

ENRICHMENT

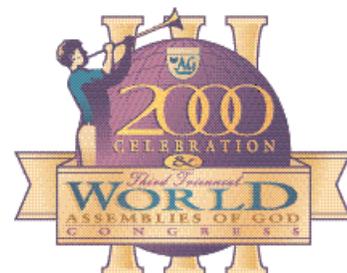
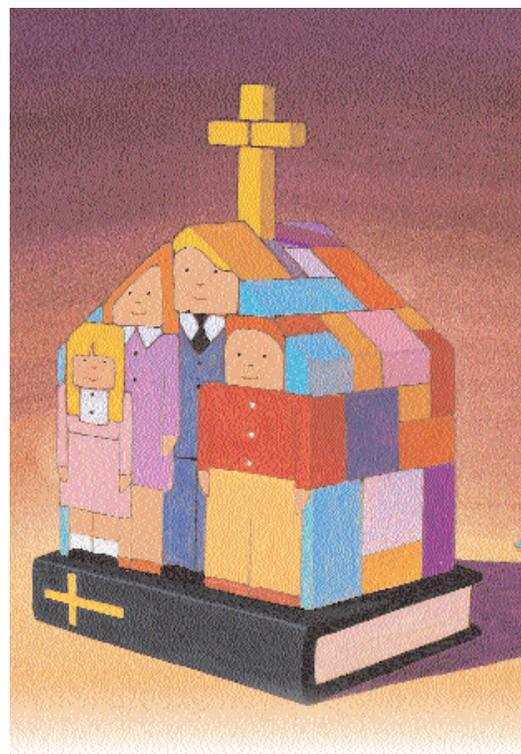
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M^{inistry} Matters

BY WAYDE I. GOODALL

FAMILY IN CRISIS

While many Americans say their families are important to them, statistics show differently—we have the highest divorce rate in the world. Surveys on the family reported the following results:

- When asked whom they would want with them if stranded on a deserted island, 66 percent said their family or spouse.
- Adults identify their relationship with their spouse as their most important personal relationship; but 60 percent of all new marriages end in divorce.
- An overwhelming percentage of Americans contend that if the traditional family falls apart, America itself will collapse; but two out of three have redefined the family to be those people whom they deeply care about or who deeply care about them.
- Adults admit it is important to give a child every opportunity to succeed; but one out of three children born this year will be born to an unwed mother, and most of them will grow up in poverty.
- Four out of five adults describe family as one of their top three priorities; yet they spend less time with their family than they devote to television, jobs, and hobbies.

THE CHURCH CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

In the U.S. there are six primary household configurations:

1. Couples with kids under 18—22%
2. Married couples without kids under 18—31%
3. Single-parent households, kids under 18—9%
4. Divorced singles without kids under 18—7%
5. Never-married singles, without kids under 18—23%
6. Widowed singles, without kids under 18—8%

The majority of churchgoers are households with two parents and children under 18 years of age. If we add grandparents of these families to this number, it raises the proportion to three-fourths of all regular

church attendees. When churches take family ministry seriously, it will enrich its families and impact its community.

Because of the various sociological issues in today's society, we have a great potential for reaching the families in our communities. For many, the church has a high level of credibility. The church is expected to help families. People in our communities believe the church is good at teaching biblical principles concerning the family, offering counseling services, encouraging people to have a biblical family, and praying for families. The church, through its various ministries, also has the most frequent contact with families. This gives churches an incredible advantage and an open door to make a difference in the families in our communities.

The Family Research Council found, however, that 72 percent of all married couples had no premarital preparation prior to their wedding, and another 13 percent met with the pastor only once or twice. Furthermore, 76 percent of these couples were married in a church. "With 85 percent getting little or no premarital preparation, it is no wonder half the marriages are failing. And churches must accept blame."¹

Pastors are concerned about reaching families in their communities. Churches that offer classes for young couples, parenting classes, classes to help blended families, yearly marriage retreats, and special family emphasis times will strengthen their families. Churches that take the family seriously have stronger families and fewer divorces.

While doing this might seem complicated, there are biblically based programs pastors can use to accomplish this goal. Churches can offer premarital counseling (several sessions) either by someone on staff, or a video teaching monitored by a qualified leader. This not only encourages engaged couples, but these couples learn valuable information that can change critical behavioral patterns that could injure their marriage.

An additional program that is gaining momentum in America is the Marriage Savers Covenant movement. In this program, all the ministers in a community agree to require premarital counseling for every couple wanting to be married. Pastors who sign this covenant will not perform a wedding ceremony for couples who have not had this counseling. This program has had a significant impact on hundreds of marriages. For example, Chattanooga, Tennessee, has seen a 14-percent reduction in divorce. Dalton, Georgia, once labeled "the divorce capital of the nation," celebrated the first anniversary of its Community Marriage Savers Covenant with a 21-percent drop in divorces—the largest 1-year drop of any city.² This program is easy to organize and manage, especially among the clergy. Most pastors agree that they need to help strengthen marriages. Clergy in over 100 communities have signed a Community Marriage Savers Covenant.

The possibility of preventing just one divorce or saving a child from a broken home is well worth the effort. Developing a family focused ministry in your church could be the bridge that brings a child, abused wife, confused husband, couple, or family to God's wonderful kingdom. **E**

Wayde I. Goodall, D.Min., is executive editor of Enrichment and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.



ENDNOTES

1. Michael J. McManus, *Marriage Savers*®, March/April, 1999, p. 5.
2. For more information on Community Marriage Savers Covenant, write: Marriage Saver, 9311 Harrington Drive, Potomac, MD 20854.

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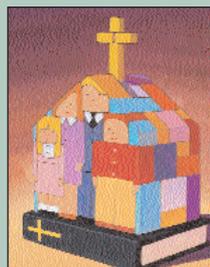
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INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK

Ask the Superintendent— Ministering to the Family

When was the last time you took inventory of your church's ministries?

Are there areas of ministry in your church that need reassessing or a clearer focus?

Taking inventory is a necessary step in the process of providing effective ministry. The

most successful churches are the ones with a clear understanding of

God's vision for the church and community.

No single effort in the life of the church is as important and necessary as an intentional, well-defined family ministry. At no other time in our nation's history has the family unit been more splintered and in need of ministry and care. Undoubtedly, the churches that will be the most vibrant and effective in the 21st century will be the ones that are giving structure and function to family ministry.

Thomas E. Trask, Assemblies of God general superintendent, understands the importance of a church's commitment to the family. Drawing from his own experiences as a parent and pastor, he shares his thoughts on this important subject.



HOW IMPORTANT IS FAMILY MINISTRY TO THE LOCAL CHURCH?

The church itself is a family, so it is important that the church understand the framework and structure of the family. The church must also minister to and address the needs of all the members of the family. When I pastored, I had to find ways to minister to the whole family—children, junior and senior high, college and career, single adults, young marrieds, middle-agers, and senior adults. I recognized that I couldn't be all things to all people, regardless of the size church. So I brought in staff members to minister to the various groups within the family. Churches that can't afford to hire additional staff are finding laypeople to help minister to families. By doing this we are addressing the needs of the family so no one is neglected.

IN THE AREAS OF SPIRITUALITY AND RESPONSIBILITY, HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE FATHERS TO BE LEADERS IN THEIR FAMILIES?

I recently spoke at a men's convention at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, on the subject, "Fathers—Men, It's in Your Heart." The Scripture says that God created man in His image.

God created man with the God-given gifts and abilities to be the spiritual leader of the home. God has placed this leadership role in us. A man may say, "I don't have that ability." But God created him with that ability, whether or not he chooses to exercise it.

It is a cop-out when a man says, "I can't do that." He probably does not want to assume his responsibility. Some men might have greater abilities in this area than other men, but God will help all men fulfill this role if they will accept their God-given responsibility.

The family wasn't put together by an organization or a committee—God put

it together. He created the family and its structure. If men will take the responsibility of leadership in their homes, their families will follow them in the framework that God ordained.

AS A PASTOR, HOW DID YOU ENCOURAGE MEN TO ACCEPT THIS ROLE AS HEAD OF THEIR FAMILY?

I had the privilege of being raised in a home where we had family worship before I left for school each day. That left an indelible mark upon my life. We practiced that in our home raising our own children.



*The church itself is a family,
so it is important that the church
understand the framework and
structure of the family.*

Some men do not know how to conduct family worship. As a pastor, I would periodically teach families how to conduct family worship. This is one way we can help men to fulfill their God-given role.

NOT ALL PARENTS IN A CHURCH ARE MARRIED. WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DOES THE CHURCH HAVE TOWARD SINGLE PARENTS?

It is important to minister to single parents and help them fulfill the role they are in. Many single parents are not single parents by choice. They may be in that position because of

something that happened over which they had no control—the death of a spouse or an unfaithful mate. They are not second-class citizens, and they are not odd or different. As a pastor, I heard people say, "I don't feel comfortable in a family setting at church because my mate is missing." I assured them they were needed and welcome. They need the fellowship and relationship opportunities within the church so the whole church can minister to them and their children.

MANY PEOPLE IN OUR CHURCHES COME FROM BLENDED FAMILIES. WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH'S ATTITUDE BE TOWARD THEM AND HOW CAN WE MINISTER TO THEM?

In many cases, there are children from both former marriages and children from the present marriage. It takes understanding to work through these matters. Blended families need the church and the family structure to stand alongside them, encourage them, and help them. The church can be the agency that gives

them help and instruction, and ministers to them. One of the greatest tragedies is when a blended family withdraws from the church. If they stay in the church, they will discover there are others who are going through, or have gone through, the same

circumstances. These people can minister to each other because they understand.

ABUSE IS COMMON IN TODAY'S SOCIETY. HOW CAN THE CHURCH MINISTER TO THE ABUSED SPOUSE AND CHILD?

There is no justification for spousal or child abuse in a Christian home. But the church is not immune from this kind of behavior. There is no agency in the world that should have a better understanding, a deeper heart, and a sympathy and empathy for these people than the church. Every church can provide healing to hurting

members. The power of the gospel plus the love of God poured out through the body of Christ ministers to those who have been abused.

YOUR CHILDREN ARE STRONG CHRISTIANS, AND TWO OF THEM ARE IN FULL-TIME MINISTRY. HOW WOULD YOU ADVISE A BUSY PASTOR TO FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN MINISTRY AND FAMILY?

Our priorities need to be in the proper order: the Lord first, the family second, and the ministry third. In the past we have gotten the second and third priorities mixed up. That is not God's plan and purpose for the minister's family. We took time for recreation as a family. Our oldest son Brad was a basketball player and the captain of the high school basketball team. He was chosen as Christian All-American. Friday nights we went to his basketball games. Also, we enjoyed attending professional sport games.

You may ask, "Brother Trask, did the ministry suffer?" No, the ministry did not suffer. God honored our commitment—what better testimony can there be than to have your family serving the Lord? What have I achieved, regardless

of how successful I might have been as a pastor, if I lose my own family?



Churches that can't afford to hire additional staff are finding laypeople to help minister to families.

WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO TRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR FAMILY TIME WHEN THERE ISN'T AN EMERGENCY?

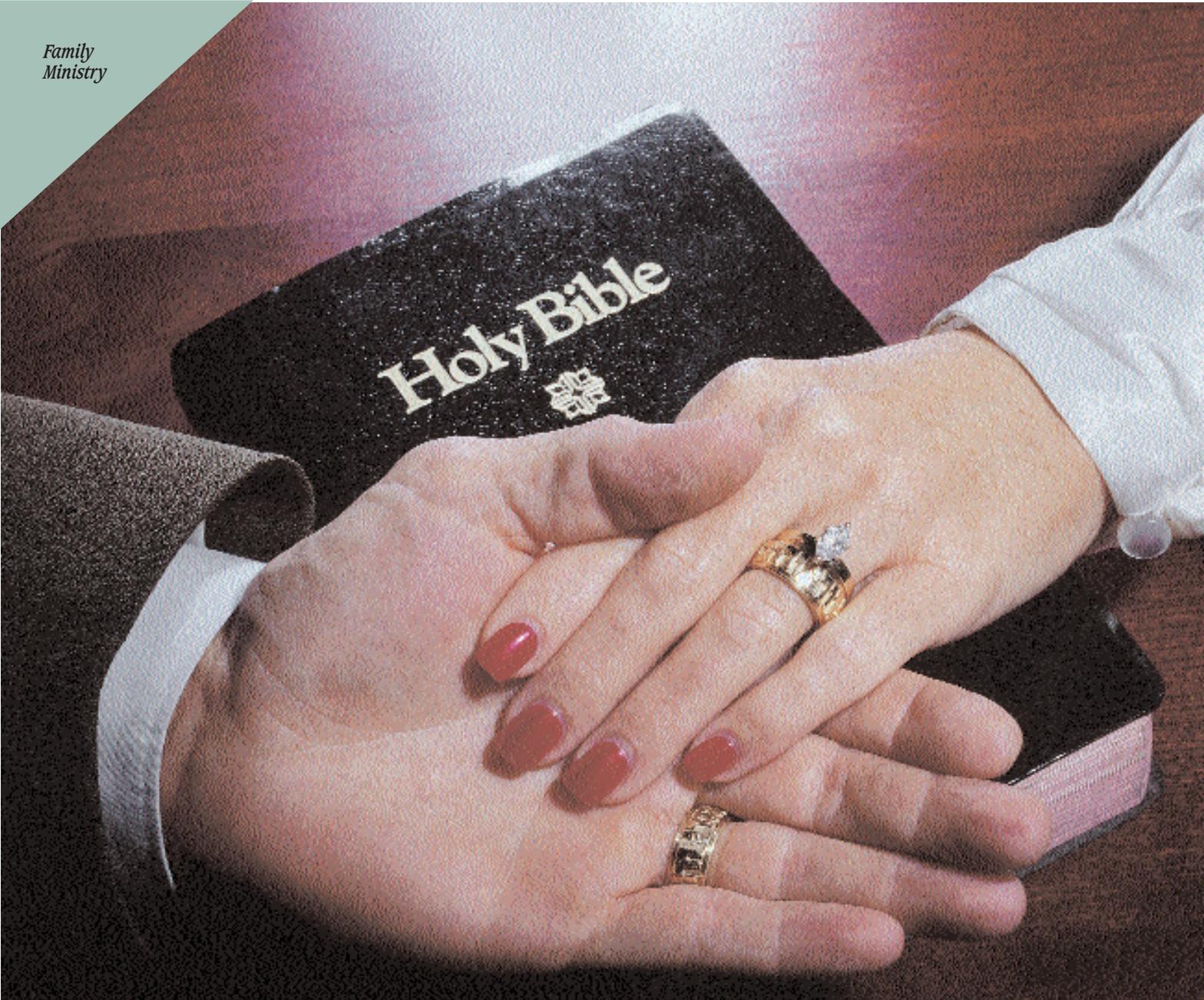
That's when you must tactfully say, "I'm sorry, but I'm committed to the family," and then hold to it. There are times, however, such as the death of someone in the church or an emergency in the church, where that situation needs to have priority. But children

understand circumstances like that. It's when the family becomes the third priority on a regular basis that children begin to say, "Dad and Mom are always involved in the church, and they don't have any time for us." That's when children turn bitter and you lose them. You send a message to them: "The work of God is more important than you are." That should never happen in a minister's home.

WHY DOES THE DEVIL WANT TO DESTROY THE FAMILY?

The enemy would love to destroy the family because if he destroys the family, he destroys the church. If he destroys the church, he destroys a nation. If he destroys a nation, he destroys the people of

God. He recognizes there is strength in the family unit. It's the family that makes up a nation, a church, and a home, so he viciously attacks the family and Christian homes. It's easy to find reasons to not attend church; it's easy to find reasons to not have devotions; it's easy to justify misplaced priorities. We must guard against these so the enemy does not have an advantage over us. 



INSIDE THE PASTORAL MARRIAGE

BY RAYMOND T. BROCK

A primary method of presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world is through the marriage of a pastoral couple. Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:32 that Christian marriage was designed by God to reveal to the world the mysterious relationship between Christ and the Church. No marriage in the congregation is more important than the pastoral marriage in communicating this message—not only to believers, but to unbelievers as well.

CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIPS

Solomon discovered a truth that is as real today as it was 3,000 years ago: “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22*). In addition, he emphasized the importance of monogamy in marriage (Proverbs 5:18–23; Ecclesiastes 9:9), and David extolled the joys of having children who are the product of love in the marital relationship (Psalm 127:5). The Bible begins by telling us that God in relationship—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created man and woman to live in relationship with each other and with Him (Genesis 1:26,27). Both reflected the glory of God. Man was created first (Genesis 2:7), followed by the woman who was taken from the side of the man (Genesis 2:21–23). Woman was created because God declared: “ ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him [a helper to meet his needs]’ ” (Genesis 2:18).

What need did Adam have that he could not handle in the Garden of Eden? Loneliness. Loneliness was the first emotion Adam had that he could not handle. This does not mean that every adult must be married, but it does encourage marriage, especially for pastors.

Even though God came in the cool of the evening to converse with Adam, he needed someone like himself—another human being—with whom to communicate during the day. Woman was not created to be a sex object; rather, she was created to be a nurturing listener and active communicator.

MODELING MARRIAGE FOR THE CONGREGATION

There are many ways of ministering to a congregation and community. None, however, is more effective than the pastoral marriage that exemplifies to the world the mystical relationship

between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:29–33). Paul gives the divine order of relationships in a Christian marriage. In Ephesians 5:21, the husband and wife are commanded to be mutually submissive to each other. In the rest of the chapter the husband is enjoined to initiate love to his wife and she is to submit (respond) voluntarily to his love.

The Christian husband (pastor or layman) is to love his wife as much as Christ loved the Church, extending to her the last ounce of blood and the last burst of energy if necessary. He is to give her all the privileges (material and temporal) he takes for himself (Ephesians 5:23–29). The Greek word for love in these passages is *agape*, which Donald M. Joy describes as “ ‘targeted affection,’ in which the person deliberately chooses whom to love. This is why only *agape* can be commanded. All other loves, *eros*, *philia*, and *storge*, are spontaneous and situated in the context of particular relationships.”¹ As “head of the wife” (Ephesians 5:23), what does a Christian husband do? In the human anatomy, the head performs four functions: sensation, perception, cognition, and communication:

Sensation is the first function of headship. In marriage, the husband is to be sensitive to the needs of the “body” (wife and children), which means they must keep him apprised of what is going on in the family. This means no conspiracy of silence or collusion between the mother and children to keep secrets from the husband/father.

Perception involves understanding the sensations received from the body and putting them into proper perspective. Information from past experiences, current circumstances, and possible outcomes in the future are brought into focus. Then the husband has the information he needs to make a decision.

Cognition is the process of making a decision for the benefit of the family. The husband does not make decisions for his own comfort or convenience. His decisions are made for the benefit of his wife and the family.

Communication completes the cycle. Having responded to the sensations and perceptions necessary for cognition, the husband then communicates to the wife and children what he believes is most appropriate for the family.

Just as the husband, as the head in Christian marriage, is the initiator of love, so the wife is

There are many ways of ministering to a congregation and community. None, however, is more effective than the pastoral marriage that exemplifies to the world the mystical relationship between Christ and the Church.

to submit or respond voluntarily and spontaneously with love to those initiatives of her husband. She becomes the recipient of the benefits derived from God's divine order of relationships. This submission is not to be forced, faked, or passive; it is to be voluntarily as unto the Lord. So Paul concludes the matter: "Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). It is interesting that God commanded children to obey their parents and to honor them. But where do children learn honor? From parents who are honorable. And what is the promise to the children who honor their parents? Long life.

DEVELOPING INTIMACY

Intimacy begins in dating, develops during courtship, matures in engagement, but does not become complete until marriage.²

Geographical intimacy begins as a young couple considers the influence their geographical heritage has on their marital expectations. Dating allows them to examine these differences and to consider what changes will need to be made before they "leave" and "cleave" as commanded in Genesis 2:24.

Recreational intimacy develops as

hobbies, recreations, and leisure-time activities are explored. The more the couples have in common in their dating, the easier it will be for them to enjoy their leisure time in their later years.

Intellectual intimacy involves the blending of two mental worlds in which the couple learn how to respect each other's intellectual gifts and discover how to share good books, literature, and poetry.

Aesthetic intimacy is the ability to share the world of beauty with its symmetry and form and allows the couple to share the world of art, music, and nature.

Emotional intimacy develops as the courting couple shares feelings on a deep level and develop trust. They learn to laugh together as well as communicate honestly when sad, angry, or disappointed.

Spiritual intimacy continues to develop in courtship as the young couple read the Bible together, pray together, attend church together, and become involved in active Christian service activities. Both must be committed to God as the organizing basis of their relationship and to His Word for establishing their priorities, especially in any disagreements.

Financial intimacy comes as the

courting or engaged couple learn to delay gratification and not buy impulsively, taking responsibility for their spending behavior. They must remember they are working for God.

Task intimacy involves discussing individual strengths and weaknesses in pastoral activities. This also includes the division of labor at home so the wife is not expected to be involved full time at church and still be in charge of all domestic and disciplinary responsibilities at home. The husband must assume his fair share of the household tasks.

Commitment intimacy grows out of sharing values and making a commitment to each other before God to maintain open communication in all dimensions of their marriage, especially in times of crisis.

Physical intimacy matures in marriage as the couple become "one flesh" (Genesis 2:23,24). They reach the purest form of intimacy when body, soul, and spirit are united in sexual intercourse in the presence of God (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:17; Hebrews 13:4). At this time they are able to communicate their love in a way that no words can convey. Sex in marriage is like the obbligato in a symphony—not the melody or the harmony—just the grace notes that embellish the composition.³

PREVENTING AFFAIRS IN MARRIAGE

In the closing decades of the 20th century, sexual affairs involving ministers increased precipitously. As a counselor I have observed several major causes of unfaithfulness among pastors. Alertness of the pastoral couple to these excuses can go a long way in avoiding marital affairs.⁴

Causes of Affairs

Invulnerability. As one pastor put it, "I began to feel I was an exception, that what I could censure in others, I could justify for myself." Another version of this excuse: "I began to believe what my people were saying about me as a person who could do no wrong."

Gullibility. David Augsburger reports a pastor's confession: "My counselee told me, 'If you really cared for me, you'd hold me.' So since caring is the essence of pastoral care, we held each other. Then we decided that much more caring was needed by us both."⁵

Warped theology. One pastor confessed having an affair with a member in his church, explaining, "After we finished making love, we both knelt beside the bed and asked God to forgive us. We knew His grace was sufficient to take care of us until the next time we got back

together." Unhappy marriage—this is an age-old excuse: "My marriage is unhappy; my wife is not a good lover. Since God is good and wants me happy, it follows that I should find someone else." A survey made by *Christianity Today* discovered that only about 10 percent of the responding pastors had sought professional counseling for their sexual temptations before acting on them.⁶

Just friends. Relationships that develop beyond the limits of friendship lead to affairs. As one pastor put it, "We were just good friends. I needed someone to

talk to, and she was a good listener." This frequently involves a staff member or someone who works near the pastoral office.

We fell in love. This is a take-off on the David and Bathsheba story (2 Samuel 11). As one pastor put it, "I don't know what happened. It was just the right chemistry, I guess. We fell in love. We couldn't help ourselves." This illustrates what we have learned from experience—falling is an unstable position. David could have checked his fall; so can we.

Marriage, an Extended Romance

God created humankind with sexual drive. With the creation of woman came the injunction that since she was taken from the side of man, the couple would become "one flesh." With this union the man was to leave his father and his mother for the woman's sake and live with her under the smile of God's approval.

Although God instituted marriage and provided men and women with the capacity to initiate and enjoy lovemaking, it becomes our responsibility to keep the fire of romance burning brightly. Without romance the best marriage will fail. Ministers must strive with enthusiasm to make their marriage happy and exemplary. The marriage relationship in the parsonage, whether by design or coincidence, becomes the model for marriage relationships in the homes of the parishioners as well.

Faced with the responsibility of setting a good example for the church—and the community—how do ministers and their spouses keep the marriage relationship interesting and desirable, even exciting at times? This cannot be accomplished unless the marriage itself rests on a bedrock of mutual love and admiration. If the initial attraction that brought a couple together has faded, the first step is to carefully rekindle the flame. Since the Scriptures enjoin the husband to love his wife (while requiring the wife to respect her husband), he must simply fill the God-given role of courting and wooing his mate with genuine affection. He will never stoop to coercion, bribes, or threats to satisfy his sexual urges. To do so is to reduce the act of lovemaking to the unethical practice of using one's spouse.

While the husband recognizes his charge to be the keeper of the flame, the thoughtful wife sees herself as tinder, feeding the flame until it becomes a burning passion and delight. It is her role to be courted. She will be coy, flirtatious, making herself desirable for him to have and to hold. All of this becomes readily possible if care has been exercised in holding fast to the "first love" that initiated the union.

But tragedy lurks behind the bedroom curtains when either husband or wife must seek an artificial stimulus to enable an acceptable performance in bed. I recall with considerable sadness some personal friends, whose marriage and young family were destroyed because they ignored this major danger sign. Their relationship had regressed to the point that the wife found it necessary to read pornographic literature at bedtime before being able to respond to her husband. Within a few months the couple had separated. Divorce soon followed, depriving their two children of the right to a well-ordered upbringing and compromising a ministry that never recovered. Add to the above a troubled congregation to complete yet another of the thousands of similar sad sagas of arrested love affairs.

Here are a few suggestions for maintaining a wholesome marital relationship or possibly even salvaging an unhealthy one:

1. Talk frankly with your spouse about your sexual needs.
2. Work (yes, work!) at maintaining a loving, tender relationship.
3. Don't let an argument turn into a standing feud. (Take the humble part.)
4. Occasionally, go together to a marriage seminar. (Regardless of the benefit, merely going will speak volumes to your mate.)
5. Should the relationship seem to be in trouble, don't let the word "divorce" be uttered before going for counseling.

Make sure you are doing the little things that make for a happy union. For example, remember the special days each year that have romantic overtones for you and your spouse. Choose a romantic spot for dinner, or take a vacation now and then. Affirm your mate with sincere compliments. Dress for your companion, not for others. Take time to make yourself appealing to your mate. Learn to say the words "I love you" without inhibition. Don't make your spouse assume your affection; express your love. Even if at times it seems hypocritical to utter the "three little words," you will never be judged unethical for your efforts. Finally, always honor your spouse, both in public (whether from the pulpit or in conversation) and in private.

—Adapted from T. Burton Pierce, *Ministerial Ethics: A Guide for Spirit-Filled Leaders* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1996). Used with permission.

SUMMARY

The purpose of marriage for pastors is not only to enjoy an intimate, loving relationship with a person of the opposite sex and to produce children. It is also to demonstrate to the world the mystical relationship between Christ and the Church. Christian marriage is a fulfillment of the purposes of creation. But the couple in pastoral ministry is wise to be alert to the potential of sexual affairs—an occupational hazard of people in helping relationships who live public lives under moral scrutiny. **E**

**Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

ENDNOTES

1. Donald M. Joy, *Bonding: Relationships in the Image of God* (Dallas: Word Books, 1985), 59.
2. Raymond T. Brock, *Parenting the Elementary Child* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1995), ch. 6 passim.
3. Dwight H. Small, *Christian: Celebrate Your Sexuality* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1976).

4. Raymond T. Brock, "The Deception of Affairs," *Pentecostal Evangel*, 24 April 1988, 6, 7, 15; Raymond T. Brock and Horace C. Lukens, Jr., "Affair Prevention in the Ministry," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 8, no. 4 (1989): 44–55.
5. David Augsburg, "The Private Lives of Public Leaders," *Christianity Today* 31, no. 17 (1987): 23.
6. Tim Stafford, "Great Sex: Reclaiming a Christian Sexual Ethic," *Christianity Today* 39, no. 14 (1987): 31, 45. Page 45 shows the following: Have you ever sought professional counseling for sexual temptation? Laypersons: Yes, 7 percent, No, 93 percent; Pastors: Yes, 10 percent, No, 90 percent. (Source: CTI Research.)

Raymond T. Brock, Tulsa, Oklahoma, is visiting professor of counseling and psychology at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri. This article is abridged from The Pentecostal Pastor: A Mandate for the 21st Century (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1997) and used by permission.



"Young man, 'I guess so' is not an adequate response."

I

INTERVIEW WITH GARY SMALLEY

Strengthening Ministry Marriages

NO MARRIAGE IN THE CONGREGATION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE PASTORAL MARRIAGE. IT IS VIEWED AS THE MODEL UPON WHICH ALL MARRIAGES ARE BASED. HOWEVER, THE IMPACT OF MINISTRY STRESS IS TEARING SOME PASTORAL MARRIAGES APART. NO OTHER TRAGEDY IN THE MINISTRY CARRIES AS MUCH PAIN AND DISTRESS AS A FAILED MINISTRY MARRIAGE. THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF A FAILED PASTORAL MARRIAGE ARE ENORMOUS. UNLIKE ANY OTHER PROFESSION, WHEN THE MINISTER'S MARRIAGE GOES BAD, THERE IS THE IMMEDIATE LOSS OF RESPECT, POSITION, AND SUSTENANCE—THE STAKES ARE HIGH.

GARY SMALLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE SMALLEY RELATIONSHIP CENTER IN BRANSON, MISSOURI, OFFERS PRACTICAL IDEAS AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO MINISTRY COUPLES THAT WILL HELP TO STRENGTHEN THEIR MARRIAGES AND EFFECTIVENESS IN MINISTRY.

WHAT TRENDS ARE YOU SEEING IN MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES THAT PASTORS NEED TO KNOW?

I am very excited about some trends I see occurring in our country. There are movements in various parts of the nation to legislate ways to motivate couples to receive training before marriage and before having children. One suggested motivation for training is to charge less for a marriage license if a couple receives premarital counseling. Silver Dollar City in Branson, Missouri, has a not-for-profit foundation funding a program to train couples in marriage and parenting. Another exciting movement sweeping the country is called Smart Marriages®. These conferences are designed to train couples to minister to other couples.

On the other side of the coin is the continual deterioration of the family, the high divorce rate, and blended families. In blended families, the divorce rate is even higher for second and third marriages. For those of us involved in strengthening marriages, we have challenges all around us. In the next 10 years, though, there will be some major changes in America with regard to providing training for couples and parents. We are developing these skills right now and are getting ready to teach them on a regular basis.

DESCRIBE HOW THE FIVE LEVELS OF INTIMATE COMMUNICATION CAN HELP TO STRENGTHEN PASTORAL MARRIAGES?

Gary Oliver, Th.M., Ph.D., executive director of The Center for Marriage and

Family Studies and professor of psychology and practical theology at John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas, has helped us define the five levels of intimate communication that all couples go through every day. In the first level, a couple simply tries to avoid

about life or each other.

During level two, a couple shares basic facts about themselves or life in general:

“It sure was hot today, wasn’t it?”

“Can you believe what the President did today?”

There is little risk in starting an argument at this level.

At level three, the couple shares their opinions, concerns, or expectations. There is a greater risk of starting an argument at this level. They may say things such as:

“You never listen to me.”

“You’re wrong and you know it.”

If a couple has not learned how to handle arguments at this stage, they are at risk of developing one or all of the four factors that cause divorce.

Couples achieve the fourth level when they feel they are safe to share their deepest feelings and will treat each other’s feelings as valuable. At this level, each person is open, honest, and accepts responsibility for his or her feelings. Communication may include this:

“Tell me if this is right; you feel afraid for our daughter because she is getting her driver’s license.”

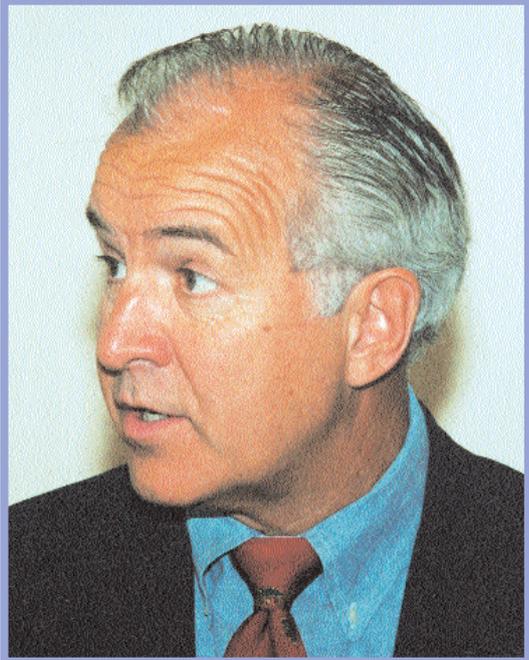
“It’s not that you mind me watching TV; it’s that you feel cheated that we don’t spend more time together.”

In this atmosphere of honor, the listener tries to understand and validate

what is being communicated. When we share our feelings, it reflects our deepest relational need. Conflicts usually reveal that a person’s feelings and needs are not being understood, validated, or fulfilled.

At the fifth level, a person feels safe

We have discovered that arguments in a marriage are the result of somebody’s needs not being met, or they perceive that their needs won’t be met.



each other. When they do speak, it is usually shallow conversation or exchanging clichés such as:

“How are you doing?”

“I’m fine.”

“Please pass the salt.”

At this level there is no discussion

to share his or her deepest needs and knows that these needs will be understood and valued. One spouse might respond like this: "See if this is right. You need some time alone at night after work, and it's not that you don't want time with me; you simply need to recoup."

Since feelings reflect whether a person's needs are being met, a couple can honor each other as they move through the fourth level (feelings) into the fifth level (needs). Honoring involves being sensitive to the other's expressions and asking the offended person to share his or her needs.

If pastors and their wives stay at levels one and two, there will be little mutual satisfaction and joy in their relationship. At the third level of intimacy, there may be what I call four relational germs that take place during an argument: withdrawal, escalating the argument, invalidating each other, and having exaggerated or false beliefs about a mate. These germs can cause infection and lead to divorce.

In our program, we teach three "love skills" that help a couple move into the fourth and fifth levels of intimacy. These "love skills" act like an antibiotic, killing divorce germs. We are training facilitators to teach these three skills. I also have a video we use in our seminars throughout the country.

WHAT ARE THESE THREE "LOVE SKILLS" AND HOW DO THEY WORK?

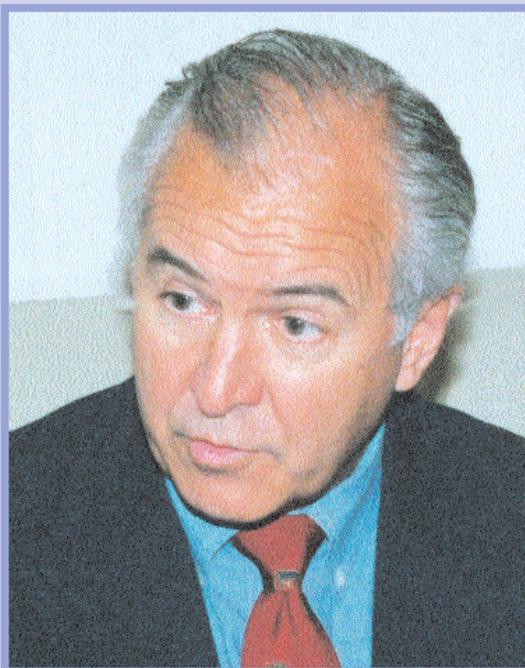
The first love skill is the skill of honor. It is the biggest antibiotic against divorce.

Honoring is considering your mate more valuable than yourself. If a person communicates superiority to his or her mate, it can kill a marriage. John Gottman, Ph.D., cofounder of the Gottman Institute Inc., a Seattle, Washington, based marriage and family organization,

person. First, recognize your mate as valuable, important, and autographed by God. Second, list all the things you treasure, admire, and appreciate about your mate, and review the list from time to time. Reviewing sets a rock-solid foundation to your marriage and gives you the energy to repair whatever is damaged after a conflict. The third aspect of honoring is to show or express ways you appreciate your mate, without embarrassing him or her. For example, tell your children or friends how important your mate is to you. That's honor, the most important skill. In many cases, it's the only skill a couple needs. Honoring can also be applied to children and friends.

Experts say it doesn't matter how much you love each other, how committed you are, or even how religious, faithful, or active you are in the church—divorces still take place. George Barna says the divorce rate in the church today is 3 percent higher than in the world. Love, commitment, and faith are obviously important, but how well they argue determines whether a couple stays in love and has longevity in their marriage. Remembering that your mate's opinions, concerns, ideas, and thinking are more important than yours will help you argue with honor rather than with

Remembering that your mate's opinions, concerns, ideas, and thinking are more important than yours will help you argue with honor rather than with anger.



calls this type of behavior contempt. Gottman says he can predict divorce with 100 percent accuracy if a person does not honor his or her mate. I call this type of behavior dishonor, a violation of Philippians 2.

We teach three steps in honoring a

person. This is why couples need to use the second love skill—what I call the drive-through listening skill.

This second love skill is based on James 1:19,20, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the

righteousness of God.” These drive-through listening skills are LUV—listening, understanding, and validation. This is similar to what happens at a drive-through restaurant.

In a drive-through restaurant, after you have placed your order, the employee repeats your order. You can then acknowledge whether the order is correct or not. In this second love skill, you first listen carefully to your mate. Next, to understand your mate, ask yourself, “What is my mate saying?” This may mean repeating what your spouse has said to clarify any misunderstanding. When you do this, you may be astonished by your mate’s uniqueness. The last step—validation—means you have understood your mate and you acknowledge his or her opinions as valuable, even if you do not agree. At this point the couple can begin to discuss solutions, determining what would benefit both of them.

My wife and I have done this for the last 5 years, and there is no issue we believe we can’t talk about; or if we can’t, we go to a close friend or two and use the same method in front of them and it works. We call it our 911 group. It works miraculously.

The third key skill is love-charging your mate’s battery. Picture yourself as a battery with jumper cables. Symbolically attach them to your mate for 20 minutes a day at different times—a minute here, 2 minutes there, 30 seconds here—as you nurture or charge your mate’s main-need battery. Some people have one or two predominant needs, and others have all seven of these needs.

