Charles Hodge was born on December 28, 1797, in Philadelphia and died eighty years later in 1878. His father fought in the Revolutionary War and witnessed the birth of a new nation—"One Nation Under God." His son saw that Union tested and almost destroyed by the ravages of the Civil War. Although his father fought for political freedom, Charles devoted his life to the battle for spiritual freedom, a

freedom he believed was to be found in the theology he espoused, taught, and displayed in his personal life. Charles was only seven months old when his father died—an absence Charles felt keenly throughout his life.

After graduating from Princeton College, he enrolled in Princeton seminary in 1816 and graduated with honors in 1819. During his years as a young seminarian, he found a father figure in the new seminary's first professor, Archibald Alexander. So close was their friendship that Charles named his first son after his mentor. In 1822 he married Sarah Bache, the great-granddaughter of Benjamin Franklin, and they raised eight children. Sarah died in 1849, and Hodge remarried three years later. He retired in 1877, after more than fifty years of teaching and writing at Princeton and died the following year.

He wrote three full commentaries on New Testament books, a three-volume *Systematic Theology*, and countless other works during the course of his writing ministry. Furthermore, he trained more than 3000 seminarians during his fifty-year teaching ministry. His influence extended well beyond Princeton's classrooms. His views on politics and social issues of the day such as slavery and the Civil War influenced thinking people in every sector of society across the nation. His theological legacy at Princeton was passed to his son, A. A. Hodge, then to Benjamin Warfield, and finally to J. Gresham Machen. However, none had as profound an influence as Hodge had on the issues of the day or those of generations yet to come.

The exposure of Hodge's broad influence is the strength of this book. After a brief biographical sketch, the reader is introduced to Hodge as he interacts with the scientific issues of his day (the introduction of Darwinism). Hodge also interacts with the philosophical and religious issues of the day such as the growing influence of German theological liberalism; theologians of the New School of Divinity; his views on women and society; his views on politics and slavery and his attempts to preserve unity in his denomination while the nation was divided by war; his views on the authority, inspiration, and inerrancy of Scripture; and his commitment to a theology that must be lived out in piety of life. A massive bibliography of almost all Hodge's significant literary contributions concludes this work.

That the authors hold a different theological position from Hodge will be immediately obvious. However, a careful and discerning reader will gain much appreciation for the life and ministry of this great theologian of yesteryear. ☞

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

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Have you ever watched a tree strain and groan to produce fruit? Of course not! A healthy tree connected to proper nourishment naturally produces fruit. The apostle Paul uses this analogy when discussing the fruit of the Spirit-filled life in Galatians 5.

The primary error in the interpretation of the “fruit of the Spirit” passage in Galatians 5 is to preach it as a checklist for Christians to accomplish. I am sure that many people understand this passage correctly, but I misunderstood it for a long time. I would become deeply convicted about my lack of love or self-discipline or gentleness. So I worked all the harder for a life that resembled what Galatians 5 represented as the Spirit-filled life. I repeatedly failed, of course, in part because I did not properly understand Paul's intent in listing the fruit of the Spirit. Reading the list in its context gives us a better understanding.

Is Galatians 5 about salvation or sanctification? The proper answer is “yes.” A doctrine of sanctification by works eventually produces a doctrine of salvation by works. This passage is about both living in the Spirit (salvation) and walking in the Spirit (sanctification) according to verse 25.

Paul begins by urging believers to make use in sanctification of the liberty purchased for them at salvation (5:1). Some had been teaching that believers, although saved, were under the bondage of law. The teaching had the potential for not only frustrating sincere believers but also corrupting the very doctrine of salvation by adding law-works to the grace found in Christ. Paul strongly condemns these false teachers (5:12). New Testament believers are not under the law, period.

But that presents another problem. If I am not under the law, can I do whatever I want? Of course not! Paul asserts that our freedom from the law must not be an occasion for the flesh to run rampant (5:13). Grace, administered by the Spirit of God, is the ruling factor in this dispensation (Titus 2:11, 12).

So, what am I supposed to do? “Walk in the Spirit,” Paul answers. But how do I do that? There is error in two extreme views of sanctification. One error says that sanctification for the believer is nothing more than self-discipline. Work harder, be more dedicated, keep the rules, and you will get there. As one counselor once said, “Fake it 'til you make it!” It is an effort at obedience without complete surrender or divine enabling.

The other extreme says, “Let go and let God.” This is passivity. This view seeks divine enabling without tak-

ing the steps of obedience that sincere faith inevitably produces. It leads to either a second blessing theology (in which I make a commitment following salvation that takes me to a level of complete maturity or sinless perfection), or a two-step sanctification (in which a distinct second step of surrender is the key to the Spirit-filled life). In truth, salvation itself is a step of surrender, and believers are constantly faced with steps of surrender to the Spirit of God as they grow in their faith.

Paul's answer here is that spiritual maturity finds its roots in a *relationship* with the Holy Spirit. Walk—conduct your life—in the Spirit. I cannot walk in fellowship with the Spirit of God unless I walk in submission to Him. I must recognize His lordship over my life and submit to His rule in my heart. I must be “led” by the Spirit, meaning I must be a willing follower of the Spirit. The Spirit leads me in different ways, but primarily through direct instruction in the Book that He inspired.

What does “walking in the Spirit” look like? Paul understood the potential for people to claim spirituality while living lives of carnality, so he describes two lifestyles. The first is the flesh-dominated lifestyle. Galatians 5:19–21 describes this lifestyle in great detail as characteristic of the unbeliever. The circles of Christianity today that claim special connections to the power of the Holy Spirit often evidence the practice and toleration of the very sins listed in this passage. Scripture itself passes judgment on such claims as false.

Paul then describes the fruit that is produced by the Spirit in the life of one who walks in the Spirit (5:21–23). If this fruit is not evident, there is no submission to the Spirit. You claim to be filled with the Spirit? This is what a person who is filled with the Spirit is like. If you are not like this, you are not filled with the Spirit. The list is meant to *test* the veracity of a claim to the Spirit-filled life, not to be a *means* of attaining spirituality.

The *problem* is not a lack of fruit. Fruitlessness is the *symptom*. The problem is the believer's relationship to the Spirit. With unconfessed sin and an unsundered will, the believer hinders his relationship with the Spirit who enables obedience in sanctification. If a tree does not produce fruit, the tree's roots have not found the proper nourishment. If a believer is not evidencing the fruit of the Spirit, he is not in a submissive and obedient relationship to Him. ☞

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

As I have reflected on the subject of sacrifice, it seems that most of our “sacrifice” today wanes in comparison to those who have gone on before. My heart is convicted as I consider what others thought of sacrifice and how little I understand what it should mean to me and to others who have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb.

John Paton

“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:39).

John Paton answered the call of God on his life to go to the heathen natives in the South Pacific. One older gentleman protested, “The cannibals! You will be eaten by cannibals!” Paton responded, “Mr. Dixon, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms. I confess to you that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether my body is eaten by cannibals or by worms” (*Heroes of Faith on Pioneer Trails*, p. 196).

Robert Moffat

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

Robert Moffat wrote the following to his parents in 1816: “Oh that I had a thousand lives and a thousand bodies: all of them should be devoted to no other employment but to preach Christ to these degraded, despised, yet beloved mortals. I have not repented in becoming a missionary, and should I die in the march and never enter the field of battle, all will be well” (*The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat*, p. 16).

