

# enrichment

A JOURNAL FOR PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY

## Intimacy in Life and Ministry

22  
Intimacy:  
the  
Foundation  
for Healthy  
Ministry  
Thomas F. Fischer

Three 34  
Miles From  
the Coffee:  
A Study in Intimacy  
With God  
Richard L. Dresselhaus

70  
How To Fall  
in Love  
With Your  
Church  
Neil B. Wiseman

SUMMER 2004







## INTIMACY IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

Ministry is about people and building healthy, intimate relationships with them. In doing so, we have opportunity to develop the interpersonal and organizational processes that enable us to address the important issues of life and social interaction. Ministry is more than preaching at them; we are commanded to love one another. This means being involved in their lives, interacting with their joys and sorrows, and helping them live abundant lives in Christ.

Relationships exist on several levels of intensity from vaguely knowing someone to being intimately involved with others. Intimacy is revealing one's deepest nature to another by close association, presence, and contact.

Eugene Peterson in addressing ministry burnout, relationships, and intimacy wrote: "I don't think pastors 'burn out' because they work too hard. People who work hard do so because they're good at what they're doing and they enjoy doing it. I think burnout comes from working with no relational gratification. Relationships become laborious and draining. Pastors can lose touch with relational vitality when their relationships are driven by programmatic necessity. When this happens, pastors can lose the context of love, hope, faith, touch, and a kind of mutual vulnerability. In the midst of the congregation, pastors become lonely and feel isolated — and that isolation can be deadly to the pastoral life. Those are the conditions in which inappropriate intimacies flourish.

"I think the epidemic (if it is an epidemic) of sexual misconduct by clergy has less to do with clergy overindulging intimacy or not being careful about intimate relationships, and more to do with the absence of genuine intimacy."<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, appropriate sexual boundaries must be established and maintained within the church. At the same time we must be careful not to build sexual boundaries so rigid that we

discourage and minimize appropriate intimate relationships.

In this issue of *Enrichment*, we are addressing three areas of intimacy: intimacy with God, intimacy with self, and intimacy with others.

### INTIMACY WITH GOD

God is relational. His intent in creating man and woman was to have persons in His own image who would willfully and intentionally interact with Him. When sin broke this intimate relationship, He sent His own Son to become flesh and live among humanity to reestablish an opportunity of divine/human intimacy. As the people of God we are obligated to maintain this intimate relationship.

### INTIMACY WITH SELF

It is important for us to understand how valuable each of us is to God. Poor self-image and low self-esteem bring unnecessary alienation from God and isolation from the community of faith. We need to give attention to appropriate, healthy self-care if we are going to lead and nurture others. Jesus said we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

### INTIMACY WITH OTHERS

First, we must build and maintain intimate relationships in our families. If we are married, the intimacy with our mate is our priority, then our children and extended family. The only sexually intimate relationship we are allowed is with our spouse.

Second, we must build appropriate intimacy with those within the community of faith. We are obligated to love one another, serve one another, pray for one another, and bear one another's burdens.

Third, we must build appropriate intimate friendships with those outside the community of faith. The level and intensity of these friendships will not be the same as within our family and with fellow believers. But unless those outside the community of faith see personal transformation within us and feel authentic love from us, they will see little need for our Lord and Savior.

Friends expand our joys and share our sorrows. It is with friends that we have the opportunity to share life and eternity. A missionary friend in sharing a prayer request for a dear non-Christian said, "Please pray for Joshua, I don't want to go to heaven without him." Who are you willing to go to heaven without?

The above statement by Eugene Peterson is a primary motivation of this issue of *Enrichment* on intimacy in life and ministry. We believe if ministers can establish and maintain healthy, intimate relationships with God, themselves, and others, they will have a more effective and fulfilling life and ministry.

**GARY R. ALLEN**, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment office, Springfield, Missouri.

#### ENDNOTE

1. Eugene Peterson, "Committing to Mutuality," *Congregations* 28, no. 3 (May/June 2002): 6.



## theme articles

### 16 ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT — INTIMACY IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

*Interview with Thomas E. Trask*

How can a pastor develop healthy relationships? General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask understands the importance of building healthy relationships and shares his insight on this important subject.

### 18 THE PASTOR AND BIBLICAL INTIMACY

*Interview with Henry Blackaby*

Read what the author of *Experiencing God* has to say about how walking in an intimate relationship with God impacts the pastor's life and ministry.

### 22 INTIMACY: THE FOUNDATION FOR HEALTHY MINISTRY

*By Thomas F. Fischer*

Why do pastors and churches have conflict? One reason is a lack of healthy intimacy. Here is one pastor, who through the heartache of conflict, discovered how to make intimacy the foundation of his life and ministry.

### 34 THREE MILES FROM THE COFFEE: A STUDY IN INTIMACY WITH GOD

*By Richard L. Dresselhaus*

Intimacy with God is a life-long pursuit. God calls us to an intimate relationship with Him, but pastors often allow the busyness of ministry to hinder that relationship. Learn how to maintain an intimate relationship with God from a pastor who knows what it means to walk with God.

### 42 INTIMACY WITH SELF: THE LENS THROUGH WHICH WE LOOK AT LIFE AND MINISTRY

*By Richard D. Dobbins*

Our self-concept and how we were raised affects our relationships with others. But God has provided through His grace ways to overcome any deficiencies in our lives. The author shares his insight and wisdom on this important subject.

### 50 THE PASTOR AND FAMILY INTIMACY

*By Gary Smalley*

After one's relationship with God, the next most important relationships are with one's spouse and family. One of the foremost leaders in family ministry provides ways pastors can grow in their relationships with their wives and families.

### 62 SURVIVING THE PARSONAGE — INTIMACY ISSUES FOR THE PASTOR'S WIFE

*By Gabriele Rienas*

What is a pastor's wife to do when confronted with the demands of ministry? A long-time pastor's wife and counselor who learned how to survive the parsonage shares her insight and encouragement.

### 70 HOW TO FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR CHURCH

*By Neil B. Wiseman*

Pastoring means ministering to people. But what about those who are not loveable? Here are some practical ways you can love your church.

### 82 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY

*By Joseph B. Fuiten*

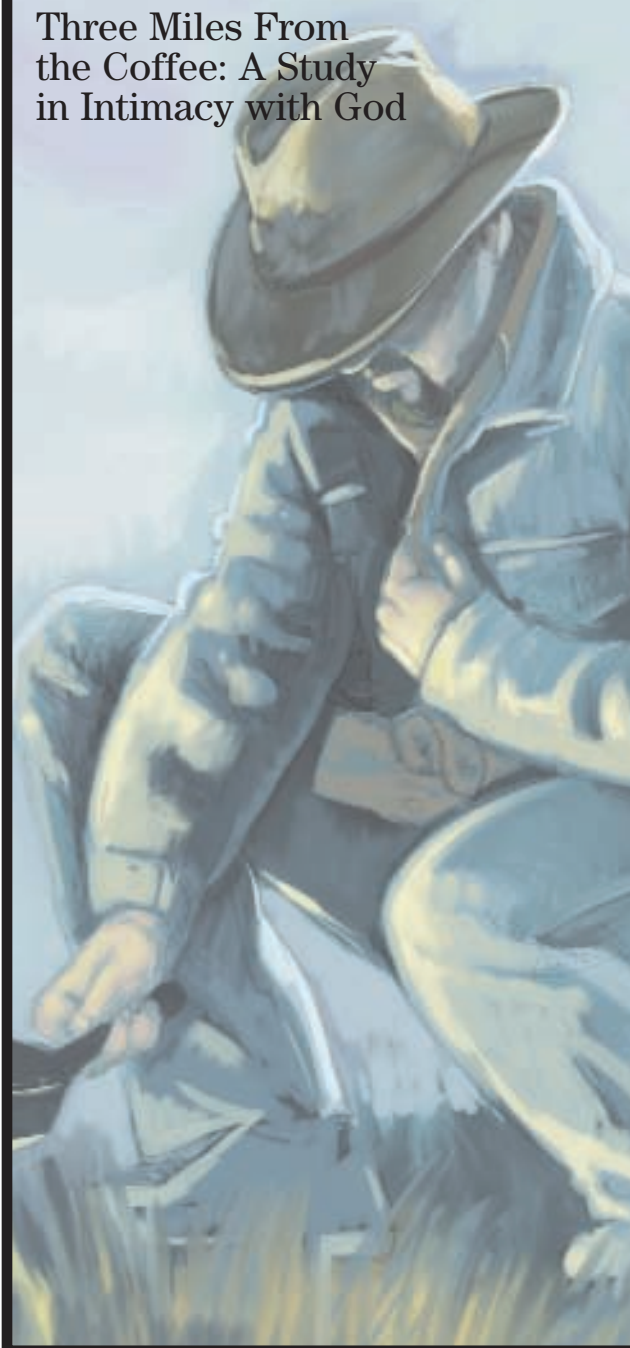
Effectively reaching your community with the gospel involves building relationships with people in your community. Read how one pastor and his church are touching lives through relationship-building ministries.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY JIM DARNELL

E-SHORT ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLIOTT PARKS

# 34

## Three Miles From the Coffee: A Study in Intimacy with God



**ENRICHMENT** (ISSN 1082-1791), is published quarterly (January, April, July, October), ©2004 by The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, Missouri 65802. Assemblies of God ministers may reproduce nonbyline material from *Enrichment* in church publications, giving credit to the journal. Except for brief quotations, signed articles may not be reprinted without permission of the authors. Subscription rates: USA—1 year \$24; 2 years \$42. Outside USA add \$10 per year. Subscriptions: All subscription correspondence, including change of address, should be sent to *Enrichment*, Customer Services, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, MO 65802, phone 1-800-641-4310. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Missouri, and at additional mailing offices. Printed in the USA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Enrichment*, 1445 Boonville, Springfield, MO 65802.



# SUMMER CONTENTS

## INTIMACY IN LIFE AND MINISTRY

# 62

Surviving the Parsonage —  
Intimacy Issues for the  
Pastor's Wife



**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**  
Gary R. Allen

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Rick Knoth

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**  
Richard Schoonover

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**  
Kevin Wilson

**ADVERTISING/PROMOTIONS  
COORDINATOR**  
Steve Lopez

**OFFICE COORDINATOR**  
Faith Hamilton

**GRAPHICS/DESIGN**  
Creative Center

**CIRCULATION MANAGER**  
Terry King

**PREPARED UNDER THE  
DIRECTION OF THE  
EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERY**

Thomas E. Trask (general superintendent); David W. Argue, C. Dan Betzer, James K. Bridges, L. John Bueno, Warren D. Bullock, Charles T. Crabtree, Charles E. Crank, Richard L. Dresselhaus, L. Alton Garrison, J. Don George, Charles E. Hackett, Nam Soo Kim, Jesse Miranda, Jr., H. Robert Rhoden, Zollie L. Smith, Jr., George O. Wood

**EDITORIAL ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE**

Gary R. Allen, chairman;  
Rick Knoth, vice-chairman;  
Dayton A. Kingsriter; John Maempa;  
Arlyn Pember; Harold W. Sallee;  
Juleen Turnage


**ADVERTISING POLICY**

For information on advertising, call Steve Lopez at 417-862-2781, ext. 4097. Display rates provided upon request. Online advertising information is also available at [enrichmentjournal.ag.org](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org) or E-mail [advertisingenrichment@ag.org](mailto:advertisingenrichment@ag.org).

*Enrichment* does not endorse any advertiser or product. Claims made in an advertisement are the sole responsibility of the advertiser. *Enrichment* reserves the right to reject any advertisement that is inconsistent with the journal's objectives, editorial convictions, and Assemblies of God doctrine.

**E-MAIL: YOU MAY  
ADDRESS ENRICHMENT AT**  
[enrichmentjournal@ag.org](mailto:enrichmentjournal@ag.org)  
**OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT**  
<http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>

 Member of Evangelical Press Association

 Member of International Pentecostal Press Assoc.

- Use of the masculine pronoun for pastor is used throughout this issue and refers to both genders.
- Unless noted, all Scriptures are from the New International Version.

## 7 eShorts

**14 VISION FOR TRANSFORMATION  
UPDATE**

## feature

**88 MINISTRY GROUP DEVELOPMENT:  
A NEW LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE**

Interview with Gary R. Allen, Charles E. Crank, Ron McManus, Thomas E. Trask  
Four ministry leaders discuss a new ministry initiative that will bring pastors and ministers together in meaningful, ministry-building relationships.

## editorials

**1 MINISTRY MATTERS**

By Gary R. Allen

**141 IN CLOSING**

By Richard L. Schoonover



## departments

**124 SERMON SEEDS**

**128 MINISTRY IDEAS**

**130 ILLUSTRATE IT**

**132 BOOK REVIEWS**

**136 NEWS AND RESOURCES**

**140 WITH CHRIST**

**142 MARKETPLACE**

**144 ADVERTISING INDEX**

## columns

**92 HISTORY IS HIS STORY**

John Bunyan: The Faithful Tinker From Bedford  
By William P. Farley

**96 THEOLOGICAL ENRICHMENT**

The Holy Spirit — God at Work  
By Thomas H. Lindberg

**100 THE CHURCH & THE CHOSEN PEOPLE**

The Hebraic Gospel of Salvation  
By Ray Gannon

**102 LEADERS EDGE**

Characters: Taking Advantage of God's Gifts  
By Clyde W. Harvey

**104 PREACHING THAT CONNECTS**

Preaching That Promotes Self-Centeredness  
By Craig Brian Larson

**106 FINANCIAL CONCEPTS**

Business & Ministry Myths  
By Randall K. Barton

**108 MANAGING YOUR MINISTRY**

Welcome to Father's House — A Practical Guide for Taking the First-Time Visitor From the Door to the Core  
By Arlene Patterson

**112 PASTORAL CARE**

Effective Hospital Visitation  
By Emmanuel L. Williams

**116 FAMILY LIFE**

Hit by a Ton of Bricks  
By John Vawter

**119 MINISTRY TO MUSLIMS**

Let's Talk About Islam  
By Sobhi Malek

**122 WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH**

The Worship Essential  
By Tom McDonald

**NEXT TIME IN ENRICHMENT**

## Ministry and Ethics in Crisis

An ethical crisis exists in ministry. Some days it seems religious leaders are not all that religious. With sexual scandals and abuses, financial irregularities, and of greater concern — the less visible ethical issues that tempt ministers daily in their choices, goals, and obligations — the world sees an entirely different picture of the church. Recovering ethical ministry based on a biblical foundation needs every minister's consideration. In this issue, read important perspectives by Warren Bullock, James Carter, Richard Dobbins, Stanley Grenz, H.B. London, James Bailey, Joe Trull, Robert Young, George Wood, and others.