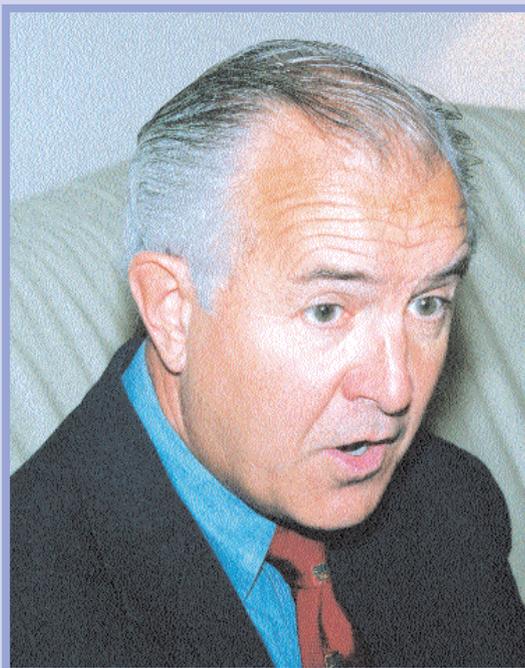
We have discovered that arguments in a marriage are the result of somebody’s needs not being met, or they perceive that their needs won’t be met. Arguments can cause the germs that infect or break up families. If I know my mate’s needs, and God gives me the

AS YOU DEFINE NEEDS IN A MARRIAGE, WHAT ARE SOME THAT ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO PASTORAL MARRIAGES?

There are seven needs that are important in marriages, especially pastoral marriages. They are: a mutual commitment to maintain a vibrant relationship with Christ; a mutual commitment to stay together and work at resolving conflicts; the need to have verbal and physical tenderness from one’s mate; connectedness—doing things together (a man’s big need), or talking together (a woman’s big need); agreement or inclusion in the decisions that affect both partners in a marriage; acceptance of one spouse by the other for who he or she is and his or her thoughts, opinions, and feelings; and the need to feel the other mate is being honest and trustworthy.

My wife and I are aware of each other’s needs and minister to each other throughout the day. She ministers much better to me than I do to her. This morning, because I left the house a little after my wife, I washed my breakfast dishes. For her, it’s important to come home to an orderly kitchen. My wife needs order; so, I honored, respected, and nurtured her by washing my breakfast dishes. ☑

There are movements in various parts of the nation to legislate ways to motivate couples to receive training before marriage and before having children.



strength to understand and meet those needs, our arguments will be cut to almost nothing.

We surveyed 5,000 marriages around the country and found consistently seven needs that kept emerging. We included these top seven needs in our program.

Gary Smalley is president of the Smalley Relationship Center in Branson, Missouri. He is also a well-known author and speaker concerning family relationships. For more information concerning family ministry you can access the Smalley Relationship Center at: www.smalleyrelationships.com.

THE FAMILY - A TROUBLED UNIT



B Y C H A R L E S M . S E L L

After years of family ministry in the Methodist church, Hazen Werner quipped, “The American home is falling apart and wall-to-wall carpeting is not holding it together.”¹ The facts support his statement: families are troubled and unstable.

One of the greatest challenges facing the church in the 21st century will be its ministry to the family. An effective family ministry must begin first with an understanding of the cultural dynamics and forces at work in the American home.

FAMILY INSTABILITY

The Reality of Divorce

Divorce is more common today than it was in the past.² In the U.S. in 1860, the divorce rate was 1 in 1,000 married women, ages 15 and higher. In 1982, it was 23 per 1,000. In 1860, 96 percent of marital dissolutions resulted from death of a spouse, compared to 56 percent in 1970.³

Exactly how many American marriages will end in divorce is difficult to

two out of five of today’s marriages will end in separation or divorce. Two demographers predict that two out of every three marriages that occur at the present time will not survive as long as both spouses live.⁵

The Acceptance of Divorce

Divorce numbers are not the only way to portray family instability. The acceptance of divorce is as crucial as its practice. George Barna’s research found that 7 out of 10 Americans accept divorce and remarriage.⁶ This change in the marriage commitment is a matter of concern for both the church and Western society as a whole. In church ministry, we will not only have to deal with the effects of the high divorce rate, but the reasons behind it. Are people merely less committed to each other, or are they less prepared to build a successful marriage?

Sexual Relationships Without Marriage

While accepting divorce weakens the force of marriage vows, several modern practices ignore them altogether: non-

intercourse rose from 47 percent in 1982 to 53 percent in 1988.⁸

Some challenge studies like these because they include married teenagers and girls who experience only one sexual encounter with no ongoing sexual activity. Instead, the challengers claim, “The real news is that two-thirds of today’s unwed teenage girls are not currently sexually active.”⁹

The teenage pregnancy rate has fluctuated in the last decade. Nationally, the teenage birth rate reached an all-time low in 1986 of 50.6 per 1,000 after declining steadily since the late 1960s. It began to rise in 1987 and recorded its largest rise in 1993. The teen birth rate rose 6 percent, from 51.1 per 1,000 in 1987 to 53.6 per 1,000 in 1988. This rise was among all races.¹⁰

BREAKDOWN OF TRADITIONAL ROLES

Confusion over family roles offers another challenge to the church. Denying any distinct roles for husband and wife, egalitarians confront the traditional view of the husband as leader and provider. Many couples have



In church ministry, we will not only have to deal with the effects of the high divorce rate, but the reasons behind it.



determine. It’s common to say that one out of two will. This is based on the fact one divorce is awarded for every two marriages each year. But this doesn’t translate into a 50-percent divorce rate since many older, currently married people are not divorcing at such a rate. To say half of all married people are divorced is twice as high as reality: actually, only one-fourth of Americans who have been married have also experienced one divorce.⁴ We can’t easily predict what will take place in the future since we can only predict based on current rates of various age groups. With some certainty we can expect that

marital sex and sexually active unmarried couples living together. Premarital intercourse became prevalent in the mid-1950s. The chances that young people who were strongly attracted to each other would include sex in their relationship grew greater in the 1960s as youth began to value the romantic aspects of a relationship less and got more quickly to the hard sexual core.⁷ The proportion of sexually active teenage females continued to rise in the 1980s with the biggest increase among whites and in higher income families. One study showed that the proportion of teenage females who had sexual

brought the confusion and controversy over this issue into their own marriages. Some identify this confusion of roles as one of the most divisive elements in American life. It is difficult to assess how much turmoil this has caused; however, there are some topics to consider regarding this issue.

First, the departure from traditional roles has unleashed a struggle for power between husband and wife. Without the constraints of the traditional submission of the wife, striving for power may dominate the husband-and-wife relationship. For some women, getting a job may be a ploy to give them

leverage in financial decisions.

Second, thirsting for power may not be what drives most women to work outside the home, but rather a striving for significance. For them, a life devoted to the care of children is less rewarding than it was for women in the past.

Third, the movement from the traditional role of husband as sole provider has resulted in more work for most women. Husbands, for the most part, have not relieved them of much of the domestic tasks.

Fourth, by questioning their own role in the home, women have jostled men to reconsider theirs.

Fifth, stripped of customary guidelines to order their relationships, couples are searching for new ways to solve conflicts and maintain harmony.

POWERLESS PARENTS

A Christian man, a prominent Wisconsin surgeon, confided to me that being a father was more difficult than practicing medicine. Other parents

agree.¹¹ The avalanche of books and articles is vivid indication that parents feel confused and are looking for parenting guidelines.

Fathers as well as mothers seem to be hard-pressed to find time for their children. This is especially true for single parents. Since the typical father sees home and job as two separate domains, combining occupation and family roles successfully is among the most common source of guilt and anxiety for the middle-class male.¹²

Children and teens are greatly influenced by their peers. Often this results in open hostility between parent and adolescent. If not opposed to parental values, many youth are at least indifferent to them. Peer orientation and alienation from parents have resulted in rising rates of running away, dropping out of school, drug abuse, suicide, delinquency, vandalism, and violence.¹³

DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY UNITS

Dave Simmons, a former professional

football player, tells men who attend his seminar how his own childhood family negatively influenced him. His father Amos, a military man, was a problem drinker and extremely demanding. He rarely said a kind word to Dave. Always prodding him with harsh criticism to do better, he braced his orders with beatings and verbal assaults. By constantly putting new goals in front of Dave, he never permitted him to feel satisfaction from any success.

When Dave married and had children, he believed the negative influence of his father was settled. But he was shocked to find it wasn't. After attending an elementary school basketball game, he became aware of the extent of his father's impact upon him. Dave had gone with his wife and daughter to see Brandon (Dave's son) play in his first athletic event. Brandon had played rather badly, and on their way home Dave proceeded to tell him so. Arriving home, Brandon, now in tears, rushed into the house, followed by Dave's wife and daughter. Dave found his wife waiting at the front door for him. Angrily, she blustered, "Amos! You are just like your father." No jolt on the football field hit any harder than those words. How could he do to his own son what he had so despised his father doing to him?

Dysfunctional Families Reproduce Themselves

The most disconcerting fact about today's families is that unless something is done for them, the problems they have today will be repeated in the families of tomorrow. A concerned politician, Congressman Dan Coates, summarized the research conclusions: Incest begets incest, child abuse begets child abuse, and alcoholism seems to beget alcoholism.¹⁴

Women who come from divorced homes divorce at a higher than average rate.¹⁵ Men with alcoholic fathers have a four times greater chance of becoming alcoholics than those who grew up in nonalcoholic families.¹⁶ In one study as many as 7 out of 10

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"It never fails...everytime I teach on David and Goliath there's always a few kids who think they have license to go home and pulverize their big brothers."

Equipping the Family To Minister to Itself

Building up Christian families is one of the most desperately needed challenges facing the church. Perhaps one out of every five families is emotionally healthy and functioning productively. About one-third of all families, have their ups and downs, but generally get by OK. The other half, however, are struggling with family life. They feel they have no support system or background that enables them to meet each challenge. Fortunately, if churches are willing to consider a new paradigm of family ministry, it is possible to appropriately equip them.

The Role of the Church

Churches have tremendous potential to empower families. Churches have the highest credibility among all of the institutions and organizations that focus on helping families. Further, churches have the most frequent and regular contact with each family member. Most Americans expect churches to help families. This opens the door for churches to build trust-based, solution-driven relationships with families.

Key Family Ministry Principles

Nine principles implemented by effective churches enable them to move beyond maintenance and into life-changing ministry. Here are the cornerstones of their approach to building strong families.

- *Equipping the Family for Self-Development.* This is the single most important principle of the entire family development approach. The task for the church is to teach a family to identify its own needs and how the needs can be met; provide families with the skills and knowledge required to meet those needs; and have the self-confidence to implement solutions. In other words, the church enables families to minister to themselves instead of doing the required ministry to the family.

- *Clear Standards.* Effective churches provide people with information from the Bible as to what a family is, how it should function, and the inescapable consequences of rejecting God's views on family.

These standards allow families to behave in ways that are based on truth rather than cultural norms, current fads, or personal whims. They also give the family the ability to make its own decisions and address its needs without having to rely on pastors and other church officials for solutions. When the family sufficiently understands the Bible and its dictates for family life, it is better equipped to avoid crises and to handle those that arise.

- *Goals and Plans.* Fewer than 4 percent of today's families have set specific goals and related plans for themselves. The result is quite obvious: lacking concrete direction, the tacit goal becomes survival.

Highly effective churches motivate families to develop goals and plans so the family can succeed on its own. Accountability for reaching those goals is one of the necessary facets of this developmental strategy. One of the family goals of effective churches is to eliminate reliance on accidental success.

- *Addressing Needs of the Entire Family.* Many churches do their best to help families, but their methods require the family to be split up: adults are in one track, teens and adolescents in another, younger children in yet another track. Highly effective churches work hard to give families opportunities to stay together for teaching, interaction, and experiences.

- *Mentors and Coaches.* One aspect of the family development process is to identify and deploy mentors for families. A significant role of the church is to know who such mentors could be; to enlist them as mentors; team them with appropriate families; and support these mentors during their service in this special role.

- *Pastors as Advocates.* The senior pastors of the highly effective churches are champions of families. They set the church's agenda with the family clearly in mind. The pastor also sets the tone for the church in regard to family ministry; the signals sent by the pastor regarding the family will determine the way in which church resources are allocated to helping families grow.

- *Seeking God's Blessing.* Families need prayer. Highly effective churches pray with families, for families, and about families regarding their strength and development. Such prayer occurs both in their public services and outside of churchwide events.

One of the keys in this strategy is to enable families to build a family prayer life. Perhaps the most crucial aspect of this endeavor is getting the mother, the father, or both parents together to own the necessity of being a family that prays in a serious manner.

- *Instituting Evaluation.* Why evaluate the health of families? What the church does, matters; but the church will have no idea how effective it is, or how it can better accomplish its ends, unless it has a means of discovering the current state of affairs. Effective churches regularly take the pulse of churches. Without such field intelligence, all ministry efforts are a shot in the dark.

—George Barna. *This article was adapted from The Habits of Highly Effective Churches, Barna Research Group, Ltd., Ventura, California.*

You may purchase The Habits of Highly Effective Churches by calling Gospel Publishing House at 1-800-641-4310 or by going to: www.barna.org or calling 1-800-55-BARNA.

abused children became abusive parents.¹⁷ In the early eighties we began to understand more fully the dynamics of dysfunctional families and the sway they have over people.

Technically, these families are called "multigenerational codependent family systems." First applied to alcoholic and addictive families, the phrase now covers families where there are workaholics, compulsive gamblers, shoplifters, overeaters, anorexics and/or bulimics, and so-called sexual addicts. Other compulsions, like watching TV, are also added to the list.

The term "dysfunctional" isn't synonymous with nonfunctional. A dysfunctional family is one sufficiently troubled to impair its ability to properly socialize children so they grow up fairly mature, emotionally, physically, spiritually, etc.

Causes of a Dysfunctional Family

Dysfunctional families are usually created by a problem person: one who is alcoholic, abusive, ill-tempered, or mentally ill. Even workaholics, sex addicts, or those with eating disorders can make a home malfunction.

What happens in such families is that the system itself is damaging. Unhealthy, unspoken rules govern it: "Don't trust, don't feel, don't talk." A codependent pattern emerges as the family tries to cope with the severely troubled person. The central issue becomes control, as each family member tries to contain the chaos caused by the troubled person. Life for every member is negatively affected by the roller coaster ride, enduring the ups and downs of the life of the person whose life is out of control. The system stifles the personal development of its members, producing immature, troubled persons.

Negative Impact of Dysfunctional Families

These families are having a profoundly negative impact on their children, who often carry their problems into

adulthood. In an extensive behavioral study of 215 people, researchers at Columbia and Yale found that the incidence of major depression was far more prevalent among children of chronically depressed parents than among children of normal parents. Children of depressed parents showed significantly higher rates of substance abuse, social and school problems, and psychiatric treatment.¹⁸ Prisoners and youth in detention facilities seem to have one major thing in common: they come from dysfunctional families.¹⁹

Judith Wallerstein has documented how parents' marital discord and divorce can have effects on some children that continue into the child's adult life. "Children are especially affected because divorce occurs during their formative years.... The early experiences are not erased by divorce. Children who witnessed violence between their parents often found these earlier images destroying their relationships 10 and 15 years later."²⁰

Psychologists now speak of the syndrome called Adult Child of Dysfunctional Family (ACDF). Such people take their personality defects and immaturity into their own marriages and in turn produce dysfunctional families, even though they may not be abusers or alcoholics as were their parents. They often do this by repeating the rules and dynamics of the dysfunctional system that they learned in childhood. Grandchildren of alcoholics may have the same symptoms as adult children of alcoholics, even though neither of their parents was alcoholic.

Number of Dysfunctional Families

Because the dysfunctional system can continue without the adult child having the same problem as the parent, it is difficult to estimate the number of seriously dysfunctional families. We are fairly certain that there are 22 million adult children of alcoholics in the United States, almost one out of eight adults. One estimate, which considered problem drinkers as well, is even higher:

one out of five.²¹

Since not all abusers are also alcoholics, we add to the number those who came from abusive, nonalcoholic families. Statistics about abuse are not accurate because much of it goes unreported. Active child abuse, such as severely battering a child, happens to about 10,000 children each year.²² Sexual abuse occurs to at least 100,000 and possibly as many as 500,000 children per year. Another 100,000 children suffer emotional mistreatment. Children in passively abusive families, where they are grossly neglected, either physically, morally, or educationally, number at least 100,000. Estimates, however, go far beyond these numbers, some as high as 2 million children a year.²³ If we include those who have been neglected or hurt by workaholics and physically or mentally ill or otherwise troubled parents, the percentage of ACDF's in the population gets quite large. Add to these the grandchildren of such parents, and the numbers soar.

CONCLUSION

To minister to today's families, congregations will have to be like physicians. They must objectively recognize the pain, struggle, and suffering going on in homes. To meet the needs of modern people, the church will, in some instances, need to train people for the so-called instrumental duties of family life. Many adults from dysfunctional childhood families are not only emotionally injured but seriously unprepared to perform basic household tasks. School and community family-life education courses will help many develop these instrumental skills. But the church should also help, since it is the church's business to teach its members to be mature Christians. ☒

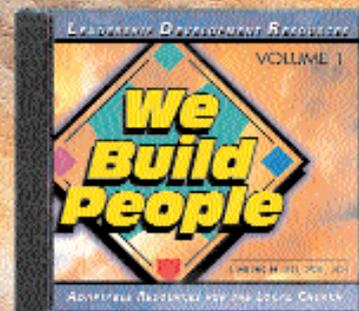
Abridged from Family Ministry by Charles M. Sell ©1995 by Charles M. Sell. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.



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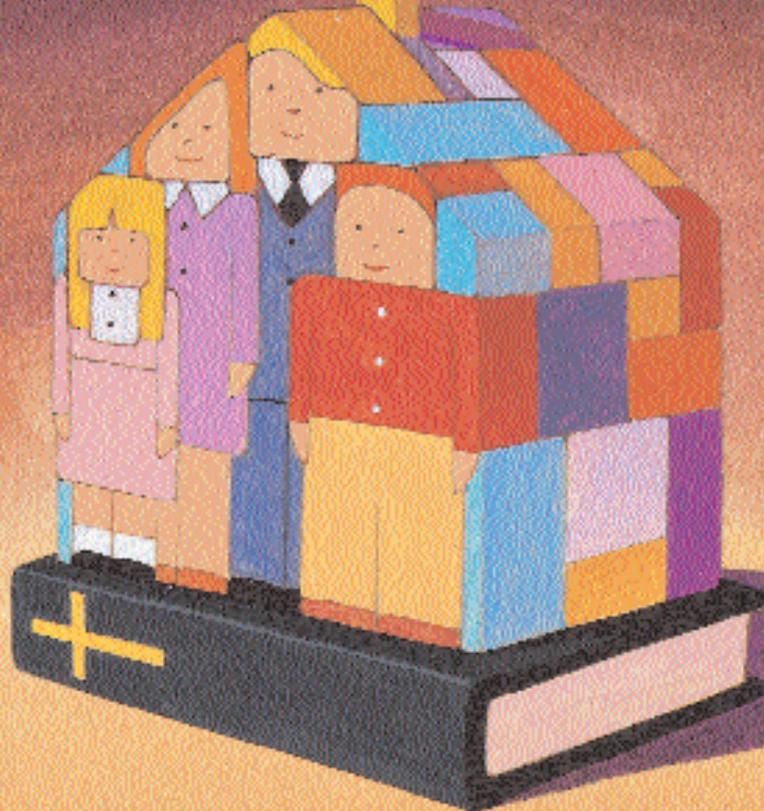
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B Y G A R Y J . O L I V E R

DEVELOPING A FAMILY MINISTRY FOR YOUR CHURCH



Given the significance God places on healthy relationships, a logical question is what the role of the church is in building strong marriages and families.

I grew up in a quiet neighborhood in southern California where the two-parent family was the norm. When I was in grade school, I remember being told by a friend that, only two blocks from his house, lived a woman who had “really been divorced.” In those days, divorce was rare. Times have changed.

I could fill an entire article with facts and figures to document the alarming decline and disintegration of the family. In unprecedented numbers our families are changing; there are fathers working while mothers stay home; families in which both fathers and mothers work; single parents; second marriages that bring children together from unrelated backgrounds; childless couples; unmarried couples with and without children; and gay and lesbian parents.

If this disintegration was taking place primarily in the homes of unchurched families, it would be tragic enough. The real tragedy, however, is that the divorce rate is as high among evangelical couples as unchurched couples. One explanation for this is that Christ doesn't make a difference in our families and biblical truth is irrelevant for relationships. A better explanation is that we haven't taken relationships as seriously as God does, and we haven't developed meaningful ways to help our people discover how to apply biblical truth in their marriages and families.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FAMILY MINISTRY

God intended for the family to be the basic unit in society. A casual view of history reveals that as go marriages, so go families; as go families, so go communities; as go communities, so go nations; as go nations, so go civilizations.

The Bible tells us that in the beginning God created the family. In His infinite wisdom He chose the family to serve as the cradle for personhood. In Deuteronomy 6, as well as in other biblical passages, it is clear that God designed the family as the crucible in

which the reality of the person of the living God is to be both taught (through formal education) and caught (by the example of the parents' lives).

The quality of family life influences every other part of our life. Surveys have found that an American's greatest source of happiness in life is the family. These surveys have also found that the greatest source of frustration and disappointment in people's lives is dealing with family problems. The quality of family life also has a powerful impact on the believability of the gospel message. Joe Aldrich states: “The two greatest forces in evangelism are a healthy church and a healthy marriage. The two are interdependent. You can't have one without the other. It is the healthy marriage, however, which is the ‘front lines weapon.’ The Christian family in a community is the ultimate evangelistic tool, assuming the home circle is an open one in which the beauty of the gospel is readily available. It's the old story: When love is seen the message is heard.”¹

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR FAMILY MINISTRY

The starting place for any family ministry is to see what the Bible has to say about the family. Throughout Scripture, God provides instruction related to marriage, the family, and parenting.

Relationships are a core part of who God is and who He would have us to become. The priority of relationships in God's plan is seen from the very beginning of His written revelation. In Genesis we see God in relationship with himself; God in relationship with man; male and female in relationship with each other in marriage; parents and children in relationship in the family; groups of families that made up the 12 tribes of Israel in relationship with other tribes.

In the Old Testament there are numerous insights into the nature and function of the family. The Hebrew family was noted for its unity. This cohesiveness developed quite naturally, as the nature of that society placed children and parents in close contact. The majority of

activities centered around the home and often included children, parents, grandparents, and other relatives.

Many functions performed by social service agencies or the local church today were performed by the extended family in biblical times. The Hebrew home was the primary educational, recreational, and social center for the children. Religious education was centered in the home. As a result, parents spent time with their children—working, teaching, communicating, and playing. This interaction helped produce a family unity that made it possible to pass on values from parents to children, from generation to generation (Psalm 78:4).²

Today, most of the functions that were provided for in the Hebrew home are now met outside the home. Education takes place in the schools. The majority of social and recreational activities take place outside the home, usually with nonfamily members. Even the bulk of religious education is left to the church.

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

When most people think of the typical American family, they picture a man and a woman who get married, have children, and live together for a lifetime. This is referred to as the biological or nuclear family. In the past, most families knew their neighbors and lived close to relatives. These relatives made up an extended family and included grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, or other adult siblings. The extended family served as supportive roles for the nuclear family.

Today there is no such thing as the “typical” or “normal” family. In addition to the traditional two-parent families we have single-parent families, extended families, adopted families, childless families, and reconstituted or blended families. The role of the extended family and the neighborhood community has significantly decreased, if not disappeared. The dual-parent or single-parent family is faced with a much more complex and difficult task.

Over the last several decades we have come to an increased awareness of the impact of families on personality development. While we've always known that families have a tremendous influence, we are now discovering that the influence of our family-of-origin goes far beyond what we had imagined. It would be difficult to overstate the immeasurable influence of early life experiences on the passage of children through adolescence into adulthood.

In an unhealthy family, the members are spiritually, emotionally, and relationally undernourished. This malnutrition produces many devastating effects. Children raised in unhealthy families are much more likely to experience difficulty, or an inability to form long-term relationships. They have a hard time trusting and forming strong commitments and are afraid of intimacy. They pretend everything is fine when it isn't. They struggle with emotional stability, communicating clearly, effective conflict resolution, as well as difficulty with believing and trusting God. In today's secular society, without a loving mother or father as a model, it is much harder to conceptualize, let alone give your life to a loving Heavenly Father.

The home is the window through which children get their first glimpse of God. It is also where they get their first glimpse of who they are and what they are worth. Children discover their value and worth in the mirror of those around them by how much they are looked at, listened to and touched, by what their parents say to them and about them in front of others, and by how much time their parents make for them.³ Often this initial view will stay with them throughout their lifetime.

WHAT DO HEALTHY FAMILIES LOOK LIKE?

Is there a difference between a family in which everyone is a Christian and a Christian family? Yes. It takes more than every family member being a born-again Christian to make a Christian family. A Christian family is a family where

relationships with each other are patterned after the way God communicates and relates to His children. It is a place where truth is lived out, not merely talked about.

In a healthy family, the parents provide an observable model of what it means to be made in God's image. Family is where we learn the importance of a growing love relationship with Jesus Christ; what it means to be a man or woman; how to relate intimately to another person; how to form strong, lasting commitments; how to acknowledge and express emotions; how to have constructive conflict; how to have physical, emotional, and intellectual boundaries; how to communicate; how to cope and survive life's problems; how to be self-disciplined; how to appreciate oneself and love others.

A healthy family provides an atmosphere of support, encouragement, and positive opportunities for growth, that includes helping each person to come to a knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of God and Jesus Christ, and a knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of himself/herself as a unique person made in the image of God. It is a family in which biblical truth is both taught and caught.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CHURCH

Given the significance God places on healthy relationships, a logical question is, What is the role of the church in building strong marriages and families? One vital life sign of a healthy church is the health of its marriages and families. If truth doesn't work inside of the home, why are we surprised it doesn't work outside of the home? If we can't help two people to function biblically in their marriages, how can we expect those same two people plus their children to function biblically as a family? If they aren't functioning biblically as a family, how can we expect them to come to church on Sunday morning with hundreds of other families and magically function as the Body that God

designed? If it's not happening with individual couples and families, it's virtually impossible that it will happen when the corporate body meets.

The church has been called to be a lighthouse, the source of solutions for what ails a lost and dying society. Developing a comprehensive family ministry is one of the most effective means of helping our people learn what it means to "become conformed to the image of his son" (Romans 8:29) and of outreach into our communities.

A strong marriage and family ministry serves as salt and light in a world characterized by confused, disoriented, and disintegrating families. It says that truth works, truth makes a difference. By offering tools, resources, support groups, and programs it also says that we care about our community.

People are beginning to realize that the world's solutions haven't worked and are once again looking to the church. Charles Sell writes, "When people make enough of a mess out of their lives and when the chosen answers in a society are seen not to work, portions of that society begin asking the 'God' questions once again."⁴

The church has a unique opportunity to impact the entire family as it moves through the various stages of life. People turn to the church during significant life events such as baby dedications, baptisms, marriages, and death. Ministers perform approximately 75 percent of marriages in the U.S., and over 60 percent of Americans prefer to see clergy about personal problems. The most frequently presented problem is marital difficulty.

WHERE DO I START?

Given the fact in eternity past God decided to create us in His own image and designed us to be in relationships; given the importance of the family for personal growth and development; and given the significant opportunity family ministry provides us to communicate help and hope to a hurting world, where can you begin? Here are a few simple steps that will get you going in the right direction.

A Foundation in Prayer

When developing a family ministry, it is easy to start by asking, “What is working for others?” At some point that will be a good question to ask, but it is the wrong place to start. Instead, begin by establishing a prayer team. Ask them to begin to pray, on a daily basis, for what God might want to see take place in your congregation.

A Solid Biblical Base

Scripture makes a strong case that ministry involves caring for the whole person—the spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. To ensure the long-term effectiveness of any family ministry, it must be bathed in prayer; rooted and grounded in Scripture; supported by a solid biblical and theological foundation; and the vision must be clearly articulated, owned, and supported by the staff and congregation.

While insights from the social sciences including psychology, sociology, and education can be helpful, it is essential that Christian family ministry be grounded in the clear teaching of Scripture. The resource list at the end of this article contains several books that provide help in this area.

Review Existing Resources

Since our time and resources are precious, it makes good sense to see what is already being done in this area. What are some existing models of family ministry? What are the questions we need to ask? What has worked well in congregations similar to ours? Ask what your church’s current philosophy of ministry is as it relates to congregational care, church growth, and community outreach; and to what degree has it made cultivating strong marriages and families a priority.

Conduct a Needs Assessment

Develop an adequate understanding of the composition, needs, and interests of the congregation and the community. This includes taking a look at the demographics of the community, the demographics of the church, population

growth rates, ethnic composition, age breakdown, average income, and unemployment.

Another important question is: What is the church already doing that has had a positive response—what resources already exist in the church and/or community? Are there any regularly scheduled classes or programs that provide people with biblically based principles on relationships, premarital preparation, parenting, divorce recovery, singles, marriage enrichment, dealing with grief, or addictions?

A church can also conduct a needs assessment survey of its congregation. A free copy of the CMFS (Center for Marriage and Family Studies) Needs Assessment for Family Life Ministry can be obtained by sending a legal-sized, self-addressed, stamped envelope to: CMFS, John Brown University, 2000 W. University, Siloam Springs, AR 72761.

Assess Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges

Based on the needs assessment, you will have a clear sense of the community God has called you to serve, the composition of your own church, existing resources in your church and community, as well as the perceived needs of the various age levels of your congregation. Make a list of the existing strengths and resources, the opportunities for ministry in your own church and in your community, and some of the challenges you will face in allowing God to work through you to take your family ministry to the next level.

Develop a 3-Year Plan

This is the most important and, in some ways, the most difficult step. In this step, build on what you are already doing that has been helpful and add to it as you have leadership and resources. Since a meaningful family ministry will eventually include children, youth, single, divorced, widowed, and married adults, you will need to determine one or two target groups; goals for the first year; and additional goals for years 2 and 3.

Look at opportunities to strengthen existing marriage and family relationships; provide care for hurting couples and families; or provide support groups for addictions, weight, divorce recovery, Alzheimer’s, and grief. Develop a strong education and enrichment program; teach biblical relationship principles across the life span; provide mandatory premarital preparation including the use of mentor couples, provide post-wedding care, classes for first-time parents, or classes for couples who are becoming empty nesters.

Incorporate training in spiritual formation and growth throughout all of these programs. In my ministry of over 30 years, I have yet to see a couple with severe marital problems who have had a strong, consistent family and couple prayer time and devotional life. However, I have had many couples who, presented with major marital issues, were actively involved in the leadership of their local church but weren’t making regular time to cultivate the spiritual disciplines with their partner. Being involved and doing things for God doesn’t replace what is gained by spending time with God.

Another essential part of a 3-year plan is to cultivate, cultivate, and cultivate leadership. This starts with you. Who you are in your own relationship with Christ is the most important component of family ministry. Helpers of families must first help themselves, then they can model what they teach and explain the difference Jesus Christ can make in a marriage and family. The reality is that healthy leaders, healthy couples, and healthy families attract others that they can help to grow and mentor who in turn will become effective leaders.

Do It, Review It, and Re-Do It

Start the process. Take some first steps. Don’t be afraid of mistakes. In fact if you’re not making a few mistakes, you are probably being a bit too cautious. Besides, if you believe that power is perfected in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9),

then you aren't going to have a powerful ministry unless you are willing to allow a few of your weaknesses to show.

CONCLUSION

Share this article with others in your congregation. Begin to pray about what God might want to do in your life, your marriage, your family, and then in your congregation. Perhaps you might want to meet with some fellow pastors and see what God might want to do in your community.

Then, as God leads, start with the first step. At The Center for Marriage and Family Studies (CMFS) we work with a handful of churches each year to help them develop a 3-year plan that fits the specific needs of their congregation. Perhaps there are ministries close to you that are equipped to help you in this way.

Let me close with this thought: Salvation by association is a powerful force in any church or community. It restores an ingredient to the Kingdom that has been lost in our latter 20th-century church. That ingredient is relationships. People are hungry for relationships. That is why family ministry is so powerful in the community. It addresses

training in the areas of marriage, parenting, and death, to name just a few. Evangelism occurs naturally out of a trust relationship among family members and friends.⁵ 

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"You always enjoy the children so much when you come calling, I knew you wouldn't mind watching them while I go shopping."

MINISTRY TO THE



Many adults want to find their way into a more traditional family format, but they need their church to provide the right kind of encouragement.

NOUVEAU FAMILY

Everything has changed. The family unit that came to church a generation ago has been replaced by something that many pastors hardly recognize. Accustomed to dealing with a limited range of predictable issues, congregations are often unable to respond to the needs of what George Barna has called the “nouveau family” (N-family, N-household, or N-home).

The church that hopes to be relevant to its culture in the next generation must develop sensitivity to those who make up these families and a strategy that ministers to them. These initiatives must answer the two questions most prominent in N-households that are considering a church: Will we be accepted without conditions? and, What is offered here that we cannot find in the world?

DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY

Our challenge is to reach out to families where they are instead of where we might like them to be. This means converting our comfort zone into a grace zone that welcomes people on a come-as-you-are basis. It also means viewing family ministry as a cornerstone of the church’s commitment to discipleship.

Understanding

The wrong way to approach our concerns for family ministry is to slap together programming that shunts people out of the mainstream of the church into demographic holding tanks. This pigeonhole approach has left hundreds of congregations with midweek family nights that barely function. The idea of Mom and Dad attending a Bible study while the kids are spread out in their age-level slots is becoming an endangered species, especially in many urban areas.

These days, Mom and Dad may not be living together; children could be offspring from other relationships; a teenage daughter may be pregnant or an elementary-age son experiencing a serious depression in the wake of a divorce; both adults working swing shifts or multiple jobs, making attendance as a unit impossible. For the N-family, calling a cluster of activities Family Night hardly makes it so.

We have witnessed a cultural revolution produced by millions of individual decisions. Taken cumulatively, those decisions have changed everything. The traditional *Leave It to Beaver* family model offered stability based on a binding set of roles (mom, dad, child) and rules (respect for authority, etc.). While this still tends to be the ideal against which families are measured, it is becoming the exception.

In the 1990s, only 26 percent of households were composed of married couples with children under 18. Also, 3 million unmarried couples lived together. The homogenous family arrangement of the 1950s has been replaced by a variety of personalized approaches—the *nouveau* family. Barna summarizes this change as a shift from family as, “people who are related to each other by marriage, birth, or adoption,” to one that sees family as, “two or more people who care about each other.”

These seemingly simple words embody one of the most radical transitions in our nation’s history. The patriarchal model has been replaced by what we might call the *Friends* or *Seinfeld* model in which my family is “the people I care about who care about me.” This definition of the family has supplanted the concept of a permanent commitment to one person of the opposite sex for the purpose of forming a household and raising children. Only 46 percent of Americans now define

family in traditional terms, while two-thirds of adults describe their families as *nouveau* to some degree.

The challenge for the church, then, is much greater than just adding a singles ministry to its normal programming. The presence of the single adult, and especially the single parent, are only symptoms of a much more profound change in our culture and values.

Acceptance

Nouveau households will not arrive at our church as trends, but as individuals searching for answers. The key to reaching them is empathy for their lifestyle coupled with love and grace.

The N-household will sense in a few seconds whether or not they are welcome. The N-family head tends to be more sensitive to issues of acceptance, while the traditional family patriarch is more attuned to programming and the quality of the church.

One study found that fewer than 50 percent of adults felt Protestant churches were sensitive to the needs of families. We can safely conclude that the figure is much higher for N-households.

Being truly sensitive to the N-home means more than simply establishing a ministry for every conceivable format. Those initiatives have a necessary place, but they are not a substitute for what happens in the heart of the leadership. Sensitive leaders believe in three things:

- *Unconditional love and acceptance.* Romans 15:7 puts it simply: “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (NIV). There can be no authentic sensitivity to the N-family apart from a heart full of grace for them. Realizing that we could be an N-family member is a great catalyst to grace. N-families, especially pre-Christians, will not come to a church where they are viewed as a threat, an inconvenience, or a permanent underclass.

- *Uncompromising stand for the truth.* While welcoming pre-Christians without conditions, the church must also teach the truth. This does not mean a public

critique of every nontraditional lifestyle. Such a stance will evoke amens from those who do not need to hear it, while driving away the very people to whom God wants to extend mercy.

• *Undaunted confidence that we can make a difference.* Many social agencies offer support for the family, but only the local congregation can bring a family into genuine Christian community. A living relationship with God is the beginning point for everything. Through it, some will find their way into a more traditional household format; others may not be able to do so. However, every family will have the best possible chance to thrive. The research is conclusive: Christianity works for families. The church simply needs to believe this and begin helping families live out their faith in Christ.

The sensitized church will attract N-families. The question then becomes what to do about it.

DEVELOPING STRATEGY

Christian publishers and parachurch

organizations are now producing resources for family life. Books, videos, courses, seminars, and web sites abound. The issue is not so much finding material as it is figuring out how to use it in a coherent way.

Touching lives in N-households means putting certain fundamental things in place, doing as much as possible with the resources at hand. The goal is not to engineer solutions to personal problems but to give the church's love for these families a tangible expression.

Starting Points

• *Reverse your assumptions.* Families do not exist to support our programs; we exist to support families. The church that means business does not see single parents and other nontraditionals as audiences or constituencies. They are God's creation and simply want to be treated like human beings, not like some segment of the church's market share. Sow into them unconditionally, and you will reap.

• *Raise your expectations.* *Nouveaus*

are not looking for a spiritual welfare state. The conventional model of ministry views them as broken people who require a hospital-like environment, surviving on perpetual life-support. This attitude simply confirms the negative messages the world sends them; it rots their self-worth and robs them of the power to do real ministry. Moreover, it's insulting.