Moffat desired to marry a young lady named Mary Smith. He wrote to his parents in 1818, “In a former letter I mentioned something respecting my hope of being united to Miss S., but her last two letters have been completely effectual in blasting my hopes. She has most reluctantly renounced the idea of ever getting abroad, her father determining never to allow her.” Not long after he wrote that letter, Mary Smith was able to write this letter to her future in-laws: “After two years and a half of the most painful anxiety, I have, through the tender mercy of God, obtained permission of my dear parents to proceed, sometime next spring, to join your dear son in his arduous work. This is what I by no means expected a week ago; but God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts. . . . Previous to the arrival of these last letters, my father had persisted in saying that I should never

have his consent; my dear mother has uniformly asserted that it would break her heart (as I have no sister, and she is far advanced in life): notwithstanding all this they both yesterday calmly resigned me into the hands of the Lord, declaring they durst no longer withhold me” (ibid., pp. 19, 36).

A friend of the Smiths, Charlotte Bogue, wrote Mary’s parents after hearing of their decision to let their daughter marry Robert Moffat and join him on the mission field in Africa: “My dear Madam, I cannot but feel deeply for you and Mr. Smith, on being called to part with her to such a distance. Great must have been the trial, the conflict must have been severe; all the parental feelings must have risen up in direct opposition to her plans and wishes. The sacrifice you have made of them is great, but not too great for Him who gave up Himself for you. ‘The best child is not too good for God.’ He gave her to you, and He has demanded her back again, and He can and will be better to you both than ten such daughters, lovely and excellent as she is. His gracious presence can more than supply hers, and if He withdraws the nether springs He can make the upper springs to overflow and abound. He has highly honoured you in giving you such a daughter and by calling her to fill such a high post on earth as that of a Christian missionary, the highest she could fill” (ibid., p. 42). Mary Smith became not only the wife of Robert Moffat and a tremendous missionary, but the mother of a daughter, also named Mary, who married David Livingstone!

Nancy Hasseltine (Mrs. Adoniram Judson)

“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matt. 19:29).

Adoniram wrote his future father-in-law the following letter: “I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home, and died for me and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion,

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

Charles Spurgeon

and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?" (*To the Golden Shore*, pp. 83–84).

A friend of John Hasseltine's told him that if Adoniram Judson had courted his daughter, he "would tie his own daughter to the bedpost rather than let her go on such a hare-brained venture." Mr. Hasseltine left the decision up to Nancy, and after much prayer and counsel she wrote to her friend Lydia of her decision: "I feel willing and expect, if nothing in providence prevents, to spend my days in this world in heathen lands. Yes, Lydia, I have about come to the determination to give up all my comforts and enjoyments here, sacrifice my affection to relatives and friends, and go where God, in his providence, shall see fit to place me" (*ibid.*, p. 84).

Gerhard Tersteegen

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Shortly after dedicating his life in to the Lord in 1724, Gerhard Tersteegen wrote out a covenant of love with blood drawn from his own veins. The covenant states his thoughts concerning sacrifice: "From this evening, to all eternity, Thy will, not mine, be done! Command and rule and reign in me. I yield myself up without reserve, and I promise, with Thy help and power, rather to give up the last drop of this my blood than knowingly and willingly, in my heart or in my life, be untrue or disobedient to Thee. Behold, thou hast me wholly and completely, sweet Friend of my soul. Thou hast the love of my heart for Thyself, and none other. Thy Spirit be my keeper; Thy death the rock of my assurance. Yea, Amen! May Thy Spirit seal that which is written in the simplicity of my heart" (*They Knew Their God*, p. 11).

David Livingstone

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

"People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger . . . may make us pause and cause the spirit to

waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us.

"Hundreds of young men annually leave our shores as cadets. All their friends rejoice when they think of them bearing the commissions of our Queen. When any dangerous expedition is planned by Government, more volunteers apply than are necessary to man it. . . . What thousands rushed to California, from different parts of America, on the discovery of the gold! How many husbands left their wives and families! How many Christian men tore themselves away from all home endearments to suffer, and toil, and perish by cold and starvation on the overland route! How many sank from fever and exhaustion on the banks of Sacramento! Yet no word of sacrifices there. And why should we so regard all we give and do for the Well-beloved of our souls? Our talk of sacrifices is ungenerous and heathenish" (*The Personal Life of David Livingstone*, pp. 494–95).

Mrs. Haldane

"Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there" (1 Sam. 1:28).

James Haldane wrote these words concerning the character of his mother: "Her life was a life of practical godliness and of cheerful trust in the Saviour. Often when she had seen her children in bed, and supposed that they were asleep, she was overheard by them, and particularly by her elder son, on her knees by their bed-side, earnestly praying that the Lord would be pleased to guide them through that world which she felt that she was herself soon to leave; that their lives might be devoted to His service upon earth; and, finally, that they might be brought to His everlasting kingdom" (*The Lives of Robert and James Haldane*, p. 14).

Can you agree with C. T. Studd when he said, "If Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him"?

Can you can agree with Jim Elliot's diary entry for October 28, 1949: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose" (*Shadow of the Almighty*, p. 108)?

Can you pray Charles Spurgeon's words when he said, "I yield up myself to Thee; as Thy own reasonable sacrifice, I return to Thee Thine own. I would be forever, unreservedly, perpetually Thine; whilst I am on earth, I would serve Thee; and may I enjoy Thee and praise Thee for ever! Amen" (*C. H. Spurgeon Autobiography: The Early Years*, p. 125).

May we, too, be willing to make the ultimate "sacrifice," whether it be the giving of our own life or the lives of our children. 

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Titus Two Women Unaware

Linda Turner

"No, I haven't trusted Jesus to save me from my sin, but I want to."

Five-year-old Lynette and I had been singing Sunday school songs to pass the miles on our way to buy herbicides for my husband's oat field. Seizing the opportunity after we sang "There Is a Green Hill Far Away," I asked Lynette whether she had trusted in Jesus to save her. Mrs. Cecil F. Alexander wrote that song to help teach her Sunday school class the meaning of a phrase in the Apostles' Creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." Eighty-two years after Mrs. Alexander's death, her song helped me lead my own dear daughter to the Lord. Though we have never met, I think of Mrs. Alexander as one of the "Titus Two" women in my life. Not only was her song filled with good doctrine, but it helped me to lovingly teach my oldest child how to trust Jesus to save her.

Mrs. Alexander demonstrated part of Titus 2:1, 3-5, which says, "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: . . . [That] the aged women . . . be in behavior as becometh holiness . . . teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be . . . keepers at home."

Titus Two women abound in my life: some prayerfully and purposely disciplined me in Christian living and homemaking. Others did not seem to realize the qualities they brought into my life. Still others I did not recognize until too late.

My Christian neighbor, Sally, is a good illustration of the latter. "How do you bathe a squirmy newborn?" I had asked. Having no experience with babies, I needed help. Sally taught me the safe "football hold" and helped me set up an area with baby lotions to pamper Lynette and prepare her for her after-bath nap. Sally encouraged me, helping me overcome feelings of inadequacy.

Though busy on her tree farm, Sally always seemed to make time for my petitions. For example, "Help! I don't know how to freeze sweet corn."



Quick to teach good things, Sally showed me how to conveniently freeze corn in my small kitchen, which had little counter space. She went on to teach me how to can green beans and beets. She helped me realize how important the privilege of preparing ahead is to a family. Living in rural Pennsylvania, winter could bring days of being snowed in with only the provisions already in the home.

If an illness or a newborn came to our farming community, Sally would be there with a helping hand, a cheerful smile, and a loaf of homemade bread. She died in a drowning accident several years before I ever thought to thank her for being a Titus Two woman in my life.