To order extra copies for your staff/volunteers or to subscribe, call 1-800-641-4310.







# eSHORTS

## WHAT IN THE WORLD

### A SECRET MISSION

If you are looking for a way to explain the truth of Philippians 2:1–11, recall what happened on Thanksgiving Day 2003. Without fanfare, President George Bush deployed on a secret mission to Baghdad. Not even his staff or extended family knew what was going on. But, to encourage and express his love for the beleaguered American troops in Iraq, he arranged to meet them on their own turf.

Think of it. The leader of the free world left the comfort and security of the White House to follow his heart. Instead of enjoying the company of his famous father at a family holiday meal, he was willing to risk his life to accomplish his mission. He knew that a few days before the Iraqi resistance had attempted to shoot down American aircraft. The plane on which he flew into Baghdad was vulnerable to attack, even if no one on the ground knew of the dignitary who was onboard.

As the President deplaned, he looked like one of the soldiers. Dressed in army fatigues, Mr. Bush assumed the role of a servant. Standing behind the serving line, he carved slices of turkey and dished up mashed potatoes. In Christlike fashion, he denied his right to be served in order to serve.

The troops were thrilled by this unexpected visit that

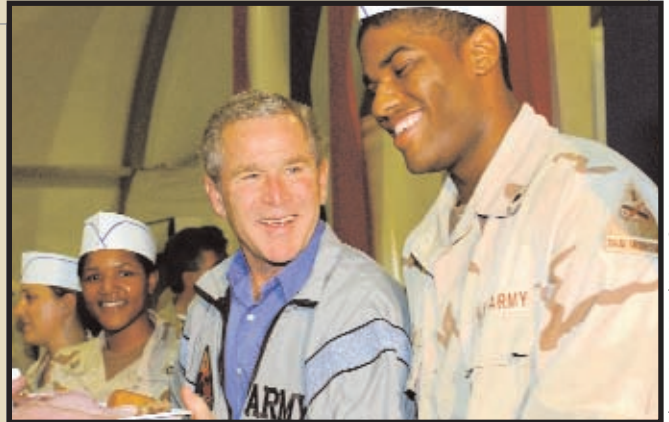


Photo: Navy Visual News Service

provided encouragement. Bush's example of self-denial and selfless love captured their hearts. But his mission of mercy did not go uncontested. There were those who questioned his motives and denounced his deed as foolish. Jesus encountered similar opposition.

Obviously, when a current event is used to illustrate a biblical truth, a one-to-one correspondence cannot be attempted. When making reference to the President's Thanksgiving Day journey, the sacrifices President Bush made only approximate the self-denying trip our Savior made from His Father's presence to earth.

**GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS**

## TIME WISE

### TIME TO MANAGE YOUR TIME

People who routinely use effective time-management techniques are the highest achievers in all walks of life, from business to sports to public service, and in ministry. If you use time-management skills effectively, you will be able to function effectively, even under intense pressure.

Good time management means defining priorities and scheduling activities. Here are three basic rules for effective time management:

- Do not create impossible situations.
- Do not get trapped into doing too much.
- Use time to create success, not failure.

Define priorities. All time management begins

with planning. Use lists to set priorities, plan activities, and measure progress.

Avoid distractions and lack of focus.

Time is precious. Yet many people waste time by getting stuck in:

- Procrastination.
- Crises management.
- Switching and floundering.
- Television, telephones, and friends.
- Emotional blocks.

No one time-management system works for everyone. Take a suggested system, try it out, add ideas you get from other places, then keep reworking the system until you find what works best for you.

**FAITH HAMILTON.** Excerpted from *Mind Tools* at [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com), and *It's About Time* at [www.ianr.unl.edu](http://www.ianr.unl.edu).





## RELIGION WATCH

WHAT THREE AUTHORS DO YOU READ MOST?

Conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Catholic clergy have divergent habits in what they chose for theological, scholarly, and inspirational reading. A recent Duke Divinity School Pulpit and Pew national survey asked more than 800 clergy from 80 denominations about their spiritual reading habits. The opinion-takers asked each participant, "Other than the Bible, what three authors do you read most often in your work as a pastor?"

No writer appeared on the top 10 lists of all three groups, indicating that those from different Christian traditions live in diverse educational and cultural realms.

Catholic priest Henri Nouwen topped both the Catholic and mainline Protestant polls, but he didn't make the conservative Protestant survey. No other Catholic favorite was on either Protestant roster.

Four authors appeared on both the conservative and mainline pastors' top 10 lists: Max Lucado, John Maxwell, Philip Yancey, and C.S. Lewis. Lewis, the Anglican who wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Mere Christianity*, ranked 11th on the Catholic poll, giving him the highest rating for all clergy combined.

Lucado topped the conservative Protestant list, followed by: John Maxwell, Charles Swindoll, John MacArthur, Warren Wiersbe, Philip Yancey, Rick Warren, C.S. Lewis, Matthew Henry, and Charles Spurgeon.

White males comprised all three favorite author lists. The first African-American to make an appearance on any list was Pentecostal preacher T.D. Jakes, the 11th choice of conservative Protestants. The top woman to be named on any group was Barbara Brown Taylor, 12th on the mainline Protestant minister survey.

**JOHN W. KENNEDY**, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*

## LEADER LIFE

### MY NIGHTMARE

I have this nightmare. In it, thousands of us spend our careers doing our best to prepare leaders for the challenges of the 21st century, only to wake up to find the best and the brightest of them have been disqualified. In the worst version of my nightmare, our young leaders refuse to open their lives to a ministry calling by silently disqualifying themselves now, rather than being caught and disqualified later. Disqualified by what?

- Disqualified by Internet pornography. Recently, a concerned official told me that in a large group of candidates for credentials in his state almost 20 percent voluntarily turned themselves in for rehabilitation

## CROSSROADS

### A DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY THROUGH A VODOO WOMAN IN NEW ORLEANS

*The New York Times* recently reported the resurgence of a religious movement around the legacy of New Orleans "voodoo queen" Marie Laveau, who died in 1881.

People are making pilgrimages to New Orleans to visit Laveau's tomb. Those who have made offerings at her grave tell stories of miraculous healings. Medical doctors are confirming healings from meningitis and other lethal diseases.

We should not dismiss this growing phenomenon as novel, faddish, or mysteriously ridiculous. The embracing of Marie Laveau as the center of a new religious revival should not surprise us. The numbing reality is people view themselves as insignificant in this globalized society. People believe their significance as a person is minimal, and they long to be removed from the iron cage that the human race has unwittingly produced. The piles of flowers, candles,

and beads that surround Marie Laveau's tomb stand as a visual testimony to the need of people to reach out beyond the confinement of the tragedies of life and the restrictions of their humanity to a force bigger than themselves.

The apostle Paul saw a similar display of fruitless effort to connect with the "beyond" at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34). Like Paul we must say to the onlookers, "I see that in every way you are very religious!" Our task is to seize a tremendous opportunity. Could we follow Paul's efforts so effectively that an ardent voodoo queen might repeat to us what was said to Paul at the Areopagus: "We want to hear you again on this subject" (Acts 17:32).

**BYRON KLAUS**, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary



during the process. (This number counts only those who would admit their struggle.) Make no mistake — this addiction has the potential to decimate the ranks of our best leadership. In combination, the available statistics and the opinions of our best experts are conclusive: We have a plague among us.

- Denial is the enemy. If you think I'm exaggerating, check out this link: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/004/1.42.html>.

With 135 million Americans online (according to [cyberatlas.com](http://cyberatlas.com)) and the average user spending over 9 hours on the Internet weekly, it is difficult to imagine that things will get better any time soon. For some, even the Internet experience itself (apart from pornography) is becoming life-controlling, turning information into a controlled substance. (See: <http://www.ChristianityOnline.com/comag/2000/003/7.22.html>).

- Do something about it. If you are in the grip of Internet pornography, you owe it to yourself and to those you serve to take specific steps toward healing, such as:

1. Enter an accountability relationship immediately that involves regular and rigorous questioning.
2. Load up software that will filter out porn sites and will report all sites visited to a trusted friend.
3. Seek help right now if you're hooked. Christian counselors are a good place to start. Call the Ministerial Enrichment hotline at 1-800-867-4011. Additional resource suggestions are available at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/004/36.45.html>.
4. Get preventive training for your organization. My colleague, Cheryl Taylor, D.Min., has excellent training/prevention materials available at: [http://www.agts.edu/community/sexual\\_integrity.html](http://www.agts.edu/community/sexual_integrity.html).

Contact her ([ctaylor@agts.edu](mailto:ctaylor@agts.edu)) to arrange preventive sexual integrity training for your ministry team.

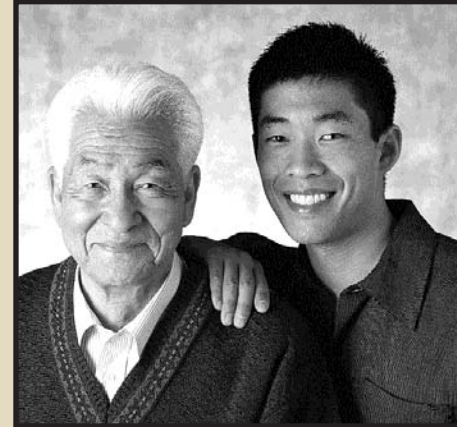
**EARL CREPS**, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

## UTHTRAX

EXTREME OPPOSITES/OPPORTUNITIES

Consider some opposites:  
Night and day.  
Ice and fire.  
Your middle-school teen and his great-grandpa Jones.  
Bzzz. Wrong.  
Only two are right.

The emerging generation



of teens is reaching back to embrace values held by their great-grandparents. A study conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, reports that younger teens are expressing more conservative views than their parents. The study reports that younger teens are more likely to be in favor of government restrictions on abortion and support prayer during official school activities.

It is not easy to go against popular opinion, but imagine how difficult it must be for teens to defend their belief system to both their peers and their parents. What are the reasons behind this revolution? Maybe it is because 1 in 5 of those in this age group was aborted in the womb. Perhaps it is because religious restrictions in increasing numbers are being placed on today's teens. Researchers are unsure, but theorize that the numbers could be due to a reemphasis on religion and a conservative voice in the White House.

Teens are searching for values that will mean something to them. Henry A. Giroux (*Zero Tolerance*) says it best: "How do we comprehend the choices young people are making under circumstances in which they have become the object of policies that signals a shift from investing in their future to assuming they have no future?"

Though the study provides no concrete answers, today's teens have decided they will take a stand and pursue another way — even if their parents do not agree with their opinions.

**T. SUZANNE ELLER**



# HEALTH WATCH

## GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY AND SPIRIT

How do we glorify God in our body? By following Jesus. Jesus walked many miles over rough and rugged terrain.

Three out of four Americans do not get enough physical

activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle. One in three Americans is obese. Is it any coincidence that diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity are at an all-time high?

It is estimated that "one death per year may be preventable for every 61 people who could be persuaded to walk at least 2 hours/week. The risk of cardiac disease is 30-to-40 percent lower for individuals who walk briskly at least half an hour per day as compared with sedentary individuals. Walking reduces body weight and the percentage of body fat. The benefit of improved blood lipids — increasing HDL, decreasing the harmful LDL, and decreasing blood pressure

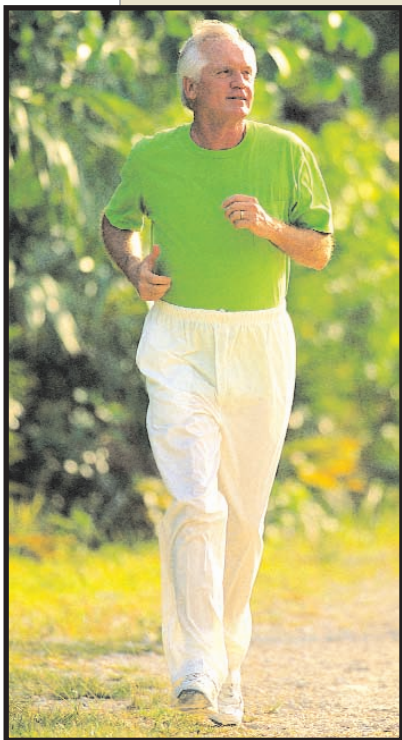
to a normal 120/80 — will reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and death.

To become healthier, consider pedometer walking. A general aerobic walk is a 15-minute mile. But the journey of a thousand miles begins with one footstep. How many footsteps are enough for maintaining good health? Dr. Ralph Paffenbarager and his colleagues at Stanford University examined 17,000 Harvard alumni. This research shows a clear relationship between one's level of physical activity and one's chance of dying prematurely from chronic diseases. By walking 1 mile (2,000 steps), 2 miles (4,000 steps), or 3 miles (6,000 steps) each day, one can realize a significant long-term health gain with lower mortality rates. Increasing to 10,000 steps (5 miles) you can become even healthier.