Express your faith in N-householders—challenge them to make commitments, serve in appropriate ministries, give to missions, and find their purpose and calling in God. Single adults, for example, need to receive scriptural encouragement to use their lifestyle in service to God (1 Corinthians 7). The kingdom of God is not a caste system based on marital status. Everyone has a role to play in God's redemptive plan for the earth. *Nouveaus* hunger for these things and will respond to a church that extends them dignity by allowing them a chance to fulfill their role.

• *Push the positive.* Pastors have spent so much time decrying the decay of the family that it sometimes seems there is little good to say about it. This has contributed to the crisis of confidence and the fear of commitment that haunts our marriageable population. Many adults want to find their way into a more traditional family format, but they need their church to provide the right kind of encouragement. Indeed, 84 percent of singles report that they would like to be married some day. The church needs to hold up the high view of the family. We need to do so without condemning the N-household, without vehement denunciations of the pre-Christian population, and without the smugness behind which the real dysfunctions of married life often hide. In preaching, teaching, and modeling, give N-persons a clearly lit path to follow, while expressing that their worth in God is not connected to their marital status.

• *Talk to them.* The only thing more dangerous than no information is wrong information. Tools such as surveys and focus groups can provide insights into the needs and aspirations of your families.

I recently asked our singles ministry to

Family Ministry Resources

- Assemblies of God Marriage Encounter: <http://www.agme.org>

Provides intensive weekend training for building closeness in couples through communication. Special midweek sessions for clergy couples.

- McManus, Michael J. *Marriage Savers: Helping Your Family and Friends Avoid Divorce*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

Outstanding training material for premarital issues as well as mentoring ministry for couples. Combines print and video.

- Collins, Gary R. *Family Shock: Keeping Strong Families Strong in the Midst of Earthshaking Change*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1995.

Good overview of current family trends, issues, and responses. Excellent resource for teaching and training.

- Hebbard, Don W. *The Complete Handbook of Family Life Ministry in the Church*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995.

A strategic overview of methods for developing local church family ministries.

- Campbell, Bill. *Marriage & Family Life Ministries Leadership Manual*. Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1993.

Comprehensive how-to manual on designing systems for family ministry.

- Campbell, Bill. *Single Adult Ministries Leader's Guide*. Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1994.

Comprehensive how to manual on designing systems for singles ministry.

—Information supplied by Earl Creps, Springfield, Missouri.

list the top-five needs of the nontraditional household. Their responses included the following: companionship, mentoring, accountability, feeling included, parenting, guidance, acceptance, and help with practical needs. Overwhelmingly, they did not want to be treated like sick people for whom marriage was the cure. As another group of singles told me, "Just teach us how to follow Jesus. We already know we're not married."

A recent survey of college students in our church indicated that their biggest concerns were not finding God's will or choosing a life partner, but money and stress. Insights like this can put strategy development on the right track. And they only come by connecting on a personal level. Encouraging these adults to become a part of the process in forming the ministries will give them ownership and connect the ministry to real world issues. A simple approach to managing this information is to survey your families about their needs, interests, and how the church can help them. Then follow up with several informal, open-ended, small-group discussions held in private homes.

• *Major on prevention.* Many N-families are formed against the will of the participants. Divorce, desertion, and dysfunction are major causes. A caring church owes

its community an effort at preventing these casualties. At a minimum, this would mean mandatory premarital counseling for all couples, hopefully supplemented by a citywide agreement among area churches. Prevention also includes providing for or referring troubled people to Christian counseling services. A vibrant single adult ministry is another key element of prevention and discipleship. Accountability groups can also serve this dual role. Many churches have had good results implementing such groups through their men's ministry.

• *Support healthy families.* Most of family life is a learned enterprise. Consequently, the congregation's teaching ministry offers an outstanding opportunity to touch the lives of N-families. Adult electives or small group studies on parenting, the single life, finances, or stress management can contribute greatly to the N-adult. Healthy families are built out of healthy people, so anything the church offers for discipleship will have positive implications on families.

• *Healing for struggling families.* The N-home can face stresses and strains that we never dreamed of a generation ago. The availability of compassionate ministry during a difficult time can make the difference between living and dying for

many families. Christian counseling, couple mentoring, and support groups can provide lifelines to a family in crisis.

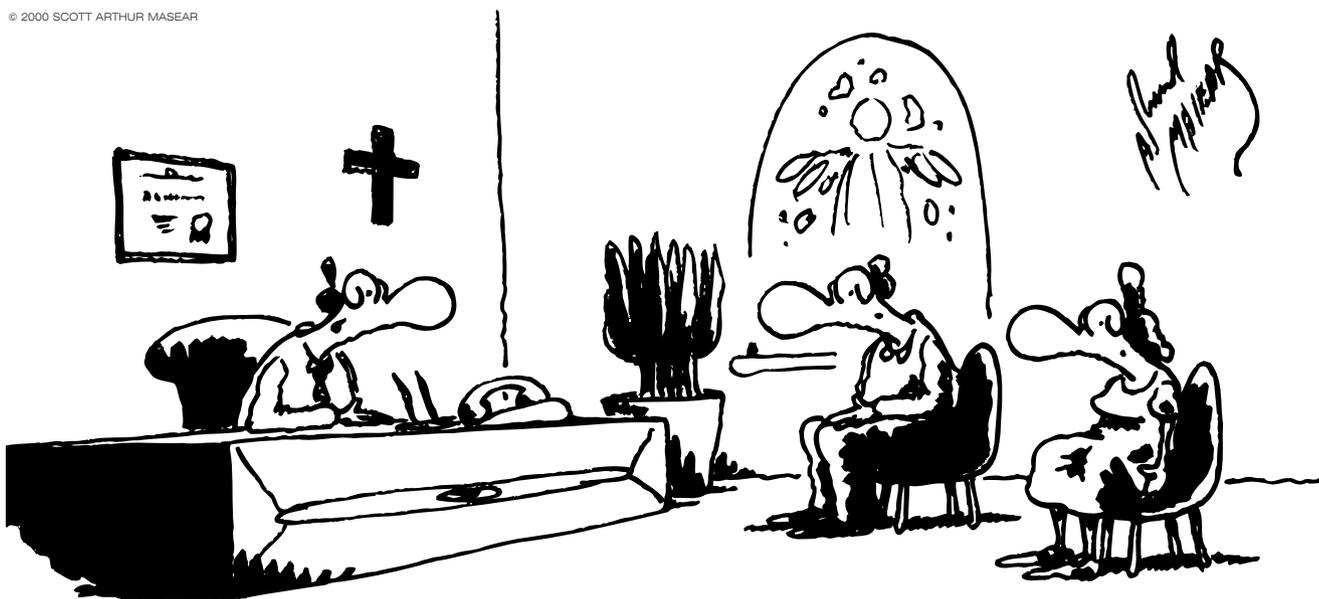
• *Take it to the streets.* N-families can be very open to the message of God's love because they are looking for answers to their questions about life. Anything that is taught in the church for families should be considered for community-wide involvement. For example, conduct a marriage or divorce recovery seminar at a local hotel conference room and advertise in the local media. The church's N-family members probably know others whom they could invite. Mobilize your nontraditional adults for evangelism and outreach. They want to be in the front lines.

The radical changes in American family life are leaving some pastors reeling. The challenge is simple: Will we be intimidated and defensive, or will we use this as an opportunity to extend compassion and bring the gospel to our cities? Millions of adults and children are waiting for an answer. **E**

Earl Creps is senior pastor, Calvary Temple Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.



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"You may feel that the magic is gone from the marriage, Grace, but I don't think disappearing is the solution."



THE DILEMMA OF THE DIVORCE CULTURE: CAN THE LOCAL CHURCH MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

B Y L E O G O D Z I C H

Over the last 27 years, since no-fault divorce legislation swept across the nation like a tidal wave, America has witnessed a 279-percent increase in the divorce rate; and the fallout for families—Christian and non-Christian—and society has been tragic.

During that time, more than 35 million babies have been aborted and the percentage of children living in single-parent homes has tripled, as has the teenage suicide rate. There has been a 400-percent increase in illegitimate births, the crime rate has been multiplied five times, respect for authority has dramatically declined, the entertainment industry has advocated sexual permissiveness and perversion with virtually no resistance, and our nation now leads the world in the rate of homicide—with domestic violence as the primary factor for more murders than any other cause.

While divorce, immorality, dishonesty, and selfishness are hallmarks of a worldly lifestyle, the same destructive forces run rampant in our churches. This carnage of marriages and the ensuing disintegration of families in their congregations frustrate pastors and leaders.

Yet, this should be the finest hour for the church. America's greatest point of need is hurting and broken relationships. The

church, the people of God, should be an example of love in a dark and lost world. It is a reproach on the gospel that the divorce rate for couples who regularly attend church is the same, and in some cases, even higher than the divorce rate for unchurched couples.

Phoenix First Assembly of God began a strategic plan to not only stop divorce, but to strengthen marriages. Eight years ago, my wife Molly and I began a Sunday school class for young couples. We started with just four other couples. Today, there are more than 850 couples on the attendance roll. Some have called it the largest Sunday school class in America. Hundreds of couples gather weekly, filling the gymnasium to worship the Lord and celebrate the covenant of marriage.

Divorce has virtually been eliminated in our congregation. Only a handful of divorces have taken place in the last 3 years in a congregation where approximately 13,000 people worship each week. Previously, our church, like most large churches, had been wracked by divorce, especially since Phoenix is located in a county with a 79-percent divorce rate. Additionally exciting is that during the last few years numerous couples have been reunited and even remarried to their original spouses after as many as 11 years of being divorced.

At Phoenix First Assembly, hardly a week

goes by without either a separated or divorced couple being reunited. In fact, both Christian and secular counselors regularly refer hurting couples to our church, often when everyone else has given up on a seemingly hopeless situation.

EXPANDING THE INFLUENCE

As a result of the success of the Sunday school class, leaders of marriage and family ministries around the nation encouraged us to create and organize our ministry so other churches could implement a similar ministry. Out of that request came NAME—National Association of Marriage Enhancement—a ministry whose purpose and mission is to call both individual couples and churches back to biblically based, Christ-centered marriage ministry and to network with those who are involved in marriage ministry.

At NAME's first annual International Marriage Conference in September 1996, we declared that we would begin to see a change in no-fault divorce laws in America within 1 year. Eleven months later, Louisiana passed the first covenant marriage law. Arizona passed a similar law the following year.

Many other states are now considering, and are attempting to pass, similar legislation. The legislation calls for an alternative marriage license for couples who agree to

receive premarital counseling. Furthermore, these couples agree they will not divorce unless they can prove adultery, abuse, or abandonment. If adultery, abuse, or abandonment is proven, they can only divorce after a 2-year waiting period, during which time they agree to receive counseling for reconciliation.

THE SAFETY NET

Our marriage revival and its success are clearly the work of the Lord. Part of the strategy includes the development of a safety net so no marriage falls through the cracks. We utilize different styles of marriage ministry to create an environment where marriage is once again lifted up as the covenant God intended it to be. We view divorce and separation as the tragic consequences of an unregenerate lifestyle and not as easy options to get out of the hurting relationship.

Specific arms of the NAME ministry have been developed. One such arm that has spread across the nation is the NAME Center—a place where couples can receive couple-to-couple biblical counseling in a confidential and certified manner.

Another arm of the NAME ministry we developed was a video-training series to train husband-and-wife teams to perform basic biblical counseling. We believe God never intended for the senior pastor to spend an inordinate amount of his or her time counseling marriages. We believe lay couples who have been adequately trained

can address the specific needs of couples and help them develop strong Christian marriages.

Each lay couple attends a biblical marriage counseling video-training seminar. The seminars are conducted by many top name marriage ministry leaders, such as Tommy Barnett, Ray Mossholder of Marriage Plus Ministries, Mike and Marilyn Phillipps of Marriage Ministries International, and others. After completing the training, the couple takes an examination. If they pass and submit a pastoral recommendation form, they become Certified Marriage Specialists. This certification is renewable annually as they continue membership in good standing in their church and receive educational updates and further resources.

In just 2 years, we have established 27 NAME centers in the United States, Canada, Africa, and Australia, with South American and European locations opening shortly. A survey of these lay-counseling couples during a 6-month period showed that 91 percent of the couples who were separated when they came to the counselors were reconciled. During that same period, 83 percent of couples who were already in the process of divorce canceled their divorce proceedings.

Periodic seminars complement the Sunday school and lay counseling program with a more intensive concentration of teaching. Other aspects of the safety net include home cell groups for marriages utilizing the 13-week *Married for*

Life! curriculum from Marriage Ministries International. The cell groups create a geometric progression of marriage discipleship that strengthens couples and equips them to study together the Word of God.

Other regular marriage ministry aspects of the safety net include: husbands meeting for early morning prayer; wives' prayer groups and intercessory ministry; Bible studies for young marrieds; support and teaching groups for those who have been divorced and are now remarried, as well as studies for those who are waiting for the restoration of a broken marriage. Planned group social activities such as dinners for eight—a home dinner group for four couples at a time in which each couple shares their testimony—are part of couple-to-couple fellowship that creates healthy relationships within the local body.

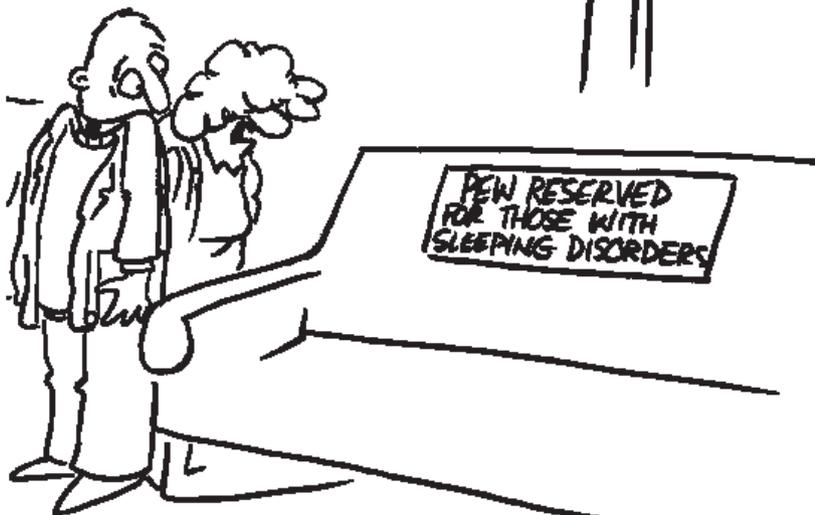
The focus of a strong marriage ministry in the local church is to empower and release couples to serve in the body of Christ. Last year we sent out four couples from our marriage Sunday school class into full-time ministry, and many others have assumed leadership positions in the church. These couples now minister out of the strength of their own marriages.

PREMARITAL PREPARATION

Another important aspect of marriage ministry is premarital preparation. As a result of the covenant marriage law in our state, we developed a 6-week class called "Preparing for the Covenant of Marriage." The material consists of a couple's workbook that includes 6 hours of audiocassette teaching along with a leader's guide. This resource is designed for the busy pastor or lay leader who does not have sufficient time to conduct extensive premarital counseling. Couples planning to marry complete the workbook and then meet with their pastor or leader to discuss the questions from the leader's guide. This premarital preparation helps couples understand the foundation for successful Christian marriage.

MARRIAGE REVIVAL

Early last year several marriage ministries



"Here, Harold, this one's got your name on it."

from across the country met to strategize for an upcoming marriage revival. Twenty-four organizations, including the Assemblies of God, FamilyLife Ministries, Focus on the Family, Promise Keepers, Marriage Plus, Marriage Ministries International, Marriage Savers, formed the Covenant Marriage Movement. These ministries are encouraging churches to have couples sign Covenant Marriage statement cards. This effort is increasing daily as churches become involved in counteracting divorce in today's culture.

Focusing on marriage from the pulpit,

especially during altar calls and invitations, is vital to creating a marriage-strengthening atmosphere in the local church. All of these things working together help create the safety net necessary to see miraculous restoration and reconciliation in your church.

As a result, city and state governments look to the church for leadership in addressing the breakdown of the family, asking for input to legislative committees or even pioneering marriage curriculum for public high schools. It is time for the church to tell the world that we understand marriage as a covenant.

In all of our efforts to reach the masses of marrieds, we have not lost sight of the impact our ministry can have on individual lives. When an 8-year-old girl runs up to give you a hug, crying, "Thank you for helping my daddy to come home!" you'll know you have touched the heart of God. 

Leo Godzich is the president of National Association of Marriage Enhancement, and an associate pastor at First Assembly of God, Phoenix, Arizona.



Mentor Couples: New Hope for Marriages

There is a new movement sweeping the land to lower the divorce rate. It began in 1986, when 95 pastors from evangelical, mainline, and Catholic churches in Modesto, California, signed a Community Marriage Policy "with the goal to radically reduce the divorce rate of those married in area churches." Far more than that has been accomplished. The divorce rate for the whole metro area plunged 30 percent in 13 years, saving more than 1,000 marriages a year in recent years.

More important—thanks to positive stories by ABC, NBC, CBS, PBS, and many newspapers—there are now 110 cities with Community Marriage Covenants signed by more than 5,000 clergy. Divorce rates are plunging in at least two dozen of these cities. Nationally, divorces are down only 1.3 percent in 19 years. By contrast, in 1 year, they plummeted 14 percent in Chattanooga; 15 percent in Evansville, Indiana; and 21 percent in Dalton, Georgia. Divorces in places where they use Community Marriage Covenants are declining 11 to 16 times faster than the nation in 1/19 of the time. Combining those numbers, divorces in those cities are falling 200 to 300 times more quickly than are divorces in the U.S.

The Achilles' heel of this movement is this: though 5,000 pastors have pledged to "train mature, married couples to serve as mentors to work with engaged couples, newlyweds, or those experiencing marital difficulties," we know of fewer than 10 full-fledged Marriage Savers churches. But what would happen if these churches actually became Marriage Savers churches? What if they actually trained couples in good marriages to help other couples to:

- Prepare couples for a lifelong marriage by giving them a premarital inventory and teaching communication and conflict resolution skills.
- Strengthen existing marriages by holding an annual retreat for couples.
- Restore 80–90 percent of troubled marriages by having back-from-the-brink couples who have survived adultery or alcoholism, coming alongside those who are considering divorce due to adultery or alcoholism, and saying, "We made it. You can too."

The divorce rate could plunge even more dramatically.

We have written a new 166-page *Manual To Create a Marriage Savers Congregation*, detailing how to create mentoring programs. One chapter profiles five model Marriage Savers churches (posted on our web site: Marriagesavers.org).

Another chapter suggests that the first step to create a Marriage Savers congregation is to have an "exploratory team." This team would include church leaders, as well as couples with solid marriages, in the following categories: 20- to 40-year marriages without trauma; a couple in a healed relationship who once considered divorce; a stepfamily that has truly blended. This exploratory team should submit to their church board a written proposal to create mentoring programs for as many as five different marriage situations: premarital couples; existing marriages (to be refreshed); troubled marriages (to be saved); the separated (to help them to become reconciled); and stepfamilies (to help them to succeed). Subsequent sections of the manual provide step-by-step suggestions on how to create Marriage Mentor programs, based on the most successful models in America.

What God has joined together, let's help the church hold together.

For more information on the *Manual To Create a Marriage Savers Congregation* contact Marriage Savers, Inc., 9311 Harrington Drive, Potomac, MD 20854, or phone 301-469-5873, fax 301-469-5871, E-mail: mjmcmanus@marriagesavers.org.

—Michael J. McManus is president of Marriage Savers,®, Potomac, Maryland.

BY EVERETT L. WORTHINGTON, JR.

The number of people seeking help for troubled marriages far outnumbers

those seeking help for depression, family tensions, alcohol or drug abuse,

anxiety, spiritual concerns, past traumas, or crises.



FOCUSED
MARRIAGE COUNSELING

When people seek counseling from their pastor, most frequently it is concerning marital problems. The number of people seeking help for troubled marriages far outnumbers those seeking help for depression, family tensions, alcohol or drug abuse, anxiety, spiritual concerns, past traumas, or crises.

Most Christians value marriage. God approves of the permanence of marriage (Malachi 2:14), and Jesus and Paul advocate marriage (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10,11). God hates the pain and brokenness that oozes from divorce.

Popular culture saturates our minds with the idea that obliterating the bonds of marriage can relieve the pain of marital conflict. In contrast, pastors advocate the virtues of marriage from the pulpit. The Christian who lives with daily marital conflict, hurt, and anger is pinched in a vice. Seeking help from the pastor, troubled spouses are sometimes disappointed when this counseling doesn't work. Too often, Christians—who are separated, divorced, or living a life of conflict and anguish—twist free by leaving the church. This is not a satisfying solution to marriage partners or to pastors.

The obvious, but not easy solution, is for pastors to counsel couples more effectively. The average marriage counseling success rate for professional marital therapists is 50 percent. Pastors probably have about the same success rate. There are four possible reasons why pastors only have a 50-50 chance of saving a troubled marriage.

First, methods used in the pulpit do not transfer well to the counseling room. Like shutting off a light switch, a troubled marriage moves from the light into the dark. The partners draw attention away from the benefits of marriage to its problems, pain, dissatisfaction, and suffering. It is similar to the way a smashed finger draws attention to itself and away from the nine fingers that are not smashed. Marital counseling is not about providing

information to partners. While a preacher is expected to inform, admonish, and inspire, a pastoral counselor must teach biblical truth using other methods. Marital trouble clamors so loudly that preaching is muted. When pastors don't make the shift in style, success rates in counseling plummet.

Second, to improve chances of successful marital counseling, it should be couched within a broad program in the church that promotes successful marriages. Such a program wages war against divorce on many fronts. This may include a series of sermons on marriage, special events for couples (like a Valentine's Day dinner), ongoing couple discussion or prayer groups, premarital counseling, marriage enrichment groups, marriage retreats, couples who are role models of successful marriages, and peer marriage mentors. While marriage counseling may be more difficult, it is a needed part of ministry to marriages in a fallen world.

Third, many pastors need more training in marital counseling. Most get little training in seminary and do not pursue further training after assuming the pastorate. Research shows that mere experience at counseling does not improve a counselor's success rate. Self-study can help, but supervised counseling involving reflection, study, and discussion is needed to supplement counseling experience. A network of local pastors can provide such peer supervision. Pastors and associate pastors within the same congregation can supervise each other.

Fourth, pastors may not know how to help couples make the needed changes. All counseling depends primarily on relationship, but what pastors recommend is also important. Here are ways to improve pastoral marital counseling skills.

HOPE-FOCUSED MARITAL COUNSELING

Hope

Hope can be defined as willpower for change, plus waypower to change, plus waitpower for God to work change. People without the desire to change (willpower)

won't change. They lack hope. People with willpower who don't know how to change (waypower) also lack hope. Both willpower and waypower are necessary for hope.

Yet, even with willpower and waypower, we don't always see immediate change. People need waitpower. Knowing that Jesus Christ walks with us through the furnace of affliction and urges us not to lose faith, fuels waitpower.

Strategy

The pastor must use a strategy of "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6, RSV). "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen" (Hebrews 11:1). Working is the energy that keeps plucking up marital weeds to produce tasty marital fruit. Love is defined as being willing to value, not devalue, the partner.

Interventions

Faith-working-through-love strategy should be employed as the pastor's guiding intervention principle. Interventions are the practical aspects the pastor uses to guide the counseling session. These may include homework assignments, assessment tools, and confrontations. Each intervention must contribute to increasing faith, encouraging work, or building love (or a combination of these). To help couples handle conflict, I use the acrostic, LOVE:

- *Listen and repeat.* Suppose a husband begins to feel misunderstood. He stops listening while his wife is talking and begins to think about how he can be understood. Because he is not listening, he misunderstands her. As he talks, she senses his misunderstanding and starts thinking about how she can be understood. She fails to understand him and the cycle continues. Paradoxically, the way out of the cycle is for one partner to put his or her agenda on hold and really listen to the other. When people "listen and repeat," they repeat and paraphrase to communicate valuing love.

- *Observe your effects on your partner.* When a partner communicates unclearly, the spouse usually gives clear signals of

Six Bridge Planks to Reconciliation Between Troubled Marriage Partners

Plank 1

Decide whether to reconcile. While we are admonished in Scripture to reconcile and live at peace in as much as it depends on us, there are some conditions where reconciliation is not immediately advisable. When partners are potentially or likely physically dangerous to each other, reconciliation might need to be postponed until a partner's safety can be assured.

Plank 2

Give a soft answer to turn away wrath. Coach offended partners to make gentle reproaches when they have been offended or hurt. Also coach offending partners to be accountable for their injurious behavior. Emphasize the need for confession and legitimate reasons for their behavior rather than denying or justifying their behavior. Show partners how to seek forgiveness (confessing, apologizing, conveying sincere regret, offering restitution, and asking for forgiveness).

Plank 3

Help people forgive. Teach people to REACH for forgiveness.

- **Recall the hurt.** Help people to not deny that an offense has been hurtful.
- **Empathize with the person who hurt you.** Guide people to think of the situation from the other person's point of view.
- **Altruistic gift of forgiveness.** Have an offended partner recall times when he or she has inflicted hurt and yet received forgiveness, remembering the gratitude felt when forgiveness is offered. Invite the partner to give that same altruistic gift of forgiveness to the spouse.
- **Commit to forgive.** Help people say aloud that they forgive their partner and perhaps write a letter of forgiveness.
- **Hold on to forgiveness.** Recognize that people doubt their forgiveness when they recall the hurt they felt. Make a distinction between hurt and unforgiveness. Help people see that it is natural to remember being hurt, but recalling a hurt is not the same thing as dwelling in bitter unforgiveness.

Plank 4

Reverse the negative marital cascade. When marriages get worse, they move from criticism, to defensiveness, to contempt, to a you-can't-get-to-me numbness. Help couples reverse this downward cascade.

Plank 5

Develop an attitude. Help people develop an attitude of gratitude when they see improvements in their relationship and an attitude of latitude when they see ways their partner has disappointed them.

Plank 6

Rebuild love. Help partners take positive steps to restore love in their marriages.

—Everett L. Worthington, Jr., Ph.D.,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.

puzzlement. "Observe your effects" is encouragement to tune in to the partner and immediately clear up puzzling reactions before they grow unmanageable.

- **Value your partner.** This is an oft-repeated self-command at the essence of showing love. In conflict, love is always needed.

- **Evaluate both partners' interests without getting cemented into defending rigid positions.** Partners locked eyeball to eyeball in conflict usually stake out rigid positions from which they will not move. Behind those positions are personal interests.

For instance, Susan and George are having a shouting match about going to a hamburger restaurant (Susan) or fried chicken restaurant (George) for dinner. They are stuck in those positions. But why does each partner have his or her position? George wants something fast (the chicken restaurant was closer to the house than the hamburger restaurant); something besides a hamburger (which he had for lunch); and something near the public tennis courts (so he can see who was playing). Susan wants the salad bar available at the hamburger restaurant and something near the coliseum (so she can see which music group is playing that night). As long as they argue about the relative merits of hamburgers versus fried chicken, they will be locked in struggle. If they examine their interests, they can work out a solution without compromising. (Compromise usually involves giving up some interests to gain others.) Most conflicts can be resolved by finding solutions that satisfy the interests of both parties.

Couples often want someone who will decide who is correct, but pastors do not want to become the hamburger-versus-chicken referee. Instead, pastors need to help couples practice ways to resolve their conflicts by teaching couples ways to build conflict-resolving skills.

After conflict, unforgiveness often lingers. Marital counseling by pastors moves beyond building conflict resolution skills to promoting forgiveness and reconciliation (see Six Bridge Planks to Reconciliation sidebar).

Hope-focused marital counseling uses interventions that make change tangible. For couples to have a strong sense of willpower, waypower, and waitpower, interventions must be: 1) physically able to be sensed by the partners (sensible); 2) more than talk; 3) active and involve physical products. For instance, in teaching couples how to deal with conflict, a pastor might have the couple videotape a discussion at home in which they employed the LOVE acronym. They then bring the tape to the following session and view it with the pastor.

At the end of counseling, I encourage partners to make a “Joshua memorial” to commemorate the work God has done in their marriage. The memorial can be any physical evidence that is meaningful. One couple went on a ski weekend as a second honeymoon. At the ski lodge, they decided to rededicate themselves to each other. They framed lift tickets so they would remember the pledges they made to each other on that weekend.

Before Intervention, Assess

Hope-focused counseling teaches hope—a general strategy of promoting love, faith, and work—and sensible interventions. By talking about interventions, I presume a pastor knows where to intervene. Without accurate assessment of the marriage, the pastor cannot know where to concentrate.

I have identified nine areas of marriage (see *Assessing Married Couples* sidebar). Each is important, but every marriage has topics that are more important than others. Most troubled marriages have difficulties in conflict resolution, and confession and forgiveness. Beyond that, careful assessment is needed.

Many pastors prefer to jump immediately into counseling. But such jumps often end up on the rocks. Most counselors (pastors or therapists) have a general belief about typical problems present in marriages. Before launching into treatment, however, they must discover how the problems show up in each couple they counsel. If they do not, couples will turn a deaf ear to counsel.

Assessing Married Couples

To assess each of the following areas, interviews and relatively inexpensive printed instruments such as H. Norm Wright’s Marital Assessment Inventory (available by phoning 800-875-7560) can be used.

Central Beliefs and Values

Christian beliefs, beliefs about marriage and divorce, and the degree to which people value those beliefs.

Core Vision

The vision of the marriage is an amalgam of what was observed in the family of origin, what is absorbed through culture (including popular and church cultures), and what is learned through other romantic relationships.

Confession and Forgiveness

Most partners in marital difficulties are more eager to forgive—“He needs forgiveness from me for all the nasty things he has done to me”—than to confess their own failings. Unfortunately, most people in the middle of conflict are not eager to grant forgiveness.

Communication

Partners develop problems by communicating too little or too much; too emotionally or not emotionally enough; too few or too many of the events of their lives; and too little or too much of their disappointment and anger. They might be unskilled at getting their point across, have a style that is harmful to the relationship, or communicate in ways that have numerous hidden consequences.

Conflict Resolution

Couples are often involved in power struggles. They disagree on many issues and want the pastor to help them resolve those specific differences. A pastor, however, needs to discern the couples’ overall conflict resolution strengths and weaknesses so interventions can have effects beyond solving specific issues.

Cognition

Troubled partners often have unrealistic beliefs about marriage or their partner. They blame the partner for everything, including the weather.

Closeness

Each partner establishes a balance of intimate, co-active, and alone activities to meet their different needs for closeness. Intimacy needs (except for sexual intimacy) can be met by people other than the partner. People often need help in balancing their intimacy with their coaction and alone time.

Complicating Problems

Look for the presence of problems such as alcoholism, affairs, abuse, and affective disturbance (depression or anxiety). Such problems often need to be dealt with before progress can be made with marital problems.

Commitment

Commitment depends on satisfaction with the relationship, satisfaction with competitors to the relationship (hobbies, work, or other romantic interests), and investments in the relationship (joint property or children).

In marriage counseling, seek to establish the existing main problems, target interventions, and let the less important areas be pulled along for the ride.

—Everett L. Worthington Jr., Ph.D.,
Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.

A pastor will look hard to assess where the problems originate. Perhaps the pastor believes all the problems, marital or psychological, are fundamentally spiritual. Careful assessment is needed to establish how and where the sin might show up.

Communication

If asked, most people will say communication is the fundamental problem in a marriage. While it is true that communication can almost always be improved in any marriage, we have to look deeper to see what is meant by communication. Then we must ask whether communication is a cause or effect of the marital tension.

Problems in communication can be one of three general types. All types exist at the same time, and the approach taken to help the couple depends on the pastor. Communication problems can be viewed as:

- *Semantics.* Communication problems exist because partners do not understand each other. Many pastors believe it is a misunderstanding of what was said that is at the root of communication problems. Those pastors will say, "Susan, stop

talking for a minute. George, what did Susan just say? What do you think she meant by that? To show her that you understand her, repeat or paraphrase what she says before you give your response."

- *Syntax.* How it was said. Pastors may say, "Susan, when you talk so much, you don't give George a chance to respond. George, when you clam up, you don't give Susan the feedback she needs to let her know whether she is getting through to you. George, when you get frustrated and yell at Susan, she is afraid to talk and withdraws."

- *Pragmatics.* Any communication has many simultaneous effects. Susan says, "George, you be the head of the house. Just decide what we are going to do, and we'll do it." On one level, it sounds as if Susan wants more leadership from George. But hidden in the message is the invisible effect that if George actually takes charge, he is doing what Susan told him to do. So who actually is in charge? The effects of communication are complex, but some people think the pragmatics of communication are where the action is.

Pastors try to change a couple's communication based on their (usually implicit)

understanding of whether semantics, syntax, or pragmatics is more important. Pastors should select and employ interventions with an understanding of what they hope to change.

CONCLUSION

Pastors should select and employ interventions with an understanding of what they hope to change. That is a general guideline for hope-focused marital counseling. (Indeed, it is a good guideline for any counseling.) Discover what the problem is; employ effective interventions that are sensible and related to the general strategy; and keep in mind that a central barrier to overcome is the lack of hope—each intervention should help to direct hope back to the healing hand of the Lord. ☒

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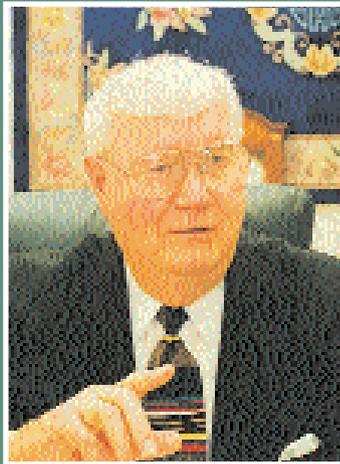


"How about a compromise, Gwen? Bill drops the 24-hour sports channel and you take the Home Shopping Network off your speed dial."

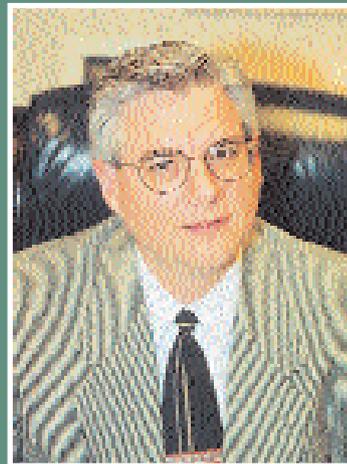
I

INTERVIEW WITH EARL J. AND STEVE E. BANNING, M. WAYNE BENSON,
ARTHUR B. LEDLIE, AND DARRELL E. OVENSHERE

Ministering the Baptism in the Holy Spirit



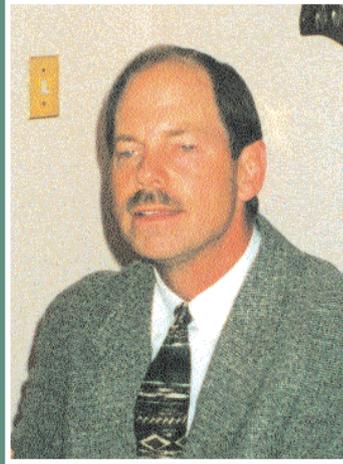
EARL J. BANNING



STEVE E. BANNING



M. WAYNE BENSON



ARTHUR B. LEDLIE



DARRELL E. OVENSHERE

During the last few years, a group of church leaders have been meeting to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to them about ways the Assemblies of God can be encouraged in both articulating and leading people into the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In surveying pastors with strong ministries in this area, Enrichment talked with Earl and Steve Banning, senior pastor and copastor, of Braeswood Assembly of God, Houston, Texas; M. Wayne Benson, senior pastor, First Assembly of God, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Arthur Ledlie, senior pastor, Metropolitan World Outreach Center, Detroit, Michigan, and his minister of creative arts and pastoral care, Darrell E. Ovenshire. Each talked with passion and wisdom about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their churches.

YOU ARE SEEING HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE EACH YEAR COME TO CHRIST AND RECEIVE THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. IS THIS THE RESULT OF INTENTIONAL PLANNING OR A SOVEREIGN MOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

S. BANNING: It is both. God desires every believer to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This promise was given when Christ ascended. He told His disciples to tarry until they received power from on high that they might be witnesses. We treat the Baptism as a natural process of our faith. Salvation is a natural process of entering into the Kingdom, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a natural process of the infusion of God the Holy Spirit to assist us in living out our faith. The Early Church was a Pentecostal church, and we are Pentecostal.

Regarding intentionality, Paul asked the believers at Ephesus, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" For Paul, the next step in

their relationship with God was being filled with the Holy Spirit. This was not left to chance or opportunity. There needs to be an intentionality in leading people into the Baptism. The Scripture says, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." It is God's intent to fill His people with the Holy Spirit.

E. BANNING: We teach our elementary children to look at the baptism in the

Likewise, there is a mandate for the youth department that our youth be given every opportunity to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We expect salvation and the Baptism as a natural process of faith. By the time our children go through the elementary and youth departments, they should be growing in their faith and filled with the Spirit.

BENSON: For 24 years I have articulated our position on the baptism in the Holy Spirit as well as the person and work of the Holy Spirit. It is safe to say I have given Spirit-filled leadership. But when we experienced the tide of the Holy Spirit that came on us in 1996, it was a sovereign response from God. I don't want to take away from God's own directives and His determinate counsel for what He did, but I had a sense of desperation, and there was a sense of desperation in others in our church as well.

The Old Testament's picture of revival is the valley of dry bones. God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones. Ezekiel declared the Word of God, and the bones came to life. Before Ezekiel's eyes, God put muscle and sinew on these bones. The bones could now bear the weight of strong and responsible ministry. A mighty, revived army stood before Ezekiel. That is a picture of revival. How do you get to Ezekiel 37? Look at Ezekiel 36. Approximately 37 times God makes a declaration of His will: I will do this, I will do that, I will blow My wind in, I will bring the harvest. Then He said, "Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever" (Ezekiel 37:28, NIV).