Judy, a Christian friend who has since moved away, is another Titus Two woman I did not recognize in time. I have lost track of her. She probably would laugh if I were able to remind her how she ministered to me one Sunday many years ago. When my newborn cried in the nursery throughout the morning church service, Judy rushed to my aid. Taking Lynette in her confident arms, she soothed her. "How precious!" she told me, soothing my frayed nerves as well by making me realize the gift God had given me. She taught me that all babies occasionally get diaper rash or colic. A crying baby is not the sign of a bad mother but instead of a baby communicating in the only way it can. A good mother responds in love, which she had seen me do. It may have seemed a small thing to encourage a new mother that morning, but Judy's attitude and acceptance have had a lasting effect on me. Even more impor-

tant, realizing how precious young ones are has helped me to patiently nurture each of my three children.

Although I can't express my gratitude to Sally and Judy, I plan on finding ways to support and thank the current Titus Two women in my life. I'll start by sending a note of thanks to our pastor's wife, who purposely encourages the spiritual gifts of our church ladies and disciples us in Christian living and hospitality.

Sometimes Titus Two women show up in surprising places. Perhaps it was because the church was hot that summer Sunday. Maybe it was because the pastor went overtime. Whatever the reason, my toddler was noisy. I tried to teach him to sit quietly. He could look at his book. He could snack on the oat cereal in the special container I had for him. He was not to crawl around nor talk out loud. His older sister and brother were doing fine, but he was not. "You must sit quietly, or I will have to take you out." So, I had

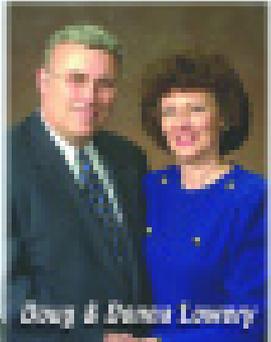
to take him out. In fact, we made the trip three times before consistency won. Later, a woman commented to me, "I watched how you patiently taught your son to behave, and I couldn't believe you didn't lose your temper the third time you had to take him out. You were firm with him, but not unkind. Although you disciplined him, you weren't harsh. You didn't scream at him or shake him. You helped me see a mistake I've been making with my toddler. If he doesn't obey the first time, I try to get his attention, but I get embarrassed and give up, or I lose my temper. Would you pray with me about it?"

I did not think much about it at the time, but could it be that God had used me to demonstrate how to discipline a child in love? Could I somehow be a Titus Two woman? With God's help, I plan to be.

Linda Turner is a freelance writer who lives in Greenville, Pennsylvania. She and her husband own a dairy farm and are members of McDaniel's Corners Church.



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He wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat.
—William Shakespeare

The only place a new hat can be carried into with safety is a church, for there is plenty of room there.
—Leigh Hunt

Blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.
—Tertullian

For where God built a church, there the Devil would also build a chapel.
—Martin Luther

Life is eternal; and love is immortal; and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.
—Rossiter Worthington Raymond

No seed shall perish which the soul hath sown.
—John Addington Symonds

I believe in the incomprehensibility of God.
—Honoré de Balzac

The sight of a white church above thin trees in a city square amazes my eyes as though it were the Parthenon.
—Amy Lowell

The shell must break before the bird can fly.
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Christians are never stingy.
—Joseph F. Berry

God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The Church has many critics but no rivals. — Anonymous

A Church exists for the double purpose of gathering in and sending out.
—Anonymous

The world is too strong for a divided church.
—Charles H. Brent

The Church that compromises Truth today will compromise Morals tomorrow.
—H. D. Bruce

A church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.
—Emil Brunner

Some people go to church to see who didn't.
—Anonymous

The church is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.
—English proverb

There is little piety in big churches. —Italian proverb

God pity the nation whose factory chimneys rise higher than her church spires.
—John Kelman

Burned but not consumed.
—Motto of the Church of Scotland

Churches: Soulariums. —P. K. Thomajan

The itch of disputation will prove the scab of the Church.
—Sir Henry Wotton



Wit and Wisdom is taken from various sources.

I Want More A Look at Hannah

Carol Robbins

Ever since the Garden of Eden, man has wanted more. Satan convinced Eve that she wanted to be more than just human—he convinced her that she wanted to be like God. Newspaper, magazine, radio, and television advertisers are consistently trying to persuade us that we need just one more thing to bring us happiness. As I read the story of Hannah in the Bible, I see that Hannah wanted more, too. However, in Hannah's case something was different.

Hannah lived in an era when barrenness was a great shame to a woman. One of the greatest dreams of a young Jewish wife was to bear a child to her husband. Some considered a barren woman to be cursed of God, or perhaps even punished by God for some sin. The Jews valued having a child to maintain the family lineage. But Hannah had no children (1 Sam. 1:2).

To complicate matters, Hannah was one of two wives. Peninnah, the other wife, had children. And, as if Hannah's barrenness weren't painful enough, Peninnah "provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb" (1 Sam. 1:6).

Giving birth to a child was not, physically speaking, a necessity to sustain Hannah's life. After all, Hannah could have lived her entire life on this earth and never borne a child—countless women have. So in the strictest sense of the word, Hannah longed for something she didn't need. Likewise in our own day and time, it's easy to tell ourselves that we "need" something, when in reality we only "want" it.

The goal of Hannah's desire was not a sinful thing. It was not something for her to consume upon her lusts. So there was nothing intrinsically wrong with her desire for more. In total contrast, today's media often try to convince us that we deserve items by appealing to our lusts. James 4:3 warns about asking for things simply to fulfill our lusts.

As Hannah focused on the object of her desire, this craving began to effect her physically and emotionally, for we read that "she wept, and did not eat" (1 Sam 1:7).

There are times to weep and fast. Times that we should kneel before the Lord our Maker in prayer with such a burden of soul that we find ourselves in tears and so broken of heart that we forget about eating. When was the last time you were burdened in such a way? Perhaps the last time you cried and didn't eat you were having a pity-party for yourself because you didn't get what you wanted.

Hannah presented her request to God with a humble spirit. She wanted a child, but she did not demand a child from God. Do we humble ourselves when we come to God with our requests? Hannah was willing

to give back to God the son of her desires. When we pray for something, are we equally willing to return it to God once He has allowed us to have it? For example, can God use the new house you just bought? Or consider—how can you use that new car for God's work? How about that new dress? Or those new expensive athletic shoes?

God remembered Hannah. He remembered her request, her vow, and her prayer. In the same way, God remembers you.

He wants to hear your request, your vow, your prayer. Jesus said, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). The book of James reminds us that "ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2b).

To want something more is not necessarily a wicked thing. However, in shaping our desires, we must humble ourselves as Hannah did. We must be willing to allow God to use the item for His work. In addition, we must ask according to His will (John 15:7). God promises to hear and answer our prayer (John 14:13, 14).

Be careful not to allow the world or the media to dictate what you want. Instead, align your desires with God's Word and find God's will. Then, as He did for Hannah, God will provide what you want. Perhaps God will use you to change the spiritual climate of a nation—as He did for Hannah.

Carol Robbins is a freelance writer who lives in Greenville, South Carolina.

God remembered Hannah. He remembered her request, her vow, and her prayer. In the same way, God remembers you.

Preventing Abuse in the Church

Linda Hull

Recent events regarding sexual abuse within the Catholic Church remind us that sexual abuse can happen anywhere—at any time—to anyone—but the most vulnerable are women and children.