Walking releases God-given hormones as natural stress relievers. God directs us to glorify Him in our bodies to the best of our ability, and to condition our bodies to optimum physical capability. Good health enhances our service for Him more effectively without stress and fatigue.

For complete pedometer walking programs, call 1-314-721-3600, or visit: [www.creativewalking.com](http://www.creativewalking.com).

**BARBARA S. SCHOONOVER, RN, BSN, CDE**



## THE HIM BEHIND THE HYMN

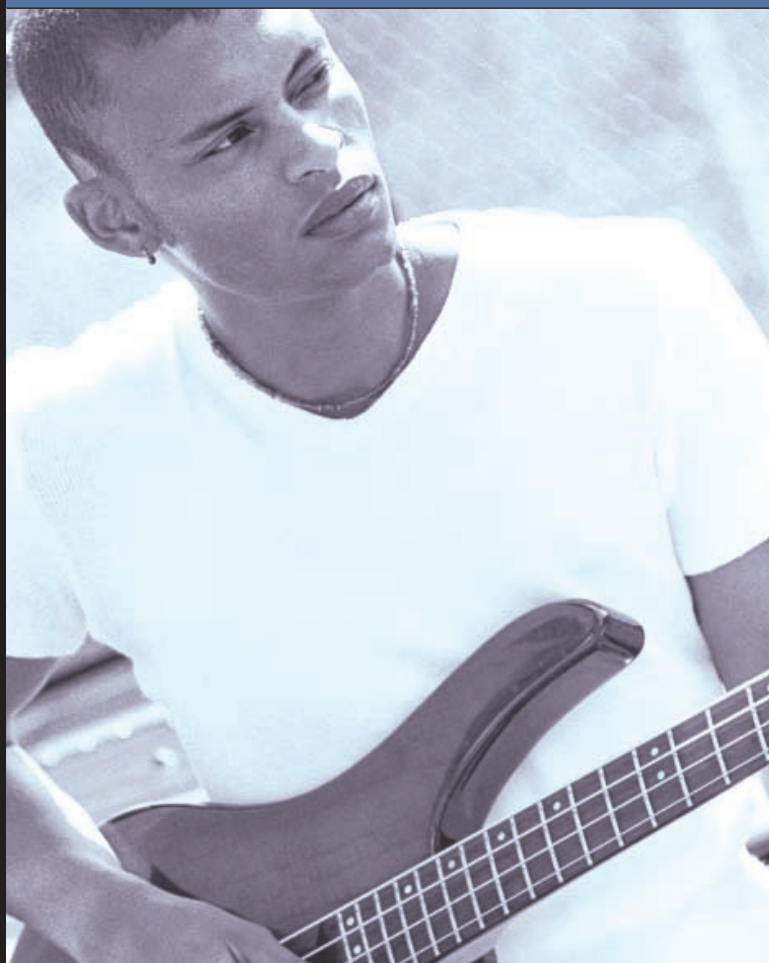
### OUT OF THE ANGUISH OF MISPLACED PRIORITIES

On a winter day in 1994, worship leader Kelly Carpenter felt spiritually detached. At the end of a church service he was forced to admit to himself that he was not connecting with the Lord. Something was wrong. As the Holy Spirit began to guide his introspection, he realized what the problem was. He had allowed his growing career as a songwriter and worship leader to overshadow his relationship with the One about whom he was writing. Kelly admits to crying out to the Lord with these words, "I lay it all down again to hear You say that I am Your friend." Amazingly, less than 30 minutes later, Kelly had written all the lyrics and music to "Draw Me Close to You."

Because of the intensely personal nature of "Draw Me



# BOOMERS



Close,” Kelly was not inclined to use his song at the Vineyard Church in California where he led worship. But once he agreed to record the song on a live album, others began to sing it and incorporate it into their praise gatherings.

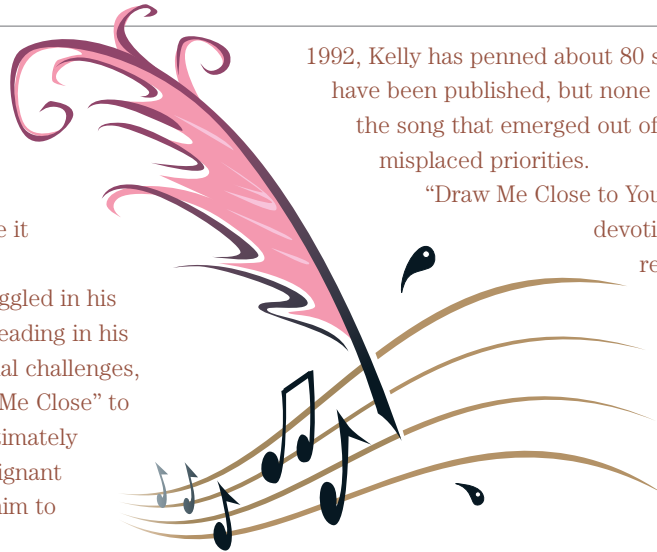
Over the past decade Kelly has struggled in his attempt to come to terms with God’s leading in his life. As he has faced a series of personal challenges, the Lord has used the lyrics of “Draw Me Close” to remind the gifted musician of what ultimately matters. In the simple words of his poignant lyrics Kelly hears the Holy Spirit call him to lay down all his ambitions.

Since he began writing worship music in

1992, Kelly has penned about 80 songs. Of these a dozen have been published, but none has hit the charts like the song that emerged out of the anguish of misplaced priorities.

“Draw Me Close to You” is also the title of a devotional book that offers reflections on the lyrics of 80 songs in the popular *Songs 4 Worship* series (including the title song). For more information go to [www.integritypublishers.com](http://www.integritypublishers.com)

**GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS**



## TO ZOOMERS

### ISRAEL HAD 12 TRIBES—WHY CAN’T WE?

We tend to regard our own preferences as natural, and everyone else’s as deviant. This sense of my own tastes as the default position by which all other approaches should be judged has a powerful hold on people — even on Christians. Paul warned the Corinthians that such comparison was “not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12).

This lack of wisdom tends to assert itself powerfully when a worshiper of one generation attends another generation’s Sunday morning service. The culture shock can be almost fatal, leaving both sides wondering if the other is really Christian. Such divisions are both unscriptural and unproductive. If we cannot tolerate each other, we are kidding ourselves to think we can embrace lost people. Perhaps some of the worship wars that concern us will have the unintended fringe benefit of forcing us to face this critical issue.

Intergenerational acceptance has many aspects, but can begin with the simple recognition that it is normal (and even healthy) for different age cohorts to express their devotion to God in diverse ways. Consider these examples:

1. If we do not expect the youth group or children’s church to resemble Sunday morning worship in all respects, why should we expect all adult groups to sing, pray, and preach the same way?
2. On a missionary trip out of the U.S., we would be stunned to find the citizens of another nation imitating the way our home church worships. In fact, one reason we

travel is to experience these differences. Yet, when a Christian group across town uses musical instruments that are too traditional (or nontraditional), sings from the hymnal (or the projection screen), preaches in an outline (or in narrative), sits in pews (or dances in the aisles), we feel righteous in condemning them for not doing church God’s official way.

If we accept differences as normal, much of the tension drains out of cross-generational relationships. Keeping things healthy means:

1. Humbling ourselves to admit that our tastes are matters of conscience, over which we are forbidden to criticize others (Romans 14:1–23).
2. Repenting of comparison for the purpose of feeling superior (2 Corinthians 10:12).
3. Blessing those of another generation with respect, support, verbal affirmation, and prayer (1 Timothy 5:1–17).
4. Concentrating on fulfilling God’s call for my ministry, rather than worrying about what others are doing (John 21:22,23).

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCE:** Towns, Elmer. 1997. *Putting and End to Worship Wars*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman.

**EARL CREPS**, doctor of ministry director, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

## MINISTRY TRENDS

### SELF-SERVICE VS. FULL-SERVICE CHURCHES

Visitors often come to a church because they are looking for authentic connections with people who care. The body of Christ is God's provision for finding and developing authentic relationships in a fractured world — one of the basic purposes behind every church ministry. Newcomers must successfully navigate their way from the disconnected crowd into sustainable relationships within the church core.

Sure, the church makes bulletin and pulpit announcements, mails notices, and extends a phone call now and then. "We told them what was available," or, "The information is there for them to find," are common responses when church leaders are asked what they do for their visitors.

The bottom line is that churches are conditioned to establish ministries and then leave the welcome sign on the door for visitors to find themselves and take the initiative to attend. This self-serve approach hinders relationship building and involvement with visitors.

Every church has ministries that can provide powerful connection points for visitors. Yet, most pastors still struggle to ensure that visitors find the right pathways of belonging in their time of need. What many churches fail to recognize is that operating with a self-service mind-set limits their growth potential.

Sustained growth comes from an outward approach, connecting visitors when they first enter the church. For more information, visit [www.connectionpower.com](http://www.connectionpower.com).

TRACIE PATTEN



## FIELD TRIP

### ENERGIZING SMALL GROUPS

Many churches are organizing small groups and encountering two common, yet contrary, experiences. The first experience is success. Small groups work. They incorporate the purposes of the church, facilitate spiritual development, and create community. The second experience is failure — failure to sustain multiplication and assimilate new members.

Solutions to growth barriers are being found through research. One study focused on a church small-group system that had a dynamic start but then hit an 18-month growth plateau. A major internal growth barrier existed in leadership development — strengthening existing leaders while producing new ones. The primary external obstacle was adequately communicating the value of small groups to nonparticipants, in and outside the church.

Systemic problems require a systems approach. Fixing one thing or focusing on one area will not accelerate an entire system. It is like rowing from one side of the boat; balance is lost and forward movement ceases.



## HISTORY AT A GLANCE

### JOHN BUNYAN: THE FAITHFUL TINKER FROM BEDFORD

#### 320 YEARS AGO — 1684

John Bunyan (1628–88), an English preacher and writer, completed the second part of the classic allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, while imprisoned for preaching the gospel. The first part had been released 5 years earlier. The narrative is based on Bunyan's own spiritual experience and reveals a profound knowledge of the Bible. The second part describes the journey of Christian's wife and children from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. They travel under the guidance of Mr. Great-Heart who protects them through fighting and prayer. The book remains a best-seller to this day. For more on John Bunyan, see the column article, "John Bunyan: The Faithful Tinker From Bedford," page 92.

#### 100 YEARS AGO — 1904

The Italian Pentecostal Movement in the U.S. began with a break from the Italian Presbyterian Church in Chicago over issues of church governance. A few years



In this case, multidimensional efforts provided consistent support to leaders and conveyed value to nonparticipants through improved communication and connection.

The results were tangible. In just 6 months congregational participation jumped from one-third to one-half; average church attendance increased by nearly 10 percent; and the number of groups, leaders, and participants rose significantly. Qualitative results were even more impressive. A refreshed attitude of anticipation replaced fatigue and unproductive guilt. The stage was set for immediate and future growth.

Given the fast pace of our culture and the proven necessity of small groups in church health, it is critical that leaders create vibrant small-group systems. A church of strong small groups will be able to implement change faster and easier. Thankfully, no barrier is impossible to overcome.

For the complete project text (including an extensive bibliography), see the sample project at <http://www.agts.edu/dmin/project/index.html>.

**LORI O'DEA**, doctor of ministry coordinator, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

## A SINGLE WORD TODAY'S FAMILIES ARE COMPLICATED



today's family like? The church needs to expand its traditional definition of family to include nine types of families existing in society today.

1. Nuclear family — An original husband and wife living together and rearing their biological children.
2. Single-parent family — A never-married, divorced, or widowed parent with his or her, or someone else's children.
3. Stepparent family — A parent rearing his or her own biological children and marrying (hopefully) and living with another adult.
4. Blended family — Two adults and their own biological children from two previous families marrying (hopefully) and living together.

5. Grandparent family — One or more grandparents rearing their grandchildren.
  6. Separated family — One parent who is separated, but not legally divorced from his or her spouse, and is now rearing his or her own biological children.
  7. Single-adult family — One adult living alone.
  8. Expanded family — Any of these family types taking in a child from the court and rearing the child for a temporary period of time.
  9. Homosexual parent(s)/partner(s) family — Two adults living in this lifestyle and rearing children (whether biological, adopted, step, or from artificial insemination).
- All nine family types might exist in churches. Larger churches usually have a higher percentage of the first eight family types. The complexities and resulting issues of today's family are astounding. The need for godly wisdom is extremely important (James 1:5). Without wisdom we will not become the family God intended us to be ... the family of God.

**DENNIS FRANCK**, director, single adult ministries

later, the leaders of the breakaway congregation attended revival meetings conducted by William Durham and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

### 75 YEARS AGO — 1929

The World Zionist Organization and representatives of world Jewry established the Jewish Agency for Israel. It was responsible for building a Jewish national homeland and became the government-in-the making of the future Jewish State.

### 50 YEARS AGO — 1954

The U.S. Supreme Court took a momentous step in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*. The court ruled that segregation in public schools is "inherently unequal" and that all people, regardless of race,

are guaranteed equal protection of the law under the Fourteenth Amendment. Desegregation began the following year.

### 25 YEARS AGO — 1979

Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for work undertaken in the struggle to overcome poverty and distress, which also constitute a threat to peace." That same year she also received the Balzan Prize for promoting peace and brotherhood among the nations.

**GLENN GOHR**, assistant archivist, Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center



# CHURCH PLANT

## PUTS VISION FOR TRANSFORMATION THEORY INTO PRACTICE

In 2002, Youth Pastor Ryan Delamater approached his pastor, Tony Cervero, at First Assembly of God in Ventura, California, with the dream of planting a church. Delamater had been at First Assembly for 6 years and had seen the youth group double. Cervero was excited about partnering with him even though the church would regret his loss.