WHY IS IT NECESSARY THAT WE EMPHASIZE THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR CHURCHES?

E. BANNING: We emphasize the Holy Spirit because we feel He is vital to the

God desires every believer to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This promise was given when Christ ascended. —Steve Banning



Holy Spirit with an attitude of expectancy. We believe that expectancy is the fruit of faith, and people will rise to the level of your expectancy if you teach the Word of God. We have a mandate for our children's director that all children be prayed for and given opportunity to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues and have an awareness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit before they go into the youth department.

work of righteousness in every believer. According to Acts 2:39, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a promise of God. It is a spiritual gift subsequent to salvation, offered by the Lord Jesus Christ to everyone who believes. John the Baptist made it clear that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. The "fire" burns up dross and inspires us, giving us passion and enabling us to do the work of God.

BENSON: I emphasize the Baptism because this experience impacts lives. My own personal experience, coupled with my influence in the church and in the community, impacts people's lives. If I am not hungry for God, and if I don't need God, then the people I influence won't perceive their need either. But if I'm desperate for God; if I can't live a day without Him; if I must have the power of the Holy Spirit; if it's no longer an option or an appendage to my already filled life but a total dependence, then others around me become influenced by that as well. They sense their need for the Holy Spirit.

Many times we relegate the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit to an historical event. To walk in the fullness of the Spirit is something entirely different. Our people need to know and experience what that means. The Holy Spirit came to make Jesus real; to make God personal; to woo us and reprove us. The Holy Spirit is not just a doctrine; He is a Person. He has probably been the most misrepresented and maligned Person in the Trinity. He has been ignored, and we have grieved Him. God has used Pentecostals to raise up a standard that holds fast to the integrity of the person of the Holy Spirit. We don't relegate Him to an "it," but we personalize Him, and He personalizes God.

S. BANNING: If we are going to be the witnesses Christ called us to be, we must have the fullness of the Holy Spirit in

our lives by walking in the Spirit. When people are filled with the Holy Spirit, they will find boldness to be witnesses. We can literally impact southwest Houston, the rest of Houston, and the world, if we will allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, and if we will yield to the fullness of the Spirit.

OVENSHIRE: The baptism in the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Word, and it is

God. It takes the supernatural to reveal the supernatural.

We go beyond emphasizing the baptism in the Holy Spirit in our services. We see many people filled with the Spirit outside of the church services. I try to sense when individuals have made a solid commitment to the Lord. Then I follow up on them and let them know there is someone who can give them power and stability.

LEDLIE: Most people who have been trained in visitation are simply following up on a person's visit to the church or confirm the fact they have accepted Jesus. They normally do not visit expecting anything else to happen. But we have had a lot of people working with visitation who see people get saved and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Pastor Darrell goes to a door fully loaded with everything that God wants to provide, expects it to happen, and sees it happen.

MANY OF OUR CHURCHES ARE NOT SEEING PEOPLE BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THEIR SERVICES LIKE THEY ONCE DID. WHY? HOW CAN WE CHANGE THIS.

BENSON: It's important that people experience the Holy Spirit and not merely have the ability to articulate our doctrine. I'm concerned that while on the one hand we have those who are deeply

involved in preserving our doctrinal distinctive concerning the Holy Spirit and will fight against any concept of gift cessationism, there has developed an experiential cessationism in the lives of many believers. For Pentecostals to lose sight of the primary function of the Holy Spirit and to lose the dynamic of having an experience with God through the Holy Spirit is to forget moorings. This is critical with relationship to our Fellowship and Pentecostals in general.

We teach our elementary children to look at the baptism in the Holy Spirit with an attitude of expectancy.—Earl Banning



critical to the Christian's life. It helps Christians to become all that God created them to be.

We try to have a supernatural expectancy at our church. If you are expecting the supernatural and looking for it, the Lord is willing to provide. Too many times we stop talking about the supernatural, and we stop expecting it. Then we go on with what we feel is normal and try to help people, but we don't really involve them with a supernatural

You can brush shoulders with Jesus on every page of Scripture and miss Him when He shows up. This is exactly what happened to the Pharisees in their day. They read, taught, and prayed about the Messiah all of their lives. But the majority of the Pharisees rejected Him when He showed up. When He stepped out of the pages of the Book and walked alongside them, they rejected Him. It's entirely possible for people who have believed in the Holy Spirit all their lives not to release total control of themselves to Him when He shows up—it becomes intimidating. We have to get close to the Holy Spirit again, to trust Him. We have to get close to God again to trust Him. And we have to walk close to Christ to trust Him.

As a leader, I was Spirit-filled, but I don't think I was Spirit-saturated. Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing." And God knows without Him we have done plenty. But we have never done anything apart from Christ that has any long-lasting fruit. For that we must have the power of the Holy Spirit.

S. BANNING: Expectancy is important—expecting something to happen and creating an environment for it to happen. At Braeswood it is uncommon for us to have a service where there are no manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. We release God to do what He wants to do in the church. We are not trying to control Him. The necessity to control creates an intimidation in the congregation.

God desires to work in the lives of the leadership and in the Body in general. It's important to release the body of Christ from the fear of making a mistake. Some people want to control the error before it becomes an error, and they work by fear, not by faith. If people misuse the gifts, and they have a

teachable spirit, we talk with them, instruct them, and they respond.

LEDLIE: It is important to allow God to use people in their area of giftedness. We have people in our congregation who are greatly used of God to lay hands on people and pray with them. Things happen. Many times we don't give people opportunity to use their God-given gifts.

When we experienced the tide of the Holy Spirit that came on us in 1996, it was a sovereign response from God. —M. Wayne Benson



As pastors, we should encourage others to rise to the place where God has called them. Allow your staff and ministry teams to operate according to the gifts and abilities God has given them. Pastors don't have to be everything to everybody because the gifts are in the Body. My wife is used of God when she lays hands on people, and it's amazing to see her use her gifts.

We ask the youth pastor, "Are you praying for people to be baptized in the

Spirit?" We tell the children's pastor, "We want you to be praying that God would open up opportunities for children to be baptized in the Holy Spirit." And it is not an embarrassing challenge, because every staff member and every layworker can be a part. The senior pastor and the Sunday service are not always the focus.

E. BANNING: People who visit our church are coming because we are a Pentecostal church. Before every worship service we invite the Holy Spirit to assist us in worship because He is the Spirit of worship. Acts 3:19 says, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." We need refreshing, and the Holy Spirit in a worship service brings refreshing and understanding. He'll speak to the sinner, to the people with inquiries, and to those who are hungry.

The key to receiving anything from God is to hunger. The Bible says that if we hunger, thirst, and seek after righteousness, we will be filled. We have a number of people who come to our 8 a.m. service to experience charismatic worship, then they go to their own church. We even have some ministers who worship with us on occasion because they are hungry. Their hunger causes them to reach out. They want to experience Pentecost, so they come to a Pentecostal church. And God forbid if people come to a Pentecostal church and there's not Pentecost—we have missed the mark.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE PEOPLE TO RECEIVE THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT? WHAT ABOUT THOSE PRAYING FOR PEOPLE TO BE FILLED?

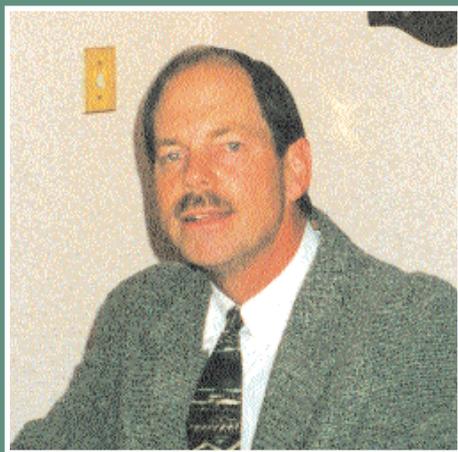
S. BANNING: First, we give instructions to those coming to be filled so they will not feel intimidated. If people are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we realize we are

As pastors, we should

encourage others to rise to

the place where God has

called them. —Art Ledlie



not the ones doing the baptizing—it is Jesus. If people aren't filled when they are prayed for, it's not because the person doing the praying or laying on of hands has done something wrong or failed. What distresses people the most who are praying for someone to receive the Baptism is that very issue. In salvation there is no "physical" evidence, like tongues, that someone has been saved. However, there is an inward witness and a changed life. With the baptism in the Holy Spirit there is an immediate response. We know a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit because he or she speaks in tongues.

When we pray for people and they don't receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit immediately, there is an intimidation—a performance issue—that can take place. We try to clear up that issue from the beginning. We are praying the prayer of faith and agreeing with that

person, but it is Jesus who does the baptizing, not us. It is a work of God; it's between that person and the Lord.

Second, we find out what a person's expectations are. People who come to be baptized in the Holy Spirit may not understand what's going to happen. And sometimes that's one of the biggest obstacles to overcome in receiving the Baptism. We give them a brief explanation concerning what will happen when they receive the Baptism.

Third, those who are praying for people to be baptized must be thoroughly baptized in the Spirit.

They must keep their relationship with the Holy Spirit fresh and

vital. They must keep the fire alive within their own spirit. They are not praying for someone to receive something they are not actively exercising themselves.

E. BANNING: We also teach our people who minister at the altar to encourage those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior to immediately receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. We don't want them to wait another day. Many of these people receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit shortly after they are saved. There's never more fervency and more hunger for God than

at that moment of conversion. So we urge the natural process, which is to love God and receive all that He has for them.

OVENSHERE: I use a five-step approach when I'm sharing with believers. First, they should acknowledge and confess their sin, and reaffirm that Jesus is Lord and Savior.

Second, I show them some facts from 1 Corinthians 14:2–4. I share that those who speak in an unknown tongue speak to God and edify or strengthen themselves. I let them know that is the Word of God; it's fact, not feelings.

Third, I share that Jesus, and only Jesus, baptizes the believer in the Holy Spirit. An individual must ask to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. I encourage the individual to ask God for the Baptism.

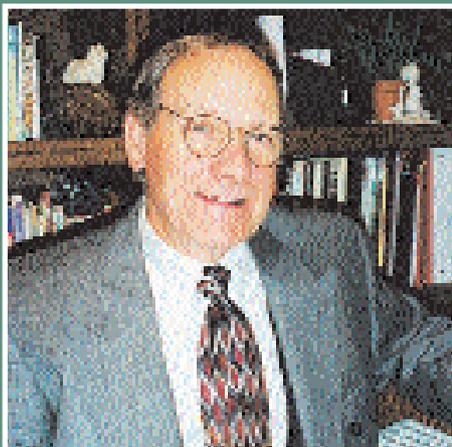
Fourth, to receive the Holy Spirit, they should begin to thank the Lord for some specific blessings and express why and

We see many people filled

with the Spirit outside of

the church services. —

Darrell Ovenshire



HOW TO MINISTER THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT EFFECTIVELY

Ministers need the supernatural ability to walk a person into the fullness of the Spirit. Just as Jesus used certain patterns and methods when He ministered in the power of the Spirit, we can be more effective in leading people into the Baptism if we develop an approach that communicates, simplifies, and builds faith. Here are some effective methods to prepare your people to receive the Baptism.

1. Make a safe assumption. God wants to fill people with the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). He doesn't need to be begged, cajoled, or argued with. He wants to be a coworker with us to accomplish the task.

2. Activate people's faith. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). People need to hear that God wants to fill them. Use faith-building Scriptures such as: Luke 11:13; Acts 2:4; Ephesians 5:18.

3. Explain what you are going to do, and why. We usually say something like this: "We are going to gently place our hands on your head and begin praying for you to be filled with the Holy Spirit."

4. Discourage passivity. This is where the process most often bogs down. People are passively waiting for God to force the Holy Spirit into them, and they don't cooperate. It is fascinating that in Jesus' ministry people often had to reach out and touch His garment to receive the healing power of the Spirit. They could not just passively sit and wait for Him to do something. We should not assume that people will know how to actively receive.

Here are a couple of suggestions. Say something like, "I'm going to ask all of you right now to stretch out your arms toward the Lord, just like a small child does when she's reaching for her daddy. Get ready to receive from the Lord." This action alone is often enough to stir up an active faith.

5. Explain that they are about to speak in a wonderful spiritual language to God. Because the phrase "speaking in tongues" may seem strange to some people (including Christians), I have found that using the term "spiritual language" is sometimes less objectionable, and is still fully biblical (e.g. 1 Corinthians 14:14,15).

Again, passivity can be a big problem. Because people are not properly instructed, they are waiting for the Holy Spirit to come and forcibly begin shaking and moving their tongue. It is helpful to point out Acts 2:4, "They began to speak in tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance." Notice that they, not the Holy Spirit, began to speak. Explain that the Holy Spirit does not speak in tongues. We do. He merely provides the syllables.

We have found the following instructions to be helpful. "When we place our hands on you, begin to thank God for this gift. The Holy Spirit will not make you speak. You choose to speak, and as you do, He will provide the syllables."

6. Pray declarative prayers, not begging prayers. There is a time for intercessory prayer (during the previous week and before the service) but not when you are ministering to someone at the altar. Speak with faith and authority—something like, "Receive the Holy Spirit!" or "Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" Jesus ministered with authority. Minister like Him.

7. Limit confusion around the altar. Ministering the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not a group event. It can be confusing to have several people gathered around the seeker, all touching him or her and all praying out loud. A spiritual committee is a poor substitute for one anointed vessel.

Ushers should understand that they are there to facilitate smooth traffic at the altar. They can assist by providing modesty cloths for those who may have fallen to the floor.

—Dennis Brown is the associate minister at West Valley Assembly of God, Goodyear, Arizona.

how much they love Him. We really focus on the Crucifixion in this praise. Then I remind the person that Jesus is present, and He is pleased with his or her verbal expressions of love for Him. I liken it to the physical growth of a child—when that child begins to say "Dada" and "Mama," the parent is excited; but the parent didn't have to twist the baby's arm to speak; the

baby speaks out of his or her own free will.

As they freely express their love for the Lord, the fifth step is to have them tell the Lord in the Spirit. When I hear the least little statement spoken in tongues, I encourage them because people are generally embarrassed or shy. So when they begin to speak in tongues, I tell them that's what they have asked for. Afterwards, I

encourage them to pray in the Spirit several times a day.

DO YOU HAVE SPECIAL ALTAR CALLS FOR THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT?

LEDLIE: We have special altar calls to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit

about four or five times a year. Otherwise, it's a spontaneous thing that happens every service.

E. BANNING: We emphasize the ministry and the baptism in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday and in other special services. When we have evangelists, we also (because of our fervent desire for every believer to be baptized in the Holy Spirit) prayerfully consider having one service where we emphasize the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But most of our people receive the Baptism at regular times at the altar, and many of them receive in Sunday school class. We urge the full operation of the spiritual gifts in the total venue of the church. A person is just as likely to receive the Baptism in Sunday school class, at Royal Rangers or Missionettes, or at a youth outing, as during a church service. It's the expectancy of the normal; it's Pentecostal.

S. BANNING: During one of our services last year an evangelist leaned over to me and asked, "Does this happen often at Braeswood?"

I answered, "It is very common for the gifts of the Spirit to function in the church."

He replied, "This is fantastic!"

I asked, "Doesn't it happen everywhere? I'm a little naive myself, I suppose."

He said, "Not everywhere."

There is a hunger that grows in the hearts of people when they see God moving in a service; when they see people praying in the Spirit, singing in the Spirit, and see the gifts of the Spirit in operation. When we pray in services for people to receive the Baptism, we instruct them to stand up—we want them to stay on their feet. We want God to do this work and expect it to happen, and it's incredible. We've had services where a massive number of people would come to the front and receive the Baptism. After this takes place, the anticipation and expectancy in the service is, if you're hungry and you want to receive, you're going to receive today. 

B Y J . D A V I D S C H M I D T



TURNING YOUR
VISION INTO ACTION



In 1966, the only way to cross the 4 1/2-mile-wide Columbia River that forms the border between Oregon and Washington, was to take a ferry. It was a beautiful ride through the splendor of the Pacific Northwest as the ferryboat plied the river's waters. But it was also a time-consuming, 2-hour ride. Then someone had a vision—build a bridge that would span the river.

The debate was fierce. “Too costly,” some said.

“How will we pay for it?” others asked.

Still others stated, “This bridge doesn't connect any two cities, so why build it?”

But the vision persisted and the project began. As the bridge progressed, scoffers gave it a name: the bridge to nowhere. Today, that “bridge to nowhere”—the Astoria-Megler Bridge—carries more than 2 million cars annually between Oregon and Washington.

In contrast, during the same years, there truly was a “bridge to nowhere” in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. An off-ramp of the parkway system in that city extended out into one of the rivers and ended abruptly with barricades. For years it sat there connecting the riverbank with nothing. Across the country there have been other bridges that were never completed and became nothing more than conversation pieces or the focus of political haggling.

Bridges only work if they connect two different places. The same is true with vision. Without a plan of action, our vision for what God might do in our church becomes just another bridge to nowhere.

YOUR CHURCH'S VISION NEEDS TO GO SOMEWHERE

In the previous two issues of *Enrichment*, I addressed the value of every church having a written vision statement—one or two pages of dreams that indicate where the pastor and church leaders sense the Lord is leading their church in the future. I also mentioned the importance of having a sense of God's preferred

future for your church. The Assemblies of God has provided every church in the Fellowship a vision tool kit to help pastors and their church leaders work through this process of vision discovery. These articles also stressed the importance of communicating that vision creatively through a variety of means, including giving people in your congregation an opportunity to shape the vision's contents through dialogue with leaders—so they might own it as their own in their hearts.

Two common questions often emerge once a church has a vision statement: “How do I convert the ideas on paper into decisions and actions that will make a difference?” and, “How do I use our vision to lead and bring about needed change?”

A partial but important answer to these questions is this: it takes an action plan. Proverbs 24:3,4 in the Living Bible states, “Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.” Visions need plans to bring them to life.

A written, communicated, and widely owned vision statement is a “bridge to nowhere” without an action plan. An action plan converts dreams into decisions that reallocate the resources of your church to undergird the new vision.

A key pitfall to avoid is writing a vision and then doing church the same as always. A fresh vision calls for fresh activity. Without a plan of action, it is simply the fruit of a team in your church putting dreams on paper. It might as well be made into a paper airplane and flown from the steeple of your church.

To build trust, maintain credibility, and to honor those who participated—as well as honor God—your vision statement must move from written words into new decisions, new prayers, reallocated human and financial resources, and change. A vision that lacks concrete decisions leading to actions will never result in people hearing the message that can change lives—the good news of Jesus Christ.

TURNING VISION INTO ACTION

Assuming you have worked hard to

communicate your church's vision to the congregation and key leaders, here are the steps to create an action plan for your vision:

1. Put together an action team. Ideally the team that helped develop the vision is a good place to start. But consider adding to it key volunteers, department heads, or staff who will help live out the vision action plan.

2. Walk through the vision statement and identify the key ideas or initiatives and list them on a chalkboard or overhead transparency. A simple way to do this is to identify key action phrases such as, “We envision that our evangelism will become more culturally relevant.”

3. Prioritize the vision ideas. Identify those ideas that you sense you need to tackle first, second, third, and so on, because of their strategic importance to your church's vitality.

4. Assign a leader to each of these priorities. Nothing of substance will happen unless you do this. Every priority needs a leader. If you do not have enough leaders to cover all the priorities, launch only those for which you have leadership. While this step requires discernment, you may need to expand the leadership potential in your church. Even if someone is young in the Lord or lacks tenure in your church, prayerfully consider who has the potential and gifts to lead an initiative. Often we overlook people, when what they really need is a leadership challenge that requires them to lean on the Lord for wisdom and strength.

It is difficult to decide how many priorities to have. Three to seven are probably about all the initiatives a church can handle at one time. Focus on a few things that are doable rather than trying to implement your entire vision at once. Set a date 6 months in the future to convene the team and decide if you can add any new priorities at that time.

5. Empower (give the authority and the responsibility to) your leaders to develop each of the priorities. Challenge them to think outside the box. Ask them to answer the question: “What could we do

differently that would change and strengthen our church's ministry in this area?" Another question to challenge them is, "To achieve this priority, what must we as a church start, stop, or continue?"

This strategic thinking is critical to breakthroughs. Without it, all churches are prone to take the path of least resistance, which rarely leads to new vitality. Once this brainstorming is done, then goals can be set, action steps laid out, people assigned, and calendars and budgets established.

PAPER AIRPLANE OR ACTION PLAN—WHAT WILL YOUR VISION BE?

When Paul wrote to the church in Colosse, he challenged them: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23,24, NIV).

Paul's words challenge our work ethic—not just to work hard, but to work for the

right motives and focus on the One for whom we are working. In church work, it is easy to get our focus on other things: the compliments of others, to accomplish our agenda, to correct something we think is wrong. We might also work out of guilt or as people pleasers or worse, to keep a tradition or a good feeling going. This kind of church work burns us out because it lacks spiritual authority and the power of God.

It is hard work to turn your vision into action, but it's not impossible. It will go better if the action plans you lay out are pursued with gusto. Your church's vision simply won't come to life without the blessing that only God can ultimately give according to His will. It won't come about if the faithful few end up carrying the ball. Visions come to life as committed people build a bridge together—to serve the Lord. Some of that work will include prayer. Some of it will mean taking risks. It will require your church to sort the treasures from the baggage and even the garbage that has built up in your church. Some of the work will require that you stay the

course. Whatever the work, bridge-building will connect what you want your church to become and what it will be.

Today, we must realize that our unchurched and lost friends and relatives are not church hungry; they are God hungry—even if they don't know it. And God has placed you and your church strategically near them so they might hear the gospel. You and your church have a unique role to play in their salvation. What is it? Only God knows. It is He who builds the chains made up of links of believers who live out their own salvation in winsome ways.

But one thing is sure—these people will not hear the gospel unless you and your church work hard to build a bridge that moves your dreams into action. 

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I

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK, LEROY BARTEL, AND DAVID BOYD

Reaching Our Children— A Priority

Our children are the church of today. But to ensure their rightful place in the church of tomorrow, the church at large must be intentional in its plan to reach and keep boys and girls for Christ. The executive leadership of the Assemblies of God recently reaffirmed their commitment to children by establishing a national Children's Ministries Agency. Enrichment met with Thomas E. Trask, Assemblies of God general superintendent; LeRoy Bartel, national director of Christian Education/Commissioner on Discipleship; and David Boyd, newly appointed Children's Ministries Agency/BGMC coordinator, to discuss the creation of this new office and what it means for the children and leaders of the Assemblies of God.



THOMAS E. TRASK



LEROY BARTEL



DAVID BOYD

WHAT WAS THE MOTIVATION FOR CREATING THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY AGENCY COORDINATOR POSITION?

TRASK: Ministry to children is one of the vital areas of the church. Through the Assemblies of God Headquarters, we offer various children's ministries: BGMC, Royal Rangers, and Missionettes—but we did not have a national Children's Ministries Agency to serve as a coordinating resource for the local church. We felt it was time to show that from a national level we are concerned about the children of this church.

I am thrilled that God has brought David and Mary Boyd to this newly created position. They have the needed gifts and a heart for missions.

BARTEL: The children's pastor is one of the fastest-growing staff positions in Assemblies of God churches. We have not had a high-profile presence for children's pastors, and many pastors have asked us to give attention to this facet of ministry. Also, we have not had a place where the various aspects of children's ministry have been brought together into common focus. David and Mary will give focus to and will promote what the Assemblies of God is doing in children's ministry. They will network the various children's ministries in the Assemblies of God.

The Children's Ministries Agency coordinator will provide a high-profile visibility for the children's pastors in our Fellowship. We have one of the premier children's pastors and his spouse giving focus and direction to this position.

BOYD: The children's pastor blends together the children's ministries—Royal Rangers, Missionettes, bus ministry, Sunday school, children's church,

nursery, and preschool—within his or her church. Many of these ministries work within the same rooms and with the same teachers. Some training is done separately; other training is done together. But there has never been a position or ministry in place above the local church—even in most districts—where someone is coordinating these ministries. Our goal is to blend what is already being done and find ways to make each area of children's ministries complement each other.

IN YOUR MINISTRY TO CHILDREN, WHAT OBSERVATIONS HAVE YOU MADE RELATIVE TO THE IMPACT OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TO THE LOCAL CHURCH?

BOYD: I've been a children's pastor for about 17 years: 5 years in the same church in North Dakota, 9 years in Michigan, and 3 years with Dan Betzer in Fort Myers, Florida. I have seen a lot of things happen because I've stayed in these places long enough to see the fruit of my ministry.

If you want a dynamic youth group, get a good children's pastor and give him 4 years. You build the core of youth ministry through the children's ministry. The children's ministry produces kids who are filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized in water, and not afraid to worship or pray. You can use these children in puppet teams, take them into nursing homes, and teach them to give of themselves. Later, when they are in middle school and high school, you have a core that can accomplish powerful things for the Lord. That's the goal of a children's pastor.

At Bethany Assembly of God in Adrian, Michigan, our Wednesday night programs helped our church grow. We had 500 kids coming, and the pastors often commented that they had more visiting adults on Wednesday night than any other service of the week. Visiting parents said, "You mean you have something for the adults while the kids clubs are going on?" For visitors, the adult service was the

add-on, and we just let them assume that. Wednesday night ministries caused the church to be as big on Wednesday night as it was on Sunday morning, which is unique.

At First Assembly in Fort Myers, we almost tripled Royal Rangers and Missionettes attendance. Families are looking for a place to go on Wednesday

If you can get children to learn the importance of giving to missions, even if it is just a quarter, when they become adults and have more money, it will be natural for them to give to missions.—Trask



Part of my job will be to meet with each of the ministry areas at headquarters and hear the leader's vision for his or her ministry. Some of them have visions and goals that haven't been fulfilled yet. Hopefully, through this process we will find that they all desire the same thing, and we can help their visions become reality.

night, and most churches don't offer programs for the whole family.

Sunday school and kids church are the foundation of the Assemblies of God's children's ministry. But the Wednesday-night clubs can feed into the Sunday programs. Families who get hooked on Wednesday start coming on Sunday, and your church will grow with young families.

HOW WILL THE CREATION OF THIS NEW POSITION ASSIST CHILDREN'S PASTORS IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD?

BOYD: First, children's pastors will have a place to call when they have a question or when they need encouragement. You can only encourage so much if you haven't walked in their footsteps. But if a children's pastor calls another children's pastor and can hear the words, "I've been there; I've done that," that's the kind of encouragement they are looking for.

For example, recruiting is the most difficult aspect of children's pastoring, and it can be discouraging—it's a challenge to get people to commit themselves to children's ministry and to love the kids. There will be many of those kinds of phone calls because there really isn't a place for a children's pastor to call and ask, "What do you do when you're...?"

Second, we will help network the ideas of children's pastors with headquarters. There are children's pastors who produce or create their own materials because they can't find their idea anywhere else. We can probably create it cheaper and make it available to all churches. We will take ideas from the field, put them through the process here, and then produce something to help meet the needs of children's pastors everywhere.

For the most part children's pastors

work in the background. Letting them have input into national programs and products shows that we want to hear what they have to say.

HOW WILL THE NEW AGENCY COORDINATE WITH OTHER AREAS OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES AT HEADQUARTERS?

BOYD: We will start by looking at the programs and ministries we now have and see how they can be done more effectively. We have some of the finest

The cutting edge of ministry is not doing your own thing. The rules today include synergy and networking. The possibilities are exciting when we blend our vision, goals, and resources and see where God takes us.

The children's agency will also help us have quality control for summer camps and our children's evangelists. We want the very best for our children.

Another feature of the Children's Ministries Agency will be the creation of a Children's Ministries Agency Committee, which will include people at headquarters who are involved in children's ministries and cutting-edge children's pastors from varying size churches. It will have people from throughout the Fellowship who are involved in Royal Rangers, Missionettes, Sunday school, children's church, and other facets of children's ministry. Once a year, this committee will meet to develop fresh ideas and resources, looking at our present resources and making observations about how they might be improved.

TRASK: The input from this committee will result in better products and services. We presently have an in-house Children Ministries Resource Committee. This new Children's Ministries Agency Committee takes the CMRC and expands it to a denomination-wide committee and provides an opportunity to get feedback from across the field.

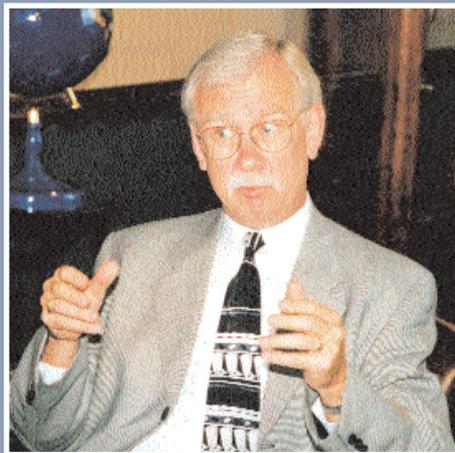
The Children's Ministries Agency will also function as a resource for a senior pastor who is looking for a children's pastor. Senior pastors can call David, and he can provide the names of children's pastors who are looking for a church.

HOW WILL CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES AND BGMC WORK TOGETHER AS IT RELATES TO THE FELLOWSHIP?

BARTEL: Brother Trask and I want BGMC and the Children's Ministries Agency

The Children's Ministries

Agency will explore how it can implement the suggestions it receives from children's pastors in our churches.—BarTEL



children's programs you will find anywhere. New programs may come if the ideas we hear from children's pastors spark our imaginations.

BARTEL: One of the things the Children's Ministries Agency will do is explore how it can implement the suggestions it receives from children's pastors in our churches.

Committee to replicate the same paradigm that exists between Speed-the-Light and the youth of the Movement.

When you give children's pastors exposure to missions and let them see what BGMC is doing, they pick up the heart of God for what is happening in missions. And the ownership of the BGMC ministry by children's pastors in the local church will increase.

BOYD: We have a dream of seeing children's pastors used overseas. We are creating opportunities for children's pastors to win kids around the world for Jesus. And BGMC can provide the needed resources.

Sandy Askew, our previous BGMC coordinator, created a resource center that is filled with educational materials to teach children about missions and the Great Commission. Sandy was brilliant in putting her heart for missions on paper so children can learn about missions. Other denominations are starting to clamor for these materials. Much of this material is free, so every church can teach its children about missions. Every child in the Assemblies of God needs to be taught the importance of giving to missions and have the opportunity to give. Whether they give a quarter or a nickel, they know it is going to reach people around the world.

During missions conventions, we ask children to make a faith promise to BGMC. We explain it to them, and then ask them to discuss their faith promise with their parents. These parents may be newer in the Lord than the kids because sometimes these kids were saved long before their moms and dads got saved. These children can teach their parents about missions and the faith promise.

TRASK: If you can teach children the

importance of giving to missions, even if it is just a quarter, when they become adults and have more money, it will be natural for them to give to missions.

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AND FOR THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES AGENCY?

TRASK: The church has a responsibility to minister to its children. If the Lord should tarry, the church in the

them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God...And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:14–16). That tells us of His heart and His concern for children.

We have always believed that children are important. The Children's Ministries Agency is vital to our Fellowship; it will make a difference. It is going to have a ripple effect that will touch every facet of the church.

Families and parents today are desperate. They are asking, "How can I shape my children? How can I give them a value system that is biblical, foundational, and good?" That is when the church can respond—that is why God placed the church here.

BOYD: If you teach children the Ten Commandments and that God said, "Thou shalt not kill," you can never convince them that killing is right. But in today's society, children don't know that killing is wrong. They don't have the foundational morals you and I grew up with. If there has ever been a time to teach children the morals of God, it is now. And God will hold His Word in their hearts. Our job is to share His Word.

BGMC has always been more about missions education than raising money. When a child understands God's love for the world, the child will love the world, pray for the world, and try to reach the world.

BARTEL: That is the value of the We Build People model. Every person needs a biblical, moral compass to guide and protect him or her throughout life. That is what we are providing through our children's ministries in the Assemblies of God. 

We will take ideas from the field, put them through the process here, and then produce something to help meet the needs of children's pastors everywhere.—Boyd



21st century will be made up of the church that is here today—the children. How we mold and shape them and what we put in them will determine what this church will become.

As a Pentecostal church we need to care for our children by having a national children's ministry. The Scripture says, "Jesus...said unto

As for Me and My Household . . .”

BY STANLEY M.
HORTON

Before calling for this decision, Joshua gave good grounds for making the choice to serve (Hebrew, *`avad*, which includes the ideas of worship, follow, and do the will of) the Lord.

How many times have you heard a pastor or evangelist use Joshua 24:15 in a call for sinners to make Christ their Lord and Savior? “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”*

The Hebrew word *bachar*, “to choose,” is often used of God’s sovereign, purposeful, deliberate choices, such as His choice of Israel, of the land, of Zion (Jerusalem), of Judah, of David, and of Solomon. When used of people’s choices, it also speaks of a deliberate intentional choice, a choice that has been the result of thought, plan, or desire.

Before calling for this decision, Joshua gave good grounds for making the choice to serve (Hebrew, *`avad*, which includes the ideas of worship, follow, and do the will of) the Lord. He did the same thing Moses did in his farewell address in the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses began by reminding the people that unbelief brought defeat; but when they turned to the Lord in obedience and faith, they received victories from God’s good hand. Again and again Moses set before them lessons of history along with warnings and promises for the future. He did this to let them see they had to make a choice. Deuteronomy 11:26–28 is an example: “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known [that is, in the personal way and in their experience of His mighty power].” (See also Deuteronomy 6:21–25; 28:1,2,15.)

In Joshua’s farewell address, Israel is reminded of the lessons of history and the warnings of the Lord (Joshua 23 and 24). He knew he was about to die, so he said, “You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. . . . But just as every good promise. . . has come true, so the Lord will bring on you all the

evil [Hebrew, *hara`*, the judgment] he has threatened” (23:14,15).

Next, Joshua drew attention to God’s dealings in Israel’s history; from Abraham to Moses to the victories in Canaan. “So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant” (24:13). Surely God’s goodness and provision gave reason enough for them to throw away all their idols and serve the Lord.

Though Joshua could set the example, he could not make the choice for them—the people had to choose for themselves. This may sound like a contradiction to Joshua’s statement, “but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” But Joshua was simply proclaiming that he and his family had already chosen to serve the Lord. Each member had to make his or her own choice. Joshua, however, was “a man in whom is the spirit [that is, the Holy Spirit]” (Numbers 27:18). We can be sure he had a powerful influence on the choices his household (including his family and servants) made. We can also be sure that if Joshua had not first made his choice to serve the Lord, his call would have had little effect.

The call or opportunity to choose (sometimes using forms of the Hebrew word *bachar*) is found again and again in the Bible. It was all too easy for God’s people to slip back. Too often the people chose their own ways, doing evil in God’s sight, choosing what displeased Him (Isaiah 66:3,4). “They hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord” (Proverbs 1:29). Too few were like the Psalmist who said, “I have chosen the way of truth [Hebrew, *emunah*, which also means ‘faithfulness’]” (Psalm 119:30). Or like the sons of Korah who said, “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be (Hebrew, *bacharti*, ‘I have chosen to be’) a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked” (Psalm 84:10). Wisdom’s call was, “Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her” (Proverbs

8:10,11; cf. 16:16).

The call to choose for yourselves this day (Hebrew, *hagyom*, “today”) comes to us every day. We do have to make an initial choice and commitment to serve the Lord. But every day brings new challenges, temptations, and efforts of Satan and his demons to trip us up. Besides, old, sinful desires keep cropping up, and we have to keep choosing (by the help of the Holy Spirit) to “put to death the misdeeds of the body” (Romans 8:13). Every day we must choose to count ourselves “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11). As Paul states, “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness” (verses 12,13).

The choices God asked Israel to make all revolved around their relationship to Him. He desired their good always and made every provision for them. He loved them and wanted them to respond to His goodness with their love. He made it possible for them to do so by His own merciful enabling (Deuteronomy 30:6).

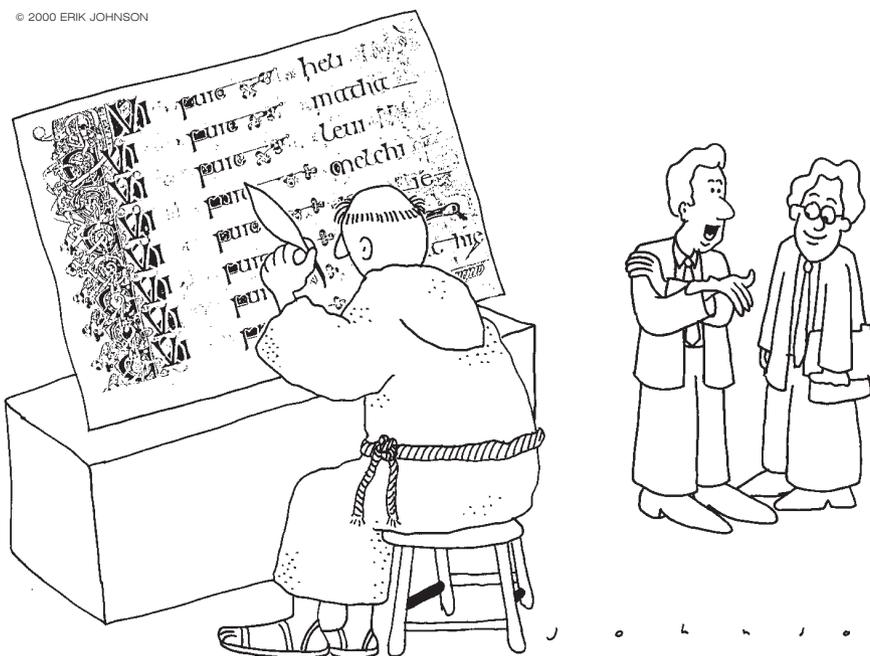
Today our choices revolve around our relationship to the Lord Jesus. God still speaks, and His message to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration is for us

today, “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” (Mark 9:7). We can afford to listen to Him, for He said, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own” (John 7:16,17). Thus, we have a constant choice before us involving our desire to do God’s will and obey the teachings of Jesus.