We church members have a special relationship with our pastors and other church leaders because we look to them for guidance and help in times of need. However, positions of authority and trust can provide opportunities for some men to abuse that trust. In addition, evidence reveals that we cannot assume that all active members of a church body are without sexual sin. Since a “spiritual conversion” does not necessarily guarantee that a sexual abuser will overcome his abusive activities, wise church leaders take steps to protect their members from potential sexual predators.

Taking action toward prevention and protection demonstrates a church’s sincere desire to establish a safe environment for its people. Establishing a sexual abuse policy to govern conduct and procedures for church workers—if your pastor or church has not already done so—is an important first step toward lowering the risk of an incident of sexual abuse. If it can’t happen, it won’t happen! Churches ought to formulate (and consistently implement) policies that will eliminate possibilities of sexual misconduct.

Some procedures that might be helpful include:

A plan to educate workers about sexual abuse.

Workers need to understand what sexual abuse is, how to recognize symptoms of molestation, and the effects of sexual abuse on the victim.

An application process for worker screening.

This includes checking references, doing a background check, and possibly even fingerprinting. Large churches need to exercise extra caution, simply because of the sheer numbers of people involved. It is impossible to know everyone!

Educate parents and children on safety precautions.

Children need to know what types of physical contact are appropriate, plus what to do if someone touches inappropriately. It is important for parents to monitor the relationships their child establishes with adults and teen boys. Teen boys and men should not be left alone with a child. Some of the seemingly nicest men could be predators, offering hugs and candy, even inviting your child to sit on their lap in an effort to gain their trust. Or they might be the ones who help on the bus or assist in the children’s ministry.

Children need to be encouraged to immediately tell their parents if anyone touches them inappropriately. If your child is uncomfortable with certain adults, don’t force a friendship. On the other hand, don’t assume that

a problem exists if your child doesn’t like a particular adult.

Restroom procedures for children.

No adult should be left alone with a child in the restroom with the door closed. The adult must remain visible to a monitoring adult standing in the hallway or doorway of a classroom. Children can also use the “buddy system.”

Transportation procedures.

If you plan to chauffeur children, always get a signed permission slip from the parent. Children who ride a church bus are especially vulnerable. At least three adult workers should be on the bus or van when transporting children. (Each acts as a safety net for the others.) There should be no unplanned stops. Each child should have a seatbelt, which must be secured and checked before driving. All volunteer drivers should complete a driving information form to supply license number, insurance information, and driving history. Having one adult carry a cell phone for emergencies is also wise.

Pastors and male church workers and other males should avoid giving rides to women alone or to children alone. Plan to have others in the car as well, making sure they are visible. Years ago, a pastor friend was accused of an illicit relationship with a divorced woman because he was seen giving her a ride. Unfortunately the accuser didn’t see the pastor’s wife in the back seat.

A plan of action if sexual abuse is suspected.

Know the laws of your state for reporting sexual abuse. Information about suspected abuse must remain confidential while an investigation is conducted. Check with your attorney to determine what plan of action should be taken when an incident is reported. Before conducting an investigation, also notify the church insurance company. It can be helpful in determining if an incident needs to be reported and how to proceed.

Make simple modifications to the church building and grounds.

Sunday school rooms, offices, and counseling or meeting rooms should have a window installed in each door. If privacy is needed (for instance, to use the room for changing clothes for a baptism), a window blind can be installed, but a blind can be misused by closing it at inappropriate times. In addition, the parking lot should be well lighted to ensure there are no dark corners. Shrubbery and trees around the building should be kept trimmed and short.

Continued on page 37

Using the Young Evangelist

Jerry Sivnksty

Recently a friend shared with me that, when he became an evangelist, a pastor invited him to come and preach with the possibility of booking him for a meeting. Following the service, that pastor led him into his office and said he wanted to have the evangelist return to preach a series of evangelistic meetings. However, as the pastor pulled out his scheduling book, he casually asked the evangelist how old he was. When he heard the answer "twenty-five," the pastor studied the visitor, slowly closed his book, and said, "Brother, I'll get back in touch with you later." Apparently, this pastor concluded that the evangelist was too young to preach for him.

Conversely, the Scriptures reveal that the Lord has used young men in great ways. For instance, King Saul said of David in 1 Samuel 17:33, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But the Bible tells us in 1 Samuel 17:49, "And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth." A whole army of men stood back and observed this event. Those watchers were men of war, seasoned by years of battle. But it was David, a young man, who slew Goliath!

The Lord used other young men as well: Joseph, Samuel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego . . . If the Lord did great things through these young men, He can also do great things through young evangelists today. For that reason, I encourage pastors to use these young men in their pulpits.

Let me give a personal example of how to do this. When I started out in evangelism, I was twenty-seven years old. I had a burning desire to be used of the Lord. An older evangelist, Dr. Glen Schunk, encouraged pastors to contact me for meetings, and I received many invitations because of his personal recommendations. My heart will always be grateful for Dr. Schunk's counsel, encouragement, and promotion. Because of his example, I in turn feel a burden to help today's young evangelists get started in ministry.

Allow me to bare my heart to pastors reading this article and encourage you to use the young evangelist. Here are several reasons that you should:

First, young evangelists can influence and reach young couples in our local churches. I can testify to the

fact that when I started out in evangelism, many young couples received Christ in our meetings. Some of them are now leaders in their local churches. Others surrendered their lives for the Lord's work and are now pastors and missionaries.

Second, pastors should use young evangelists because experienced men of God can greatly affect and shape the evangelist's ministry. One pastor in Florida, Dale Simpson, invited me to preach in his church for nineteen years in a row. He greatly influenced me and guided me in my ministry. Whenever we met, he excitedly shared insights into the Word of God he had gleaned in his personal study, plus outlines that the Lord gave him on specific passages. Simply visiting Pastor Dale stirred and challenged me. His godly life, his love for the Lord, his devotion to his family, and commitment to the ministry greatly influenced my walk with the Lord. I witnessed a man who, for nineteen years in a row, never wavered in his convictions.

In a similar way, the apostle Paul greatly influenced the life of Timothy. First Timothy 1:2 begins, "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith." Likewise, the book of Titus gives a glimpse of how Paul influenced Titus. Titus 1:4 opens, "To Titus, mine own son after the common faith." Paul poured his life into these young men and into others as well. The essence of true leadership in the ministry is helping others to become useful and effective individuals in their specific calling. If you are a pastor, perhaps the Lord will use you to provide guidance for a young evangelist. Maybe thirty years from now, if the Lord tarries, the Lord will be greatly using some man because you poured your care, wisdom, and experience into him when he was just beginning his ministry.

In conclusion, a young evangelist needs all the encouragement we can give him. Getting started in this ministry is extremely difficult. After all, young evangelists are not well known and must be patient in waiting for the Lord to open meetings for them. In addition, they face heavy expenses in purchasing a vehicle and a trailer for their families to travel with them. If we can aid them as they begin their ministry, that effort will certainly be worthwhile. Through them, souls will come to the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity, and Christians will grow in their service to Him.

You may contact Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684, or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com

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The introductory column on Ecclesiastes presented several common objections to viewing Ecclesiastes as normative, reliable revelation from God. One popular perspective sees this book—which is admittedly unique in the sacred canon—as an accurate record of human philosophy that does not seriously factor God into the equation. The book, it is thought, contains merely man’s reasoning “under the sun” and essentially apart from God.

G. Campbell Morgan opined, “Ecclesiastes is an inspired confession of failure and pessimism when God is excluded. . . . If you want to know what a man of great privilege, and of great learning and great wisdom can come to, read this record of a man who has put God out of count in his actual life.” Similarly, Spiros Zodhiates remarked, “The pessimism of this book is as pronounced as the optimism of the Proverbs. Only at the end does the author tell us what he found to be the real source of meaning in life—reverence for God (12:13, 14). He had left God out of his search for happiness.” Such statements mysteriously miss the remarkably straightforward textual evidence that Ecclesiastes furnishes one of the richest treasures of theology proper in the Bible.