"The idea was birthed right in my office," Cervero remembers. "You can't invest in a guy like Ryan and not participate in what God's doing. We always try to set a tone in our church of innovative ways of bringing the gospel."

In September 2003, Ryan and his wife started Elements at

house. I started the message with the question, 'How many of you have ever had a bad day?'"

Twelve people accepted Christ as their Savior in just the first two Sunday services. Home meetings during the week supplement the Sunday a.m. gatherings. Ryan and Meredith work with a dozen core leaders and are training others as the home groups multiply.

Their goal is not a mega-church but a multiplied church.

"When we reach 500," Delamater says, "we want to plant another church. I've got three locations in mind for the next one. One day at a time, though."

Elements' ministry team is currently a volunteer force also working full-time jobs. Delamater has been able to focus on the church exclusively by living off funds from the sale of his Ventura home as well as offerings from supporters.

"We don't really have a mother church," he says, "but a network of five churches and the district office that support us."

Ventura First Assembly is on the list, as is North Hills Church in Brea.

"Elements is just a half mile from our church," says North Hills Pastor Doug Green. "But we're not concerned about territory. There's a whole generation in Brea that Ryan will be able to reach that we won't."

"Brea Elements, with North Hills Church and Pastors Doug and Brenda Green as key partners, is a great example," says Southern California District Superintendent Ray Rachels, "of a church seeking to meet people where they are, in a new location, with a new design, yet proclaiming the unchanging message of Christ and every person's need for a personal relationship with Him."

Last year's Washington, D.C., General Council fully endorsed the Assemblies of God's Vision for Transformation church planting theme of "every church a parent or a partner." Paul Drost, director of Church Planting for the Assemblies of God, sees Elements as just one example of how the Vision for Transformation is energizing new congregations.

"Five years ago I was given the mandate to help the Assemblies of God become a church planting/church multiplication movement. At first it felt like I was the only one pushing this boulder up hill," Drost says. "Stories like the Delamater's make me very conscious that there are lots of other hands not only on this boulder, but others."



The worship team for Elements sets up for a service.

a friends house in Fullerton and moved to part-time use of a nearby church building when the attendance hit 45. On March 14, 2004, he and his wife, Meredith, with their ministry team held the opening service of Elements (Assemblies of God), a new church that is meeting in the Improv comedy theater in Brea, southeast of Ventura in greater Los Angeles.

This step made them unique.

"There are 16 Improvs in the U.S.," Delamater says of the theaters featured nationwide on the Comedy Central channel, "and they had never had a church ask to use their facility. They had a lot of preconceived ideas about what we were about."

But Elements reached an agreement with the Improv in Brea, and the March 14 service drew more than 300 people. Elements' Sunday morning gatherings follow a "four M" approach.

"We have a meal first, then music, then a movie clip, then a message," Delamater says. "Our clip that first Sunday was from the old movie 'The Money Pit' where a bathtub falls through the floor and everything falls apart in this old



## Ask the Superintendent — **INTIMACY IN LIFE AND MINISTRY**



**G**eneral Superintendent Thomas E. Trask is known for his deep relationship with God. He is also known for his compassion for people inside and outside the church. In his quarterly interview with *Enrichment* journal, Trask shares his insight to help pastors build healthy relationships in their lives and ministries.

### HOW CAN A PASTOR BUILD AND MAINTAIN AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

**TRASK:** Pastors must value their relationship with God through their discipline of time, desires, values, and priorities. When those elements are in place, intimacy with God becomes natural. Spiritual health can be maintained as easily as physical health. God will help us establish priorities essential for developing character, integrity, and ministry through an intimate relationship with Him.

### HOW DOES A PASTOR'S INTIMACY WITH GOD INFLUENCE HIS MINISTRY?

**TRASK:** Intimacy with God can be measured by the outflow of one's ministry. A lack of intimacy with God produces a shallow ministry and hinders our functioning in spiritual matters.

In the Old Testament, men who had intimacy with God were trusted by Him and used in leadership. Scripture says, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48, KJV). If God can't trust us with small things, how can He trust us with larger things?

When I use the phrase, "I feel a check in my spirit," I am referring to a sensitivity to the voice and witness of the Spirit. When we learn to obey the Spirit, then we know how God is leading us and can respond appropriately.

Also, gifts of the Spirit function when we have an intimate relationship with the Lord and are sensitive and responsive to what He's prompting and speaking to us.

### HOW IS INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR A DIRECT REFLECTION ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

**TRASK:** Inappropriate behavior comes from not having an intimate relationship with God. A pastor who has an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ will not live an ungodly lifestyle. The moral failure of clergy is caused by a lack of intimacy with God.

### SELF-CARE IS BUILDING AND MAINTAINING INTIMACY WITH OURSELVES. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOVE OURSELVES?

**TRASK:** Self-care flows out of our relationship with God. That is why it is important for a person to know the Word of God. As we study the Word we see the value God places on each person.

God's call is a tremendous responsibility that is given by the work of the Spirit. God gives us qualities He wants to use. We must not depreciate our God-given value. People often live in such a way that leaves room to compromise and become less than what God intended for them to be.

When we ordain ministers, we are not calling them into the ministry. Rather, we are recognizing the call God has placed on them. The value and call God has invested in us and trusted us with is a precious commodity. We must guard and treasure the call of God. The moment we don't, we become careless.

### HOW DO WE DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE NEGATIVE ASPECT OF BEING A LOVER OF SELF AND THE NEED FOR POSITIVE SELF-CARE?

**TRASK:** One negative aspect involves our ego. Scripture says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think" (Romans 12:3, KJV). We must walk humbly before God. Humility begins with a proper appraisal of ourselves. If we have talents or gifts, we have no reason to be proud because we didn't acquire them. They are from God. All He has given us is to be used to build His kingdom. God's gifts are not for my possession, gratification, or exaltation. They are for His exaltation and glory.

## *Pastors must value their relationship with God through their discipline of time, desires, values, and priorities.*

I determine whom to rely upon. To be self-sufficient means I don't need to rely on Him; I can do it on my own.

For example, a person who prays and studies God's Word may start out in the ministry depending on the anointing of the Spirit. Later when he's accustomed to doing ministry, he thinks, *I don't need to study like I used to study. I don't need to prepare like I used to because I know how to do it.* That's self-sufficiency. There is a great difference between relying on God and His resources, and relying on self.

### HOW CAN THE MINISTER BUILD AND MAINTAIN HEALTHY FAMILY INTIMACY?

**TRASK:** Pastors must live what they preach. They can't preach one message in the pulpit and live a different lifestyle at home. When I was growing up, my godly parents pastored a small Assemblies of God church. The fact what Dad preached behind the pulpit was what I saw lived at home made a powerful impact on my life. There is no substitute for that.

The pastor's family needs to see that he is real. The character and nature of Christ must be consistent in all aspects of his life to build and maintain healthy family intimacy.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF ISOLATING ONESELF FROM PEOPLE WITHIN THE CHURCH?

**TRASK:** There needs to be a balance. We cannot remove ourselves from people and be a servant to people. There will always be some who want a buddy-buddy relationship with the pastor because they want to be closer to him than others. That's dangerous. On the other side, the congregation must see that you are not removed from them.

For example, when the church has a workday, it's good for the pastor to work with the people. It demonstrates that he is a servant. These are occasions when they see and witness a pastor's humanity. However, when a pastor stands behind the pulpit, he must speak with command and authority because he is God's voice to the church.

### HOW CAN WE BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH FELLOW MINISTERS?

**TRASK:** This is one area we are addressing with former Indiana District Superintendent Charles Crank. He is helping us create new paradigms within the Fellowship and the sections of our districts. (See interview with Thomas E. Trask, Charles Crank, and Ron McManus, page 88.) We want to bring pastors together in small settings where they can hold one another accountable, develop relationships, and encourage each other.

The Bible says throughout that we are to love one another, pray for one another, and care for one another. We must do that.

One danger in the ministry is to withdraw from fellowship and have no one to help shoulder your burden and speak to your life. We're addressing this, and I believe the result will be healthier ministry relationships.

### HOW CAN A MINISTER BUILD MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY?

**TRASK:** A minister needs to involve himself in civic activities when the opportunity is presented. I serve on boards in the community. It is time consuming, but it gives me opportunity to witness for Jesus Christ and to represent the church. It gives the community opportunity to meet you. Many people are not affiliated with any church. If a pastor has developed a personal relationship with people in his community, when crises arise, they will look to him. This opens a door to minister to them.

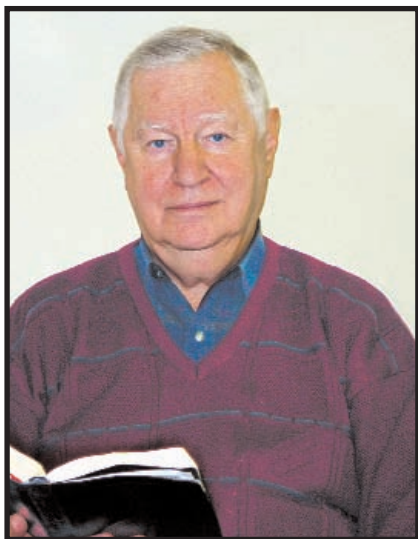
### IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH TO ADD TO SUM UP THE TOPIC OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS?

**TRASK:** I would admonish pastors and ministers to develop and maintain an intimate relationship with the Lord. Out of it will come a life of blessedness and God's grace will rest upon their lives.



# THEME INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH HENRY BLACKABY



## THE PASTOR AND BIBLICAL INTIMACY

*I made a commitment to God that I would never preach what I did not incarnate.*

Jesus said in Matthew 22:37–40 that the greatest commandment was to love God with all our hearts and love our neighbors as ourselves. This is the essence of the gospel. It is also the basis for building healthy intimate relationships.

Richard Schoonover, *Enrichment* journal associate editor, interviewed Henry Blackaby to discuss this important topic. Blackaby has been a successful pastor, director of the office of prayer, revival, and spiritual awakening

for the Southern Baptist Convention, and noted conference speaker. He is currently president of Henry Blackaby Ministries. He has also written *Encountering God*, *Created To Be God's Friend*, and *What the Spirit Is Saying to the Churches*, books that focus on an intimate relationship with God and others.

Blackaby's insight into biblical intimate relationships will help pastors become models for developing healthy relationships.

### WHY IS INTIMACY IMPORTANT IN RELATIONSHIPS?

**BLACKABY:** God created us to have intimate relationships. The word *koinonia* sums up these intimate relationships.

First John 1:3,7, says, "Truly our fellowship [*koinonia*] is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship [*koinonia*] one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (KJV).

John gave God's definition for intimacy. We cannot have one type of relationship with God and another type with people. Intimacy with God creates intimacy with others.

As Scripture unfolds it is fascinating to see the heart of God in His covenant relationship with His people. The essence of being a child of God involves intimate interdependence, which every individual needs for growth and maturity. God created us to have interdependence, but sin causes self-centered independence. Redemption brings us back into interdependence with God and His people. When we experience God's fullness, we will have that intimacy.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A PASTOR TO HAVE AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD? HOW DOES A PASTOR DEVELOP THAT INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP?

**BLACKABY:** Having a relationship with God is a choice. God created humanity for fellowship with Him. God gives us a desire to have a relationship with Him and then enables us to have it. When that relationship is broken, God works to restore it. A person who does not have a relationship with God has chosen to quench the Holy Spirit and resist God.

When I read Scripture, the God of the universe who authored it is present, and the Holy Spirit is my Teacher and brings me into a deep relationship with God. If a pastor listens to the Holy Spirit within him, he knows God is drawing him to a closer relationship. A pastor needs to understand that his life centers around his relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit.

A pastor's relationship with God is manifested in his obedience to Scripture. A pastor develops this relationship by

They replied, "Wherein shall we return? We're doing everything correctly."

The religious leaders never understood they were standing on the edge of judgment. God judged Israel and its religious leaders because they forsook their relationship with Him.

Today we have evangelical orthodoxy. Many believe if people are doctrinally correct they are in proper relationship with God. This is not true. In Matthew 15:8 Jesus said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." We may leave the impression that attending all the church's activities is evidence our heart is right with God, but that is not true. The key to intimacy with God is the heart.

Religious leaders are in grave danger because they handle the sacred things of God. Pastors often assume that if they are preaching every Sunday, visiting members, guiding the church, and if the church is growing, they must be in a right relationship to God. That's not always true. The gravest danger to the people of God is when spiritual leaders engage in



*Pastors often assume that if they are preaching every Sunday, visiting members, guiding the church, and if the church is growing, they must be in a right relationship to God. — Blackaby*

immersing himself in Scripture and letting God work in his life. God cleanses His church with the washing of the water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). I cannot function apart from an extended time in Scripture. But it's not just reading Scripture; it must become an intimate time with God.

## YOU MENTIONED IN YOUR BOOK, *WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING TO THE CHURCHES*, THAT GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE MOVED FROM RELATIONSHIP TO RELIGION. HOW IS THIS A DANGER FOR PASTORS?

**BLACKABY:** For a pastor to move from relationship to religion is a profound danger. The leaders of Israel practiced the Law, kept the sacrifices, and honored the feast days. These were designed to bring the Israelites into intimacy with God. But it is easy to fulfill religious requirements and assume you are in right relationship with God.

When God came to the leaders of Israel, He said, "Return to Me."

activity and move from relationship to religion.

Every time I talk with a pastor who is in trouble, sooner or later he will say, "I'm not spending enough time in God's Word, in prayer, or in fellowship." Most pastors who are in trouble are not walking in an intimate relationship with God.