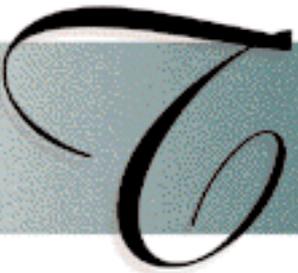
He has lovingly made full provision to enable us. He has fulfilled His promise to ask the Father to give us another Counselor (Gk. *paraklêtos*, “Helper”) to be with us forever (John 14:16). Israel had difficulty keeping the covenant they made to serve the Lord. We have the Holy Spirit’s help to make the right choices that will be in line with God’s Word, honor Jesus, and bring glory to God.

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**Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*



**“It takes him a while to do our bulletins.
But he’s good, real good.”**



The Urgency of Water Baptism

BY M. WAYNE
BENSON

When one tells how he or she has been freed from sin by the power of Jesus Christ, it encourages the saints and convinces the sinner.

For 18 months, we relegated water baptism to an afterglow following the Sunday evening service. We soon realized this was inadequate. The problem wasn't a matter of doctrinal erosion. We had decided to leave the baptistry in our new sanctuary unfinished as a cost-cutting measure. After all, we still had the baptistry in the old sanctuary.

Within a few months it became evident that the money to finish the baptistry was a great price to pay for eliminating a critical part of our worship. The entire congregation no longer witnessed water baptisms or heard the testimonies of the candidates. Only those interested enough to walk to the other side of the 250,000-square-foot complex where the afterglow took place participated in the service.

We were convicted about the serious loss of emphasis to the body of Christ and made plans to install the new baptistry. The Holy Spirit knew that revival would soon come to First Assembly, and we would need these facilities to baptize the thousands of new converts who would be saved.

THE CONGREGATION RECEIVES A BLESSING BY WITNESSING WATER BAPTISMS

We still baptize new believers every Sunday evening, and the congregation considers it a highlight of the service. Why wouldn't any congregation consider the testimony of transformed lives something to celebrate? When one tells how he or she has been freed from sin by the power of Jesus Christ, it encourages the saints and convinces the sinner. We have wiped tears from our eyes as a young woman tells of her freedom from a lesbian lifestyle. We have cheered for the teenager who stands before his peers and commits himself to sexual purity. We have rejoiced in the restoration of a couple whose marriage was on the trash heap of divorce, standing together now, embracing Jesus and each other in the baptismal. Often,

after such testimonies, the Holy Spirit woos sinners with such deep conviction they do not wait until the end of the service to be saved, but respond immediately. Such are the blessings to the church that embraces the importance of the powerful ordinance of water baptism.

THE MINISTERS' MANDATE

Pastors are sometimes criticized for not putting more emphasis on water baptism, a criticism not entirely unfounded. It is my observation (statistics on the ratio of conversions to water baptisms seem to support this) that there are many believers in our Assemblies of God Fellowship who have not been baptized in water. Could it be a lack of understanding on the part of the newly saved Christian? More likely, it is the neglect and failure on the part of ministers to accept the responsibility for these precious converts. Are we giving adequate emphasis to the fullness and meaning of water baptism? Do we help converts understand baptism and why it is essential? Do we challenge our hearers to feel the imperative, the urgency, of being baptized?

Jesus did not make water baptism optional in the Great Commission. The responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of the minister, not only to fulfill the command of the Lord, but also to make known the privilege and meaning of following the Lord in water baptism.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT CONVERTS BE BAPTIZED WITHOUT DELAY?

Baptism is often presented as an outward act picturing an inward experience. The inward experience involves coming out of lostness into the new life in Christ. As important as it is that one give public testimony of this great transforming work of God's saving grace by being baptized, that is only the first of many reasons for being baptized.

If you read through the New Testament to see

why water baptism was stressed, you will see the suddenness with which believers were baptized after conversion, and the great emphasis placed on the ordinance by Christ and the apostles.

Look, first, at the emphasis given to baptism. In the Early Church, there was no such thing as an unbaptized Christian. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter concluded his sermon with this charge, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).^{*} About 3,000 converts were baptized that day (verse 41). In fact, all converts mentioned in the Book of Acts were baptized as soon as they were converted: the Samaritans (8:12); the Ethiopian eunuch (8:38); the apostle Paul (9:18); Cornelius and his family (10:47,48); Lydia and her household (16:15); the Philippian jailer and his family (16:33); and the Ephesian disciples (19:5).

Second, look at the suddenness with which new converts were baptized. There is no indication in Scripture that anyone was put on probation before being baptized in water. Baptism stood at the very threshold of Christian life. In almost every instance of detailed conversion and baptism, the emphasis suggests urgency and imminence. The Ethiopian was baptized immediately in a pond of water by the road (8:36); Paul was baptized by Ananias within hours after conversion (9:18); Cornelius and his friends were baptized the same day they came to the Lord (10:47); and the Philippian jailer and his household were baptized “immediately” (16:33).

The pattern of immediacy suits the typology. After a person dies, preparation begins immediately for burial. When a person is converted and dies to sin and his old life, preparation should be made immediately to bury the old sinful life. Baptism indicates the beginning of a new direction for life—a “newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

The disciples in the Early Church seemed to know how subtle the enemy is, that delaying obedience to Jesus’ command to

be baptized in water opens the door for doubt and spiritual failure. New converts need to quickly make a public confession of their past guilt and sinful lives. The longer they wait for baptism, the less likely they feel the need for it.

FIVE TRUTHS ABOUT WATER BAPTISM

The urgency and emphasis demonstrated in the New Testament are linked to five truths associated with water baptism. First, water baptism is vital because it was commanded by our Lord Jesus. Just before He ascended into heaven He told His disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” He then added, “...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19,20). This would include water baptism. Furthermore, He said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15), and “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 15:14).

Second, baptism testifies of a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). It gives public witness to our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3–13; Galatians 2:20, 3:37; Ephesians 2:5,6; Colossians 2:12, 3:1–4). The “old man” is symbolically dead and buried in a watery grave.

Water baptism proclaims the gospel. It attests to forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Those who have declared their faith in Christ should not be denied this immediate recognition and public witness to their identification with Him and His body of believers. In essence, it is a declaration that as a child of God, he or she is uniting with the body of Christ.

Third, it declares our allegiance to Christ, putting ourselves on God’s side (Matthew 12:30). Jewish converts already believed in the Father and the Holy Spirit, but had rejected Jesus as the Son of God. After they were converted, they were to acknowledge all three Persons of the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

Fourth, water baptism indicates the seriousness of our commitment to Jesus Christ. It is the visible sign that seals the spiritual commitment. It affirms our salvation—that we are born again, dead to sin, alive in Him, and now free to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). We pledge to God that we will live for Him. It gives the convert something to live up to.

Finally, water baptism is an act of obedience to our newfound Savior and Lord. Obedience is the first lesson a Christian must learn. God’s abundant blessings follow obedience to this commandment of the Lord Jesus.

We have discovered the newly baptized believer is open and hungry for the power of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, we encourage each candidate desirous of the Spirit-energized life to join the elders in the prayer chapel, immediately after water baptism. Approximately 90 percent of these freshly baptized seekers are almost immediately baptized in the Holy Spirit. This parallels the pattern given in Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:38,39.

Every unbaptized Christian should notice the attitude of Jesus when He subjected himself to baptism by John, not because He needed repentance, but as He said to John, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus became an example when He surrendered himself to be baptized by John.

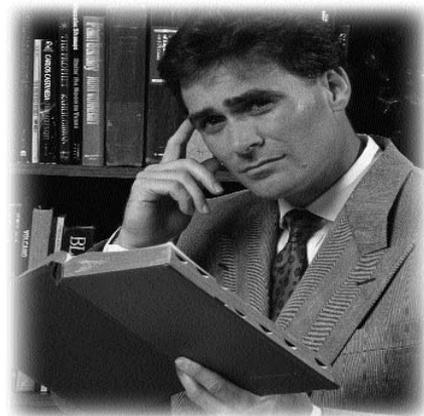
Every new person who is saved has the right to be baptized in water and needs to be baptized as soon as possible. Why jeopardize a new Christian’s spiritual security and development? He needs the strengthening benefits of baptism so he may “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Let us communicate with passion the urgency of being baptized. Let us teach believers and lead them into all the means of grace provided for them by our wonderful Christ and Lord. 

M. Wayne Benson is senior pastor, First Assembly of God, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and an executive presbyter.

**Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.*

Why Pastors Work Too Much

BY JOHN C. LARUE, JR.



A nationwide study for *YOUR CHURCH* showed that the typical pastor puts in an average of six 9-hour days a week. Here's what we learned about how a pastor's feelings, expectations, and motivations also feed into the stress of a heavy workload.

PERSONAL FEELINGS

Even though most pastors work more than 54 hours a week, they are basically satisfied with that workload (see Chart 1). Most pastors (53 percent) rarely feel guilty about working so hard.

Two-thirds (66 percent) of the pastors surveyed, however, said they're disturbed that their job is never finished. A few times a year, most (53 percent) pastors wish they had a Monday-to-Friday, 9-5 job. Yet when asked what the greatest benefit of their work schedule was, the vast majority of pastors cited job flexibility (see Chart 1).

CHART 1: PASTOR'S SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT WORKLOAD

- 2% of pastors very dissatisfied with workload
- 14% of pastors very satisfied with workload
- 17% of pastors dissatisfied with workload
- 67% of pastors satisfied with workload

EXPECTATIONS

What motivates pastors to work so hard? According to the survey, most overworked pastors admitted they had no one to blame but themselves for long hours (see Chart 2). They said that the high expectations of their congregations were not a decisive factor.

Specifically, the pastors surveyed cited

three main reasons why they work so hard: high personal expectations (68 percent), unfinished work (64 percent), and a love for ministry (51 percent). Fewer than one in five cited unreasonable expectations from church members (17 percent) or the church board (7 percent). In addition, 17 percent said they believe God holds them accountable to work hard (see Chart 2).

CHART 2: TOP FIVE REASONS PASTORS WORK TOO MUCH

- 68% I expect too much of myself.
- 64% There is too much to be done.
- 51% I love what I do so much that I can't stop.
- 24% People expect it of me.
- 17% God expects it of me.

FAMILY IMPACT

Long workweeks can take their toll on a pastor's family. Married pastors typically miss two evening meals a week at home due to church obligations. Even pastors who make it home for dinner five nights a week often have to rush off to a meeting or activity right after dinner on two of those nights.

In general, spouses are not as satisfied as pastors about their workload. The typical spouse complains more than once a month about the pastor's work schedule. One of every two pastors admits that the pastoral workload causes conflict with his or her spouse.

Children normally complain less than a spouse. Still, in one-third of the homes surveyed, results showed that an intense ministerial workload causes some conflict between pastors and their children.

HEALTH IMPACT

The pressure of full-time ministry takes its toll on a pastor's physical and emotional well-being. The typical pastor gets only 6.8 hours of sleep per night, which is far short of the recommended 8 hours per night. Over time, that adds up to more than 8 hours of missed sleep per week.

Not surprisingly, 8 of 10 pastors said that the stress of long workweeks affects them physically. Half of the pastors surveyed said they suffer physically from stress at least once a month. More than 4 out of 10 pastors said that overwork has caused or heightened health problems for them.

Emotional stress is a more common effect of overwork, however. Nine of 10 pastors surveyed said they take home the mental and emotional baggage associated with ministry. On average, they said they can find relief from the psychological burden of ministry only four nights a week.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Despite the long hours and the stress that it causes on their families, health, and emotions, pastors still believe that the benefits of ministry outweigh its burdens. Nonetheless, pastors must learn how to balance the requirements of work and home.

THE STUDY

In 1997, 1,199 surveys were mailed and 580 returned, for a response rate of 48 percent. With a sample this size, results are considered accurate to within plus or minus 4 percentage points.

John C. LaRue, Jr., is vice president of research and development for Christianity Today, Inc., in Carol Stream, Illinois.

How Can a Minister's Wife Cope With a Church's Expectations?

BY JOANNA BLOSS

Keeping ministry obligations and fulfilling family responsibilities is a juggling act for even the most competent of ministry families.

In the early days of my husband's pastoral career, he held the highly esteemed but meagerly paid position of youth intern. Being a young seminarian, he worked long hours, embracing any opportunity available to gain as much experience as he could. I, being young, in love, and a childless bride, stayed at his side—singing in the choir, teaching the children, and playing the piano. I even survived a junior high lock-in or two. Imagine my delight when, at our annual congregational meeting, I was bestowed the honor of “Layperson of the Year.” The church chairman beamed as he handed me the award. “How could we have known,” he said, “that we would get two for the price of one?”

It wasn't long before the demands of full-time ministry and a few children entered our lives. Somehow “two for the price of one” seemed like a good deal for everyone but my husband and me. Keeping ministry obligations and fulfilling family responsibilities is a juggling act for even the most competent of ministry families. In addition to our own expectations, we must deal with the constant demands of needy congregations.

So how do you cope with both realistic and unrealistic expectations? Ideally, you and your husband should discuss this long before it becomes an issue—preferably before that first interview with the search committee. First, you might ask yourself where those expectations are coming from. Often, we create unrealistic expectations and set ourselves up for failure when we cannot live up to them. And at some point, even in the best situations, most of us will encounter expectations from others, no matter how subtly they may be communicated. Here are some questions to ask to determine what you realistically can and cannot do.

WHO IS SETTING THE STANDARD?

I have a friend who, in my mind, is Superwoman. She's up at dawn to have her quiet time, exercises regularly, is a gourmet cook, and home schools her children. She can accomplish more in 24 hours than I can in a week. It would be easy for me to be intimidated by her; but because I know her so well, I've learned two things: Although her life seems perfect on the outside, I know she struggles to maintain balance and order. Second, I know that God doesn't intend for us to be cookie-cutter Christians. He has gifted me in different ways than my friend, and my job is to shine in those areas instead of longing to be like her.

Often, we are the ones who create unrealistic expectations and set ourselves up for failure when we cannot possibly live up to them.

Perhaps you've been comparing yourself to the pastor's wife or even to your predecessor. Don't. God has called you to be the best you can be. His is the only standard you should try to measure up to.

WHAT IS YOUR SEASON OF LIFE?

I have three small children, so my availability is different from my friend Katie's whose girls are in high school. I eliminate almost every evening activity that would require a baby-sitter. That means no evening Bible studies and no committee work at night. At times I find that frustrating, but I remind myself that this is my season. Someday, when my little ones aren't as needy, I'll be leaving the house after 7 p.m. My husband and I need to save our precious baby-sitting dollars for nights out together—not planning the next pancake feed.

Perhaps you work outside the home or care for an elderly parent. You must consider these responsibilities when deciding what can be reasonably expected of you.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE?

You may have experience teaching Sunday school, playing the piano, and taking meals to shut-ins, but it doesn't mean that you have to do those things. Experiment until you find what you really love doing—then be available to do it. I find that teaching a women's Bible study is energizing. Adequate childcare is available, and I can prepare when my children are sleeping.

Spending time alone with God will allow Him to reveal to you where He wants you to invest the rest of your time.

When you are operating within your gifts, you will generally feel energized and not drained. Once you determine what you love, you'll be free to turn down opportunities that conflict with your schedule and your gifts. However, if you are being asked to do something you'd rather not do, ask yourself if the Spirit may be trying to stretch you.

CAN SOMEONE ELSE DO THIS JOB?

I struggle with wanting to rescue every needy ministry in the church. If there is an empty spot on the Christian education board, I want to fill it. If we are desperate for one more Sunday school teacher, I'll teach that class. Instead, I'm learning to be quiet. It is not my responsibility to single-handedly keep every ministry in the church alive. There are plenty of other capable people. Sometimes I just have to let them figure out who they are.

ARE YOU MAKING EXCUSES?

One pastor's wife I know was criticized because she sat with the same family too many Sundays in a row. It would be tempting to explain how hard it can be to go to church Sunday after Sunday alone, or to tell why it's nice to have help corralling the kids. I've found, however, the greater the explanation, the more there is to criticize. So, do what

you have to do, smile sweetly, and sit with whomever you like. It also helps to have your husband as an ally. If you've talked through these issues ahead of time, he may be able to deflect some of the criticism that comes your way.

HAVE YOU SET APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES?

People will have ideas about how the pastor's wife should spend her time within and outside of the church. Rather than allowing yourself to be swayed by their opinions, make up your mind ahead of time and be firm about what you can and cannot do. Your primary function is to be available for your husband and family and to see that your home runs smoothly. You cannot do this if you allow others to dictate how you spend your time.

Set appropriate boundaries. Let the machine pick up the phone at dinner-time. Protect your day off. And do it with confidence. People learn to respect someone who has clearly defined boundaries.

ARE YOUR PRIORITIES IN ORDER?

Often in ministry we get so caught up in doing good things, that we fail to do the best things. Our ultimate responsibility is to love God. If you are too busy to meet with God daily, then you are too busy. Spending time alone with God will allow Him to reveal to you where He wants you to invest the rest of your time.

God has called you to be the best you can be.

My husband and I learned we would never succeed in trying to please people. Instead we've tried to focus on loving them. We demonstrate that love by being available in times of need, but also by simply enjoying the fellowship of those in our congregation. Building relationships takes time, and is more rewarding than bending over backward trying to anticipate and meet expectations. **E**

Joanna Bloss ministers with her husband in McPherson, Kansas.

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"Pastor, you fellows are making this look like child's play. Aren't you glad we voted to build the new church ourselves?"



Church Guide to "New Church Hire" Reporting

BY RICHARD R.
HAMMAR

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act is designed to reduce welfare payments and address welfare fraud.

In 1996, Congress enacted the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, popularly known as the "welfare reform" bill. The Act had many provisions designed to reduce welfare payments and address welfare fraud. One of these provisions requires employers to report all "new hires" to a designated state agency. The purpose of this requirement is locating "dead-beat dads" who avoid their child-support obligations by changing jobs and their place of residence. Forcing these persons to honor their support obligations will enable many women to go off welfare. Another purpose of the new law is to reduce fraudulent unemployment benefits payments to persons who are working.

Technically, states are not required to mandate new hire reporting. But if they fail to do so, they will forfeit federal funding under certain programs. To date, all states have enacted legislation mandating new hire reporting.

Many church leaders are unaware of the new hire reporting rules. This article will explain the rules and provide you with the information you need to comply.

CHURCH COVERAGE

The new hire reporting requirements apply to all "employers." The new law uses the same definition of "employer" as is contained in section 3401(d) of the tax code. This definition defines an employer as "the person for whom an individual performs or performed any service, of whatever nature, as the employee of such person." This definition contains no exception for religious organizations. And there is no exception for small employers having only one or two employees. But remember—reporting is only for new hires, as defined by state law. This generally will be any employee hired after a date specified by state law.

HOW IT WORKS

When employers (including churches) report new hire information to their designated state agency, the agency will match the information against its own child support records to locate parents and enforce existing child support orders. Once these matches are done, the information is sent to the National Directory of New Hires, so other states can compare the information with their own child support records. The information also will be shared with state welfare and unemployment agencies, to detect and prevent fraudulent or erroneous payments.

The federal welfare reform legislation requires that employers include the following information in their new hire reports:

- employee's name
- employee's address
- employee's social security number
- employer's name
- employer's address
- employer's federal employer identification number (EIN)

Note that most of this information is contained on the W-4 form ("withholding allowance certificate") completed by each new employee at the time of hire; and, as a result, most states allow employers to comply with the reporting requirements by sending copies of each new W-4 form completed by a newly hired employee.

Key point. *The employer's federal identification number is inserted on line 10 of Form W-4 only when the form is sent to the IRS. Since this happens infrequently, the employer's identification number generally does not appear on the form. So, for an employer to use W-4 forms to comply with the new hire reporting requirements, it must manually insert its federal employer identification number (EIN) on line 10. The employer's name and address may need to be manually inserted on line 8.*

Key point. *Some states ask employers to voluntarily report additional information, such as date of hire, or medical insurance information.*

FILING A REPORT

The deadline for filing a report is specified by state law. However, it may not be later than 20 days after an employee is hired.

Most states allow employers to comply with the new hire reporting requirement in any one of three ways:

(1) Electronic or magnetic reporting

Some states permit employers to report by electronic file transfer (EFT); file transfer protocol (FTP); magnetic tape; or 3 1/2-inch diskette.

(2) Fax or mail

Most states permit employers to fax or mail any one or more of the following:

- A copy of a new employee's W-4. Be sure it is legible, and that the church's federal employer identification number (EIN) is included on line 10. Also be sure that the church's name and address are included on the form.

- A printed list.
- A new hire reporting form provided by your designated state agency.

Key point. *If your church hires new employees infrequently, the easiest way to comply with the reporting obligation may be to use the state reporting form. Simply complete one form with your federal employer identification number, name, and address, and then make several copies. This way, you will only need to add an employee's name, address, and social security number when a new employee is hired.*

(3) Voice reporting

In some states, employers can report new hires by leaving a voice message on a special voice response system.

Key point. *Be sure to check with your designated state agency to find out what reporting options are available in your state. Telephone numbers for all state agencies are included in a table in this article. Use the option that is easiest for you.*

Key point. *Does your church use a payroll reporting service? If so, it may be automatically making the new hire reports for you. Check to be sure.*

PENALTIES

The federal welfare reform law prohibits states from assessing a penalty in excess of \$25 for each failure to report a new hire. However, states may impose a penalty up to \$500 if an employer and employee "conspire" to avoid the reporting requirements or agree to submit a false report.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Federal law requires each state to implement safeguards to protect the confidentiality of new hire reports. In addition, all data transmitted by states to the National Directory of New Hires is done over secure and dedicated lines.

EXAMPLES

The application of the new hire law to churches is illustrated in the following practical examples:

Example 1: *A church hires a full-time office secretary in September of 1999. The pastor has learned of the new hire reporting rules, but assumes that the church is exempt. This assumption is incorrect. The*

new hire reporting law defines an employer as "the person for whom an individual performs or performed any service, of whatever nature, as the employee of such person." Since a full-time office secretary hired by a church will always be an employee, the church is an employer subject to the reporting requirements.

Example 2: *Same facts as the previous example. What are the legal consequences of failing to comply with the new hire reporting requirements? The church would be subject to a penalty of up to \$25, depending on state law.*

Example 3: *A church treats all of its nonminister staff as "self-employed" persons in order to avoid any payroll tax reporting obligations and the new hire reporting requirements. The church has five nonminister workers, all of whom work full-time. It is virtually certain that all the nonminister workers are in fact employees rather than self-employed. As a result, the church is subject to significant penalties for failing to comply with the payroll tax reporting rules, and will be subject to a penalty of up to \$25 (as determined by state law) for each new hire that is not reported to the designated state agency. If the agency determines that the church and its workers*

"conspired" to avoid the reporting requirement, then it may be able to assess a penalty of up to \$500 per worker.

Example 4: A church would like to hire Brad as a custodian. Brad asks the pastor if the church complies with the new hire reporting law. The pastor informs Brad that it does. Brad reveals that he has not been honoring a child support obligation based on a court order in another state, and says that his life "will be ruined" if the pastor reports him. He assures the pastor that he is doing his best to comply with the order, but needs more time to work things out. The pastor agrees not to report Brad as a new hire. The church is subject to a penalty of up to \$500 as provided by state law.

An employer is "the person for whom an individual performs or performed any service, of whatever nature, as the employee of such person." This definition contains no exception for religious organizations.

Example 5: A church hires Rev. D as a youth pastor. Rev. D asks to be treated as a self-employed worker for federal income tax reporting purposes. The

church agrees to do so. The church treasurer assumes that since Rev. D is "self-employed" for tax reporting purposes, the new hire reporting requirement does not apply to Rev. D. This assumption is incorrect. As a full-time youth pastor, Rev. D is almost certainly an employee for federal income tax reporting purposes. This in turn makes the church an "employer" subject to the new hire reporting requirement.

The new hire reporting requirements apply to all "employers."

Example 6: A church hires a part-time custodian who will work less than 10 hours each week for an hourly rate of pay. The church will exercise little if any control over the methods the custodian will use in performing custodial services. The custodian probably is self-employed for federal income tax reporting purposes. As a result, the church is not an "employer," and the new hire reporting requirement does not apply to this worker. ☐

Richard R. Hammar, J.D., LL.M., CPA, serves as legal counsel to The General Council of the Assemblies of God. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he is the author of over 30 books on legal and tax issues for churches and pastors. This article is excerpted from his monthly Church Treasurer Alert! newsletter.

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"I understand there are certain drawbacks to getting up early on a Sunday and going to church. But I expect you to be there if you are to be the associate pastor!"

TELEPHONE NUMBERS OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCIES

STATE	TELEPHONE
Alabama	334-353-8491
Alaska	907-269-6685
Arizona	602-252-4045
Arkansas	501-682-3087
California	916-657-0529
Colorado	303-297-2849
Connecticut	860-424-5044
Delaware	302-369-2160
D. of Columbia	888-689-6088
Florida	904-922-9590
Georgia	888-541-0469
Hawaii	808-586-8984
Idaho	800-627-3880
Illinois	800-327-4473
Indiana	800-437-9136
Iowa	515-281-5331
Kansas	888-219-7801
Kentucky	800-817-2262
Louisiana	888-223-1461
Maine	207-287-2886
Maryland	888-634-4737
Massachusetts	617-577-7200
Michigan	800-524-9846
Minnesota	800-672-4473
Mississippi	800-866-4461
Missouri	800-859-7999
Montana	888-866-0327
Nebraska	888-256-0293
Nevada	888-639-7241
New Hampshire	888-803-4485
New Jersey	609-588-2355
New Mexico	888-878-1607
New York	800-972-1233
North Carolina	888-514-4568
North Dakota	800-755-8530
Ohio	800-208-8887
Oklahoma	800-317-3785
Oregon	503-986-6053
Pennsylvania	888-724-4737
Rhode Island	888-870-6461
South Carolina	800-768-5858
South Dakota	888-827-6078
Tennessee	888-715-2289
Texas	888-839-4473
Utah	801-526-4361
Vermont	802-241-2194
Virginia	800-979-9014
Washington	800-562-0479
West Virginia	800-835-4683
Wisconsin	888-300-4473
Wyoming	800-970-9258

People Helping in the Church

PART 3: A Biblical Model for Counseling in the 21st Century

BY DONALD A.
LICHI

While none of us has the ability to change the events of our past, we have a great deal of control over the meaning we choose to give to the events of our lives.

Previous articles in this series described the vision and basic counseling skills the 21st-century pastor must acquire to face increasingly complex problems in the local church. Saving the lost and healing the saved denote the church's evangelistic and pastoral care missions. In the second article in this series, I described the essentials of a helping relationship along with various attending, listening, and responding skills. This article, and the concluding one to appear in the next issue of *Enrichment*, will present two important behavior change models: Praying Through to deal with past hurts, and Putting Off the Old Self/Putting on the New Self to deal with besetting sins and temptation.

People typically seek counsel for one or more of four basic reasons. They can be presented under the heading of four H's.

- *A horrifying image of God.* People often perceive God as harsh, punitive, and impossible to please.
- *Hurtful experiences from the past.* Perhaps the person has been abused, neglected, or made poor decisions that continue to plague him or her with guilt.
- *A horrible image of oneself.*
- *Unhealthy and destructive habits.* The Praying Through and Putting Off the Old Self/Putting on the New Self models are practical tools to manage these concerns.

PRAYING THROUGH...A BIBLICAL MODEL TO HEAL PAST HURTS

While none of us has the ability to change the events of our past, we have a great deal of control over the meaning we choose to give to the events of our lives. Furthermore, none of us lives according to the events of our past. Rather, we live according to the memories and the interpretations we choose to give to the events of our past. Thankfully, these interpretations can be edited. As Pentecostals, we trust the Holy Spirit to assist in the process of

reckoning, or settling with God the account of our past, so we can live redemptively in the present and in the future. Two biblical examples will illustrate this point.

Jacob worked through his guilt and fear toward Esau through his encounter with God in Genesis 32—something we sometimes call praying through. Joseph determined to see God's hand in bringing good from the apparent evil and injustice that had befallen him. He stated in Genesis 50:20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good."

None of us lives according to the events of our past. Rather, we live according to the memories and the interpretations we choose to give to the events of our past.

Paul had to reconcile the pride in his past and his zealous persecution of the church by reckoning with God (see Acts 9:1–19; Philippians 3:4–14).

Many believers are hindered in their Kingdom effectiveness because they have not settled some of the issues of their past. The Praying Through model¹ is an effective tool in reconciling one's past. Here's how it works (see sidebar for illustration):

1. *Talk to God honestly about what hurts you.* Take the lid off of your hurts. Pastors need to help counselees see that God isn't surprised or intimidated by the concerns people present to Him.
2. *Express your feelings about your hurts to God.* People need to pour out their feelings to God until they are emotionally spent. Old-timers in the church called this praying through. That is, pray and bare your soul until you know you have touched the heart of God. This has the profound effect of lifting one's burdens.²
3. *Meditate for a new meaning from your old hurts.* This is a time for silence before God as the Holy Spirit suggests new, redemptive, and

constructive ways to look at your old hurts. This is a marvelous work of the Holy Spirit and fulfills God's Word in Romans 8:28, "In *all things* God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (NIV).

Remember, we don't live according to the events of our past; we live according to the meaning and interpretations we give to the events of our past, and this meaning is being edited by the Holy Spirit.

4. *Praise God for the new meaning He gives you.* Continue to give thanks for the Holy Spirit's work in your mind. This process will take time; but as you focus on what God has given you, the enemy's grip will loosen.

While many of the consequences of poor choices in the past cannot be reversed, one can be freed to live in a far more redemptive manner when the Holy Spirit breaks through and brings healing to the hurts of the past.

Help the person seeking your counsel to view himself or herself differently. The following four points make this a practical tool. Each person who has come to Christ can learn to confidently say that he or she is:

1. **LOVABLE**—Counselees need to know that when they were lost and still God's enemies, Christ died for them (Romans 5:6–8). If this is how much God loved them when they were His enemies, how much does He love them now? The Scripture uses the term, "much more." Richard Dobbins, Ph.D., psychologist and founder of EMERGE Ministries, suggests that people draw a picture of the cross on a piece of paper and write over it, "How much does God love me? Much more!" (see Romans 5:9,10.) If people can learn to see themselves the way God sees them, they won't be able to hold on to an unhealthy self-image.

2. **VALUABLE**—"Value" is an economic term. What something is worth is determined by what someone else is willing to pay for it. Our salvation was not purchased with silver, gold, or any corruptible thing, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18,19). Of course worth

is not the same as worthy. None of us is worthy of salvation, but nonetheless we are of great worth to the Father.

3. **FORGIVABLE**—Many believers hold on to the guilt of sins long after they have been forgiven by the Father. This is never God's will. If one continues to be troubled by condemning guilt after a sin has been confessed and repented of, this guilt comes from God's enemy. God will forgive us of any sin that we will confess to Him (1 John 1:9).

4. **CHANGEABLE**—This is where the Praying Through model is particularly helpful. God is so interested in growing us spiritually that He will remind, teach, comfort, discipline, and suggest to us a way to escape when we are being tempted (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In summary, the 21st-century pastor is confronted with the common issues of a person's view of God, hurts from his or her past, a horrible self-image, and destructive habits. In the next article in this series, we will examine a practical tool in helping the believer meet temptation successfully by putting off the old self/putting on the new self. 

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1. For a more complete discussion of this technique, see: Richard D. Dobbins, Ph.D., *Your Feelings... Friend or Foe?* (Akron, Ohio: Totally Alive Publications, 1994).
2. A good example of this type of prayer is found in the imprecatory psalms of David (see Psalms 58,59).

Four Steps To Praying Through

HERE ARE FOUR STEPS TO PRAYING THROUGH.

1. Talk to God honestly about what hurts you. Take the lid off of your hurts.
2. Express your feelings about your hurts to God. Pour them out until you are emotionally spent.
3. Meditate for a new meaning from your old hurts.
4. Praise God for the new meaning He gives you.



MBA Plans for the New Millennium

BY RANDALL K.
BARTON

For more than 50 years, the Assemblies of God Ministers Benefit Association has provided retirement services to ministers and churches, and most recently, lay employees.

For more than 50 years, the Assemblies of God Ministers Benefit Association has provided retirement services to ministers and churches, and most recently, lay employees. With the approach of the new century, MBA has taken a close look at how it can better serve the financial needs of ministers, lay employees, and churches.

After conducting an extensive survey of Assemblies of God ministers and lay employees (both MBA participants and nonparticipants), a new retirement plan was developed.

Effective January 1, 1999, MBA presented the new SELECT Retirement Plan. SELECT Plan combines the CHOICE Plan that allowed self-direction of investments, the old Original Church Plan, and the MBA 403(b)9 Retirement Income Plan with these features:

- All funds existing in any of the previous plans can be self-directed to customized investment options.
- Lay employees of Assemblies of God churches and institutions nationwide can now invest in SELECT Retirement Plan investment strategies.
- LifePoints, an award-winning investment education program, is available at no cost to help participants make informed investment decisions, set personal retirement goals, and establish an investment strategy.
- Investment options include an equity fund and fixed income funds designed for the Assemblies of God that screen out companies known for or who derive a major portion of income from abortion, pornography, tobacco, alcohol, and gambling.
- The old MBA Fixed Income Fund that invested predominantly in church loans has been retained to provide ministers a fund with no volatility and high-income yields, ranging from 1-to-2 percent in excess of market yields.
- Frank Russell Investment Company, one of the largest and most experienced retirement planning consultants in the world, has been chosen to assist with the educational program and provide investment consulting services.

- “Rabbi Trust” (deferred compensation) plans have been modified to provide greater flexibility, and 403(b) contribution tests have been expanded to include more flexible testing to maximize pretax savings.

- A new Y2K-compatible record-keeping service has been implemented, allowing ministers 24-hour access to their 403(b) and Rabbi Trust account balances.

- Through an 800 number or MBA customer service representatives, ministers and lay employees can change their investment elections as often as quarterly.

- High-yield savings accounts are still available for ministers as an investment alternative to after-tax savings accounts, certificates of deposit, and the like.

- The Assemblies of God Financial Services Group was formed to create a management umbrella organization serving Ministers Benefit Association, Assemblies of God Foundation, A/G Loan Fund, and other financial services.

- Internet access to your account information is being developed.

The new technology upgrades—including 24-hour access to your account information, Internet services, world-class investment consulting services, and cutting-edge tax planning—will make Ministers Benefit Association the preferred retirement planning vehicle for the 21st century.

Many ministers and lay employees throughout the Assemblies of God have utilized IRAs, nonchurch 403(b) plans, and other retirement vehicles to access mutual funds. The new SELECT Retirement Plan offers diversified investment options for ministers and lay employees of all ages, while providing the unique tax benefits available for ministers, such as housing allowance, which is not available through other retirement plans.

These tax benefits make MBA the best retirement vehicle in the marketplace today. Understanding the tax consequences of retirement plan contributions and distributions is critical to maximize your retirement benefits.

THE TAX MAZE OF CHURCH RETIREMENT PLANS

In deference to historical concerns of separation of church and state and the entanglements of tax policy with ministry performance, ministers enjoy perhaps the greatest tax-advantaged retirement opportunities provided by the Internal Revenue Code.

The objective: Participate in a church-sponsored plan so your money goes in tax-free, compounds tax-free, and comes out tax-free to the extent paid as retirement housing allowance. As simple as this may sound, when you consider the complex regulations surrounding church retirement plans, you find a maze of rules that can baffle even the best CPAs and tax attorneys.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO 403(B)9 CHURCH RETIREMENT PLANS

To determine the potential tax consequences of contributions to church 403(b)9 plans, four questions must be asked:

Question #1: Is the contribution an employer contribution or a salary reduction elective contribution?

Question #2: Is the participant a minister or lay employee?

Question #3: What are the income tax consequences?

Question #4: What are the Social Security tax consequences?

Tax Consequences

Subject to Internal Revenue Code limits:

- Employer contributions are income tax-free for ministers and lay employees.

- Employer contributions are SECA tax-free for ministers (15.3 percent of self-employment tax) and do not count toward Social Security earnings.

- Employer contributions are FICA tax-free for lay employees (7.65 percent employer/7.65 percent employee tax) and do not count toward Social Security earnings.

- Elective deferrals are income tax-free for ministers and lay employees.

- Elective deferrals generally are SECA tax-free for ministers and do not count toward Social Security earnings.

- Elective deferrals are subject to FICA taxes for lay employees and would generally require employers to pay 7.65 percent,

employees 7.65 percent, and would count toward Social Security earnings.

DISTRIBUTIONS FROM 403(B)9 CHURCH RETIREMENT PLANS

Three questions must be addressed:

Question #1: Is the participant a minister or lay employee?

Question #2: Has the minister declared a housing allowance in advance for all or a portion of the distributions for the year?

Question #3: Is the participant under age 70 and receiving Social Security benefits?

Tax Consequences

- Distributions are taxable as ordinary income to lay employees.

- Distributions can be treated as tax-free for ministers to the extent of a housing allowance appropriately designated in advance. Additional distributions are taxable as ordinary income to ministers.

- Distributions are not subject to FICA tax for lay employees.

- Distributions after retirement are not subject to SECA tax for ministers.

- Distributions are not counted as earnings for lay employees for determining if Social Security benefits should be reduced prior to age 70.

- Distributions are not counted as self-employment earnings for ministers for determining if Social Security benefits should be reduced prior to age 70.