God in Ecclesiastes (Shades of Deuteronomy)

Ecclesiastes is saturated with God. Solomon refers to God directly *50 times* (44x by name or title; 6x by pronominal reference). He is the dominating subject, the governing influence, the underlying assumption of everything Solomon says in the book. Ecclesiastes comprises one of the most condensed doctrinal and theological discussions of God to be found in Scripture. He is the structural foundation of the entire book’s philosophy of life.

A careful analysis of Ecclesiastes not only unveils a remarkably balanced theology of God’s attributes and activities, but also reflects a profoundly Deuteronomic view of God. The dual references below demonstrate how consistently Solomon’s depiction of God in Ecclesiastes reflects the viewpoint of Deuteronomy in particular.

God

- is the Creator, maker of all things (11:5; 12:1; *cf. Gen. 1–2*).
- is the giver of life (8:15; 9:9; 12:7; *cf. Deut. 32:39*).
- created man [upright] (7:29; *cf. Gen. 1–2; Deut. 4:32; 32:18*).
- became the author of man’s labor because of the Fall (1:13; 3:10; *cf. Gen. 3:17–19*).
- graciously intends that man derive a measure of enjoy-

ment from the fruits of his temporal life (2:24, 25; 3:12, 13, 22; 5:18, 19; 8:15; 9:7–9; 11:9, 10; *cf. Deut. 12:7, 12, 18; 14:26; 16:10, 11, 13–15; 26:10, 11; 27:6, 7; 28:47*).

- is transcendent (removed from and infinitely above man); (5:2; *cf. Deut. 26:15*).
- is sovereign over man in all His activities (3:18; 6:10; 7:13; *cf. Deut. 32:8, 30, 39*).
- is ultimately inscrutable to man and beyond human comprehension (3:11; 8:17; 11:5; *cf. Deut. 29:29*).

In His dealings with men, God

- is the ultimate source of wealth (5:19; 6:2; *cf. Deut. 8:18*), but
- may withhold one from enjoying his accumulation (6:2).
- is the sender of both prosperity and adversity (7:14; *cf. Deut. 28, especially verse 63*).
- blesses men good in His sight with wisdom, knowledge, and joy (2:26; 5:20; *cf. Deut. 28:1–14*)
- providentially holds the righteous and the wise, along with their works, in His hand (9:1; *cf. Deut. 33:3*).
- gives evil men travail and may give their accumulation to others (2:26; *cf. Deut. 28:15ff.*).
- hears and takes vows seriously (5:2, 4, 6; 8:2; *cf. Deut. 23:21*).

Furthermore, God

- is to be feared (3:14; 5:1, 7; 7:18; 8:12, 13; 12:13; *cf. Deut. 5:29; 6:2; 8:6; 10:12, 13; 13:4; 28:58*).
- blesses those who fear Him (7:18; 8:12; *cf. Deut. 5:29*) and judges those who do not fear Him (8:13).
- is to be obeyed (12:13; *cf. Deut. 5:29; 6:2; 8:6; 10:12, 13; 13:4*).
- will hold all men responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions, and will judge them accordingly (3:15, 17; 11:9; 12:14; *cf. Deut. 32:35, 36, 41, 43*).

Does this sound like the ravings of a man who left God out of his calculations? Far from it! A pervasive and expressly Scriptural God-consciousness is the cornerstone of every observation and conclusion. Solomon repeatedly and deliberately factors God into the equation when it comes to confronting life’s enigmas and man’s responsibilities.

Man in Ecclesiastes (Shades of Genesis)

In addition, the broader theological perspective of Ecclesiastes is deeply rooted in the soil of Genesis. God’s creation of the heavens and earth reflects pattern and design in

OF ECCLESIASTES

its cycles and seasons (1:2–8, 3:1–11, 11:5, 12:1; cf. Gen. 1:1–25, 2:4–15, 8:22). Man was not only created by God (12:1; cf. Gen. 1:26), but created from the dust (3:20; cf. Gen. 2:7a) into which God breathed His breath (12:7; cf. Gen. 2:7b); when man expires, his body returns to dust (3:20, 12:7; cf. Gen. 3:19). Marriage, too, is the creation and blessing of God (9:9; cf. Gen. 2:18–25), and “good” (*tob*) is a thematic expression connecting both Genesis 1 (7x) and Ecclesiastes (over 30x in a descriptive, noncomparative sense).

Man was originally created in innocence, but chose to sin (7:20, 29; cf. Gen. 2, 3; 6:5; 8:21). The results include death both for man as well as all living creatures (3:18–20, 9:1–12; cf. Gen. 2:17; 5), unending and ultimately unsatisfying labor for man (1:3–15, 3:9, 10; cf. Gen. 3:17–19), and separation from God (5:2; 8:17; 11:5; cf. Gen. 3:24).

Interestingly, the original Hebrew word/name for man (*adam*) dominates two Old Testament books: Genesis (53x, occurring only in chapters 1–16) and Ecclesiastes (49x, additionally significant given the book’s brevity).¹

Target Audience of Ecclesiastes

To or for whom was Solomon writing? J. Stafford Wright observes,

Ecclesiastes was clearly written as a discussion guide for people prepared to think out their response to God’s unseen hand in life and history. Although it contains practical advice, it would appeal to a different public than Proverbs. One may rather link it to Job. The Wisdom writings have a twofold scope. First they set out the rules of life for an individual who wishes to be a member of a prosperous society and who looks for the right way to build up a God-fearing conscience. These rules form the Book of Proverbs. Society, however, is not ideal; mankind has a fundamental twist, and there will always be cases where a person finds things happening to him that he cannot reconcile with the [rules] of Proverbs. . . . This second scope of Wisdom writings is taken up by Job and Ecclesiastes, each in its own way.²

One reason Solomon adopted such a distinctive style and vocabulary might be linked to a potential intended purpose and target audience: *It is arguable that Solomon*

wrote Ecclesiastes at least in part as an international evangelistic missionary effort.

Consider the following observations and evidences:

1. Solomon’s wisdom was universally famed and revered (1 Kings 4:29–31, 34; 10:1, 23, 24). He literally commanded an international audience.
2. His one direct reference to audience (“my son” 12:12) need not be construed as contradicting a more international audience. Such terminology would be consistent for a “teacher” such as Solomon, universally revered for his wisdom, to use of his readers as “students,” “pupils,” or even “disciples.”
3. A philosophical discursus such as Ecclesiastes would naturally revolve around the most basic life-and-death issues that touch all men and address all human experience, as Ecclesiastes does.
4. An international target audience would explain the adoption of a linguistic style more readily accessible to a wider audience.³
5. An international target audience would also explain the adoption of a literary style readily accessible to a wider audience, since the wisdom literature genre was widely known and employed in Solomon’s day.
6. A “missionary message” would also account for the sobering, repeated message of judgment (3:17; 5:6; 8:12, 13; 11:9; 12:7, 14).
7. An international audience might also explain the exclusive use of *Elohim* for God in Ecclesiastes.
8. Despite the absence of the unique covenant name for God (*Yahweh*), the entire argument of the book moves steadily in the direction of its culmination in classic Deuteronomistic OT religion (“Fear God and obey His commandments”).
9. God clearly intended His covenant relationship with Israel—including specifically the laws He gave them—to have an international impact and testimony (Deut. 4:5–8).
10. Solomon elsewhere manifested a keen awareness of the burden of this international testimony that they bore before the nations (2 Chron. 6:32, 33).