## HOW DOES OUR INTIMACY WITH GOD AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR FAMILY AND CHURCH?

**BLACKABY:** Intimacy with God is the foundation. Genesis to Revelation reveals that our relationship with God affects our other relationships.

When we began to have children my prayer was, "Lord help me have a relationship with You that will encourage my children to serve the God they saw their dad serve." There would be nothing more painful to me than to have one of my children, who lived in my home for 18 to 20 years, choose not to serve God.

Everything about my walk with God should be attractive to

those with whom I am related. But if my relationship with God is not authentic, my life will not bring about what God intended. Intimacy with God is foundational for marriage and parenting.

In 30 years of pastoring we saw only one divorce in our churches because intimacy with God prevents that. The forgiveness and reconciliation we receive from God is so real we practice it with our wife or husband.

God worked through them. Each felt he or she was part of the others' life. But to do this, a pastor must walk with God to know what God has in mind for each individual.

My son and I wrote a sequel to *Experiencing God* called *Your Church Experiencing God Together*. This book is designed to help people understand how to relate to one another. The primary pattern for relationships is the pastor. If



*A pastor's intimate relationship with God, and intimacy with God in the lives of the people of God, will result in an explosive affect on the community and the world. — Blackaby*

When couples told me they were no longer in love, I told them that was a symptom, not the problem. The problem was they had lost their relationship with God. A person cannot walk in an intimate relationship with God and not love his or her spouse and children the same way they are being loved by God.

#### **AS A PASTOR BUILDS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CHURCH, HOW IS IT GOING TO STRENGTHEN HIS PEOPLE AND THE MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH?**

**BLACKABY:** Healthy, intimate relationships in the church begin with an understanding of the Church. Christ is not a figure head; He is the Head of every church. He is present and active.

My primary purpose as a pastor was to shepherd the people of God and bring them to Christlikeness. When a pastor has an intimate relationship with Christ, he understands what Christ is doing in his people and church. The church is God-centered, God-initiated, and God-oriented.

God adds to the Body as it pleases Him. If a pastor understands that each person in the body of Christ is loved by God, and that God has entrusted that individual to the church and to the pastor, how should he as pastor relate to each person?

I designed the church by working with people. We took our definition for church from Scripture. The church is a living body, and each part is necessary. I guided people so they would know where God put them in the Body, to understand how the Spirit equipped them to function in the Body, and how to interrelate with one another according to Scripture. When that happened, the people saw their significance, and

people are taught to love one another, the model for love needs to be the pastor, his wife, and children.

I never withheld my children from the church. Many people say you cannot get too close to your people because some may feel you have favorites. That is nonsense. I told the church at our first service, "I want to help you raise your children, but Marilyn and I can't raise our children apart from the intimacy within the life of the congregation. We give you permission to help us raise our children to be the most godly they can be." Today, all five of our children have a deep love for God and for His people because I taught them from the Scripture and in practice that we needed to love one another. I was the pattern for that love, as well as my wife. The pastor needs to keep Christ as the Head and the Holy Spirit as the life of the Body, and then live out that intimacy from the Scriptures with his people.

*It is easy to fulfill religious requirements and assume you are in right relationship with God.*

In our church every deacon was assigned spiritual care over a segment of the congregation to help them grow in Christlikeness. I began every deacons meeting by asking them to tell how the people under their care were growing toward Christlikeness. Some would say, "This one is struggling or this one has turned away from God." Then the deacons began to

consider how we could help those who were moving away from intimacy with God. One would say, "I work with the dad. I will talk with him." Another would say, "Our teenage boy is in the same class with their teenage boy." So people in the church interrelated with one another.

That is how I functioned and modeled love as a pastor. In fact, I made a commitment to God that I would never preach what I did not incarnate. A person who speaks one way and lives another is a hypocrite, and God hates hypocrites. Even if I had a tremendous truth the people needed, because I sensed my own need, I did not preach that truth until I was living it.

### WHAT CAN PASTORS DO TO BUILD STRONG, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES TO SHOW PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH THE LOVE OF CHRIST?

**BLACKABY:** We have forgotten that evangelism is a by-product of discipleship and have made discipleship a by-product of evangelism. We have it backwards. The last thing Jesus said to the disciples in the Great Commission was, "Teach them to practice everything I have commanded" (Matthew 28:20). This is what the Early Church did in the Book of Acts. They spent their time teaching more than head knowledge; they taught knowledge and application. They turned the Roman Empire upside-down. The same result can take place today.

God puts Christians in the community to fulfill His purposes. Each week I was in the workplace with my members. If a lady was on the cleaning crew at the hospital, I asked to accompany her as she went from room to room. I met her companions and strengthened her witness. The hospital staff saw me as I related with my members.

Many in my church were teachers, so I became involved with the teachers in the public schools. I would visit them and met their principals. Some of the principals said, "You are the first pastor who has talked with me. Ministers criticize the school system but will not come, talk, and build a relationship with us."

I spoke with the superintendent and the director of education. I told the high school English teachers, "Let me give you our perspective as conservative evangelicals about the literature you require students to read. It contains material

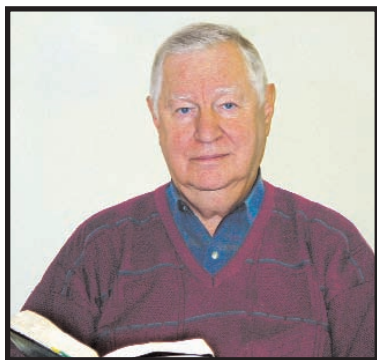
they should not even repeat."

They replied, "Nobody has ever talked to us this way." We helped change the school system in a secular society. I put our children in public schools so we could be salt and light.

I taught my people what it meant to be salt and light in the community. Our people were involved in almost every crisis that happened within the community. They saw the impact we could make.

I worked with the police department and rode with patrolmen. In one church I pastored the mayor was a deacon. I went to city council meetings. Councilmen saw me and the members of the church involved in the community. We should not pull out of society. The salt has to be applied in the heart of society. But I had to teach and model it. In my preaching I often used illustrations from my involvement in the community to show that God uses us as salt and light.

We also had great testimony times. When we came together, we shared what God was doing, and the burdens we had for people in the workplace. Week after week God transformed lives. I would look out over the congregation and see 8 or 10 people who would have taken their lives had we not intervened.



*Many people say you cannot get too close to your people because some may feel you have favorites. That is nonsense.*  
— Blackaby

When someone made a profession of faith I had the person who requested prayer for this person's salvation testify. This is powerful. This was an answer to prayer. We celebrated that as a part of our worship. When that is done over and over, the congregation sees how the church can affect the community.

People need to have an authentic witness in their lives and in their family before they can bear witness effectively in the community. We tried to help them have an authentic intimate walk with God. When people had an intimate walk with God, I did not need to teach them soul winning because their lives were a witness. You could not keep them quiet.

I told them to anticipate that what God told them in their morning devotions, they would have opportunity to share with someone that day. The workplace became their mission field. A pastor's intimate relationship with God, and intimacy with God in the lives of the people of God, will result in an explosive affect on the community and the world.



INTIMACY WITH GOD

BUILDING SELF-INTIMACY

BUILDING INTIMACY IN THE FAMILY

BUILDING INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH



INTIMACY

# Intimacy:

## THE FOUNDATION FOR HEALTHY MINISTRY

I never imagined that ministry could be so painful, life shattering, and lonely. Everything seemed to be going well in my congregation. The church had been formed 40 years ago as the result of a split. But the church also had a recurring cycle of schism every 7 years. I was determined to change that.

During my honeymoon period I was constantly fighting fires. In spite of the ongoing conflict I was able to build a leadership team that could effectively deal with the historically high levels of antagonism in the congregation.

After 2 1/2 years it seemed that God had enabled the ministry to turn the corner. Rapid congregational growth began to occur, most of it by conversion. By the fourth year the Sunday School had doubled, and nearly 25 percent of the worshipers had been members for 2 years or less.

---

B Y T H O M A S F . F I S C H E R



At the end of the fifth year something strange began to happen. I couldn't put my finger on it. The ministry momentum suddenly stopped and everything turned ominously cold. This was the calm before the storm. I was about to experience what my predecessors experienced in their sixth year: congregational schism resulting in the loss of at least one-half of the membership followed by the pastor's resignation.

Six months later it happened. The congregation self-destructed before my eyes. Attendance dropped by 75 percent. The Sunday School dropped from 50 children to zero. An 80 percent drop in offerings was the fatal blow. Without resources to sustain ministry, the congregation's fate seemed certain death.

Unlike my predecessors, I did not leave. Instead, I pastored the church for another 8 years. Subsequent efforts to rebuild the church were moderately successful. Over the next 3 years I redoubled my efforts to turn the congregation around. But these efforts were also sabotaged. My efforts to reenergize the church's mission and realize God's vision were in vain.

## Healthy intimacy is God's plan for us whether we are clergy or laity and is an essential part of our spiritual journey.

As painful and tragic as the congregation's experience was, the most difficult consequence was my own painful experience. Powerless and unable to turn things around, I felt incompetent.

Personal attacks — directly and indirectly, privately and publicly — hurt me deeply. I was rejected, smeared, and misunderstood. People accused me of everything imaginable and dragged my reputation through the gutter. A few faithful supporters knew these accusations were false. But when scores of people — some who had been supportive — deserted me, it was more than even my thick skin could repel. Little did I know that this event would impact my life, family, faith, style of ministry, and my understanding of God's plan for my life.

I felt angry, hurt, isolated, rejected, and alone. I was afraid to reach out to others. Afraid to make connections with people who would only form fickle friendships, I let my feelings turn inward. My anger turned into cynicism; cynicism fed discouragement; discouragement made waste of my relationships with God, family, the congregation, and my world. I had had enough.

Professionally, I was too embarrassed to admit failure. Denominational support at the time was thin at best. Most of those with whom I dared share the situation didn't know the dynamics of a historically anxious church. They couldn't understand; they hadn't been there. They believed I had done

something wrong. After all, it never would have happened in their church. Little did they know that the problem stemmed from a breakdown of intimacy in the church and in my own life.

### THE BREAKDOWN OF INTIMACY

This experience affected some of the most foundational areas in my life including my patterns of intimacy. It affected the basic level of my relationship with my spouse, child, church friends, nonmember friends, my desire to relate with others, and ultimately my relationship with God. *Who could I trust?* I asked. *Who could I turn to?* Perhaps most painful was the gnawing question, *Did anybody care?*

The factors that cause a breakdown of intimacy are many. The grief of divorce or the loss of loved ones, failed and unrealized dreams, and the shattered expectations in our lives are potential catalysts for the loss of intimacy. For pastors, the difficult experiences of ministry can lead to a breakdown of intimacy.

The experiences leading to the breakdown of intimacy are not always the fault of the church. This breakdown can occur in anyone's life. Though the circumstances leading to it may differ, the result is the same — a lack of intimacy.

Healthy intimacy is God's plan for His people whether we are clergy or laity, and it is an essential part of our spiritual journey. We must understand what healthy intimacy entails and practice intimacy in all areas of our lives.

When antagonists overcome us, when the best-laid plans start to go haywire, when the Spirit's direction for the church is uncertain, anxiety can overtake us. Left unchecked, this anxiety may cause us to question our leadership, the validity of our calling, our confidence in maintaining God's vision for the church, and cause us to shrink back from God's purpose for us individually. This anxiety may also cause us to become reactive, defensive, and prone to ignore or remove those who speak against our plans or us.

### INTIMACY SUBSTITUTES

A common hazard in ministry is the many distractions that can keep ministers from maintaining healthy connections with their spouse, family, and friends. We can easily become habituated to the routine of church life and the expected (and unexpected) pressures of the church. These distractions, left uncorrected, can cause those we leave behind to feel abandoned and lonely. As they feel more detached, they become starved for intimacy.

When we experience a deprivation of intimacy, the risk that we will seek intimacy in other ways becomes greater. These substitutes for intimacy can range from workaholism disguised



as greater zeal for the church — “Wow! Our pastor must really love God since he doesn’t take any time off!” — or be part of a hidden immoral life marked by pornography and affairs.

Pastors’ wives may feel lonely and abandoned as their husbands spend more time and energy with the congregation and its members than with them. When the church meets the pastor’s intimacy needs, his relationship with his spouse and children often suffers.

Affairs can also take place when spouses find intimacy difficult in their marriages. These affairs are not always sexual. Often, they are emotional affairs.

When a pastor or spouse can talk with someone else more intimately than he or she can with his or her spouse and family, they may be developing an intimacy substitute. Intimacy substitutes severely compromise the foundation of God-pleasing intimacy that builds strong marriage and family relationships.

To avoid inappropriate intimacy to rebuild intimacy, pastors must understand the nature of intimacy and the steps to building healthy intimate relationships.

## THREE KEYS TO INTIMACY

Intimacy is the foundation of relationships with God and others. Claudia Black, author of *Talk, Trust, Feel*, suggests that healthy intimacy may be measured by one’s capacity to talk, trust, and feel.

### Talk

Healthy relationships are characterized by healthy verbal communication. The freedom to share, explore, and validate are some of the benefits of talking. Purposeful talking builds and affirms meaningful connections. Healthy mutual conversation grows relational connections and intimacy.

### Trust

The best communication occurs in an atmosphere of trust. Those who enjoy healthy intimacy in their relationships with others base their relationships on trust. They trust the other person cares enough to accept them, build them up, listen to them, and, if necessary, gently correct them.

### Feel

The degree to which one is able to share one’s feelings is directly related to his or her ability to verbalize those feelings and the perceived level of trust. When individuals appropriately expose their vulnerability and share their deep and intimate feelings, healthy intimacy begins to develop.