LIMITS ALLOWED BY LAW

The above rules assume contributions are

made within the limits allowed by law. Currently (1999) those limits are:

- Elective Deferrals (Salary Reductions)—You may generally contribute the lesser of \$10,000 or 25 percent of your compensation. (If your adjusted gross income is \$17,000 or less, you can defer up to \$3,000 of your income without regard to the 25-percent rule. If your compensation is less than \$40,000, you can contribute up to \$10,000 without regard to the 25-percent rule, within certain lifetime limits.)

- Employer Contributions—Your employer can contribute the lesser of \$30,000 or 25 percent of your compensation. (If you have made elective deferrals or after-tax contributions, those amounts are included in the \$30,000/25-percent maximum.)

- Your elective deferrals and employer contributions may be limited by [Internal Revenue] Code Section 403(b)(2) in some circumstances.

- Special make-up elections can be made that allow contributions in excess of these limits under certain conditions. These elections are somewhat complex, but are worth considering in some circumstances.

Plan now for your retirement years. Maximizing your contributions, maximizing your investment returns, and minimizing your tax consequences will provide the retirement income you need to enjoy the fruit of your years of labor and service to the Lord.

Randall K. Barton is CEO of the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, Springfield, Missouri. 

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"The motion passes to form a committee to select a task force to see why we can never get anything done in our board meetings."



Ministers and Working Wives

BY JERRY
NEWSWANDER

Because of the cost of raising children and saving for retirement, ministers' wives have joined the workforce.

Because of the cost of raising children and saving for retirement, ministers' wives have joined the workforce. Many have secured employment to supplement the family income or to receive the insurance that churches cannot afford. While it is true that some ministers' wives work because of financial necessity, it is also true that some prefer to pursue a career while serving with their husbands in the ministry. Regardless of the reasons, purposes, or goals for ministers' wives who work, there are special stresses that confront any ministerial family when the wife works.

Pastors whose wives work outside the home encounter unique demands and expectations not experienced by other families. The minister is expected to care for church families, but he is also responsible for the well-being of his own family.

Many people do not understand the additional stress placed on ministerial families who secure supplemental employment outside church ministry.

Ministerial families must not feel that because the wife or mother works outside the home their faith is weak. It is also unfair to assume that ministers are not caring for their family properly if their wives supplement the family income.

My wife has worked throughout our approximately 20 years of pastoral ministry and 22 years of marriage. She enjoys ministry, so she balances her time between work, home, teenage children, husband, and church. We both know her job has been a necessity and a blessing. Many ministers' wives are in the same situation. Rather than seeing your wife's job as an inconvenience, view it as a ministry. God's grace can be ministered to those she meets throughout the day.

Your attitude, spiritual life, and personal relationships will be healthier if you take positive steps to cope with the unique stresses of ministerial life and the necessity of your spouse being involved in the workforce.

Ministry couples must take steps to cope with the business and pressures of life. The following ideas can help.

1. **Plan time for your spouse.** Make time together for lunch, dinner, quiet time, a romantic evening, or a mini vacation. My wife and I meet for lunch several times each week. I try to plan my schedule around her days off so most weeks we spend part of a day (or an entire day) together. If possible, plan a short trip every 3 months. Take time each day to converse with your spouse about the day's experiences.

2. **Plan time for the entire family to be together.** At times, we plan our private meals together as a family. We may do a special activity together. It is wise for parents to take their children on dates—mother/son and father/daughter for example. Let them choose the activity. Take time each day to speak with your children about their experiences.

It is important to find healthy methods of coping with the special stresses that are added to a ministerial couple/family when the spouse works.

3. **As a couple, visit with minister friends and their wives over a meal, coffee, or in some enjoyable activity.** This is a time to nurture friendships, share burdens, and gain new insight on ministry or family concerns. Establish friendships in the church as well.

4. **Choose prayer partners.** Share needs

with your friends and pray regularly with each other. Meet for prayer, share needs through notes, and use the phone or E-mail.

5. **Pray with your spouse and family.** Prayer will strengthen your family relationships. You will be refreshed, and your children will learn how to pray and have a model to follow.

6. **Be patient with work schedules.** Some jobs might require an employee to periodically work overtime or vary work schedules. Be flexible with your spouse's work schedule.

7. **Realize that the minister may have to share home responsibilities.** Those responsibilities may include taking the children to and from school, cooking, and supervising home activities.

8. **Attend sectional, district, and national conventions as time allows.** Plan ahead for these meetings. My wife attends meetings with me as much as possible. Many churches send their pastor and spouse to district and national meetings. If your church cannot afford to pay your way, perhaps your district has a scholarship fund to help with expenses.

9. **Talk with a Christian counselor, if needed.** Seek assistance when you sense a need for help. Attend marriage retreats.

Ministerial families must not feel that because the wife or mother works outside the home their faith is weak.

10. **Exercise and maintain a healthy diet.** Proper diet and exercise will help you feel better and look better. Good health assists in dealing with stress.

11. **Maintain and nurture a positive, pleasant, and productive attitude (Philippians 4:8).** A healthy attitude and good sense of humor will be a blessing (Proverbs 17:22).

12. **Do not feel guilty because your spouse maintains a job.** You cannot regulate the economy, nor can you control cash flow through the church.

Each couple is unique and can devise other methods of coping with schedules, time management, and stresses. Find healthy methods of coping with the stress that is added to a ministerial couple/family when the spouse works. **E**

Jerry Newswander is administrative assistant pastor of New Hope Assembly of God, Taylor, Michigan.

Your primary function is to be available for your husband and family and to see that your home runs smoothly.

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"You've heard of family values? Well, we value families."

What College Students Would Like To Say to Their Pastors

BY WAYNE E.
KRAISS

After working closely with college students on several campuses over the past 38 years, I have been impressed with the respect most of them have for their pastor.

After working closely with college students on several campuses over the past 38 years, I have been impressed with the respect most have for their pastor. It is that respect that keeps some of them from talking openly with their pastor about some of these issues.

I am sure many of the comments I hear from students are based on their *perceptions* and not necessarily on facts. These perceptions, however, often become the basis for decisions and opinions that are formed in the mind of the student. These same perceptions often influence the student to continue to attend or leave a church. Here are some frequent comments:

(1) *"I am treated with suspicion because I am in college."* One student told me of an episode in which he asked the pastor about a point in his sermon. The pastor ignored his question and replied, "That is what is wrong with colleges these days; they fill your mind with stupid questions and make a cynic out of you." The student was deeply hurt. He had intended no harm or disrespect. He had asked about a comment in the sermon that AIDS was God's punishment for immorality. His question related to whether every sickness was a punitive response from God or just AIDS. He was struggling with the age-old issue of the innocent suffering for the sins of others—when children of addicts are born addicted. What could have been an opportunity for meaningful dialogue between the pastor and this student was lost in a verbal attack.

Most college and university students are encouraged to ask questions as part of their educational experience. Presuppositions are tested and examined. When they ask honest questions of their pastor, it should not be viewed as a challenge to the pastor's beliefs or authority. It may be that the student is looking for some reaffirmation.

(2) *"I would like to hear more expository messages."* This comment tops all others as the most often stated. It is closely related to

the comment, "All we hear are topical sermons with a few proof texts thrown in for good measure." The student's thirst for messages that are solidly based on the biblical text is commendable. It reflects growth and maturation on the part of the student who is seeking to become a student of the Word.

What could have been an opportunity for meaningful dialogue between the pastor and this student was lost in a verbal attack.

One student confided, "My pastor is a good preacher and loves the Lord. I dearly love him and appreciate him, but he is not feeding me. I guess I have become spoiled by some of the expositions of Scripture I have heard. I have been so moved and convicted by the power of the Word."

Students know it takes much more time to prepare an exposition of a text than to pull together some ideas about a single topic. What can sound like harsh criticism from the student may, in fact, be a cry from the pew for new priorities in the management of the pastor's time.

(3) *"Because I do not feel called to the ministry, I feel a sense of rejection."* This comment is usually from students who hold pulpit ministry in high regard but do not feel it is their calling. Students tell of having other students recognized and prayed for because they are preparing for ministry; but they hear or see little, if any, concern for their commitment to follow the will of God in preparation for some other avenue of service. Parents feel frustrated when they see concern expressed for others, but not for their son or daughter. Although it is usually an oversight, this has the potential of creating lifelong tensions between the pastor and laity. It contributes to the appearance of elitism within the ranks of the ministry.

(4) *"I wish I could tell my pastor how much*

I need his or her support at this time in my life when I am sorting through so many issues.” College is an intense time for students because they are making major adjustments in their lives. They are sorting through a lot of issues and need some space in which to do that. Some students may do nonsensical things—many of these aren’t expressions of rebellion or backsliding. We must keep the communication lines open. Attacking them or making an example of them through innuendo are not helpful and may actually produce the opposite result.

Over the years I have watched several pastors come to campus, find students from their church, and take them out for dinner. I have wished the pastor could hear how impressed these students were with such thoughtfulness. They talk about it to other students. They call home and tell their parents. I hear comments like, “My pastor is the greatest!” Once in a while a note from the pastor arrives at a moment of need, and the student’s

The student’s thirst for messages that are solidly based on the biblical text is commendable. It reflects growth and maturation on the part of the student who is seeking to become a student of the Word.

relationship with the pastor is strengthened. The wise pastor uses opportunities to listen, communicating confidence and trust in the student.

Some students return to their home church with new songs, new ideas, and new thoughts about worship. Many pastors are threatened by suggestions like, “Have you ever thought of...?” These students are usually not in rebellion or rejecting the old paths. They have been exposed to new things and are excited about them. They have met other students from churches where the worship may be different and have found satisfaction in some of it. Some of these suggestions may not work in the home church, but the sincerity behind them

must not be lost by impatience or suspicion.

Pastors who encourage and listen to all the college students in a congregation will be handsomely rewarded. These young people are making life-changing decisions and forming opinions about their faith. They return from campus with a new picture of the breadth of the church and the knowledge that other people who worship a bit differently love Jesus too. Their educational development has encouraged them to test assumptions and ask questions. Our faith will easily endure such scrutiny. It will be reassuring to the student if the pastor is willing to engage in that process too. A few students will return home with an unwarranted sense of arrogance or superiority. Life has its own way of humbling them. When that happens, they will need a pastor more than ever. Try to keep the lines of communication open so you can be part of the healing process. 

Wayne E. Kraiss, D.Min., is president of Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, California, and the commissioner of the Assemblies of God Commission on Christian Higher Education.



Ministry Needs Company

BY CHRIS
MAXWELL

My accountability team requires time—meals together, intercession, conversation, and an annual retreat away from the normal routine of pastoral obligations.

My friends waited as I searched for words. A fire in the fireplace provided warmth and light during our time of prayer. Each friend prayed individually and then for me. The words and prayers of these friends went deeper than I expected.

Where were we? What were we doing? We were at our annual hideaway.

We head to the mountains and listen to the rhythm of the water and enjoy the cool air. We leave the routine of pastoral ministry behind and gather for prayer, study, accountability, and encouragement.

That night I did not know what to say. But they knew what questions to ask, how to get me started, and when to challenge me to make changes. An old phrase states that misery loves company. But our hurts may cause us to avoid help from others. Often, misery runs from the company it really needs.

Ministry frequently does the same. We preach sermons that challenge the congregation to have fellowship. We highlight how the Early Church devoted themselves to each other, expecting our parishioners to do the same. But do we build such relationships ourselves? I thank God for a family and a church that provides true friendships. I also thank God for the deep level of friendship He has provided with other ministers. I need that. Ministry needs company.

CONNECTION

Sports teams thrive on teamwork. Each player possessing unique skills must cooperate with those wearing the same jersey.

In life, people frequently become close friends only with those viewed as identical. We forget how point guards bless power forwards in the game of life. Looking and thinking alike do not provide all we need. Spiritual connection comes from a willingness to obey God and blend with others.

God has linked me with some men who are

very different—our differences help reveal our strengths and weaknesses. We are all ministers, joined in basic beliefs; yet we are assorted. This blesses our bond. Diversity adds to victory. We blend well because we choose to accept or challenge issues as God directs.

George Wood, Assemblies of God general secretary, offers this insight on ministerial relationships: “Whenever you look at New Testament ministry you will search in vain for Lone Ranger preachers. Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. Peter took companions to Cornelius’ home. Paul maintained a partnering and mentoring relationship with several dozen coworkers over the tenure of his missionary journeys.”

Too often ministers gather only to compare notes and evaluate success. Praise reports replace honest hurts at gatherings where sincerity longs for freedom.

When I get together with my friends, the masks fall. Hurts and hopes are discussed, suggestions are offered, and prayers are lifted. Prophetic, scriptural direction guides future plans.

In *Eight Habits of the Heart*, Clifton L. Taulbert motivates strong community behaviors (regardless of race or history): “Within the community, dependability is being there for others through all the times of their lives, a steady influence that makes tomorrow a welcome event; and responsibility means showing and encouraging a personal commitment to each task.”¹

COMMITMENT

Connection does not just happen; it takes hard work. Once, when we explained our unique relationship to other ministers, their response was, “How would anyone have time for that?”

My accountability team requires time—meals together, intercession, conversation, and an annual retreat away from the normal routine of pastoral obligations. Finding time is not

always easy. But what do we tell our people who say they have no time for Bible study or prayer? What do we tell couples who say they are too busy for time together? We challenge them to find moments for God and for each other. Like every effective exercise, this one requires time. It requires commitment. Teaching others to find time is not enough; we must do it ourselves as well.

When I get together with my friends, the masks fall. Hurts and hopes are discussed, suggestions are offered, and prayers are lifted.

Before the minister stands before the bride and groom, he or she challenges them to stay true to their relationship—not to base it on feelings, convenience, or pleasure. We teach them to do what is right with consistency. Commitment must also find a home in our relationships with ministerial friends. Enduring relationships require loyalty. Like marriages, committed friendships with a small group of people require commitment.

Philip Yancey writes in his book, in *Church: Why Bother?* that church life calls for people to “voluntarily choose to band together with a strange menagerie because of a common bond in Christ.”² Moments with my friends do that, but they do not happen by accident—each appointment requires commitment.

COMMUNICATION

Sermons take textual truth from Scripture and reveal practical application for the lives of listeners. Much of the Bible includes dialogue. God talked to people, and people responded. God uses people as His mouthpiece to provide His instruction. His words are spoken to listening ears.

As ministers, we want an audience to hear our teaching. We counsel by listening, asking questions, and pursuing honesty. We expect people to communicate with each other.

In our moments of deep inner pain, listening friends can pray with us. We need a friend who empathizes with our difficulty. That friend can be a pastoral partner who gives time and concern. My friends and I have learned the blessing we give each other.

Read the Psalms. What did David do? He unloaded honesty in poetic release. He directed his words toward God, but many of them related his inner hurt or joy.

Relationships that encourage honesty in prayer take ministers to new levels. When one of my friends released a deep wound he had held internally for years, we wept with him. Our questions, his slow movement toward real answers, and his final release brought glorious freedom.

Again, George Wood’s words challenge us: “I need the *koinonia* relationship with fellow laborers in gospel ministry so I don’t get isolated, so I may receive encouragement or correction, and so I will continually recognize my ministerial aptitudes and giftings are insufficient to accomplish all that God wants within the sphere of my ministry. Rather, the combined calling and giftedness of

companions is needed if Christ’s work is to be fully done.”

If we pursue God’s plan, ministry with company is necessary. If we praise life in the intermediate mode, it is optional. If we prefer shallow friendships, it is because of our individualistic order. Avoiding relational depth allows us to hide in the cave of personal seclusion. But is that what God wants? Is that what we really want? We will miss too much if we omit deeper relationships with spiritual family members.

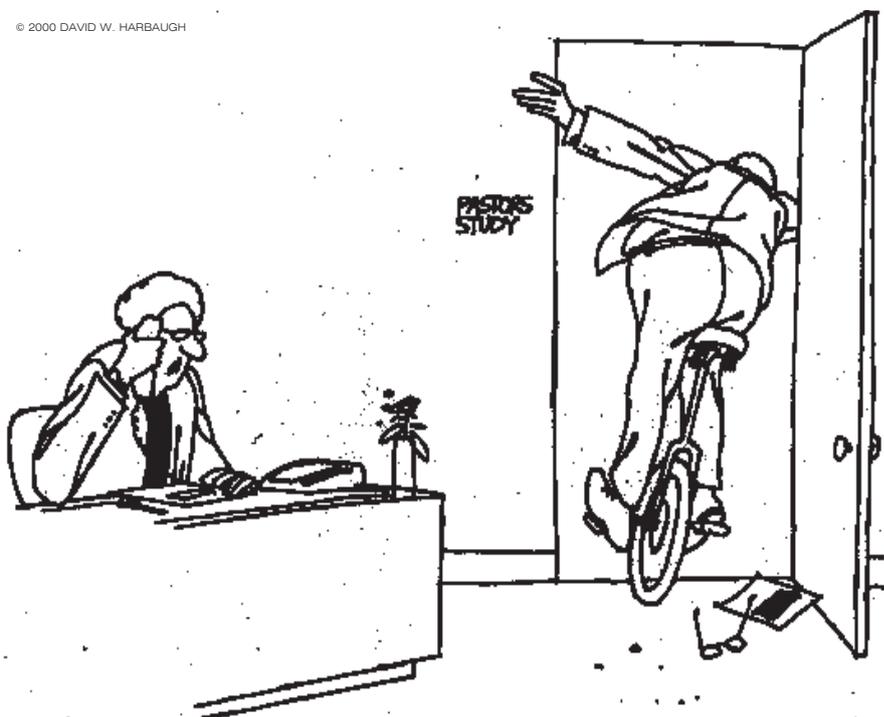
Doctors need doctors. Ministers need to receive spiritual checkups from those they can trust, not from people they try to impress nor from those who try to please them to get pastoral approval. Ministers need that company. Which ones will pay the price to put it into practice? ■

Chris Maxwell is senior pastor at Evangel Assembly of God, Orlando, Florida.

ENDNOTES

1. Clifton L. Taulbert, *Eight Habits of the Heart* (New York: Viking, 1997), 25.
2. Philip Yancey, *Church, Why Bother?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 64.

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“You’d think they’d loan him a car while his is being repaired.”



Ministering to the Missionary Family

What makes a missionary family different from any other American family? Actually, very little. True, they are called by God to serve on a foreign field. They have made a special commitment. Yet their response to serve as missionaries does not make them impervious to the normal struggles of family living.

Challenges are often augmented when the missionary family arrives on a foreign field. They have left familiar things behind and are now in a new and perhaps unusual culture. The systems, programs, provisions, and laws they were familiar with in the U.S. are no longer in place. Many things they had relied on and taken for granted, aren't there.

Relational dynamics within the family do not change when a family moves to another country. Each member of the family is still unique, with his or her own personality, likes, and dislikes. Each individual has to make his or her own adjustments to life on the field. Neither do maturation and social needs of children change just because they have moved to a foreign country. Developmental stages are still different for a 5-year-old and a 15-year-old.

Parents may discover there are no programs overseas to help them with a child who has special needs. Access to the specialized help available in the States is not there; thus the parents are forced to deal with the situation themselves.

Thankfully, other missionary families on the same field are generally very supportive of one another. However, some veteran missionaries might view a problem situation in a new missionary's home as a spiritual one. They might say, "All you need to do is trust the Lord." While God can work things out, the problem at hand might be very deep-seated and not quickly resolved. Understanding and patience between families are very important.

Occasionally, children in missionary families go through major adjustment crises after they arrive on a foreign field. They are uncomfortable with their surroundings and don't want to be there. They miss the familiar things back home. This can create a rift between parents and children. Parents become frustrated with their children and the children cannot

understand why they have to be there.

Assemblies of God Foreign Missions endeavors to help children make many of the adjustments before they get to the field through the MK (Missionary Kid) program within the Personnel and Family Life office. Before the children reach the mission field, the MK office staff work with them for several weeks during Pre-field Orientation and School of Missions in Springfield, Missouri. While their parents are learning about their respective fields and responsibilities, the children learn what to expect when they get there.

After they are on the field, children receive regular communication from the MK office. Sometimes it's a letter with a stick of gum inside. Though simple, it's a taste of home and tells the MK that someone cares about him or her.

Many churches send letters and care packages to MKs. For example, Stone Church in Chicago observes "Christmas in August." During the month they collect inexpensive items like candy bars, batteries, and toothpaste, and prepare a box sent to arrive just before Christmas. More elaborate gifts are included as well. Everything is gift wrapped, including the toothpaste and batteries. There are many things to unwrap—making it fun for the whole family. Plus they get some things that are hard or impossible to buy on the field.

Personal letters from pastors are meaningful and encouraging to the missionary family. Sometimes the only communication they receive is from the church's missions committee. While that communication is important, an occasional letter from the pastor can add an extra touch.

Not enough can be said about the power of prayer. When church members band together and pray for missionary parents and their children; when youth groups pray for MKs, there is no way to measure the impact their prayers will have.

Missionaries regularly tell that no one could have known what they were going through at a particular time, but they knew churches were praying. When pastors call and tell those same missionaries that their church was especially

BY CARY TIDWELL

Their response to serve as missionaries does not make them impervious to the normal struggles of family living.

burdened to pray for them at a certain time, it often becomes apparent that the burden came at the exact time when the missionary was facing a crisis. We will never know this side of eternity how many times the prayers of God's people have spared our missionary families from difficult circumstances. May God's people continue to intercede for our missionaries as His Spirit leads them.

Missionaries answer to supporting churches, districts, an area director, a regional director, and the executive director in the Division of Foreign Missions. They are also part of a missionary fellowship on the field. And ultimately, they are responsible to God to fulfill their calling to the best of their ability. Missionaries and their families sometimes feel the weight of the responsibility and scrutiny under which they serve. They need love and patience as they strive to fulfill their calling.

Missionaries are ordinary families that have accepted a call to missionary service. But because they know that people tend to place them on pedestals, some missionaries are hesitant to admit failures or shortcomings, fearing their calling or competence will be questioned. Missionary families are just as vulnerable to fear, uncertainty, and discouragement. They need the understanding, love, prayers, and support of the church as much as any other family in a congregation.

Pray for our missionary families worldwide. Pray for their ministries and for them as members of a family unit. Ask God to strengthen their love for Him and one another as they work together to accomplish Kingdom purposes. 

Cary Tidwell is director of the Personnel and Family Life Department for the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, Springfield, Missouri.

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"Pastor seems happy. See what he's been up to."

Missionary Families— What To Pray For

Use the following guide to pray for missionaries and their families.

Relationships. Missionary life requires commitment and sacrifice from every member of a missionary's family. Pray that God will strengthen family members and draw them closer to each other.

Encouragement. Discouragement can easily set in amid the heavy workloads and adjustments. Pray that God will strengthen our missionary families spiritually.

Protection. Political and religious sensitivities, natural calamities, and spiritual warfare can put missionary families in harm's way. Pray for God's protection upon families in times of crisis.

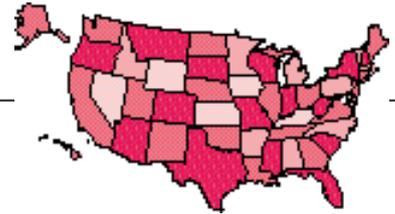
Health. Many missionary family members battle physical illnesses. Pray for their healing.

Education. Providing for MK's education on a foreign field can be challenging. Sometimes children must attend boarding school away from their parents. Pray that God will open the right educational opportunities and that He will comfort parents and children who have to be separated.

Spiritual Growth. Pray that all members of the family will be spiritually nurtured.

Provision. Costs of food, utilities, and other supplies can be staggering. Pray that God will provide for day-to-day needs.

While gifts and letters are wonderful sources of help and encouragement, not enough can be said about the power of prayer.



Leading the Church in a Peaceful Manner

BY CHARLES E.
HACKETT

I believe pastoring is a calling from God, and the pastoral place is an appointment of God.

Wayde Goodall, D.Min., executive editor of *Enrichment Journal*, recently conducted a pastoral exit survey. I was surprised and dismayed by the statistics—especially that 46 percent of the forced exits of pastors were due to unresolved conflicts that involved the pastor. After spending 29 wonderful years as the pastor of one church, I am saddened that so many of my colleagues have had these unhappy pastoral experiences. I believe pastoring is a calling from God, and the pastoral place is an appointment of God. The calling and appointment must be confirmed by the vote of a board and congregation, but God's will for one's life is never in the hands of other people.

This large number of pastors being forced to leave their pulpits because they were unable to lead the church in a peaceful manner is a major catastrophe. It is not God's plan for a church to be a place of conflict, but rather a place of salvation and healing. Any church that is not a place of salvation and healing will become a place of conflict and friction. There is no middle ground.

As a pastor, I gave careful attention to two areas that directly affected the peace and harmony of the church. First, my own attitude and spirit as the leader of the congregation. Of course, I had opposition, but how I responded determined whether it was a local skirmish or an all-out war. I took great care in avoiding the latter. There were times I could do nothing but fast, pray, and ask God for His sovereign intervention. It worked every time. Other situations required that I take firm, decisive, yet kind action. God will not handle problems that are the responsibility of the pastor.

God has called me to fight the devil, not church members. I refused to stoop to the level of carnal church people. Jesus said that peacemakers were blessed, and every pastor ought to be a specialist in making peace.

Second, I gave careful attention to my pulpit ministry. God does not give a boring preaching

ministry to anyone; we develop that on our own. If no one was being saved, the finances were down, attendance was dropping off, and the preaching dull and routine, then I knew conflict was coming. These conditions bring out the worst in carnal Christians. Pastors cannot devise a strategy that will avoid conflict if the church is lifeless. New Christians filling the church with their excitement and testimonies of God's goodness were the greatest silencer of my critics. These new parishioners were also very outspoken in their love and support for me as their pastor.

Every church can and should have revival.

What do you do when there are no visitors, much less a lack of converts? The answer is simple: Call the church to fasting and prayer, and go into the marketplace and find somebody who needs Jesus. There are millions out there, but few will come to a cloistered pastor or a church in conflict. Much of the ministry of Jesus occurred in the marketplace. Let us follow His example. Let us go where the sinners are. You will find them everywhere, and they are looking for answers that are found only in Jesus. They will not be saved unless we reach them and bring them into a church of love and peace where they can be accepted, loved, and disciplined. Some pastors have conflicts wherever they go, while other pastors rarely ever have conflict. This says more about the pastor than the church.

Any church can have God's best among its members and pastor. Every church can and should have revival. God has not ordained that only a few churches should have peace and harmony, but it is His will that every church experience His blessings that result in an abundant harvest. **E**

Charles E. Hackett is executive director of the Division of Home Missions, Springfield, Missouri.



ARE YOU FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT?

Ephesians 5: 18-21

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian must maintain the flow of the Spirit in and through his life. Does the Bible teach “once filled, always filled”?

MESSAGE:

1. The Command (verse 18)

- a. The contrast
 - (1) Why the contrast between drunkenness and Spirit-fullness? What fills a person affects that person's conduct.
 - (2) The early disciples were accused of drunkenness (Acts 2:13-16).
- b. The continuing aspect
 - (1) “Keep on being filled” is a better translation.
 - (2) The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not a once-for-all experience.
 - (3) Available to meet special needs.
 - (a) Peter's defense before religious authorities (Acts 4:8).
 - (b) The disciples' need for added boldness (Acts 4:29-31).
 - (c) Paul's pronouncing judgment on Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:9-11).

(4) A state of fullness is available to Christians.

- (a) Requirements for men chosen to serve tables (Acts 6:2,3).
- (b) Exemplified by Stephen (Acts 6:5; 7:55).

2. The Evidences (verses 19-21)

- a. Initial infilling is outwardly evidenced by:
 - (1) Speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).
 - (2) Power to witness (Acts 1:8).
- b. Continuing evidences of Spirit-fullness are:
 - (1) Ministry to fellow believers (verse 19).
 - (a) Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs for mutual edification.
 - (b) Spiritual songs include singing in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:15).
 - (2) Ministry to the Lord (verse 19).
 - (a) Music in worship must always be “to the Lord.”
 - (b) It must proceed from the heart and be prompted by the Holy Spirit (John 4:23,24; Philippians 3:3).
 - (3) Gratitude to God (verse 20):

(a) At all times.

(b) For all things.

(c) In the name of Jesus.

(4) Mutual submission and consideration (verse 21).

(a) It must be done “in the fear of Christ.”

(b) Various relationships considered: wife to husband (5:22-24); husband to wife (5:25-33); children to parents (6:1-3); parents to children (6:4); employees to employers (6:5-8); employers to employees (6:9).

CONCLUSION:

Christians can measure their degree of yieldedness to the Holy Spirit by the guidelines suggested in this passage. Being filled with the Spirit has a salutary effect on our relationships with fellow believers, with the Lord, with our families, and in our secular involvements. As a Christian allows the Spirit to manifest himself through these relationships, the flow of the Spirit in his or her life will be maintained.

—Anthony D. Palma
Springfield, Missouri

THE WALK IN LOVE

Ephesians 5:1,2

INTRODUCTION:

In describing the believer's walk in love, Paul used Jesus as the example (Ephesians 5:2). Jesus himself instructed His followers to love one another as He loved them (John 13:34; 15:12).

MESSAGE:

1. The source of love

- a. Spiritual life results in love (1 John 3:14).
- b. The Holy Spirit produces love (Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22).

2. The objects of love

- a. Believers are to love God with all

their hearts (Matthew 22:37,38). When they love God, they will also love others (1 John 4:20).

- b. Believers are to love all people, family members. (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4), fellow believers (1 Peter 2:17), and even enemies (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14,20).

3. The nature of love

- a. The quality of love is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, and love will never fail (verse 8).
- b. The intensity of the believer's love is described as fervent (1 Peter 1:22; 4:8).

4. The blessing of love

- a. Love of God results in the believer's receiving a crown of life (James 1:12).
- b. During this life, our love of God also assures us that all things work together for our good (Romans 8:28).

CONCLUSION:

There is danger of losing the “first love” as the church of Ephesus did (Revelation 2:4). For this reason believers must keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 21).

—Hardy W. Steinberg

S E R M O N S E E D S

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GOOD FRIDAY?

INTRODUCTION:

For the disciples, the Friday that Christ was crucified was a tragedy. Their hopes were nailed with Him to a cross. Fear gripped them.

What was that Friday like for Christ? It began with flogging. Roman soldiers fashioned a leather whip, studded with small rocks and bone. Every blow against Christ's back ripped open new strips of skin. His muscles and tendons turned into a mass of quivering, bleeding flesh. Most prisoners died of shock and blood loss before being nailed to the cross.

After the beating, Jesus carried His cross part of the way to the execution site. There the soldiers laid it on the ground and threw Him down onto it. The 7-inch spikes hammered through His wrists and feet tore through exquisitely sensitive nerves. Electrifying pain exploded up and down His arms and legs.

Breathing became an all-consuming

struggle while He hung between heaven and earth. Gravity restricted His respiratory muscles, forcing Him to push against His feet and flex His arms just to breathe. Movement intensified the pressure on His ravaged nerves, causing them to scream in agony. Each attempt to breathe forced His back against the splintered wood, reopening the raw wounds.

For Jesus and His disciples, Good Friday seemed anything but good. What, then, is so good about that Friday nearly 2,000 years ago?

MESSAGE:

1. **That Friday set in motion our redemption (Romans 5:6–10).**
 - a. Set the prisoners free from Satan's grasp (Hebrews 2:14,15).
 - b. Nullified Satan's power over mankind (Revelation 12:11).
2. **That Friday proved God's love for us (Romans 5:8).**

a. Don't gloss over John 3:16. God loves me.

b. Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:32–39).

c. God wishes to reconcile us to himself (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

3. **That Friday should lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4).**

a. Today is the day for repentance (2 Corinthians 6:1,2).

b. Follow the example of the 3,000 (Acts 2:37–41).

CONCLUSION:

To those who were standing at the foot of Christ's cross, nothing about Friday looked good. But no one knew Resurrection Sunday was coming...and with it, God's redemptive plan that He conceived before the foundation of the world.

—Richard Maffeo
San Antonio, Texas

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION WITH OUR RISEN LORD

Colossians 3:1–4

INTRODUCTION:

A significant facet of Christian experience is a personal identification with our risen Lord. We must not overlook its impact on Christian living.

MESSAGE:

1. **This identification originates in faith in Christ's resurrection.**
 - a. Faith in His resurrection is an essential step in accepting Christ as our Savior (Romans 10:9).
 - b. Faith in His resurrection brings us into right standing—justification—with God (Romans 4:25).
 - c. Faith in His resurrection enables us to reckon ourselves alive unto God (Romans 6:11).
 - d. Faith in His resurrection makes it possible for a living Christ to dwell in our hearts (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3).
2. **This identification demands a transformed nature.**
 - a. Ungodly, fleshly desires must be put to death (Colossians 3:5–7).

- b. The old nature and its deeds must be put off (Colossians 3:8,9).
- c. The new man with Christian attributes must be put on (Colossians 3:10–14).
- d. The figure of this transformation is seen in water baptism (Romans 6:4).

3. **This identification has a new goal for our lives.**

- a. Earthly things can no longer dominate (Colossians 3:2).
- b. We seek things above (Colossians 3:1)
- c. We set our affections on things above (Colossians 3:2).
- d. Our objective is the risen Christ (Colossians 3:1).

4. **This identification empowers us.**

- a. Paul desired to know the power of Christ's resurrection (Philippians 3:10,11).
- b. Our identification brings continuous contact with Christ's miracle-working power (Mark 16:19,20).
- c. Our identification enables us to sit in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:5,6).

d. Our identification helps us know the greatness of Christ's power and to understand His relationship to the Church (Ephesians 1:19–23).

5. **This identification will be consummated when Jesus comes for His own.**

- a. Because His is our life, we shall live (Colossians 3:3,4).
- b. Our mortal bodies will be quickened by the same power as His body was (Romans 8:11).
- c. We shall have a body like His (Philippians 3:21).
- d. We shall see Him as He really is (1 John 3:2).
- e. We shall appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).

CONCLUSION:

When we consider the great possibilities of identification with our risen Lord, we should make every effort to let it be effective in our individual lives.

—F. Helen Jarvis



MOTHER JOCHEBED

Exodus 2:1–10

INTRODUCTION:

One of the great mothers of the Bible is Jochebed. She and her husband Amram were of the tribe of Levi. Her influence was lived out through her three famous children—Miriam, Aaron, and Moses.

MESSAGE:

1. Jochebed's sterling qualities

- a. Her great concern.
 - (1) Her third child was a boy; what would she do? (See Exodus 1:22.)
- b. Her great courage.
 - (1) She defied the king's command (Exodus 2:2).
 - (2) She was not afraid (Hebrews 11:23).
- c. Her great faith.
 - (1) She had a plan to save her son (Exodus 2:3,4).
 - (2) When she had done what she could, she trusted God.
 - (3) The river she could have feared became her salvation (Exodus 2:5–10).

- d. Her great spiritual insight.
 - (1) She saw Moses was a special child (Exodus 2:2; Hebrews 11:23).
 - (2) Even Pharaoh's daughter saw Moses was special (Exodus 2:10).

2. Influence of a godly mother

- a. Miriam
 - (1) Helped her mother in saving Moses (Exodus 2:4).
 - (2) Became a musician and led Israel in a victory rally (Exodus 15:20,21).
 - (3) Became the first recorded prophetess (Exodus 15:20; Numbers 12:1,2).
 - (4) Led the women of Israel as Moses and Aaron led the men (Exodus 15:20).
- b. Aaron
 - (1) Spokesman for and special aide to Moses.
 - (2) Was involved in the miracles that released Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 7:19).

c. Moses

- (1) The deliverer of God's people.
- (2) A friend of God; they talked together.
- (3) Moved the hand of God to supply the needs of His people: manna, quail, water (Exodus 16,17).
- (4) Held back God's hand of judgment when Israel sinned (Exodus 32:32).
- (5) He was Israel's lawgiver.
- (6) He was buried by God himself.

CONCLUSION:

- Training by godly parents brings results (Proverbs 22:6).
- Children who obey parents have a promise of long life (Ephesians 6:1–3).
- Godly influence is long lasting (Psalm 37:25).
- May God give us more mothers like Jochebed!

—James E. Griggs
Springfield, Missouri

THE BELIEVER'S WALK IN CONTRAST

Ephesians 4:17–24

INTRODUCTION:

In describing Gentile or pagan conduct (Ephesians 4:17–19), Paul used the expression, "the old man" (verse 22). In describing Christian conduct Paul used the expression, "the new man" (verses 22–24). Paul described the believer's walk in contrast with the Gentile or pagan walk.

MESSAGE:

1. The walk of the old man (4:17–19)

- a. In the vanity of the mind (verse 17). This is living frivolously, without eternity in view, refusing to honor God. (See Romans 1:21; also used of idolatry in Acts 14:15.)

- b. In blindness or hardness of heart (verse 18). Like Pharaoh, this condition is the result of rejecting the knowledge of God (Mark 3:5; Romans 1:28).
- c. In outrageous behavior (verse 19). Lasciviousness or indecent behavior comes from a heart that has rejected God (Mark 7:21–23).

2. The walk of the new man (4:22–24)

- a. Puts off former corrupt lifestyle (verse 22). This includes the sins of the flesh (2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 3:5) and sins of the spirit (Colossians 3:8).
- b. Is renewed in the spirit (verse 23) by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16). When the human spirit is under

the control of the Holy Spirit, living is different.

- c. Puts on new man created in righteousness (verse 24). When the new man or Christ is put on (Romans 13:14), He creates righteousness and holiness. (See 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

CONCLUSION:

The walk of the believer should be as different from the world's as Israel's was from the Gentile nations when she was living close to God.

—Hardy W. Steinberg

S E R M O N S E E D S

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PROMISED TO YOUR FAMILY

INTRODUCTION:

Older generations need to communicate their beliefs and values to younger generations. God commanded parents, “Thou shalt teach...thy children” (Deuteronomy 6:7). Parents were clearly challenged to instruct their children in the essential elements of faith.

MESSAGE:

1. **Joel prophesied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for all people (Joel 2:28,29).**
 - a. All flesh (verse 28).
 - b. Sons and daughters (verse 28).
 - c. Old men and young men (verse 28).