The cosmopolitan appeal of Ecclesiastes lends even more weight to the universal and timeless value of the message of Ecclesiastes for the unconverted of every age.

Continued on next page

At a Glance

(Continued from page 31)

This awareness prompted one commentator to conclude,

Strange as the remark may seem to some, we do not hesitate to say that if there is one book more than another in the Old Testament which we would like to send for special consideration to millions of our fellow-countrymen today, it is Ecclesiastes. And though it may sound still stranger, if there is one Old Testament book more than another which many Christians of today need to read and pray over, it is Ecclesiastes.⁴

Why? What is the purpose or message of Ecclesiastes? In short, Ecclesiastes unfolds a divine blueprint for constructing a Biblical philosophy of life.

Addendum

Who wrote Ecclesiastes?

- Traditional view among Jews and Christians is Solomon.
- Liberals long ago forsook any possibility of Solomonic authorship as preposterous.
- Even some conservatives argue for non-Solomonic authorship (Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, E. J. Young, Leupold).
- Martin Luther seems to have been the first to assert non-Solomonic authorship.

Problems of Solomonic Authorship

- Solomon's name never appears; instead, the writer identifies himself simply as *Qoheleth* (lit., one who convenes or addresses an assembly), translated "Preacher."
- 1:16; 2:9—"All who were before me in Jerusalem" seems an unlikely description for Israel's third king. But as Kaiser notes, he may well be referring to the pre-Israelite line of Canaanite kings in Jerusalem. Jerusalem had a long and significant royal history prior to Israel, including Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18) and Adonizedek (Josh. 10:1).
- 1:12—"I was king" sounds strange, since Solomon reigned till his death. But this could be translated "I have been" and may suggest a writing late in life. I.e., Solomon gives a synopsis of his reign as it is coming to a conclusion.
- 4:1-3 suggests a powerlessness in face of injustice that one would not expect from a king. But this is a general observation of life, not a commentary on his own domain.

Alternatives to Solomonic Authorship

- Hezekiah (Compare Eccl. 2:4-9 and 2 Chron. 32:27-29).
- An unknown postexilic author who assumed Solomon's identity as a literary device to lend weight to his assertions.
- If it weren't really Solomon, its "appearance" of Solomonic authorship would seem to undermine its authority and the credibility of all its conclusions.

Hints of Solomonic Authorship

- 1:1—"The son of David, king in Jerusalem" is suggestive, though not conclusive.
- 1:12—"King over Israel [not Judah] in Jerusalem" suggests a pre-division monarch.
- 2:4-9—Strongly suggests Solomon's experience.
- 12:9—Fits Solomon's history and character.
- 12:12—This single direct reference to audience ("my son") is reminiscent of Proverbs.

Summary of Authorship Issue

The issue of authorship is not a "fundamental of the faith" or a litmus test for orthodoxy. At the same time, it seems logical that if we are to take 12:10 seriously, it would be difficult to excuse another author's apparently pretending to be Solomon (though it might not preclude a later writer, under inspiration, putting Solomon's actual recorded musings—he left behind a significant corpus of composition, after all [1 Kings 4:32]—into a final published form.)

"The tradition of David as singer and psalmist . . . is taken seriously. . . . We ought to take Solomon's reputation for wisdom equally seriously and see his court as the center that drew wise men from all quarters to discuss problems of living in a difficult world (1 Kings 4:34). . . . There are, in fact, no passages in the book that rule out the possibility of Solomonic authorship" (J. Stafford Wright, "Introduction to Ecclesiastes" in *Reflecting with Solomon*, 162-67).

¹ Technically, the word appears most frequently in Ezekiel, but the vast majority of those occurrences appear in the repeated phrase "son of man." Psalms ranks second with about 65x, which is neither surprising nor especially theologically significant, given its length.

² "Introduction to Ecclesiastes" in *Reflecting with Solomon*, ed. Roy Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 167-68.

³ Scholars frequently call attention to Ecclesiastes' Aramaisms (use of Aramaic words rather than Hebrew). Aramaic was a branch of the Semitic language closely related to, yet distinct from, Hebrew. "It is undeniably true that the language of this work is markedly different from that of other 10th century Hebrew texts which have been preserved in the Bible. For that matter, it is different from all other books in the Old Testament of whatever age, with the partial exception of Song of Solomon" (Gleason Archer, *Survey of Old Testament Introduction* [Chicago: Moody, 1974], 487).

⁴ J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), III:167-68.

Your Parents Don't Need to Know

The Florida Supreme Court struck down a state law July 10 that required minors to notify their parents at least 48 hours before obtaining an abortion. The 1999 law, which was signed by Governor Jeb Bush, never went into effect because of the court challenge. Senior Justice Leander Shaw wrote the majority opinion, saying the law violated privacy rights within the Florida Constitution. Justice Charles Wells was the lone dissenter. In 1989 the same court struck down a law that required minors receive parental consent before having an abortion. Wells said there was a difference between notification and consent. Governor Bush criticized the ruling saying, "The court said that the limited rights of privacy that underage Floridians have are more important than the rights of parents to have some say in their children's lives. . . . Put aside the legal stuff, it is just hard to imagine we live in a society where parents wouldn't be notified of an abortion." (Baptist Press, 07/11/03)

Clergy Unsure whether Jesus Is "The Way"

A poll of members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) indicates that many do not believe that Jesus

Christ is the only way to Heaven. The survey found that at least 70% of the members, elders, and clergy of the denomination agreed when asked whether they believed the "absolute truth for humankind is in Jesus Christ." But when these same groups were asked whether only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved, the agreement rate fell dramatically. In fact, only 43% of parishioners, 50% of elders, and 39% of clergy said they could agree with exclusivity of salvation by Christ alone. A statement passed by the denomination's 2001 General Assembly affirmed salvation through Jesus, but remained silent on the destiny of non-Christians. The resolution said, "Although we do not know the limits of God's grace and pray for the salvation of those who may come to know Christ, for us the assurance of salvation is found only in confessing Christ and trusting Him alone." (Agape Press, 06/25/03)

Campolo in Favor of Women Preachers

"Anyone who resists the notion of women preachers is functioning as a tool of the Devil," said Tony Campolo, founder and president of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, during the opening session of the Cooperative Baptist

Fellowship's general assembly June 26. "It's one thing to be wrong, but that isn't wrong, that's sinful. The Bible says, 'neglect not the gift that is in you,' and when women are gifted with the gift of preaching, anybody who frustrates that gift is an instrument of the Devil," Campolo continued. He encouraged the CBF to continue combating the sexism of those whom he said, "change the Bible to fit their theology." He also said that the other group, still anonymous, had an improper attitude about homosexuals. Any doubt that Campolo was targeting the Southern Baptist Convention dissolved when he said that some have "drawn the line" and said they would "fight out" the issue of homosexuality. R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said to Baptist Press that Campolo's comments show how far out of step he is with Southern Baptists. "Unfortunately, Dr. Campolo is a sociologist rather than a theologian. His venom toward the Southern Baptist Convention and his advocacy of liberal positions on social and moral issues puts him in no posi-

tion to judge the SBC or its institutions," said Mohler. (Baptist Press, 06/27/03)

Anglican Controversy

Faced with perhaps the worst crisis in recent Church of England history, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams summoned openly homosexual priest Jeffrey John and his advisors to Lambeth Palace on July 5. The archbishop said he and other leaders had underestimated the level of opposition that Rev. John's appointment in May as a bishop would generate throughout the church and the 70-million-member worldwide Anglican