## REBUILDING INTIMACY

Admittedly, maintaining healthy levels of intimacy is difficult. Rebuilding intimacy that has been compromised is even harder. We must engage in the struggle to keep love, trust, open

communication, and the expression of our feelings flowing freely each day. As we do, we realize that healthy intimacy is not given to us, but comes from interacting with God, church, family, others, and ourselves.

The steps to rebuilding intimacy begin with you. I had to decide that I would no longer run from this pain. Instead, I would embrace it. As I did, I began to discover the new formation of healthy patterns of intimacy in my life. I began to discover a well-developed sense of self, which helped me enjoy healthy relationships.

During this time of transition I read many books. Geraldine Piorkowski’s, *Too Close for Comfort: Exploring the Risks of Intimacy*, was extremely helpful in showing me that my symptoms were indicators of a breakdown of intimacy.

One of the most common ways a breakdown of intimacy can occur, she writes, is chronic inattention: “With chronic inattention, we begin to question our worth. If we cannot elicit basic attentiveness, we wonder whether we have any value at all.”<sup>1</sup>

My needs, wants, desires, and feelings had been invalidated. This left me feeling devastated, hurt, and abandoned. I was experiencing chronic inattention.

Getting a handle on this important aspect of intimacy has been a key to my own renewal in life and ministry. Unfortunately, many Christian leaders do not realize how important intimacy is and how it affects their life, family, church, and walk with God.

Intimacy is not only a personal, family, and relationship issue, but it is also a faith issue, and an extremely essential dynamic of Christian spirituality. Without intimacy, we are unable to experience the depths of a truly intimate walk with God.

## INTIMACY WITH GOD

Finding true release from my discouragement came from the spiritually mature recognition of who I am in Christ. After much searching I realized I was a child of God. I could not take all the credit for what I did or experienced. I was merely the clay and He was the Potter (Isaiah 64:8).

The Potter-clay relationship is an intimate one. The clay must trust the Potter implicitly. The manner by which the Potter shapes and molds the clay is completely independent of the clay’s will. Thus, the clay must have an intimacy that trusts the Potter.

Trust is important. Trust connotes a level of intimacy which says: “No matter what pain, suffering, loss, or disappointment I may experience — even if it means my death — I will not resist You, Lord. Do whatever You wish, wherever, however, You wish through me, Lord. I will trust You.”

When this attitude becomes the core of our response of faith, we are directed to worship God as He intends — with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

A healthy intimacy with God also gives us the most

important outlet for sharing our weaknesses, doubts, and ineptitudes. As we spend time with God in His Word and in prayer, He gives us strength, wisdom, and guidance for realizing the next step in His plan for the church and us.

Our patterns of intimacy produce a preference to either become close and intimate with God or distant and aloof from Him. These intimacy patterns are a response to God's grace. He invites us to be His children and to have an intimate relationship with Him. Our response is rooted in our own patterns of intimacy. Are we able to talk, trust, and feel with God? Are

Elijah and calling him to get up and eat, God moved Elijah to a new stage of intimacy. This intimacy was the transformation from seeing God as an escape to recognizing Him as his refuge and help in time of trouble.

Our intimacy with God is perhaps the most important tool for ministry. Without it, pastors and Christian leaders make themselves vulnerable to the devastating consequences of failed spiritual warfare.

When people learn to talk, trust, and feel with God in every aspect of their lives, they have a deeper, more

intimate understanding of God's grace, beyond simply knowing that they are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8,9).

## When we experience a deprivation of intimacy, the risk that we will seek intimacy in other ways becomes greater.

we willing to give up our barriers and let God come close to us? Or will we maintain our distance?

It has been said, "The eye with which we see God is the eye by which He sees us." This statement contradicts the Word of God. God is unchanging. He is the eternal God of grace and love who sent His Son Jesus Christ to save us. However, this statement may accurately describe how Satan and sin distort our perception of God. If we think we are unworthy of intimacy, we will project this in our relationship with God. If we view God as a mean, abusive tyrant who cannot be trusted, we will move away from intimacy with God. If we feel we cannot understand God, we may think He cannot understand us.

As we develop intimacy with God based on His Word, we begin to see ourselves in God's eyes of grace, forgiveness, and restoration. This essential recognition of grace is the core of healthy intimacy. Without it we cannot have intimacy with God or with others.

Intimacy with God can be seen in virtually all of the spiritual disciplines. The manner, frequency, and content of our prayers reveal the depth of our intimacy with God. Preferences for worship style, content, and form also reveal things about our intimacy with God. Worship can be a transcendent, mystical experience with God, or it may come from a desire to become more intimate with Him. For some, however, worship is an escape from their intimacy-devoid world.

The degree that people are unable to develop healthy intimacy in their personal lives may also be the degree they are unable to develop an intimate relationship with God. Some people use their so-called intimacy with God as an escape from stepping out in intimate faith to obey and follow God's calling. They cloister themselves in prayer or become so absorbed in worship that they become disconnected from the world.

Elijah is one example of this escapism. In 1 Kings 19, Elijah, a fugitive from Queen Jezebel, asked God to end his troubled life. He then lay down under a tree and fell asleep. In touching

Instead, this grace-based intimacy produces a profound awareness that we are truly temples of the Holy Spirit who lives within us (1 Corinthians 6:19). When we abide in God's presence, sharing our deepest feelings with Him becomes one of the greatest acts of intimacy we can ever experience.

This intimacy permeates every aspect of our lives. When we develop intimacy with God, we are encouraged because we know even in our greatest weakness or failure, God is there to display His strength.

### BUILDING SELF-INTIMACY

Learning to talk, trust, and feel with God and others may be the greatest challenge of intimacy for Christians. But the first step for any intimacy begins with honest soul searching. When we see who we really are, what our deepest fears are, what we really need, and what motivates us, we begin to move along the journey to discovering healthy intimacy.

If we are unable, or unwilling, to examine ourselves, we will never move to the next step: intimacy with God. Ultimately, the struggle of intimacy is not with the church, our families, or God. It is within us.

I once asked a church leader, "Why didn't you become a pastor?"

He responded, "Because I didn't want to deal with my own issues."

Most individuals are not inclined to deal with their own issues. Generally, the deeper people's intimacy issues, the greater they resist dealing with those issues. This is one reason why the ministry can be so painful. We may think the church or our antagonists cause our pain. We may even think God is against us. But these are only situations where the consequences of our pain are manifested. Situations in our life will continue to bring us pain until we deal with the pain at its source: in our own heart, mind, and soul.

(continued on page 29)





(continued from page 26)

## BUILDING INTIMACY IN THE FAMILY

My family was unable to support me during this difficult time. The loss of my mother and the discovery that my father had inoperable prostate cancer added to my pain. When church funds necessitated letting go trusted friends and staff members, I could feel the safety net breaking.

### Ultimately, the struggle of intimacy is not with the church or our families. It is within us.

At the same time, my adolescent daughter turned from being Daddy's girl into a rebellious teenager. Her sudden, inexplicable break-off into adolescence added to the grief. Though my spouse was supportive, she could only provide so much help and encouragement. Ultimately, even I didn't understand it, either.

Though supportive, my spouse was dealing with anger toward the congregation. I needed to minister to her at a time when I had nothing left to give.

The family is a laboratory or workshop where God challenges our intimacy patterns and gives opportunities to develop healthy ones. God's design that the "two become one" in marriage is a challenge and a God-given opportunity to develop intimacy. Oneness with your spouse is a high calling. Like every high calling, it is not for the weak-hearted.

God's calling for healthy, growing intimacy within marriage — "till death do we part" — is one of the most elusive, challenging, yet rewarding experiences couples have. Both husband and wife must have healthy intimacy with God to realize God's plan for marriage (Ephesians 5).

Developing marital intimacy, especially in the aftermath of severe trauma, can be difficult. It can be extremely tiresome to continually make efforts to improve intimacy with one's spouse and children, especially amid the vicissitudes of parenting, adolescence, health, and finances.

The professional pressures from ministry and the challenges of spiritual warfare make healthy intimacy in marriage a difficult, but rewarding task.

Many marriage and family materials address healthy intimacy. Townsend/Cloud's, *Boundaries*, video series (Zondervan); and Yancey's, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* are examples. The key is to find appropriate materials for your respective needs.

## BUILDING INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH

If the family is a laboratory or workshop for intimacy, so is the church. In his exhortation on Christian marriage Paul wrote:

## REBUILDING INTIMACY

One of the most devastating results of congregational schism is its effect on intimacy with one's spouse. A minister can find another church and begin anew. This is not an option for dealing with your spouse. Rebuilding intimacy with your spouse will undoubtedly be difficult. Renovation is always harder than starting out fresh.

Intimacy is rebuilt slowly. As in most grief processes, it can take up to 5 years to sort through one's talk, trust, and feel patterns. There are five steps you may utilize to help rebuild intimacy.

### PRAY

Pray for yourself and your spouse daily. This prayer will not only keep you connected to God, but it will connect you to each other. Pray for the ability to forgive your spouse for not understanding. Pray that you and your spouse will develop a greater talk, trust, feel relationship. Pray that God will curb whatever bitterness, anger, cynicism, or lack of trust that might have occurred in your relationship.

### TALK, TRUST, FEEL

This is the basis for healthy relationships. One must learn to talk, trust, and feel with one's spouse. For some, this may signal a major shift in their marriage. Such shifts can be difficult. This may require the assistance of professional counseling. Have patience and refer often to Step 1 above: pray.

### LEARN GELASSENHEIT

*Gelassenheit* is the German word for "letting go." *Gelassenheit* can begin when we see God's greater purpose for us and His hand in every part of our lives. As we understand His promise of unconditional nonabandonment and learn to trust Him, we can relax and let God lead us on His journey for our life, our spouse, family, friends, and congregation (Hebrews 12:1).

### REDISCOVER TOUCH

Talk, trust, feel intimacy has a natural consequence: touch. Whether it's physical touching — hugging, holding hands — or looking into their eyes, talk-trust-feel-based touching helps build and maintain intimacy. Avoid the tendency to pull away. Risk getting close and share the love that God has given to you and your spouse.

### PRAY TOGETHER

There is no greater experience of intimacy than praying together. Hold hands, look in your spouse's eyes, and express to God and to each other the thankfulness you have for him or her. Share your dreams with each other. Ask God for His blessing on you individually and together as a couple. This is one of the most remarkable demonstrations of what the power of prayer can do in your life.

THOMAS F. FISCHER, Rochester Hills, Michigan

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:21,22,25). Paul concluded this section with the words, “But I am talking about Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32).

In doing so, Paul was not only laying the foundation for healthy intimacy in marriage, but was also laying the foundation for intimacy in the church. Exercising healthy intimacy patterns of talking, trusting, and feeling are important in both the family and the church. One cannot have a healthy ministry when intimacy patterns in the parsonage are failing. In the same way, churches that resist healthy intimacy will eventually threaten even the healthiest families.

Paul wrote Timothy, “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” (1 Timothy 3:5).

In their professional lives, ministers must deal with staff, training leaders and disciplining others. These relationships and interactions can also tax their capacities for intimacy — especially when others do not use healthy interactions. In dealing with others, depending on their ability to establish healthy intimacy patterns, we need to ask:

- Should I confront or not?
- Should I use e-mail or write letters, or talk with them directly?
- Should I go through a third party to address my concern rather than going directly to the party?
- Should I take responsibility for others’ anxieties and allow them to make me anxious?

There are many ways to build intimate relationships within the church. Perhaps the most important strategy to prevent intimacy blowout is to deal with anxiety. Anxiety management is an important building block for healthy organizations.

Anxiety management can be seen in churches that have a strong focus on life application. Since anxiety in the church is only a reflection of anxiety in one’s personal life, ministries directed to address intimacy in family, work, divorce, grief, parenting, and service will need to be part of a congregation’s regular diet of ministry offerings.

A strategic ministry plan for developing healthy intimacy in the church has two specific areas of focus.

## INTIMACY IN MINISTRY TEAMS

The first area necessary to develop healthy intimacy in the congregation is teaching anxiety management to leadership. Anxiety or fear prevents intimacy. The extent to which anxiety grips a congregation determines the level of realization of its mission. Schismatic churches have one thing in common: they are highly anxious. Anxiety diminishes their capacity to talk, trust, and feel. As a result, people don’t communicate

# IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH MINISTRY

If intimacy is the primary means by which emotive forces permeate a system, the implications are nothing short of profound. Consider for example the following implications.

**Leadership styles.** Styles of intimacy affect church health, growth, and vitality. Churches can be characterized by their patterns of intimacy. Violating patterns of intimacy can lead to dramatic changes in the organization — spectacular renewal for growth, dramatic repeated conflict, rejection of leaders or members, etc.

**Leadership strategy.** Not every relationship is created equal. One can’t treat everyone the same way. Intimacy styles vary. Healthy relationships recognize and respect the styles of intimacy that characterize each relationship. From this basic sense of mutual, loving trust, change, growth and further development of intimacy occurs.

**Recurrent intimate patterns.** Congregations have personalities. These personalities are characterized by firmly established styles of intimacy. In healthy congregations these patterns of intimacy are the engine for growth, vitality, and genuine fellowship.

In unhealthy churches these styles do not change without significant pain, trauma, and fear. Many people resist change for these reasons. In the desire for equilibrium, organizations may engage in self-sabotage to prevent the greater pain brought about by change. Pastors and leaders who challenge the system’s intimacy patterns may not be successful and may be subject to repeated multitudinous attacks.

The greatest danger, however, is that intimacy has a built-in tendency to deteriorate. The continuing challenge of the leader is to continue nurturing intimacy in healthy ways. Perhaps this explains why healthy churches so reverently respect and cherish their “father-figure” leaders.