- d. Servants and handmaids (verse 29).
2. **Peter promised the Holy Spirit to every family (Acts 2:38,39).**
 - a. You (verse 39).
 - b. Your children (verse 39).
 - c. All who are far off (verse 39).
 - d. All whom God calls (verse 39).
3. **Cornelius experienced the Holy Spirit with his family (Acts 10).**
 - a. A godly centurion (verses 22,30,31).
 - b. Through a desire for God (verses 4–6,24).
 - c. Through the baptism in the Holy Spirit (verses 44–46).

CONCLUSION:

Many parents have failed to follow God’s exhortation to properly teach about the Holy Spirit to their children. The tragic result of failing God in this respect is vividly illustrated in Judges 2:10: “There arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.”

Parents and church leaders often take for granted that children adequately understand distinctive Pentecostal teaching. Do we make that same false assumption in our homes? The Holy Spirit is promised, but all must actively seek Him.

—Larry Summers, Mobile, Alabama

SARAH

Genesis 23:1

INTRODUCTION:

Of all the women in the Old Testament, the only one we are told to follow as an example of obedience to God is Sarah.

Sarah lived 127 years. Genesis 23:1 does not say she grew old or that she was stricken in years. About 37 years earlier, she had a divine visitation that renewed her strength. After Genesis 23, there are three passages that mention Sarah that speak of her relationship with God.

MESSAGE:

1. **Sarah had a desire for righteousness (Isaiah 51:1,2).**
 - a. Her desire led her to seek the Lord.

- b. For her and Abraham, that meant leaving everything to follow God.
- c. God honored their faith by making them the parents of a great nation.
2. **Sarah exhibited godly character (1Peter 3:1–6).**
 - a. She had a holy and unadorned simplicity (verse 2).
 - b. She had a meek and quiet spirit (verse 2).
 - c. She exhibited believing and loving subjection to her husband (verses 5,6).
3. **Sarah, along with Abraham, had faith (Hebrews 11:11).**
 - a. She exhibited faith and was

included in the hall of faith.

- b. She received strength to conceive seed (verse 11).
- c. She bore a child when past age (verse 11).
- d. She judged Him faithful who had promised (verse 11).

CONCLUSION:

Abraham knelt by the body of his wife and wept. He could attest to her faith. Through Scripture God shows us her example of faith. Her character speaks to us today. She believed for the impossible, and God honored her.

—Gary A. Denbow
Columbia, Missouri

WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT

Ephesians 5:8–14

INTRODUCTION:

The lives of those who walk as children of light have been transformed (verse 8). Walking as children of light:

MESSAGE:

1. **Results in good fruit (verse 9).**
 - a. Goodness as exemplified in the life of Jesus (Acts 10:38).
 - b. Righteousness as manifested in the life of Zechariah (Luke 1:5,6).

- c. Believing and living the truth, as Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:3).
2. **Results in pleasing God (verse 10).**
 - a. Determining and doing what is acceptable, as Joshua challenged Israel to do (Joshua 24:15).
 - b. Doing what is acceptable, as in the case of Enoch (Hebrews 11:5).
3. **Results in the rejecting of evil (verses 11–13).**
 - a. Refusing participation in evil, as the three Hebrews (Daniel 3).

- b. Reproving evil, as Reuben did in saving Joseph’s life (Genesis 37:21,22).

CONCLUSION:

Those who are not the children of God, but who are dead in their sins, are called to arise and respond to God’s grace and receive the light in which they should walk (Ephesians 5:14).

—Hardy W. Steinberg



PARENTING CONFERENCES

My husband Bill and I have found that in scheduling parenting conferences in various churches throughout the United States, Saturday (in most areas) is not a good day for parents to come to a parenting conference. Many couples work and their children are involved in sports; Saturdays are precious. If they are “good” parents, they will be at the soccer field or some other sporting event watching Jimmy and Susie. Instead, we have found that a strong family emphasis that starts on Sunday evening and continues on Monday and Tuesday evenings works best. Churches need to work around family schedules if they expect a good attendance at family-related seminars.

—Nancie Carmichael, *Sisters, Oregon*

MARRIAGE RETREATS

At marriage retreats, atmosphere is important (maybe more so for women than for men). While keeping costs down, a weekend or overnight stay at a retreat facility or a hotel should be special—a place where couples can get away from the group for walks and have time alone.

We have found in speaking at retreats that many planners, in their eagerness to provide as much as possible for the participants, over-plan and schedule too many sessions or activities. People come to retreats to get away and to hear truth; but they also need time to process what they hear and talk about it with their spouse.

Mini-marriage retreats held at churches, even a 1-day event, can be done effectively. To help people not feel on the spot, it is important to plan coffee breaks (nicely done), humor, and interaction. Always think about how you can bring along the casual participant.

Being thoughtful about the needs of families is a powerful way to reach the lost of your community. People desperately need anchors in their lives. As believers, if we prayerfully discern the needs of families, we will find amazing opportunities to encourage and point them to Jesus.

—Nancie Carmichael, *Sisters, Oregon*

COME & FOLLOW SUNDAY

During a pastoral change in the church I now pastor, they canceled Sunday school for several months as the congregation regrouped. Just prior to my coming as pastor, the church restarted Sunday school, but with anemic results. While the church averaged 180 during Sunday morning worship, we averaged around 15 in our Christian education

department. This included one adult and four elementary and youth classes. Understanding the phrase, “As the Sunday school goes, so goes the church,” we planned for a new awakening.

We planned a Come & Follow Sunday. We placed attractive posters produced on a computer and ink-jet color printer in every hallway, bathroom, and class around church beginning the last Sunday of February—5 weeks prior to our event Sunday. The posters read, “Come & Follow Sunday, March 28,” and featured some appropriate computer-generated clip art. In every church service, we announced: “Come & Follow Sunday, March 28. Don’t miss it!” No other details were given. By Sunday night, March 21, several people from the congregation began blurting out following the announcement, “What is it? Tell us what it is.”

Our response was, “Come & Follow Sunday, March 28. Don’t miss it.” This created expectation. On Sunday morning, March 28, we had excellent attendance.

Complete with “I Love Sunday School” pins and signs, our special day commenced. After the song service during morning worship, each Sunday school teacher was given 2 minutes to tell about what was occurring in his or her class.

Some teachers were passionate and teary-eyed, while others displayed exuberance over what God was doing in the lives of students. We highlighted five new adult classes, and we had placed a sign-up sheet in each bulletin. Following these testimonies by the teachers, I preached on the importance of Sunday school and the difference it makes in the life of a Christian.

The following Sunday was Easter, so we canceled Sunday school to give another week for attendees to choose their classes. During the Sunday school time on Easter, we held a continental breakfast. Over 100 attended. This helped everyone see the potential attendance of Sunday school. The Sunday following Easter, 76 attended Sunday school. Several of the adult classes have continued to grow.

We planned a smaller-scale campaign in the fall. Keys to our success were simplicity, placing posters around the church, creating expectancy, giving prime pulpit time, allowing the people opportunity to consider class options, and the support of the senior pastor.

—Michael Johnson, *Bend, Oregon*

DEVELOPING A FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY

To develop a Family Life Ministry (a marriage class or a parenting course), make sure you address six issues that will help you be successful and keep you on course:



Prayer—Begin with prayer to understand God's heart concerning marriages and families in your community. Enlist your leaders and your congregation to pray about beginning a Family Life Ministry before you do anything else.

Purpose—Define your purpose and then allow your purpose to drive your organizational planning. Who do you want to reach, and how do you want to help them? Do you want to reach young married couples already in the church or unchurched couples in your community? What skills do you want to impart to them? Establish the mission of this ministry and stick to it.

Plan—Determine the kind of structure needed to support an ongoing ministry of this nature. Will you offer a Sunday school class, a home group, or a workshop/seminar format? Will it be an ongoing ministry or a 12-week course?

Personnel—Who will lead the ministry? Will it be teacher-led or guided by a leadership team? Define the roles and responsibilities of your leadership team and recruit people to fill those roles. Work to acquire a core group of people who are interested and committed to establish and build this ministry.

Program—What kind of curricula will you offer? A number of biblically sound, need-meeting marriage series are available from most Christian publishing companies.

Promotion—Develop a strategy for promoting the ministry. Advertise to your congregation and your community through bulletin and newsletter articles, E-mails, letters of invitation to a prospect list, and Public Service Announcements in newspapers and on radio stations.

—Ray Noah, Portland, Oregon

SCHOOL OF PARENTING: NOW ENROLLING

Paducah...Jonesboro...Springfield...Littleton. With every heart-wrenching news report of a school shooting, our church receives calls from concerned parents asking: "How can we make sure we're doing this parenting thing the right way? Help us! We really don't know what to do."

This turmoil has created an opportunity for our church to provide help for hurting families. We have reached out to families through our School of Parenting. We have put together a core of classes to help equip parents at every stage of the child-rearing process. Each quarter, we offer at least one of the following parenting classes as a part of our adult Wednesday night program:

General Parenting 101—This class focuses on laying a biblical foundation for parenting philosophy and parenting skills.

Expectant Parents 201—This class prepares expectant moms and dads for the new experience of parenthood.

Terrific Toddlers 301—Here we teach parents the skills for navigating the toddler years.

Preadolescence 401—We designed this class to equip parents for the challenges of their children's adolescent years.

Graduate School—This is a class for parents needing wisdom and insight for dealing with the delights and difficulties of the teenage years.

Continuing Education—We recognize the unique needs of single parents and have created a single parents support group. We also have plans to add a Grandparenting by Grace course for grandparents who are helping to raise and influence their grandchildren.

For these classes we use excellent video curriculum produced by respected Christian authorities in the areas of family life and parenting. Tapping into the expertise of these well-known ministries has helped us with recruiting facilitators, rather than teachers, and has given us an edge in promoting classes to the church and to the community.

A steady stream of people have come to our School of Parenting. Parents, soon-to-be-parents, and grandparents alike have found the help they've been looking for. Perhaps the most satisfying of all has been the unchurched people with little spiritual background who have come to these classes. It has been a delight to watch biblical truth take hold in their lives and produce authentic life change.

Through the School of Parenting, God has given us a opportunity to make a difference by impacting one family at a time.

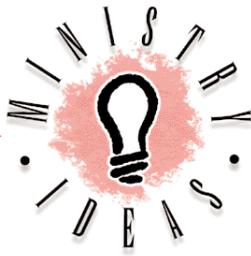
—Ray Noah, Portland, Oregon

COUPLES.COM FAMILY MINISTRY

We started a new young couple's ministry and named it "couples.com." We developed topics related to connecting to people based on the catchy title for our ministry: "Connecting to Your Spouse," "Training Your Kids To Be Y2K Compliant," and other appropriate titles.

We also felt it was important to address specific issues related to where couples are today: Raising Great Kids, How To Be Your Best at What You Do, Divorce-proofing Your Marriage. In these classes, we provide a biblical base for family issues and give couples opportunity to discuss family-related issues together. We also bring in guest speakers who have a ministry to families. These speakers provide an additional feature that helps our families.

—Steve Novotny, Tacoma, Washington



SMALL GROUPS WORK WELL WITH COUPLES

To develop caring relationships with couples within a group, couples need to feel it is safe to openly share their needs. Once the core group grows to 40–50 people, it loses its effectiveness as a small group. Couples may leave because they no longer feel they have a safe environment in which to share their needs.

Large core groups, such as a couples Sunday school class, could be divided into small groups for fellowship and need sharing. This has several advantages and can provide opportunities for ministry among the couples in the groups rather than just from the pastor or pastoral staff. For instance, if a family is having financial difficulties, the small group can join together to help rather than leaving it for the pastor to find resources to help. These small groups can provide opportunities for true Body ministry described by the apostle Paul in Romans and Corinthians.

—Steve Novotny, Tacoma, Washington

PRE-EASTER TUNE UP

Once upon a time there were four men named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. But Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, and Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody, and Nobody did the job that Anybody could have done. At last report, these four men were still arguing and the job wasn't done.

Yes, pastor, I am somebody, and I will help with:

- _____ Praying
- _____ Nursery
- _____ Making phone calls
- _____ Hospitality team
- _____ Mailing/writing letters
- _____ Visitors area
- _____ Baking
- _____ Other _____
- _____ Drama/music (specify)

Name: _____ Phone: _____
 —Jonathan Gainsbrugh, Placerville, California

HOW TO MEND A BROKEN HEART

Due to rising costs, many single-parent families need assistance today. Is your church there to help?

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One Dallas church placed offering envelopes in their pews with these words: “Mend a broken heart: Help put back the broken and missing pieces of a neglected and abused child’s heart. One touch of God can be a life-changing experience for a child who has known almost nothing but pain, loneliness, anger, and abuse.”

A check or cash donation can be placed in the envelope and designated toward a special youth activity that some young person might miss due to lack of finances. A special committee disburses the funds as needed.

Although money cannot mend broken hearts, help through a difficult time may save a young person from serious trouble or even suicide.

—Douglas Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas

EYES AND HEARTS

Several pastors take time each Monday morning either to phone or write a personal note (not computerized letter no. 12) to the people whose ministries the day before deserved a word of thanks. Perhaps it was an usher who handled a difficult situation with grace and wisdom, or a musician whose ministry especially blessed the people. Maybe it was

an elderly saint whose return to church after a long illness made everybody happy, or it might have been the teen who brought three of his schoolmates to church with him.

We must never be so engrossed in our own work on Sundays, that we fail to see what God is doing in and through the people around us—people we might be prone to take for granted week after week. We must cultivate eyes that see and hearts that appreciate, and it wouldn’t hurt to carry a notebook and write down their names. In the whirl of activities on any given Sunday, it’s easy to become distracted and forget the people who helped us in our ministry because they helped others.

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E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to: enrichment@ag.org.



FORGOTTEN MEMORIALS

In Guyana, 60 miles up the Essequibo River, there is a village, Bartica, that serves as a supply center for the miners and prospectors working in the mountains further up the river. In the center of this village of a few thousand people there is a huge white monument placed on a concrete slab. It's impressive. It can be seen from quite a distance. Walk around the base and there is no inscription. Ask any of the citizens, and nobody knows why the monument was erected. Old-timers can't remember and the young were never told. Strange—a monument to nothing. A memorial that has no memory or meaning.

Could anything be more useless? Will your life become a monument to nothing? Right decisions will play a very important part in how useful your life will be...how meaningful your life can become. I want my life to count for something; how about you?

—Robert Strand, *Springfield, Missouri. Adapted from Moments for Teens. Used with permission.*

MEMORIAL DAY

The black horse-drawn caisson with its flag-draped burden winds its way through the quiet avenues of Arlington National Cemetery, while over 275,000 silent witnesses await the new arrival at his or her final resting place. These witnesses include: Presidents William H. Taft and John F. Kennedy, Colonel William Jennings Bryan, Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, General Jonathan M. Wainright, Lieutenant General Clair Lee Chenault, Fleet Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, and an Assemblies of God sailor, Petty Officer Robert D. Stethem.

Memorial Day, May 30, 2000, is a reminder to the living that freedom comes with a price that is not measured in dollars and political favors—it is a day to remember deceased family members and friends. But the staccato bursts of rifle volleys and the plaintive echoes of taps also remind us of the original intent of that first Memorial Day in 1868. In a speech 4 years after the opening of Arlington National Cemetery, General James A. Garfield, later to become President of the United States, stated:

"We do not know one promise these men made, one pledge they gave, one word they spoke, but we know they summed up and perfected, by one supreme act, the highest virtues of men and citizens. For love of country they accepted death, and thus resolved all doubts, and made immortal their patriotism and virtue."

We, the living, cannot let our American war dead become

exiles in our memory. They, and we, deserve a better fate.

—Chaplain Charles W. Marvin, *Springfield, Missouri*

WIGGLESWORTH RECEIVES BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

A man with the spiritual hunger of Smith Wigglesworth was not one to ignore reports of Pentecostal happenings in England likened to those of the Early Church as recorded in the Book of Acts. When a man volunteered to pay his travel expenses to Sunderland, Wigglesworth was on his way to the All Saints' Church. He was not to be deterred, even when reports reached him that the activities in Sunderland were demonic in nature. He was motivated by a thirst for spiritual power, particularly for an experience of speaking in unknown tongues.

Initially, Wigglesworth was not impressed with All Saints' Church. He felt that more vital ministry was going on back home on Bowland Street. Furthermore, as he pressed members of the church for demonstrations of the tongues phenomenon, they insisted that he needed the baptism in the Spirit rather than tongues. This infuriated him for he was convinced that he already was a possessor of Spirit baptism from his 1893 experience of sanctification. Nonetheless, Wigglesworth warmed up to the services, and began to experience some powerful visitations of the Spirit. However, after 4 days, he felt the need to return home, disappointed that he had not received tongues.

Before he left, Wigglesworth made one last visit to the vicarage, where Mrs. Boddy made a final plea for him to receive prayer for the baptism in the Spirit. Wigglesworth agreed. The vicar's wife laid hands on him and prayed, then left the room. Unexpectedly, Wigglesworth was apprehended mightily by the Holy Spirit.

He reported, "The power of God fell upon my body with such ecstasy of joy that I could not satisfy the joy within with the natural tongue, then I found the Spirit speaking through me in other tongues."

Wigglesworth left Sunderland a changed man. As he put it, "One time I thought I had the Holy Ghost. Now I know the Holy Ghost has got me."

—Adapted from *the Assemblies of God Heritage.*

Used with permission.

ANOTHER CURE BY FAITH

Mary Alice Reynolds, the wife of a well-known real estate agent in Indianapolis, had been an invalid for a year. Doctors had tried every means to help her, but she gradually grew worse.



Mrs. Reynolds was a member of a Methodist church, but admitted she was hardly a model member. God had not left her, however, and He was about to do something that would bring glory to His name.

One evening in March 1883, during a most discouraging time, Mary Reynolds' thoughts turned to God. A question formed quietly in her mind: *Why don't you take your case to the Lord in prayer?*

At that moment a friend came into her room and suggested that she might like to have a Quaker evangelist R.H. Ramsey, pray for her. Evangelist Ramsey was ministering in the area, and he prayed for the sick.

Mrs. Reynolds accepted the suggestion. She later told about her meeting with the evangelist: "When Mr. Ramsey anointed me, I urged that he not only pray for me bodily, but my spiritual welfare also." The next day she was overjoyed when she realized she had been healed—body and soul.

When a well-known family has this kind of an experience, word soon gets around. The editor of the *Indianapolis Journal* (a friend of Charles Reynolds) interviewed the former invalid who was now up and taking care of household responsibilities.

The editor's long and detailed account, "Another Cure by Faith," was published on the *Journal's* front page, March 24, 1883. The story was also reported in the *Indianapolis News* on the same day. The next day, a brief story, along with other news from Indianapolis, appeared on page one of the *New York Times*.

The story published in the Indianapolis papers created a tremendous amount of interest. People began to parade into the Reynolds home—sometimes as many as 30 people a day—to talk with Mary about her healing. Many of these people were looking for spiritual and physical help, and Mary had the joy of pointing them to the Great Physician.

Now, here is the rest of the story.

Eight years after Mary Alice Reynolds was healed, she gave birth to a daughter who was given her mother's middle name. The daughter grew up to become Alice Reynolds "Mother" Flower, the wife of J. Roswell Flower, one of the founding fathers of the Assemblies of God.

Mary Alice Reynolds' healing nearly 117 years ago was for real. She lived another 35 years and influenced the spiritual lives of countless people—including some of the founders of the Assemblies of God.

—Wayne Warner

*Adapted from the Assemblies of God Heritage.
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THE UNLOCKED DOOR

In Glasgow, Scotland, a young lady got tired of home and the restraints of godly parents. The daughter said, "I don't want your God. I give up; I'm leaving!"

She decided to become a woman of the world. Before long, however, she became dejected with being unable to find a job, so she took to the streets to sell her body as a prostitute. The years passed. Her father died; her mother grew older; and the daughter became more and more entrenched in her wretched manner of living.

No contact was made between mother and daughter in the intervening years. The mother, having heard of her daughter's whereabouts, made her way to the skid row section of the city. She began by stopping at each of the rescue missions with a simple request, "Would you allow me to put up this picture?" It was a picture of the smiling, gray-haired mother with a handwritten message at the bottom: "I love you still...come home."

Months went by, and nothing happened. Then one day that wayward girl wandered into a rescue mission for a meal. She sat absent-mindedly listening to the service, letting her eyes wander over the bulletin board. There she saw the picture and thought, *Could that be my mother?*

She couldn't wait until the service was over and went to look. It was her mother, and there were those words, "I love you still...come home!" As she stood in front of the picture, she began to weep.

It was night, but she was so touched by the message that she started walking for home. By the time she arrived, it was early in the morning. The wayward daughter was afraid and made her way timidly. As she began to knock, the door opened on its own. She thought someone must have broken into the house. Concerned for her mother's safety, the young woman ran to the bedroom and found her still sleeping. She shook her mother awake and said, "It's me! It's me! I'm home!"

The mother wiped her tears, and they fell into each other's arms. The daughter said, "I thought someone had broken open the door."

The mother replied gently, "From the day you left, that door has not been locked."

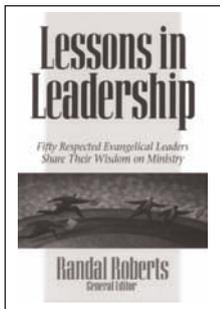
—Robert Strand, Springfield, Missouri

Adapted from Moments for Mothers. Used with permission.

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E-mail: You may send your illustrations to: enrichment@ag.org.



Randal Roberts, general editor (Kregel Publications, 282 pp., paperback, \$13.99)

Lessons in Leadership, 50 Respected Evangelical Leaders Share Their Wisdom on Ministry

Randal Roberts, general editor (Kregel Publications, 282 pp., paperback, \$13.99)

Ministers move into ministry with high hopes. Yet, after years of service, they may look back and wish they had handled some situations differently. Today, though, there are many who can provide godly advice, encouragement, and warnings to today's new generation of leaders. *Lessons in Leadership* provides instructions left out by many classes in pastoral leadership.

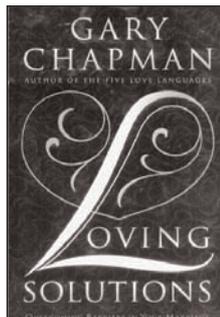
The chapters are like letters, beginning with "Dear Leader" and continue providing instruction with this format. Bill Bright, Stuart and Jill Briscoe, Ted Engstrom, Jay Kesler, and Luis Palau team with others to provide insight in training workers for service. Their personal experiences present strategic application for ministers of today and tomorrow.

Prayer, honesty, servanthood, teamwork, obedience, kindness, motivation, risk-taking, and balance: this wide array of topics will refresh meaning, renew vision,

and reinforce commitment. Each chapter concludes with "Questions for Reflection" to stimulate deeper study.

Lessons in Leadership's general editor, Randal Roberts, contends readers will benefit most by reviewing, "One letter a day, perhaps by imagining that each day's mail brings a letter from a different evangelical mentor." Those who study will not agree with each conclusion, but the process can add new dimensions to ministry in a variety of areas. They are lessons leaders desperately need to learn.

—Reviewed by Chris Maxwell, senior pastor, Evangel Assembly of God, Orlando, Florida.



Gary Chapman (Moody, 240 pp., hardcover, \$19.99)

Loving Solutions: Overcoming Barriers in Your Marriage

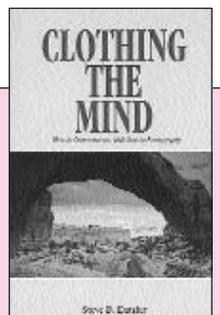
Gary Chapman (Moody, 240 pp., hardcover, \$19.99)

Loving Solutions is a sequel to Gary Chapman's *The Five Love Languages*. In *Loving Solutions*, Chapman draws on his 25 years of counseling experience and 35 years of marriage to deal specifically with overcoming barriers in marriage.

Shockingly, Chapman writes, "There are three radical and surely negative approaches to a troubled marriage: suicide, homicide, and divorce." He identifies some of the scars left by divorce, exposes some of the myths of marriage, but then concentrates on the realities of marriage.

Love is presented as "the most powerful weapon in the world" to heal troubled relationships. Chapman emphasizes: "Remember, love is not essentially a feeling; it is a way of thinking and behaving." He also discusses other needs in a marriage: the need for significance, the need for recreation, and the need for peace with God.

Addressing specific issues, Chapman writes insightfully concerning the irresponsible spouse, the workaholic spouse, the controlling spouse, the uncommunicative spouse, the verbally abusive spouse, the



Clothing the Mind

Steve D. Eutsler (Teen Challenge International, 125 pp., paperback, textbook and workbook, \$13)

Pornography is an increasing menace to a consistent walk with Christ. Its tentacles have reached into the lives of too many Christian leaders. Because of this, Teen Challenge commissioned Steve D. Eutsler to write *Clothing the Mind*.

Eutsler defines pornography as "any material designed with the intention of arousing illicit sexual desire." He traces the development of pornography and how it makes inroads into a person's mind. The destructiveness of pornography is also highlighted, along with methods for deliverance from its clutches.

The book presents Scriptures for memorization to help counter the tendency of pornographic thoughts, and study questions to help an individual renew his or her mind.

The accompanying study guide can be used by individuals or groups and is useful in training lay counselors and support groups. These materials need to be in a church's library to assist the pastoral staff and laypersons who need to be sensitive to this significant problem in the church.

—Reviewed by Raymond T. Brock, Ed.D., adjunct professor of counseling and psychology, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

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physically abusive spouse, the sexually abused/abusive spouse, the unfaithful spouse, the alcoholic/drug-abusing spouse, and the depressed spouse.

This is not a book to be skimmed over lightly. It deserves to be pondered by the counselor or pastor who aspires to make a difference in the lives of those who come to him/her looking for loving solutions to problems in their relationship.

—Reviewed by Raymond T. Brock, Ed.D., adjunct professor of counseling and psychology, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

The Other Side of Pastoral Ministry

Daniel Brown (Zondervan, 192 pp., paperback, \$9.99)

Daniel Brown, a Foursquare pastor, has done pastors a service by writing this book. Brown's goal is to motivate pastors and congregations to attain new heights in ministry for God in their communities.

Brown believes that churches ought to flow like a river, not sit motionless like a lake. He contends that every dynamic, growing church must be changing to meet the needs of an ever-changing culture. In this volume, he explores 10 key "currents" that mark a "river church."

The author begins by addressing the pastor. He urges ministers to be balanced in their spiritual and relational ministries.

One of the highlights of *Pastoral Ministry* is the chapter on how to implement change without losing your pulpit. These pages are worth reading by the person who plans to pioneer a church as well as the pastor in an established, tradition-bound congregation. Brown lists and applies 12 steps to change that pastors need to think through.

Chapter four is a creative and insightful look at the church as the "body of Christ," comparing the church to the human body. The perceptive pastor could preach a series of messages from these pages.

This volume provides fresh ideas for your mind and new vision for your heart and may be the key to help your church flow like a mighty river for the Spirit.

—Reviewed by Thomas Lindberg, D.Min., First Assembly of God, Memphis, Tennessee.

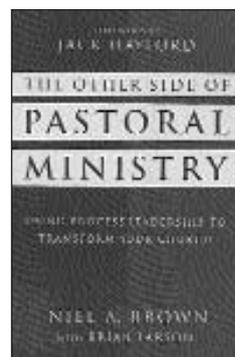
Pastors at Risk

H.B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman (Victor Books, 240 pp., hardcover, \$18.99)

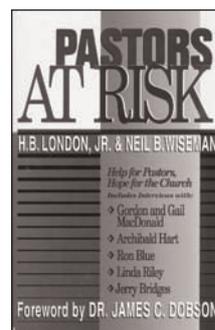
Pastors at Risk is must reading. Veteran pastors, H.B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman hold up a mirror in which every pastor will find a reflection of his or her own experience in ministry.

The writers expose the reader to the testimony of hurting pastors and their wives, the wise counsel of professional therapists, and the theological insights brought by gifted and scholarly students of the Word. A sense of relevancy and immediacy will challenge both the mind and heart of the reader.

Pastors will be encouraged to discover that the pressures of ministry are shared by all. Inadequate resources, lack of parishioner commitment, cantankerous church leaders, stylistic preoccupations, unrealistic expectations, fractured family relationships,



Daniel Brown (Zondervan, 192 pp., paperback, \$9.99)



H.B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman (Victor Books, 240 pp., hardcover, \$18.99)

Just As I Am—the Autobiography of Billy Graham

Billy Graham (Harper Collins, 760 pp., hardback, \$17.95)

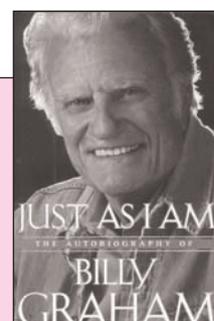
Just As I Am is a beautiful mixture of greatness and meekness as Billy Graham describes God's blessing on his life-long ministry with almost astonished wonder, "Why me, Lord?"

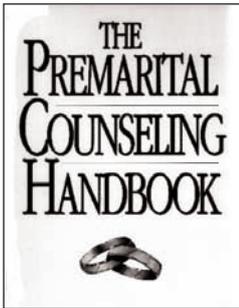
Pentecostals may wonder why an evangelist who has made no public declaration of a traditional Pentecostal experience has been so effective. Reading the book will provide the answer—the ministry has been bathed in prayer.

Part of the book is Graham's reflection on past regrets—the things he would do differently if he were to live life over again: He would speak less and study more; spend more time with his family; and spend more time in prayer, not just for himself, but for others.

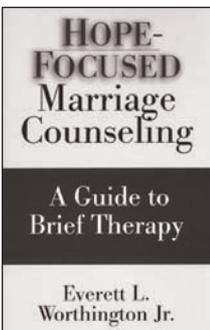
Reading Graham's autobiography will be a spiritual experience for every reader who desires to be the best at whatever ministry God has given him or her to do.

—Reviewed by Zenas J. Bicket, Ph.D., former president of Berean University of the Assemblies of God and chairman of the Doctrinal Purity Commission, Springfield, Missouri.

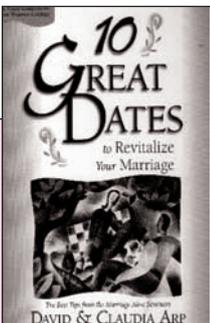




H. Norman Wright
(Moody Press, 271 pp.,
hardback, \$22.99)



Everett L.
Worthington, Jr.
(InterVarsity, 311pp.,
hardcover, \$22.99)



Ten Great Dates To Revitalize Your Marriage
David and Claudia Arp (Zondervan, video/manual, \$79.99)
Dating again, but this time without the sweaty palms and the awkward moments of wondering what to say.

Ten Great Dates To Revitalize Your Marriage, a book and video, offers a fun approach to working at the marriage relationship. Planned dating around certain themes is an interesting concept for revitalizing a marriage and is bound to have positive results.

The authors provide a practical approach to planned dating that not only creates a memory but addresses marriage-building themes—themes such as communicating better, developing spiritual intimacy, building a creative sex life, and resolving conflict. It is a positive, revitalizing look at many of the components of a marriage seminar without the seminar.

The video curriculum makes *Ten Great Dates* valuable for teaching and small group settings.

and poverty-level salaries are a few of the pressure-producing factors that impose themselves on the sometimes insecure and already vulnerable pastor.

However, the treatment is not only descriptive and enlightening, but it is also prescriptive and affirming. Repeatedly the authors show that pastors are needed to provide a message of hope to a culture that is unraveling and crumbling. At risk? Yes. But persons of destiny? Yes, as well.

What will sustain the pastor in such hazardous work? London and Wiseman remind every pastor of the simple and essential answer—a reaffirmation of call. To know that the Lord of the harvest has “put me into the ministry” is adequate enough to sustain every faithful pastor in the work of this special office.

—Reviewed by Richard L. Dresselhaus,
D.Min., First Assembly of God,
San Diego, California.

The Premarital Counseling Handbook

H. Norman Wright (Moody Press, 271 pp.,
hardback, \$22.99)

In a *Time/CNN* poll on marriage and divorce,

45 percent felt that couples did not taken marriage seriously enough, 50 percent believed that it should be harder than it is now to get a divorce, and 64 percent stated that people should be required to take a marriage education course before they get a marriage license. H. Norman Wright's *Premarital Counseling Handbook* provides the framework for such a course. It is a clear, concise, professionally sound, six-session model for premarital counseling from a Christian worldview. The *Handbook* covers the issues inherent in first-time marriages as well as the pitfalls of remarriage.

The *Handbook* draws from the best research and theory on marital stability from Christian and secular authors. Each chapter contains extensive notes providing bibliographic support and additional sources for study.

Objective evaluative tools are helpful in premarital counseling. The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis and PREPARE premarital counseling tools are integral to Wright's program. Additional materials and training on these evaluative instruments are required for proficiency.

The *Handbook* presents a clear Christ orientation. It also assumes the reader agrees on the importance of marital stability and moves quickly to the pragmatics of developing a lasting foundation. This book is a key sourcebook for anyone involved in premarital counseling.

—Reviewed by William H. Snow, Ph.D.,
vice president for academics and professor
of psychology, Bethany College, Scotts
Valley, California.

Hope-Focused Marriage Counseling: A Guide to Brief Therapy

Everett L. Worthington, Jr. (InterVarsity, 311
pp., hardcover, \$22.99)

Everett Worthington is a leader and educator in Christian counseling. He is known for his commitment to research and scholarship. His latest book transforms research into a practical

B O O K R E V I E W S

guide for Christian marriage counseling. He presents a model that strategically seeks to instill hope into a marriage.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 presents the rationale for a hope-focused approach. Unlike traditional marriage counseling where change is expected during treatment, hope-focused counseling seeks to facilitate lasting change beyond the counseling session. The goal is to recapture the optimism that initially brought the couple together. Part 2 focuses on implementing sensible and powerful interventions aimed at promoting marital love, faith (trust), and work (effort). Included in this section are numerous exercises that facilitate change outside the counseling office.

This book is an excellent biblically based marriage counseling resource. It will appeal to pastoral counselors who have limited time and are seeking a professional, structured counseling model.

Since the interventions are numerous and sensible, the pastoral counselor must be careful not to use them as an end in themselves. Worthington states, "The foundation of counseling is not a strategy or interventions: It is the human relationships between a counselor and two people. It is only after an empathic connection can a therapist move clients from their troubled trajectory to a new direction."

—Reviewed by Christine Arnzen, MA, LPC,
director, Counseling Center, Evangel
University, Springfield, Missouri.

Your Pastor Is an Endangered Species

H.B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman
(Victor Books, 208 pp., hardcover, \$16.99)

There is a large gap between clergy and laity, one that is often made more dangerous by lack of information and understanding—from both sides. Many congregations could benefit by reading this small, "nuts and bolts" volume written by veterans of the ministry.

Chapter 2 sets the book on solid footing by looking into Scripture for God's agenda for the church. Neither pastor nor laity can seriously approach ministry without understanding this information. Another chapter is given to overcoming myths of leadership. But the authors do more than spotlight the myths; they explain how to solve them.

Chapter 7, "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Church Leaders," probably justifies the reasonable cost of the book.

Overall, this is a healthy and illuminating book. However, at times the authors resort to "sympathy-seekers" for pastors. The apostle Paul might not have needed that emotional placebo. Readers might want to skip over those few pages and get on with the truly helpful information the book contains.

—Reviewed by Dan Betzer, senior pastor,
First Assembly of God, Fort Myers, Florida.

A S E R V I C E

Enrichment reviews books we feel our readers would like to know about. These books are not always in accord with our point of view, and the reviews do not constitute a recommendation of the books. As a service to readers the Gospel Publishing House will supply any of these books, but books cannot be returned for credit.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Anthony D. Palma (Gospel Publishing House, 79 pp.,
paperback, \$4.99)

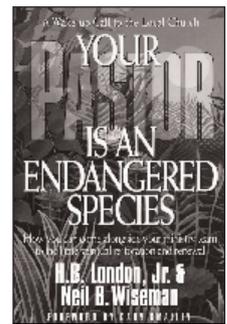
In recent years there has been a renewed interest in Pentecostal hermeneutics concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Anthony Palma, Ph.D., has enhanced this area of hermeneutics with his timely book, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*.

In the introductory chapter, Palma discusses his hermeneutical approach and the various terminologies used in Scripture to describe the Baptism and work of the Holy Spirit. The other chapters examine the baptism in the Holy Spirit as a subsequent experience to salvation, tongues as the initial physical evidence, and the purpose and results of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

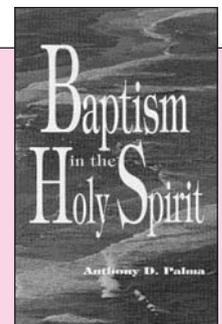
Written in a scholarly manner, this book presents a solid, biblical, and practical approach to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Reading this book will enhance anyone's understanding of this important Pentecostal doctrine.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an invaluable resource for personal study or for leading a group study on the Holy Spirit. It would be an important addition to any pastor's library.

—Reviewed by Richard L. Schoonover, associate/technical editor,
Enrichment Journal, Springfield, Missouri.



H.B. London, Jr.
and Neil B.
Wiseman (Victor
Books, 208 pp.,
hardcover, \$16.99)



NEW PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL VISITORS EDITION OFFERED

Copies of the *Pentecostal Evangel* Visitors Edition, published October 1999, are available with undated covers for ongoing use in church information packets, community-wide canvassing, and other outreaches. The edition includes an introduction from General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask followed by "What to expect in an Assemblies of God church," which familiarizes guests and potential visitors with typical worship practices in a local assembly.

Assemblies of God laity wrote features covering men's ministries (Honor-Bound), Women's Ministries, Royal Rangers, Missionettes, youth, senior adults and Sunday school. Contributors range from an 11-year-old girl who wrote of "Learning about Jesus" in Sunday school to a senior adult who describes finding "A place of love and fellowship" in his local church.