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Communion; the priest would have to withdraw his acceptance. Canterbury staff had already drawn up his withdrawal letter. The stunned and angry clergyman agreed to step aside but said he would write his own letter. In his letter, Rev. John said he made the decision to withdraw his acceptance of the post because of "the damage my consecration might cause to the unity of the church, including the Anglican Communion." In a rare and hurriedly called news conference on the palace lawn that same day, Archbishop Williams discussed the case with reporters. He praised Rev. John and warned that the issue of homosexuality in the church can't be ducked forever. Somehow, the church must "discern the will of God in this area of ethics," he said. (*World*, 07/19/03)

Canada Approves Homosexual Marriage

The Canadian cabinet approved a new national policy today to open marriage to gay couples, paving the way for Canada to become the third country to allow same-sex unions. The decision to redefine marriage in Canada to include unions between men and between women will immediately take effect in Ontario, Canada's most populous province. Last week, the province's highest court ruled that current federal marriage laws are discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional. The policy opens the way for same-sex

NOTABLE QUOTES

Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the church and the State for ever separate. —Ulysses S. Grant

The church is never a place, but always a people; never a fold but always a flock, never a sacred building but always a believing assembly. The church is you who pray, not where you pray. A structure of brick or marble can no more be a church than your clothes of serge or satin can be you. —Anonymous

We must stop giving the impression that the church is surrounded by a wall, fighting for its existence against a world that is trying to destroy it; instead, we must realize that the church is a force pushing out into the world. —Isaac K. Beckes

Persecution has not crushed the church; power has not beaten it back; time has not abated its forces; and what is most wonderful of all, the abuses of its friends have not shaken its stability. —Horace Bushnell

If the Christian Church were a pillar of fire leading the peoples of the world, instead of an ambulance corps bringing up the rear as it so often seems to be, communism probably would never have been born. —Helen Shoemaker

The holiest moment of the church service is the moment when God's people—strengthened by preaching and sacrament—go out of the church door into the world to be the Church. We don't go to church; we are the Church. —Ernest Southcott

Our houses of worship have become places for the social climbers and our congregations have become just crowds, like the patrons of a movie theater. . . . The church should be a chamber of commerce in reverse and point up what is wrong in a community. The great sin of the church is to be so interested in serving those within it that it cannot serve the needs of those without. —Albert T. Rasmussen

A Christian church is a body or collection of persons, voluntarily associated together, professing to believe what Christ teaches, to do what Christ enjoins, to imitate his example, cherish his spirit, and make known his gospel to others. —Robert Fleming Sample

couples from the United States and around the world to travel here to marry, since Canada has no marriage residency requirements. In addition, gay-rights advocates in the United States are already declaring that Canada will serve as a vivid example to Americans that same-sex marriage is workable and offers no challenge to traditional heterosexual family life. No American state allows same-sex marriage, but Vermont has enacted a law providing for civil unions, which allow gay couples many of the benefits of marriage. Canadian marriage licenses have always been accepted in the United States, but now that the definition of marriage in the two countries appears likely to diverge, legal challenges to same-sex couples claiming rights and privileges deriving from their Canadian marriages seem certain to arise in at least some states. Issues including adoption rights, inheritance, insurance benefits, and matters as mundane as sharing health club memberships are likely to arise in courts and state legislatures. To protect religious freedom, the cabinet decided that the planned federal legislation would allow religious institutions to refuse to conduct same-sex marriages. (*News Notes*, 06/23/03)

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

A Local Church Strategy for the Unreached

Pearson Johnson

Unreached Peoples Affinity Bloc Focus

EAST ASIA

Country	Population	% "Christian"
China	1,262,556,7877.25
Mongolia	2,662,020 0.71
North Korea	24,039,1931.69
South Korea.....	46,843,98931.67
Japan.....	126,714,2201.56

An ad in *Time* arrested my attention: "When time is money, why would I connect through anywhere else?" Further down the page, it reads, "Half of the world's population is within 5 hours' flying time." It was an ad promoting Hong Kong International Airport's strategic place among the population centers of East Asia. "Why would Honk Kong International advertise in the Midwest US edition of *Time*?" I asked. The answer is clear—the business world and its markets are aggressively global in their scope, and this full-page ad presupposes that American businesses know that it is strategic to spread their influence to the immense cities of East Asia. While they do so to plan for profits in the years to come, we as Christians see reaching this region as much more than a venture—we have a *commission* to aggressively and strategically take our "product"—the gospel—into strategic global "markets"—the unevangelized regions.

As we continue in these *Global Focus* columns to educate ourselves about the needs of the unevangelized, we cannot help but begin in East Asia. A prayer journey over the maps of Eastern and Northern China, Mongolia, the Koreas, and Japan leaves us naturally overwhelmed by the immensity of the task that remains. When faced with such a daunting task, however, our hearts should turn to a God whose glory must be proclaimed and whose love and gospel can penetrate the darkest of places. With so many unbelievers gathered in the megacities of East Asia, the potential for missions is tremendous!

While the United States has 9 cities with over one million people, China has 167 cities of over a million! The numbers are so staggering they almost defy comprehension. While the US's largest city, New York City, boasts over 8 million, the largest city in China, Chongqing, is at 30 million and growing. Cities the size of NYC dot the landscape up the eastern coast of China, as urbanization continues.¹ Tokyo, Japan, is now the largest megacity in the world with 34.5 million people.

What can we as Fundamental Baptists do to reach East Asia? In December of 2002, Ben and I were part of a group of Fundamental Baptist pastors, missionaries, and educa-

tors who met for the first China Round Table Forum to discuss the challenge of missionary work in mainland China.² The recommendations of the forum included working toward developing a unified Fundamentalist strategy for ministry in China, prioritizing the work of partnering with and aiding the existing house-church movement, focusing our involvement as Westerners on pastoral and theological training, and promoting the needs of the region among our Fundamental Baptist brethren. Be involved in accomplishing these goals through your local churches.

Join the effort to see East Asians made into disciples of Jesus Christ! Read with your family about East Asia. Visit the region, or one of the Chinatowns in the States.³ Talk to immigrants in your community or host a group of Chinese students from the local state college. Opportunities to teach English in the Far East, especially China, abound for almost anyone with a college degree. Most importantly, pray for the continued spread of the gospel among the inhabitants of this region. Estimates of the current Christian population in East Asia, with the exception of South Korea, are extremely low (see text box insert). The need for involvement is immense!

Let me close with an exhortation from J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission:

The Lord Jesus commands us, commands us each one individually—"Go," He says, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Will you say to Him, "It is not convenient?" . . . Have we forgotten that we "must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," that every one may receive the things done in the body? Oh remember, pray for, labor for the unevangelized millions of China, or you will sin against your own soul!⁴

China and all of East Asia need laborers: church planters, teachers, evangelists, and prayer warriors. I challenge you to sharpen your global focus, desiring the spread of God's glory among the peoples of East Asia!

¹ Statistics courtesy of the International Mission Board of the SBC.

² The forum was organized by Dr. Tony Fox of Northland Baptist Bible College. For more information on the recommendations of the China Forum, contact us: pjohnson@intercity.org or beckman@intercity.org.

³ Major Chinatowns exist in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Boston, Atlanta, Seattle, Pittsburg, LA, Philadelphia, San Jose, Washington, Minneapolis, Portland, and San Diego.

⁴ Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission* (Littleton, CO: OMF International, 1998 Reprint Ed.), 8-9.