**Pastoral intimacy issues.** The systems-intimacy paradigm also significantly affects leaders. As organizations require intimate interactions — healthy or unhealthy — pastors will need to develop intimacy patterns with the organization. This, of course, has profound implications for ministerial health in at least the following areas:

*Self-differentiation.* The real issue of self-differentiation is not how busy, preoccupied, or loyal one is to the organization. It’s an issue of intimacy. Highly undifferentiated leaders thrive on the emotional intimacy offered by their church, ministry, or organization.



Highly differentiated leaders, on the other hand, thrive on a different set of intimacy elements to satisfy their intimacy requirements. Indicators of such thriving can be a perfectionistic drive for continued acceptance by their congregation. Highly undifferentiated leaders can have a significant fear of loss of intimacy — hence, their devoted, uninterrupted loyalty to the work of their ministry.

When highly undifferentiated leaders experience organizational disruption, they can fall apart emotionally and spiritually in unimaginable, excruciating emotional pain. This pain is nothing less than the pain of lost intimacy.

*Emotional well-being.* Perhaps the greatest pain of congregational conflict for leaders is the disruption of intimacy needs. When the pastoral intimacy between congregation and pastor is frustrated, out of control, uncertain, or destroyed, leaders may go through a painfully intense crisis of intimacy.

Fulfillment of intimacy needs comes from multiple sources that exist in a delicate balance with each other. When crisis occurs in one area of intimacy fulfillment, it can disrupt the other areas. As multiple sources of intimacy satisfaction are disrupted, fulfilling intimacy needs becomes severely hampered. A crisis in one's family will disrupt normal fulfillment of intimacy needs at work, church, etc., and vice versa.

The resulting crisis can be characterized by numerous indicators of traumatized intimacy needs including: feeling of a lack of control, destruction of confidence and self-esteem, feeling of intense isolation, insatiable loneliness, depression, inability to focus, weakened spirituality, etc.

The often frantic and desperate reactive response to this disruption or loss of intimacy is to regain levels of intimacy equilibrium by virtually any means available. The intense longing for satisfaction from intimacy overrides normal intimacy boundaries resulting in masking behaviors such as addictions (alcohol, eating patterns, drugs, sex, work, etc.) or engaging in inappropriate sexually intimate encounters.

Long-term sexually intimate encounters may seem especially fulfilling when the partner is perceived to fulfill and restore intimacy equilibrium. For some it may seem to be the only way to address loneliness.

*Spirituality.* People are consistent. We relate to people and our environment the same way we relate to God. Disrupting accustomed intimacy patterns also affects one's spirituality. Loneliness and emptiness may cause pastors to fake their spirituality until they can experience reestablished equilibrium and healing.

*Pastoral tenure.* According to this intimacy paradigm, pastoral tenure may be more affected by intimacy issues than spirituality. When one feels unfulfilled in his or her current ministry this sense of unfulfillment may not necessarily be the tasks and challenges at hand. Instead, the lack of fulfillment indicates a frustration of normal intimacy needs.

Pastors make grave mistakes when they believe going to a different location will make them happier or bring fulfillment.

The answer for their longing is not in another location. It is inside their hearts, in the deepest emotions, and in their entrenched patterns of intimacy.

*Response to conflict.* Conflict is essentially a clashing of intimacy issues. Whether it is dealing with the normal warp and woof of congregational conflict or confronting die-hard antagonists, it is important to recognize that conflicts, above all, are intimacy issues.

Antagonists are antagonists because their intimacy patterns are unhealthy, confused, or both. Everything from emotional outbursts to their excessive need to overcome their own fear of lack of control by controlling behaviors to triangulation demonstrates this.

For this reason it is especially important not to engage antagonists along the lines of their intimacy issues. In this lies the effectiveness of the nonanxious response. Nothing forces them to retreat like having the person they are attacking not be absorbed into their intimacy issues. Reacting to such individuals merely exposes and incites one's own intimacy issues.

The careful, reasoned response born of healthy emotional intimacy is the most constructive response possible. Such responses do not guarantee that the antagonist will not gather others around to sabotage themselves and the organization. Nor are they guarantees that a price will not have to be paid. But what it does guarantee is that even if a great price needs be exacted, the price will be an investment into a healthier equilibrium and a dominant pattern of congregational intimacy.

*Recruitment and involvement.* Some individuals will become involved in the church in areas where they have absolutely no giftedness or expertise. Others will resist involvement even in areas where they have profound giftedness and expertise. What causes this? It may not be as much a faith issue or gifts issue as much as an issue of intimacy.

Intimacy determines what activities one will be interested in and to what extent. Since intimacy is the issue then a key to successful recruiting is to develop and highlight those healthy elements of intimacy that allow for intimate involvement. Such elements include trust, safety, acceptance, responsibility, reward, self-worth, growth, self-disclosure, etc.

The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) is the biblical recognition of these factors of intimacy. "Love, patience, peace, self-control" and other things "against which there is no law" are characteristic of healthy patterns of intimacy.

Those who have — or are seeking — healthy intimacy patterns appear to be more likely to be involved in healthy relationships to the degree their intimacy equilibrium allows. Those with unhealthy or uncertain patterns of intimacy will often tend to either shy away from involvement or overcompensate by becoming inappropriately involved.

**THOMAS F. FISCHER, Rochester Hills, Michigan**



well. They do not trust each other, do not communicate indirectly or via triangles, and do not share their feelings in a healthy manner.

Team ministries must have a foundation of intimacy to survive. Team members who are supportive and genuinely interested in each other and their respective ministries are the ideal. Playing, praying, being spontaneous together, and being constructively supportive are hallmarks of healthy intimacy.

When one member of the ministry team exercises healthy intimacy with others,

## Healthy relationships are characterized by healthy verbal communication.

the capacity for other team members to exercise healthier team relationships increases. As teams become more relationally connected, they become more effective in working together toward the common vision and mission of the church. It is crucially important for leaders to model this kind of intimacy. The degree to which they are successful reflects their patterns of healthy intimacy.

Knowing the barriers to healthy teams is also essential. In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*, Patrick Lencioni lists the five dysfunctions of teams. These are:

1. *Absence of trust*: This is rooted in one's unwillingness to be vulnerable.
2. *Fear of conflict*: When trust is lacking, individuals become "incapable of engaging in unfiltered and passionate debate."<sup>2</sup>
3. *Lack of commitment*: The lack of trust and fear of conflict become obstacles to gaining real commitment from individuals. Instead, feigned agreement will sabotage even the most beneficial decisions.
4. *Avoidance of accountability*: Without commitment, individuals "will often hesitate to call their peers on actions and behaviors that seem counterproductive to the good of the team."<sup>3</sup>
5. *Inattention to results*: A team with the previous four dysfunctions will have ego and recognition problems, self-serving agendas, disregard of goals, and unconcern for the good of the organization thriving unhindered.

These five dynamics perpetuate a highly anxious, untrusting atmosphere. The seemingly endless repetitive patterns of antagonism, pastoral resignations, congregational schism, and inability to attain lasting momentum and energizing vision for ministry are all indicators of a loss of intimacy.

Numerous resources are available for teaching anxiety management and developing healthy intimacy. Ronald Richardson's, *Creating a Healthier Church* (Fortress); Peter Steinke's, *Healthy Congregations, and Understanding How Your Congregation Works* (Alban), are good study guides for congregational leaders. Edwin Friedman's, *Generation to Generation*, and video, *Reinventing Leadership*, both from Guilford, are helpful resources for pastors and leaders on the effects of anxiety from a systems perspective. The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at <http://www.lmpeacecenter.org> and <http://www.ministryhealth.net> offer resources to assist in developing healthier, nonanxious congregations. *Emotional Intelligence*, by Goleman, and Boyatzis' latest book, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business School Press), also help underscore the importance of anxiety management and developing trust as the basis for leadership.

## INTIMACY IN THE CONGREGATION

The second area in which strategic efforts need to be directed for healthier intimacy in the congregation is congregational programming. Ministry opportunities need to be designed to develop intimacy. Worship services, sermons, and the general climate of the church should signal the message, “You can talk, trust, and feel here.”

This kind of atmosphere does not happen overnight. Intimacy patterns run deep and are difficult to change. God changes these patterns through pain and spiritual brokenness. Creating ministry opportunities that allow individuals to share their painful life experiences and to gain insight and strength from brokenness is essential. Making application in sermons and pointing larger groups toward this direction help create a climate conducive to intimacy. Various life-oriented studies in smaller groups — no larger than 10 to 12, using leaders serving as facilitators, not presenters — can also help create a basis for intimacy.

Fellowship is not to be overlooked. Group activities such as trips, retreats, and sporting events provide an environment where people can freely and spontaneously relate to others and begin building healthy intimacy with others who have a healthy grace-based relationship with Jesus Christ.

It seems simple enough, doesn't it? — healthy teams, pastors, parishioners, and churches. Every aspect of life, in or out of the church, depends on intimacy.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps what Paul was saying in his letters to Timothy can be reduced to a simple, yet difficult, concept: Those who are unwilling to engage in the lifelong struggle for healthy patterns of intimacy need not apply for the ministry. Without the capacity for healthy intimacy, Christian leaders will be unable to feed and care for the people of God.

The real truth may be that the pain is caused by our own naiveté, ignorance, inability, or resistance to examine our intimacy patterns. One of the most important areas of stewardship is the stewardship of intimacy. This stewardship includes managing ourselves: our needs, our intimacy patterns, and our default tendencies toward cut-off or fusion. It also includes managing our relationship with God — our preferences for closeness to or distance from God — and our relationship with our families and others.

The Psalmist writes, “A broken and contrite heart You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). In his brokenness King David recognized that his tryst with Bathsheba, his immoral dealings with her husband Uriah, and the character of his service before God were severely lacking. David repented and opened himself up to healthy intimacy with God.

Talking, trusting, and sharing his feelings with God — unhindered and unguarded — was a turning point in David's

life. As he began developing healthy patterns of intimacy with God, he found himself released into the joy of God's grace. This joy of intimacy with God affected every aspect of his life and spilled over to his relationships with others.

Intimacy is not only a leadership issue but a church and family issue as well. It is also a spiritual issue, and an issue of grace. When individuals discover the blessing of intimacy with God and others, they have new insight into the miracle of grace. That is what God intends for all of us. For those in ministry, the realization of this intimacy is His call upon our lives.

As we learn to talk, trust, and feel with others we find our supportive relationships are strengthened, our network of support is bolstered, and we have a greater confidence in ourselves. This confidence becomes foundational as we seek an emboldened ministry.

Whether one's ministry is characterized by success or failure, healthy intimate relationships with God, self, family, and others is foundational for a healthy, resilient, and joyful ministry to the glory of God. ■



**THOMAS F. FISCHER** is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church, LCMS, Rochester Hills, Michigan, and director of MinistryHealth.Net. His free MinistryHealth e-mail newsletter and Sermon Starters resources have over 2,500 subscribers. Visit his website: <http://www.ministryhealth.net> for more articles on ministry health. He may be contacted at [director@ministryhealth.net](mailto:director@ministryhealth.net).

### ENDNOTES

1. Geraldine Piorkowski, *Too Close for Comfort: Exploring the Risks of Intimacy* (New York: Plenum Press, 1994), 76.
2. Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 188.
3. *Ibid.*, 189.

© 2004 George Crenshaw

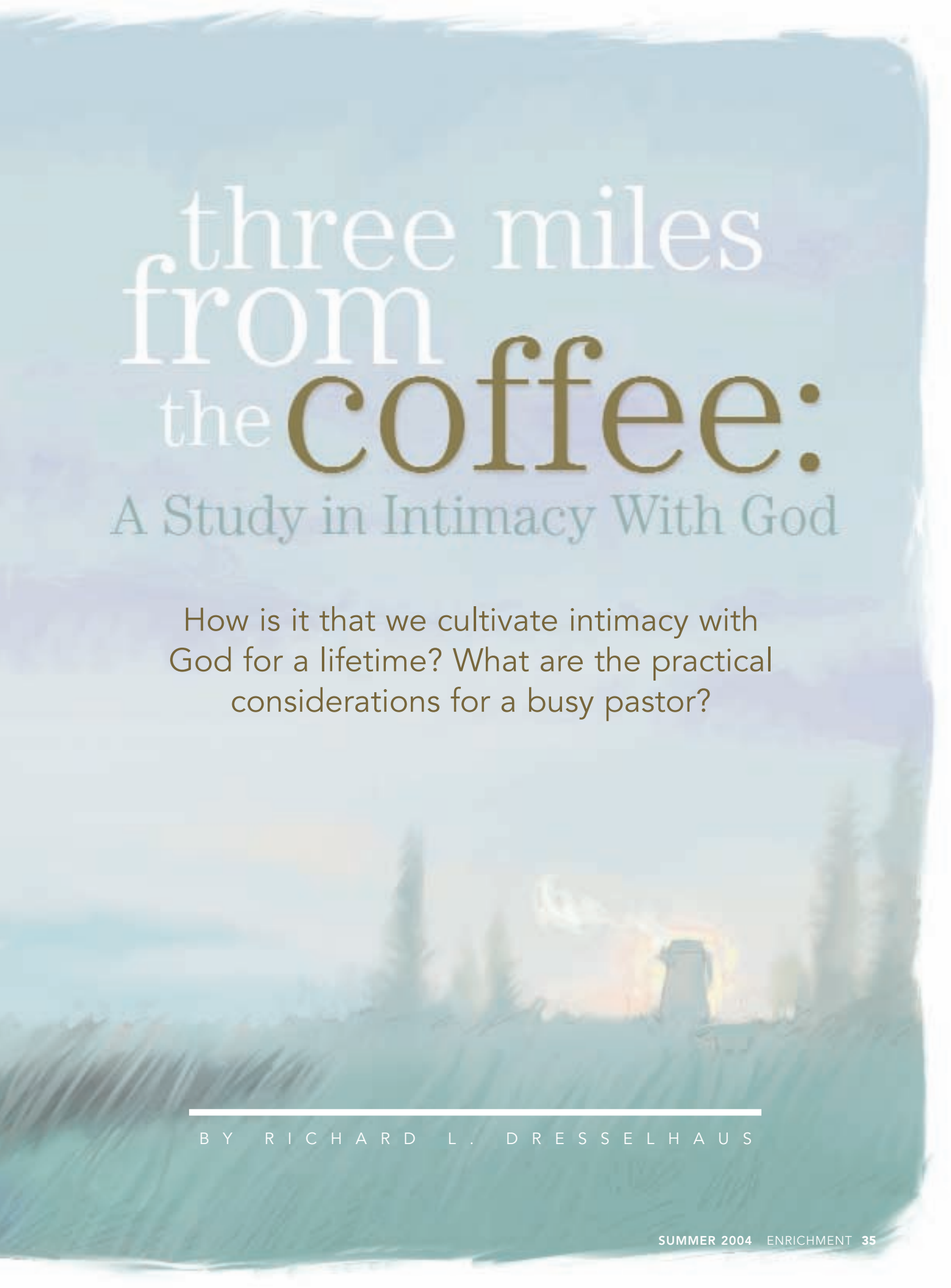


“How come you know so much about sin?”