Other areas of focus include missions,

statements of faith, and statistical data. Not only does the issue provide an introduction to the Assemblies of God, but it also carries an emphasis on having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To order this special issue for as little as 22 cents per copy (minimum order of 50), please call 1-800-641-4310 and ask for item #69-6941.

"WHY I SERVE" NOMINATIONS STILL BEING ENCOURAGED

Assemblies of God pastors from across the country continue to use the *Pentecostal Evangel's* "Why I Serve" column to recognize the lay volunteers in their churches. The *Evangel* encourages senior pastors who have yet to nominate one of their lay workers to do so.

To participate, a pastor selects a diligent and effective volunteer worker (or couple) and gathers all necessary information: name(s) of nominee(s), church, location, pastor, area(s) of responsibility for the nominee(s), and the pastor's statement. Material is then sent to:

"Why I Serve," *Pentecostal Evangel*, 1445 Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802.

All nominees receive a certificate suitable for framing as recipients of the *Pentecostal Evangel* "Servanthood Award." Those appearing in the *Evangel* are not "winners," but representatives of the Fellowship's lay workers. Nominations must be made by senior pastors and are limited to one per church. Immediate family members of the pastoral staff are ineligible.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR PASTORS

Since April of 1998, Dr. Ron McManus has taught Foundations of Leadership conferences cosponsored by the General Council of the Assemblies of God and various district councils. McManus serves as president of EQUIP (Encouraging Qualities Undeveloped in People), a not-for-profit Christian organization based in Atlanta, Georgia, founded by John Maxwell. McManus also serves as coordinator of the National Leadership Institute of the Assemblies of God.

The Foundations of Leadership journey begins with a 2-day conference. The material is divided into three sections: Spiritual Formations, Strategic Formations, and Skill Formation. There are also three, 1-day follow-up sessions. These sessions include evaluation and additional instruction.

In the initial 2-day session, several key questions are addressed: What is the biblical role of the pastor? How do you develop leaders in the church? What are the priorities of a pastor? How do you create vision for the church? How do you change things and live to tell about it?

The program is designed for pastors and spouses of churches presently 200

and under in attendance. Participation is by invitation of the host district.

Following are upcoming district conferences:

Minnesota—Feb. 21,22

Southern California—Feb. 25,26

Georgia—March 3,4

Arkansas—March 16,17

Alabama—March 30,31

New Mexico—May 29,30

Districts may contact the National Leadership Institute Office at 417-862-2781, ext. 3025, for more information.

MULTIREGIONAL SINGLES RETREAT

A multiregional singles retreat will be held March 17,18, 2000, at the North Texas District campgrounds. Singles from New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Arkansas, Missouri, Louisiana, Mississippi, and other areas of the country will gather for inspiration, instruction, and fellowship. For more information concerning registration, contact Mel Surface at 1-817-284-4856.

NURSERY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN, PEEK-A-BOO I.C.U.

Almost 3 million babies will be born during year 2000. By year 2030, they will be shaping the world as adults. Churches can begin to nurture biblical values and character that will guide how these millennial babies will shape the world.

This year's nursery ministry awareness campaign focuses on providing inspirational care units that will nurture biblical values in our little ones. During the first 3 years of life, children can learn to love, trust, and obey God. Peek-a-Boo I.C.U. will help your church become aware of its role in supporting young families as they disciple their little ones.

The awareness campaign is presented

in the *Christian Education Counselor* (November/December 1999). You can request a copy, along with support materials, by calling 417-862-2781, ext. 4012. The second Sunday in March is Cradle Roll Day, but the awareness campaign can be used any time.

With the help of God and committed churches, Y2K can mean Year 2000 Kids—kids who love Jesus and want Him to be the leader of their lives.

AGE-LEVEL CONSULTANTS AVAILABLE FOR MINISTRY TRAINING

Developing effective Sunday school discipleship and Christian education ministries is a team effort. To assist Assemblies of God churches in building healthy congregations and equipping leadership, Gospel Publishing House provides a team of age-level training consultants. These qualified individuals are available for information on teaching and discipleship issues, resources, networking, training workshops and

retreats. Listed below are the phone numbers and E-mail addresses of these training consultants:

Training Coordinator: Larry Thomas (417-862-2781, ext. 4004); lthomas@ag.org

Adult Ministries: Clancy Hayes (417-862-2781, ext. 4008); chayes@ag.org

Youth Ministries: Carey Huffman (417-862-2781, ext. 4002); chuffman@ag.org

Children's Ministries: Verda Rubottom (417-862-2781, ext. 4011); vrubottom@ag.org

Early Childhood: Sharon Ellard (417-862-2781, ext. 4018); sellard@ag.org

NATIONAL FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

The 2000 National Fine Arts Festival will take place August 7–11 at the Indianapolis Convention Center. For more information, contact the national Youth Department at (417) 862-2781, ext. 4041, or E-mail: faf@ag.org. For a free Rules Brochure, order item #731-404 by calling 1-800-641-4310.

NEWS & RESOURCES

LIVE VIDEO RECORDING OF 1999 FINE ARTS FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS

This exciting, live video recording of 1999 National Fine Arts Festival Merit Award winners in Orlando also features the Fine Arts Choir and Orchestra. Cost: \$17. Video can be ordered by calling 1-800-641-4310, and requesting item #731-410.

NEW LOOK FOR TAKE PRIDE DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

The popular youth discipleship curriculum *Take Pride* has a fresh, new look. Order the *Take Pride*, Leaders Guide (#731-608), \$15, or Students Guide (#731-609), \$15 by calling 1-800-641-4310. For more information, call the national Youth Department at (417) 862-2781.

“I’M READY TO PRAY” SPEED-THE-LIGHT DEVOTIONAL AVAILABLE

In response to last year’s popular Speed-

the-Light “Your Turn To Pray” devotional, the ’99/’00 STL theme year devotional “I’m Ready To Pray” is now available. Order this resource to teach teens to pray and give by calling 1-800-641-4310 and requesting item #733-045. Cost: \$1. Discounts available for quantity purchases.

MARCH 19 IS BENEVOLENCES CHILD CARE DAY

What is the Benevolences Department doing for America’s children in crises? Hillcrest Children’s Home is doing its part in housing, caring for, and sharing Christ with many of America’s homeless boys and girls. Highlands Child Placement Services and Maternity Home ministers to many children and young women.

Sunday, March 19, is Benevolences Child Care Day. This special day provides an opportunity to emphasize these ministries in your church.

Check #1 on the Reader Service Card to receive a packet of information to

share with your congregation about Hillcrest and Highlands.

APRIL IS DISASTER RELIEF MONTH

According to the National Climatic Data Center, there were six major natural disasters in the United States during 1998. Damages ranged from \$1 billion to \$6 billion for each disaster. These figures do not include the numerous minor disasters that also struck our nation.

Assemblies of God churches are not immune from natural disasters. The Benevolences Disaster Relief fund provides relief to churches affected by natural disaster. April, the start of tornado season, is Disaster Relief month. Churches are requested to receive a Disaster Relief offering during April and send it to the Benevolences Department.

For more information on Disaster Relief, check #2 on the Reader Service Card.

AMA DAY IS MAY 28

Nearly 500 retired and disabled ministers and their spouses rely on Aged Ministers Assistance for financial help. Memorial Sunday is an important day because that is the day many churches receive an offering for this ministry.

Retired and disabled ministers gave faithful service to the church during their years of ministry. Now it is our turn to give back to them by receiving an AMA offering.

To receive free AMA Day bulletin inserts, check #3 on the Reader Service Card and indicate quantity.

SENIOR ADULT MINISTRIES COURSES NOW AVAILABLE

Christians with a desire to serve the needs of adult seniors can train for that specialized ministry by studying with

Berean School of the Bible, a division of Global University. The three new senior ministry courses are: Introduction to Senior Adult Ministry, Ministry After 50, and Hospital and Nursing Home Ministry. Students can earn a specialized ministries diploma with an emphasis in senior adult ministry after completing these and 19 other core courses.

These new courses are not only designed for Christians wanting to minister to seniors; senior adults themselves can benefit from studying the courses, especially the Ministry After 50 course. Seniors may enroll in the course(s) without being obligated to complete the entire diploma program.

The textbook for Ministry After 50 is *Celebrate Life After 50*, by Roger Palms, former editor of *Decision* magazine. In his book, Palms shares practical how-to instructions for seniors to invest themselves in service to God and others.

The Introduction to Senior Adult Ministry course provides advice to churches about hosting special events and launching new ministries that attract seniors and nourish those who already attend. It offers how-to information about administering senior adult ministries at the district, sectional, and local levels. Also included are tips on elder care, a discussion on the process of aging, and ideas on how to prepare for active retirement.

The Hospital and Nursing Home Ministry course outlines steps to begin an effective hospital ministry, and also details the dos and don'ts of visitation. This course is intended to prepare workers for ministering to terminally ill patients, to people in grief, and to the church during a crisis. The care home section familiarizes students with the needs of the elderly and how to begin an

effective ministry to them.

Anyone interested in completing the specialized ministries diploma can obtain the list of required core courses by calling the Berean campus of Global University at 1-800-443-1083, or by visiting Berean's website: www.berean.edu. Seniors who want to enroll in a course without earning a diploma can call for more information.

GUIDELINES FOR GOOD LIVING

Finally, counseling helps for the Pentecostal pastor. It is almost like having Dr. Richard Dobbins on staff. His notes are your notes; his words are your words.

Dr. Richard Dobbins is president and founder of EMERGE Ministries in Akron, Ohio, and host of *From This Day Forward*. Dr. Dobbins has developed counseling materials you can share with people needing help. *Guidelines for Good Living* is a written summary of the daily radio broadcasts. Topics range from depression and forgiveness to controlling rage and raising teenagers.

Guidelines for Good Living is available quarterly in print, audiocassette, and CD. If someone is looking to you for advice, you can make a copy of the cassette or CD and give it to that person to listen to at his or her leisure.

"These resources can be kept for information and future reference. Many people find them helpful as aids to their own healing and growth. Pastors also find them useful as counseling aids," stated Dobbins.

There are many counselors in this world, but few are Pentecostal. Dr. Dobbins, a pastor for over 20 years, understands the counseling challenges you face and wants to help your ministry be more effective. This material is also great reference material for sermon preparation.

For more information or to place an order for *Guidelines for Good Living*, call Media Ministries at 417-869-8829 or E-mail us at: dayforward@ag.org. For information on airing *From This Day Forward* on your local

radio station, contact us today. The program is free and is an excellent way to show your community that your church cares.

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY PREPARES FOR WORLDWIDE OPERATIONS IN 2000

Global University of the Assemblies of God is the name of a new Assemblies of God educational institution to serve students worldwide.

"We are combining Berean University and ICI University to focus on the whole world," says Ron Iwasko, D.Min., president. "Global University will offer everything from evangelism courses to graduate-level degrees. Delivery systems will primarily be print, but will also include the Internet, CD ROM, and video conferencing." Iwasko is a missionary, educator, and Assemblies of God minister.

Berean University is the endorsed Assemblies of God distance-education entity, offering courses required for ministerial credentials and associate of arts, bachelor of arts, and master of arts degrees. Study centers across the United States facilitate local instruction for distance-education students. Berean University administrative offices are located in Springfield, Mo.

ICI University is a missions organization designed to provide evangelism/discipleship courses and bachelor's and master's degrees to students in over 160 nations. Stateside offices are currently located in Irving, Tex., with hundreds of learning centers around the world.

Global University offices will move to Springfield, Mo., in mid-2000. Overseas, the school will continue to be known as ICI. The university will seek regional accreditation as soon as feasible.

BYRON KLAUS APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF AGTS

Byron Klaus, D.Min., formerly vice president of Latin America ChildCare and a professor at Vanguard University of

Southern California (Costa Mesa), was elected president of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. His appointment was effective July 1. Klaus succeeds Del Tarr, Ph.D., who has served that position since 1990 and is retiring.

Klaus has served a number of associate pastorates during his years of ministry. A graduate of Bethany College of the Assemblies of God, he earned a master's degree from Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctorate in ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1986. He has been associated with Vanguard University since 1986, first as associate dean for graduate studies and then as professor.

"The selection of Byron Klaus as president of AGTS culminates a process that sought broad input from Assemblies of God national and district leaders," says George Wood, general secretary of the Assemblies of God and chairman of the AGTS Board of Directors.

"Overwhelmingly, the various constituencies of the church told the board of directors to look for a president who had an extraordinary passion for God, the well-being of the kingdom of God, and the salvation of the lost," Wood says. "We wanted a president with an unequivocal commitment to Pentecostal spirituality, an articulate advocate of Pentecostal theology and practice, a demonstrated commitment to evangelism and world missions, an example for personal growth and spiritual piety, an advocate for revival and renewal in the church, and a churchman with strong local church loyalty.

"Byron Klaus embodies these essential qualities. If the Lord tarries, he will lead AGTS into an expanded role of training pastors, missionaries, and church leaders for effective service to Christ and His kingdom in the new

millennium," Wood concludes.

Klaus and his wife Lois have two daughters.

AGTS is one of 18 endorsed A/G post-secondary schools.

NATIONAL YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM WINNERS

The Christian Higher Education and Youth Departments have selected the 1999 J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program recipients. Additional scholarships were awarded and scholarships for the top three winners increased. A one-time donation made these increases possible.

First place, a \$3,500 scholarship, went to Melissa Ann Bost of Glendale, Ariz., daughter of Gary and Cindy Bost. Melissa is attending Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie Tex. She graduated 26th from Westview High School's class of 458.

Chandra Porter of Mountain Home, Idaho, was awarded the second-place \$2,500 scholarship to attend Northwest College in Kirkland, Wash. She graduated fifth in a class of 216 at Mountain Home High School. Chandra is the daughter of Sidney and Terry Porter, pastors of Mountain Home Assembly of God.

The third-place scholarship of \$2,000 was awarded to Rachel Kear. Rachel graduated first in her Riverdale High School class of 75 and is attending North Central University in Minneapolis, Minn. Rachel is the daughter of Ronald and Cynthia Kear of Mount Blanchard, Ohio.

The J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship participants are judged on academics, extracurricular involvements, Christian service, Christian life, financial need, essay, and references. It

is sponsored annually by the Christian Higher Education and Youth Departments. Applications are available from district youth directors after Nov. 3, and are accepted from Jan. 1 to Mar. 31 each year at the district youth director's office. High school seniors who attend an A/G church (or are dependents of A/G missionaries) and who plan to attend an A/G postsecondary school upon graduation are eligible to apply. There are 18 endorsed A/G post-secondary schools.

A/G POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE BACCALAUREATE AND COMMENCEMENT DATES FOR SPRING 2000

American Indian College, Phoenix, Ariz.—None, Apr. 28.

A/G Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo.—June 6, June 6.

Berean University, Springfield, Mo.—Not scheduled.

Bethany College, Scotts Valley, Calif.—May 5, May 6.

Black Hills Indian Bible College, Rapid City, S. Dak.—None, Apr. 21.

Central Bible College, Springfield, Mo.—May 3, May 4.

Evangel University, Springfield, Mo.—May 4, May 5.

Latin American Bible Institute-Calif., La Puente, Calif.—May 5, May 6.

Latin American Bible Institute-Tex., San Antonio, Tex.—None, Apr. 28.

North Central University, Minneapolis, Minn.—May 5, May 5.

Northwest College, Kirkland, Wash.—May 5, May 6.

Southeastern College, Lakeland, Fla.—None, Apr. 21.

Southwestern A/G University, Waxahachie, Tex.—None, May 5.

Trinity Bible College, Ellendale, N. Dak.—May 4, May 4.

Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, Pa.—May 5, May 5.

Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, Calif.—May 5, May 6.

Western Bible Institute, Phoenix, Ariz.—None, May 1.

SCC BECOMES VANGUARD UNIVERSITY

Seventy-eight-year-old Southern California College in Costa Mesa, Calif., has transitioned from a liberal arts college to a comprehensive university. The transformation, which included a new name—Vanguard University of Southern California—became official July 1, 1999.

President Wayne Kraiss, in his 23rd year at SCC's helm, notes that this is the most significant transition in the college's history. "It's more than a name change—it's who we have developed into. SCC's elements no longer fit into the liberal arts model, so going to university status is an obvious move," Kraiss says.

With 29 undergraduate majors and concentrations, 3 graduate programs, and a degree completion program for professional adults, the college was ready for its advanced status as Vanguard University.

Additional information about Vanguard University is available on the university's web site at: <http://www.vanguard.edu>.

HOME MISSIONS CANDIDATE ORIENTATION

The Division of Home Missions will hold its spring candidate orientation March 6–9, 2000, in Springfield, Mo.

The orientation, which involves thorough evaluations and training sessions, is designed to ensure candidates are qualified as well as prepared for national appointment and ministry.

Those interested in becoming a nationally appointed home missionary should contact the Division of Home Missions at 417-862-2781, ext. 3254, or E-mail: dhm@ag.org.

The Division of Home Missions consists of six departments: Intercultural Ministries, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, Mission America Placement Service (MAPS), Church Planting, Chaplaincy, and Teen Challenge International, USA. The Division of Home Missions also cooperates with the Youth Department in nationally appointing Youth Alive missionaries.

ARMED FORCES DAY

It's easy to forget how precious freedom is when you're not personally fighting for it. It's also easy to forget the military men and women standing in the gap—out of sight, out of mind.

But every day, our military men and women are ready to put their lives on the line to defend America and our freedom. And every day, the world becomes a more dangerous place to be. If these truly are the endtimes, our military personnel need our prayers more than ever.

Sunday, May 20, is Armed Forces Day in America. Take a few moments during your service to let your congregation know how much their friends and family in the military need their prayers—especially those who don't know Christ. Prayer makes a difference.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about serving in the Armed Forces as a military chaplain, contact the Chaplaincy Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3260, or E-mail: chaplaincy@ag.org.

COMMISSION ON CHAPLAINS TO MEET

The semiannual Commission on Chaplains will meet May 18, 19, 2000, at the Assemblies of God Headquarters in Springfield, Mo.

The commission interviews, evaluates, and officially endorses qualified candidates for various military, institutional, and occupational chaplaincies.

Those interested in learning more about becoming officially endorsed chaplaincy candidates should contact the Chaplaincy Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3260, or E-mail: chaplaincy@ag.org.

HARVEST 2000...LIGHTHOUSE STRATEGY

Harvest 2000 "Lighthouse Strategy" is

the Assemblies of God response to the national prayer and evangelism thrust being coordinated through Mission America. The original title for this inter-denominational effort was "Celebrate Jesus 2000." Today, it is known as the Lighthouse Movement or Lighthouse Strategy. It includes over 72 denominations representing over 200,000 evangelical churches, 250 plus parachurch ministries, and more than 50 parachurch networks. Our A/G participation is coordinated through the Harvest 2000 office.

The goal of the Lighthouse Strategy is to pray for every person in America and share a meaningful presentation of the salvation message with each person by the end of the year 2000. Three key words in accomplishing this goal are: *prayer, care, and share.*

To reach this goal, the Lighthouse Strategy hopes to enlist at least 3 million believers to become Lighthouse homes. Each Lighthouse home will accept the challenge of the 15–20 homes surrounding it (5 to the left, 5 to the right, 5 in front, and 5 in back). The believer(s) in the Lighthouse home make a commitment to pray for those in these 15–20 homes, to seek opportunities to care for them, and be ready to share the salvation message.

The Assemblies of God launched this prayer and evangelism thrust at the 48th General Council in Orlando in August 1999. Resources available from the Harvest 2000 office for the Lighthouse Strategy include enrollment decals (to identify Lighthouse homes), quarterly issue of the "Lighthouse edition" of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, and the *Rock Solid* evangelism and new convert follow-up booklet. Both the *Pentecostal Evangel* and *Rock Solid* booklet are available in Spanish as *Evangelio Pentecostal* and *Roca Sólida*. For more

information, contact the Harvest 2000 office at 1445 Boonville, Springfield, MO 65802; phone (417) 862-2781, ext. 3075; or E-mail: Harvest2000@ag.org.

UPCOMING CHRISTIAN SCHOOL CONFERENCE

Throughout the year Christian School Services holds seminars to inform and sharpen the skills of today's Christian private school educators. The nations premiere private school educators from around the globe host these conferences.

Some of the educators include Paul Kienel, former president and founder of ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International), and Sandy Friesen, managing editor of Christian School Services. Sandy produces cutting-edge curriculum for today's Christian school. Both of these educators have the vision and wisdom to enhance these power-packed conferences.

National Conference dates:
Evangel University, Springfield, Mo.
March 3,4, 2000
Indianapolis, Ind.
August 8–10, 2000

To learn more about Christian School Services and receive help to start and/or maintain your Christian school, call 417-862-2781, ext. 4024, or E-mail: schoolsAG@aol.com. You can also visit us at: www.we-build-people.org/acts/.

HONORBOUND PRODUCES WORSHIP CD

Raise an Army is an original HonorBound soundtrack for today's man of prayer. Featured worship leader is Ron Gollner of Green Valley Christian Center, Henderson, Nev., and Broken Pieces. This music was featured at the 1999 Raise an Army conference at Brownsville A/G, in Pensacola, Fla. Videotapes of the conference are available

through the HonorBound office.

The CD or cassette can be ordered from the HonorBound office by calling 417-862-2781, ext. 4168.

HONORBOUND PREMIERES "DAD'S COACHING CLINIC"

In fall 1999, HonorBound: Men of Promise launched a new seminar entitled, "Dad's Coaching Clinic." This one-day seminar is designed to help *good* dads become *great* dads. This will give dads tools and confidence-building skills to enable them to have an incredible family. Dad's Coaching Clinic is not designed to tell Dad what he's doing wrong as a father. Instead it will give Dads pointers through practical, easy-to-do steps and principles.

NEWS & RESOURCES

For more information, call the HonorBound office at 417-862-2781,

ext. 4168, or E-mail: honorbound@ag.org.

PASTOR, GROW YOUR CHURCH!

Pastor, help the men in your church become prayer warriors by joining HonorBound in the Reach 3 Challenge. Each man is challenged to pray for three unsaved men and share the gospel with them. HonorBound has Reach 3 cards and tracts available for churches that want to develop an evangelism ministry among its men. The Reach 3 tract set is free and available in English and Spanish.

To order, call the HonorBound office at 417-862-2781, ext. 4170, or GPH at 1-800-641-4310, and ask for item 726-102 for the English set and 726-103 for the Spanish set.

LIGHT FOR THE LOST JUNIOR COUNCILMEN PROGRAM

The Light for the Lost Junior Councilmen program is growing. This program, which is designed to give Royal Rangers a heart for missions, began in 1993 with just 32 boys. At the end of 1998, 451 young men were active Junior Councilmen. By June 1999, 170 new Junior Councilmen had joined. For more information on the Junior Councilmen program, contact Light for the Lost at (417) 862-2781.

NEW A/G MINISTRIES LOGO ON DISK NOW AVAILABLE

The Office of Public Relations has released a new updated version of the Assemblies of God's official ministries logos. The new set of logos called "A/G Ministries Logos on Disk" includes the most recent changes and replacement logos released over the last 2 years. The set comes on five disks and is formatted in high resolution, PCX files compatible

with most IBM software programs.

A/G Ministries Logos on Disk contains 75 of the most commonly used ministries and institution logos of the Assemblies of God. In an effort to make them available to more churches, the price of the A/G Ministries Logos on Disk has been reduced from \$39.95 to only \$11.95 per set.

Churches may order A/G Ministries Logos on Disk (item #739-604) through the Gospel Publishing House at 1-800-641-4310.

The next scheduled update for A/G Ministries Logos on Disk is April 2001.

"BEST OF BANS CD" RESOURCE AVAILABLE FOR CHURCH BULLETINS

A new church publishing resource is now available on CD-ROM through the Office of Public Relations. The new CD, Best of BANS CD, contains over 2,000 quality clip-art images formerly available in the church's popular "Bulletin And Newsletter Service." Also included are more than 800 bulletin fillers and church sign messages, over 75 cartoons, 70 Scripture verses, and 100 creative borders. It's the most comprehensive collection of Pentecostal church clip art ever assembled.

The Best of BANS CD provides churches with a fast, high-quality, easy-to-use publishing resource for church bulletins and other publishing needs. CD-ROM formatting allows each file to be accessed more quickly without tying up valuable hard-drive space.

The Best of BANS CD is formatted in high resolution PCX files compatible with most IBM software programs. It comes complete with a printed directory for easy preview and selection.

The BANS subscription program was discontinued as a quarterly service in

the fall of 1998. However, the premium material was gleaned from over 16 years of BANS files and compiled on CD-ROM.

The new Best of BANS CD (item #739031) costs \$34.95 and can be ordered through the Gospel Publishing House at 1-800-641-4310.

NATIONAL MISSIONETTES WEEK

National Missionettes Week is May 14–20, 2000. The theme, “Girls in Training,” supports the second of the five-fold purpose of Missionettes—“Teaching girls to obey everything Jesus commanded us.”

The national Missionettes leaders desire all Missionettes to understand the value of training in godliness to equip them for this life and eternity. First Timothy 4:7,8 was chosen for this year’s theme, “Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (NIV).

The national Missionettes office sends an annual theme packet to every church reporting an active Missionettes ministry on the Annual Church Ministries Report. The packet includes ideas for celebrating National Missionettes Week and information on theme-related products available from Gospel Publishing House. *Club Connection*, the magazine for Missionettes, also features creative ideas and helps for planning and organizing National Missionettes Week activities.

According to Kerry Clarensau, Missionettes coordinator, girls and sponsors in more than 22,000 clubs will participate in National Missionettes Week. During the week, activities and accomplishments of local Missionettes clubs will be featured in events such as banquets, teas, luncheons, awards presentations, and Missionettes celebrations.

National Missionettes Week offerings from local clubs and churches enable the national Missionettes office to continue providing the tools local churches need to reach and effectively disciple girls.

CHURCHES USE WOMAN’S TOUCH AS RESOURCE AND EVANGELISM TOOL

Woman’s Touch, an inspirational magazine for women produced by the national Women’s Ministries Department, is being used by pastors to disciple, strengthen, and mentor the women in their congregations.

“We believe *Woman’s Touch* is a won-

derful tool and resource for women, and also serves as an evangelistic tool for our women to give to their friends,” reports pastor John A. Wilson, West County Assembly of God, Chesterfield, Mo.

At West County, the *Woman’s Touch* magazine is purchased in bundles and placed next to the *Pentecostal Evangel* in the church’s literature rack.

Published six times per year, bundles of 5 or more subscriptions to the same address of the Regular Edition of *Woman’s Touch* can be purchased for \$7.50 each. To receive ordering information about *Woman’s Touch*, check reader service card #11, call 1-800-641-4310, or E-mail: gph@ag.org.

With Christ

David R. Allen
Battle Creek, Michigan

Jose J. Ayala
Longmont, Colorado

Webster L. Baker
Arton, Alabama

Ruth A. Beauford
Seminole, Oklahoma

Tomey L. Blick
Everett, Washington

Clifton Bowers
Quincy, Florida

Ida B. Bragdon
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Jerry Bray
Stone Mountain, Georgia

Nell Brewer
Memphis, Texas

Clarence Brotzman
Gering, Nebraska

Inez Brotzman
Gering, Nebraska

Melvin M. Byron
Fort Mill, South Carolina

Donald E. Calfee
Princeton, West Virginia

Eduarda Campos
Abilene, Texas

Miguel Canales
Carson, California

Ola M. Carroll
Springfield, Missouri

Su Chol Choe
Torrance, California

Earl Cole
Harrisburg, Arkansas

Travis F. Corder
Lake Dallas, Texas

Juanita V. Covington
Saint Paul, Minnesota

Florence Craighead
Weatherford, Texas

Howard R. Davidson
Columbus, Ohio

Paul W. Davis
Tequesta, Florida

Rowland H. Dean
Duluth, Minnesota

Clifford L. Diamond
Madera, California

Harold Wayne Dixon
Lawton, Oklahoma

James W.C. Drake
Kirbyville, Texas

James E. Engstrom
Anderson, Indiana

Clifton O. Erickson
Orlando, Florida

Nona L. Fogger
Winnfield, Louisiana

Ruth S. Ford
Oakland, California

Howard F. Fortenberry
 Mooresville, North Carolina

John L. Franklin
Houston, Texas

Domingo Galarza
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

Norice Chester Gallop
Richmond, Indiana

Arlin H. Green
Cleveland, Texas

Juanita Green
Lafayette, Louisiana

Murry E. Green
Winnsboro, Texas

Jack R. Gresham
Plain Dealing, Louisiana

Daniel M. Grubbs, Sr.
Eugene, Oregon

Dean L. Harrison
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Edward E. Helton
Bloomington, Indiana

Robey F. Herrick
Macon, Georgia

Lawrence N. Huffman
Des Moines, Iowa

Peter P. Jankowski
Hamburg, New York

Anton P. Jensen
Okeechobee, Florida

George M. Kasparian
Fresno, California

Riley E. Kaufman
Centralia, Washington

Idama Keeton
Denton, Texas

Elbert H. Kelley
Clanton, Alabama

Coleatus Kerr
Lansing, Kansas

Forrest L. Langley
Clinton, Mississippi

Hollis K. Lawson
Springfield, Missouri

Opal Leitch
Akrón, Ohio

Lois G. Lemm
Adrian, Michigan

Lloyd R. Logan
Springfield, Missouri

Mario B. Loiz
New York, New York

Myrtle E. Lund
Tarrant, Texas

David R. Markese
Salem, Oregon

Robert L. Markland
Jackson, Wisconsin

Cleaburn A. McCrary
Houston, Texas

Dolores J. McGhghy
Springfield, Missouri

Velia F. Menchaca
Houston, Texas

Edmae Messer
Sulphur Springs, Texas

W. Grady Mizelle
Hurley, Mississippi

Charles L. Mooney
Seattle, Washington

Edith M. Moore
Ashland, Kentucky

Lillie B. Mundt
Waxahachie, Texas

Howard A. Nelson
Schaumburg, Illinois

Richard W. Nelson
Southport, Florida

James W. Nicholson
Turner, Oregon

Nellie Nutt
Henderson, Texas

David W. Nyien
Springfield, Missouri

Harold D. Oakley
Jackson, New Jersey

Richard W. Patnode
San Diego, California

Dennis J. Pedrin
Williamstown, Massachusetts

Rosie N. Peel
Panama City, Florida

Anderson W. Phillips, Sr.
Columbia, Maryland

Donald R. Price
Watsonville, California

Lillian A. Rahner
Springfield, Missouri

Ira Rebeck, Jr.
Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania

Louis G. Reep
Phoenix, Arizona

Duane E. Rice
Murphy, North Carolina

Clyde C. Rieson
Beaumont, Texas

F. Ellis Robertson
LaMirada, California

Clyde O. Ross
San Francisco, California

Anthony N. Rousonelos
Largo, Florida

Kenzy K. Savage
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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In Closing

BY WILLIAM CARMICHAEL

The breakup of families through divorce is one of the worst diseases of our time. I use the word “disease” because divorce affects the mental and emotional health (and the poverty level) of millions of children in this country. As Dr. Allen Bloom wrote, “To children, the voluntary separation of parents seems worse than their death, precisely because it is voluntary.”

Years ago, when our nation’s legal system instituted “no-fault” divorce, no one could have imagined what statistics now show: nearly 75 percent of all children growing up today will spend at least part of their formative years in a single-parent home.

The scars of divorce stay with many children into their adult lives, affecting a variety of relationships, including the more frequent breakup of their own marriages. This is a cycle of emotional and spiritual devastation.

Children instinctively believe they have a right to the attention and nurture of both parents. The family is supposed to be the one sure relationship for children. When divorce occurs, children are forced to face the truth that the two people they rely on to nurture them no longer wish to nurture each other. Some children never resolve or settle this issue. Their parents’ decision to divorce shapes their lives, yet the children have no say.

Divorce destroys the children’s sense of belonging. It damages hope and optimism. It breaks connection with a father or mother, fractures the natural bonding process, and forces children to do some “unlinking” that screams against everything they instinctively know about love

and commitment. In the process, they may lose faith with the idea that some relationships are permanent bonds. This may even affect their ability to trust Jesus.

Every church needs to be tenacious in teaching, counseling, and emphasizing strong and lasting marriages. A primary role of the church is to stand in the gap, emphasizing the need for strong marriages in their community.

Pastors who have mandatory premarital counseling programs, and churches that have strong family ministries—small groups for family issue interaction, Bible-based counseling intervention, and parenting and marriage retreats and seminars—have lower divorce rates among their families than churches that do not have this emphasis. Many communities are developing a coalition of pastors and churches that, as a total church community, refuse to perform marriages without premarital counseling. And premarital counseling offers one of the best opportunities to lead a young engaged couple to the Lord.

Premarital counseling is vital to the spiritual and emotional health of all children born into a marriage. The ability of children to relate to a loving God is hindered by parents. Little children don’t wait for their parents to get through with doing their thing. Early spiritual and emotional development cannot be put off just because parents decide to break up. Life is always urgent for a child, without any possibility of postponement.

All people, regardless of their spiritual condition, desire good marriages and families. People do not go into marriage with the idea that it is not going to last.

People rarely conceive children they do not love. Churches without a strong family ministries program are overlooking opportunities for evangelizing families in their communities. Churches can be beacons of help and hope. When the people in your community know that you offer good premarriage programs, they will seek you out.

If you emphasize family, families in crisis will come to you in their time of need. These are the times when they are looking for answers and are most open to receiving the redemptive grace of Jesus.

Having strong marriage programs in your church is hard work. But we do not build strong families by giving token allegiance to or preaching an occasional sermon on the family. It requires a commitment by the church to emphasize marriage, parenting, and family issues. It may require further training for you or your staff. It needs the same emphasis as children’s, youth, men’s and women’s ministries, and Christian education programs. In fact, some training can be integrated into those departments.

We are in a battle for our children, and keeping their families together during their formative years is one way we can increase the chance they will choose to have a relationship with a loving Lord, and become Kingdom builders rather than emotional cripples. **E**

William Carmichael lives in Sisters, Oregon, and is the author of several books on marriage and family. He and his wife Nancie conduct parenting and marriage seminars.



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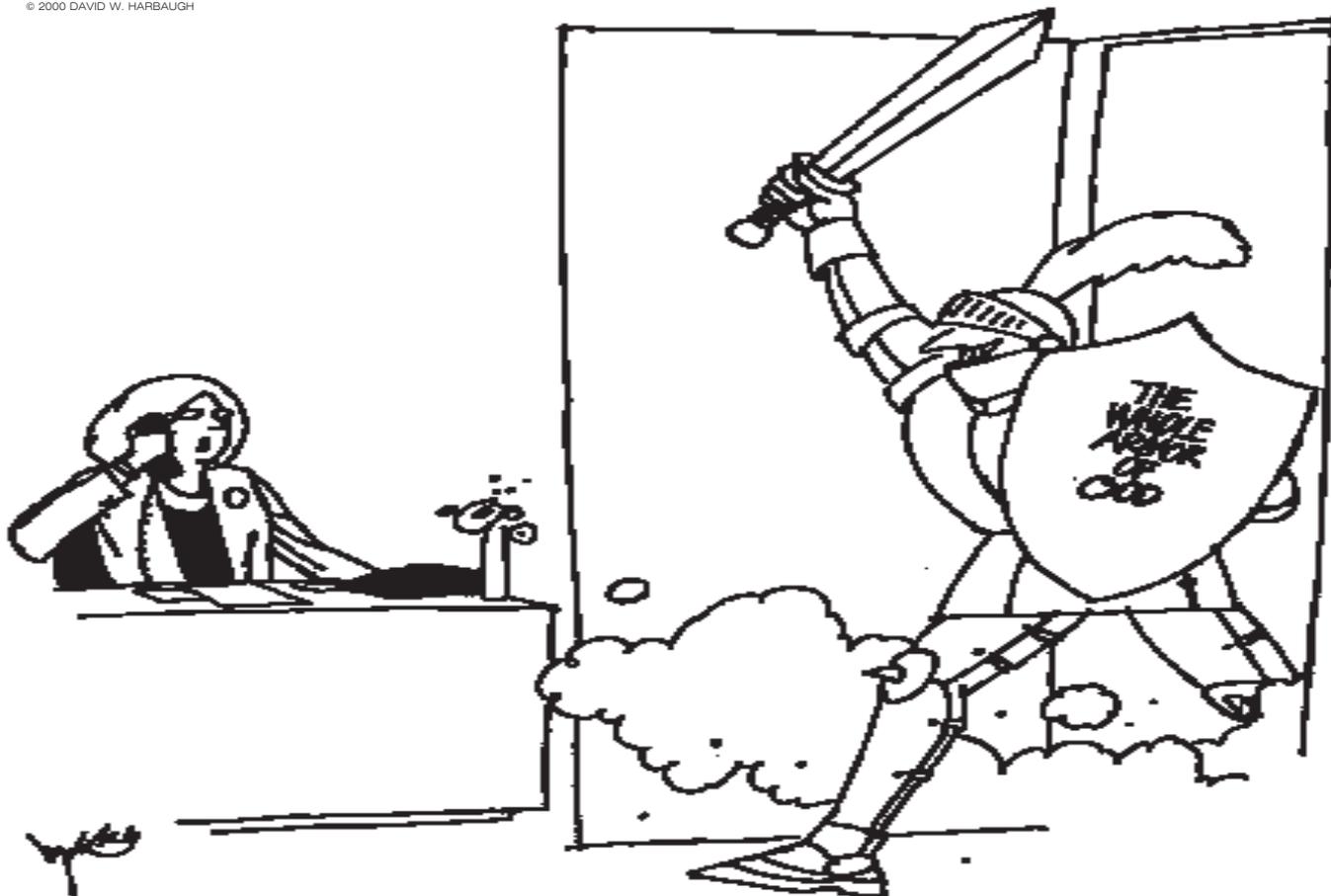
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"He's at a pastoral retreat. Hold on, I think he just came in."