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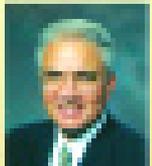
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Preventing Abuse in the Church

Continued from page 37

Outside storage buildings should be kept locked.

Counseling procedures.

One of the most vulnerable of ministries is counseling. In a news article, Cal Thomas writes about the problem of sexual sin among the clergy.¹ He quotes Joe Trull, author of *Ministerial Ethics*, as saying that "30-35% of ministers of all denominations admit to having sexual relationships" outside of marriage. He goes on to say that "at least half" of this sexual contact happens during pastoral counseling. Perhaps this news should not be surprising since many pastors fail to implement safeguards to eliminate any opportunity for sexual sin to occur.

Customarily, counseling sessions have been conducted behind closed doors, but this practice can lead to suspicion and accusation. Again, the door should have a window, and if it doesn't, then the door must remain open. Female staff should remain nearby during counseling sessions, preferably within sight of the open doorway.

A busy office is automatically a deterrent to improper behavior, so wisdom suggests avoiding evening or after-hours counseling sessions. However, if a woman simply must receive counseling outside of regular office hours, she should bring a friend along. Another option would be to ask the pastor to invite his wife to sit outside the counseling room during the counseling time.

It is best to avoid male-female counseling sessions away from the office or church. If a woman arrives for counseling and finds herself alone in the building with the pastor or male counselor, she should leave immediately and call to reschedule the appointment. Any honorable pastor will understand. In fact, a truly conscientious pastor will likewise prefer to reschedule since his reputation is at stake, too.

In counseling sessions or other meetings with a child or teen, parents

should always attend. These, too, should take place in the church. If a child must meet with the counselor or pastor alone, again, parents should remain in sight of the open door and periodically look inside. Let your child know that if for any reason he/she is uncomfortable during a counseling session, then it is fine to come to you immediately.

Also, check the credentials of any counselor before making a commitment to receive counseling services. But remember that membership in an association does not guarantee that a member is licensed, certified, or qualified to conduct counseling.

Visitation procedures.

Church visitation is another area where compromising situations can arise. A visitation team should consist of two men and one woman, or two women and one man, or a married couple. If the person being visited is a woman, teen, or child alone, a team of men should not enter the home. Rather, they should speak briefly at the door and leave.

Single male teachers or workers should not date students or conduct one-on-one counseling sessions or visitation. Furthermore, two or three adults should be present at every teen or children's activity or class to ensure proper behavior.

For some, implementing policies intended to eliminate any suspicion or appearance of evil may seem overly restrictive. However, people are fearful, and rightly so. The cause of Christ is sadly damaged when scandal hits the church.

The bottom line is that pastors and church leaders are obligated before God to shepherd the flock by effectively ministering to them, protecting them, and delivering them out of the hand of predators.

¹Thomas, Cal. "The Catholic—Which Is To Say Universal—Problem," Times Herald-Record, 20 June 2002.

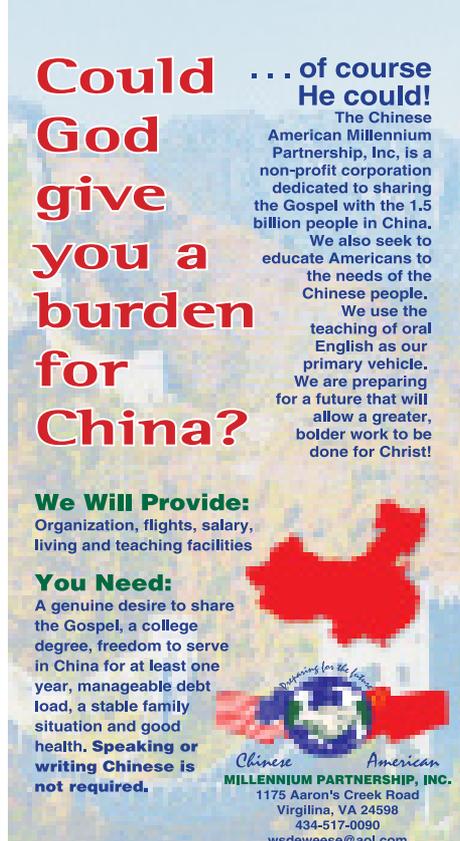
Linda Hull, her husband David, and their two sons live in Walden, New York. Linda is a former church secretary. She currently writes and publishes an e-zine titled "Words of Encouragement."



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Keep Your Family in a Bible-Preaching Church

Several issues ago, Dr. Mark Minnick featured an article about the importance of preaching on preaching. That article really spoke to my heart so I prepared a sermon for my people called, "The Importance of Preaching." Dr. Bell heard me preach it at an FBFi meeting in Puerto Rico, and asked me to preach it at all the Regional Meetings and then at the National Meeting this last year. One of the points of the sermon was to emphasize how thankful we should be to be in a Bible-preaching church.

You can survive without a lot of things in your spiritual life, but preaching is essential. A great music program is a wonderful blessing, but Christ-honoring music can be simple and presented by sincere Christians that are not professionals. A strong youth program will help any church, but you may have to do what you can with a handful of teenagers and a volunteer director. The list could go on to name the things that are truly helpful, but not essential. Preaching the Bible is essential. If you don't have that, you don't have church.

The pastor of the church I first attended after getting saved is a humble man. He has labored faithfully for many years and like all of us, has had his share of ups and downs. The thing I most appreciate about him is that he is a Bible preacher. I learned more under his ministry than he realizes he taught me, because the Bible

itself teaches the Christian. You will learn things listening to the Bible being preached that the preacher is not even saying. People tell me things that they have learned under my preaching that I don't even know myself.

The Living Word is the voice of the Living God to man today. If you have your family in a church that preaches the Bible, don't take that lightly. Most of us know someone that has left a good Bible-preaching church to go to a church that had some other attractive feature: buildings, activities, a gym, an exciting youth group, and so on. That is never a wise decision. Often a man will move to take a better job or a promotion in another city giving no thought to the kind of church his family will have to attend.

I've heard many times the sad stories of those who have done this. They are sometimes trying to compliment our church by reporting that there is just no good Bible-preaching church where they are. My first thought is, "Then what are you doing there?" My second thought is, "Well, when are you going to start one?" If you know the importance of keeping your family in a Bible-preaching church and you sincerely believe God is calling you to a place where there isn't one, He must be calling you to be a part of the solution to that problem.

You may think that the

sacrifices of starting a new church are too high a price to pay, but you will benefit more from any sacrifice that keeps the family under solid Bible preaching, even if it is in your own living room for a while than from any shallow or dead program that doesn't feed their souls.

Most folks are getting all the entertainment they need, but very few are getting the preaching they need, and yet churches all over the country are going into the entertainment business. In many large cities, the Mega-church is the best show in town. Church buildings themselves are looking more and more like theaters. Unless it has already happened and I don't know about it, I suppose it won't be long before they will be selling popcorn in the foyer.

Don't give in to this fad. Keep your family in a Bible-preaching church. Don't be fooled into thinking that a dynamic teacher is worth the compromise either. If a man won't demonstrate obedience to the Bible in the programs of his church, he is not really teaching the Bible; he is just teaching about the Bible. Nehemiah 8:8 gives us the standard, "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."

There are a lot of things that believers can tolerate for a time while a church or leadership is new, but this is something we must get right. We can't be Biblical without the truth of the Bible. We all make mistakes, but we must not make a mistake here. Keep your family in a Bible-preaching church.

Most folks are getting all the entertainment they need, but very few are getting the preaching they need . . .



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