# three miles from the coffee:

A Study in Intimacy With God

How is it that we cultivate intimacy with God for a lifetime? What are the practical considerations for a busy pastor?

---

BY RICHARD L. DRESSELHAUS

**M**axie Dunnam, in *Alive in Christ*, tells the story of a cowboy who was camping out on the prairie. When it was time to cook breakfast, he decided to light the grass and hold his skillet over the flame. But the wind came up, so he kept moving his skillet to keep it over the flame. All seemed to be going well, but when his eggs were cooked, he was three miles from his coffee.

That's it exactly. We keep moving with the winds of duty and accommodation until suddenly we realize we have been disconnected from our beginning commitment — to know God intimately.

## All seemed to be going well, but when his eggs were cooked, he was three miles from his coffee.

The pastors in a neighboring section asked me to respond to 10 questions. One question was: Do you have any regrets after more than 40 years of pastoral ministry? My answer: I would have cultivated a more intimate relationship with God.

Yes, I have had an intimate relationship with God straight from the beginning. Bible school set that in place. But the demands of ministry have moved the skillet along until now “I'm three miles from the coffee.” That early resolution has never diminished, but I've yielded too much to the winds of duty and accommodation. I doubt I'm alone.

One seasoned pastor put it bluntly: “I am no longer pastoring. Now I can get on with being a Christian.” That's a terrible admission. Yet, in all candor, there is a warning here: Never allow the pressures of ministry to move us away from the critical mission of our lives — to know God intimately.

My heart resonates with the words of author Joy Dawson in *Intimate Fellowship With God*: “To have a nodding acquaintance with the Creator of the universe is no small thought. But to be on intimate terms with Him is enough to give us heart flutter for the rest of our lives.”

That is it precisely. I have tasted, and it is true. Intimacy with God must remain the joy and delight of the pastor's heart.

### INTIMACY AND JOURNEY — IT'S DEFINED AS A LIFELONG COMMITMENT

Bishop Theophan, a 19th-century mystic, said the principal thing is to “stand before God with the mind in the heart; and to go on standing before him unceasingly day and night until the end of life.”<sup>1</sup>

The Puritan, Thomas Goodwin, argued that our “fallen nature is actually allergic to God and never wants to get too close to him.”<sup>2</sup>

But Henri Nouwen, in *The Genesee Diary*, makes the point

for continuance by quoting a rabbi: “He who thinks that he has finished is finished.” Nouwen continues, “How true. Those who think they have reached their goal have missed it. Those who think they are saints are demons. An important part of the spiritual life is to keep longing, waiting, hoping, expecting.”

The pursuit for intimacy is a journey. The quest is marked by a lifelong resolution to know God. There are no shortcuts or quick-fix deals. It is a passion that must burn for a lifetime.

The Genevan Catechism rightly makes this question its first: “What is the chief end of human life?” The answer: “To know God by whom men were created.” The Westminster

Catechism rightly adds “and to fully enjoy Him forever.” This is a priority that can never be experienced in brevity. Rather, it is the commitment of our hearts that endures for a lifetime.

Indeed, this is a worthy pursuit.

Richard J. Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, speaks of intimacy with God as a critical need in today's church. “Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a pressing spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, a gifted people, but for a deep people.”

Foster continues, “Perhaps somewhere in the subterranean chamber of your life you have heard the call to deeper, fuller living. Perhaps you have become weary of frothy experience and shallow teaching. Every now and then you have caught glimpses, hints of something more than you have known. Inwardly you have longed to launch out into the deep.”

How do we proceed on this journey? How is it that we cultivate intimacy with God for a lifetime? What are the practical considerations for a busy pastor?

## One seasoned pastor put it bluntly: “I am no longer pastoring. Now I can get on with being a Christian.”

First, it is imperative to think holistically. That is, to understand that one's total experience of living must be centered in God. Intimacy with God is not an emotion that ebbs and flows, nor is it an occasional rush of excitement. No. It is a life lived in God: at work; at play; in the pulpit; at the hospital; in the counseling room; with family; on the golf course. This wonderful sense that all of life is caught up into God: bathed in grace; abounding in mercy; given over to compassion; and alive with joy and discovery.

Second, it is imperative to think intentionally. Spirituality is by design. No one will ever achieve an intimacy with God without a design to make it a reality. It is the purpose and

intent of the heart, when focused on God, that cultivates that glorious sense of intimacy with God that the human heart craves.

Finally, it is imperative to think realistically. My wife and I are grandparents of an infant grandson. We watch with expectation as Noah advances from one level of development to the next. Try as we might, the process cannot be rushed. Time is required. The same is true in our quest to know God intimately. It takes time and involves process. Typically, it is only in retrospect that we realize how far He has brought us. The moment may deceive us, but our memory marks the glorious significance of our progress in knowing God more intimately.

Remember, intimacy with God is a journey. It is a quest that requires the rest of our lives. What an honor.

## INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP — IT'S ACTUALIZED BY CHRIST WITHIN

Years ago I was looking for an appropriate subject for a master's thesis. At the top of my list was the Pauline use of the phrase *en Christos* (in Christ). However, I rejected the idea because the subject seemed to be without boundaries. My project required a limited and manageable subject. But I have never lost my intrigue with so lofty a theme.

The key to intimacy with God is the release of the life of Christ within the heart of the believer. It is His life that must be released deep in the spirit of the believer. Our daily life then becomes the plank work on which a life of intimacy with God is walked out in actual experience.

Listen again to the testimony of Maxie Dunnam in *Alive in Christ*: "More and more I am convinced with Augustine that Paul is 'the person who knew Christ best.' ... If one seeks for the most characteristic sentences the Apostle ever wrote, they will be found, not when he is refuting the legalistic, or vindicating his apostleship, or meditating on eschatological hopes, or giving practical ethical guidance to the church, but where his intense intimacy with Christ comes to expression. Everything that religion meant for Paul is focused for us in such great words as this: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' " (Galatians 2:20).

Dunnam then speaks of "the rhythm of the Christian life," that continual pouring out and life-giving renewal that is the result of Christ's indwelling presence. Here is the dynamic of intimacy with God. Christ in us — the motivating power that results in a blessed life of intimacy.

The apostle Paul opened his heart and exposed his passion for intimacy by employing a descriptive metaphor: "I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is found in you"

(Galatians 4:19). Here is the key for Paul, and for us. Intimacy with God is the life of Jesus released within the heart of the believer. By His life we are empowered. By His abiding presence we experience a quality of life only He can bring. The indwelling Christ is the shaping influence of our lives.

Recently, I listened with great interest as a district

## It is possible to live with an inner quietness while navigating through the intersections of a rushing, out-of-control world.

superintendent listed his three priorities for effective pastoral ministry. At the top of his list was intimacy with God. His top choice for priority remained unchallenged. Knowing God is not optional, not for any believer, and certainly not for a minister of the gospel.

Ask the average pastor to identify the thing most needed in ministry and service. The answer will be predictable enough: "To know God and to make Him known." Yet this priority is often met with defeat and discouragement. May our confession be that of the apostle Paul, "I want to know Christ" (Philippians 3:10).

Where is the difficulty? Right here. Salvation is by grace and our relationship with God through Jesus Christ is also by grace. It is the release of His life within us, accomplished by His grace, that moves us into the much-coveted life of intimacy. If left to any of us, we would remain strangers to this inner circle of communion with God. Along with redemption, intimacy is a gift given by grace for the receiving. Out of our poverty comes His riches. Out of our alienation and





estrangement come His provision of intimacy. His life is released within us. This is the key to intimacy with God.

## INTIMACY AND SOLITUDE — IT'S FOSTERED BY A RETREAT FROM THE RUSH OF LIFE

If the release of Christ within empowers the life of intimacy, solitude provides the context in which we experience that release. In other words, how can anyone whose life is consumed with the relentless rush and hurry of modern life have intimacy with God?

Foster is again helpful: "This time is for learning to 'center down,' or what contemplators of the middle ages called 'recollection.' It is a time to become still, to enter into the recreating silence, to allow the fragmentation of our minds to become centered."<sup>3</sup>

We live in a world that disallows any centering in on God. Foster continues: "The lust for affluence is psychotic. It is psychotic because it has completely lost touch with reality. We crave things we do not need or enjoy. We buy things we do

those who live in solitude and community often have a great knowledge of the significant events of these times and a great sensitivity to the people who are subject to these events."

Few have developed a theology and practice of solitude more insightfully than Henri J.M. Nouwen.<sup>4</sup> "My reading about the spirituality of the desert has made me aware of the importance of *nepsis*. *Nepsis* means mental sobriety, spiritual attention directed to God, watchfulness in keeping the bad thoughts away, and creating free space for prayer." He then defines prayer as "a habitual state of imperturbable calm."

I also am strongly influenced by Nouwen's warning to those who speak much and are caught up in a world of words: "It almost seems as if it is impossible to speak and not sin. Even in the most elevated discussion, something enters that seems to pollute the atmosphere." Pushed to its extreme, such thinking leads to withdrawal and isolation. However, the warning is still to be heard. Verbosity can be the enemy of solitude and hence, intimacy with God. It is good to be reminded that it is virtually impossible to listen attentively while speaking vociferously. It would be well to listen more and speak less. Conversation,

**Our part is to remove the barriers,  
come out of hiding, rid ourselves of shame,  
and receive the gift of His grace: intimacy.**

not want to impress people we do not like." So goes the insanity of it all. And that at the expense of our quest to know God."

Perceptively, Donald P. McNeill in *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* has observed: "It is not hard to notice that those who are very involved in the world are often out of touch with its deepest struggles and pains, while

especially the idle kind, can sweep us away from the solitude and rest that God has intended for the human spirit.

One final thought triggered by Nouwen's ideas about solitude is what he calls the "ought modality" — what I ought to say, or think, or do, or feel. When I succumb to this, I am victimized by my environment and surroundings. Compulsion rules the day.



We find ourselves imprisoned in a world shaped by others rather than a life controlled by God. This is the enemy of any quest for intimacy with God.

Add to this the many “ifs”: what if I become ill; what if I lose my job; what if I am victimized by enemies; what if my peace is stolen by forces I cannot control. The “ifs,” like the “oughts,” sweep away the quietness and serenity of spirit that foster intimacy with God.

How do we, then, live a life of solitude in a fast-paced, rushing world? It is here that I find hope. There is an inner tranquility, quietness, and serenity that is attainable in the midst of a busy world. In other words, it is possible to live with an inner quietness, while navigating through the intersections of a rushing, out-of-control world.

Pastoring is demanding and setting priorities is rarely easy. Do I refuse to go to the bedside of someone in desperate need so I can practice solitude? Do I sacrifice ministry to others to nurture my own inner spirit? What belongs to God, and what belongs to men? How do I parcel out my time and energies in ways that will maximize my life of service to God and to His people? This is never an easy choice.

It is here that God’s call to obedience sheds its light on our path. Service unselfishly given does not exclude the life of solitude. With the fulfillment of our call also comes the opportunity to practice quietness and tranquility of spirit. This in balance is the call of the Spirit. A call we dare not dismiss.

Martin Luther acknowledged that on one occasion he had so much to do that he had to spend 4 hours in prayer to get everything done.<sup>5</sup> Is there a secret here that most of us have not yet discovered? Is prayer the key to accomplishing much in response to the demands of a busy life? I think so.

## INTIMACY AND COMMUNION — IT’S CULTIVATED IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

I meet few Christians who are satisfied with their prayer lives. In fact, with some there is significant frustration and disappointment. Could it be we have given prayer a narrow definition that violates its very essence? Do we measure our prayer life against artificial criteria that is unbiblical and therefore unattainable?

It is said of Francis of Assisi that he prayed so much “he became a prayer.” Bloesch, in *The Struggle of Prayer*, characterizes the prayer life of the great saints not so much as involvement in a single act of protracted prayer or the endless repetition of prayers. Rather, it was a constant waiting on the Lord — praying inwardly even though occupied outwardly with the daily tasks of life.

May our lives become a prayer. Of course, we must include the

regular practice of focused intercession, those occasions when a pressing challenge makes “praying through” the only option. But to see prayer as life is a dimension we should not discredit.

Jacques Ellul, in *Prayer and Modern Man*, has much to say about this broader understanding of prayer: “Prayer is not an affair of the moment. It is the continuous woof [fabric] on which is woven the warp [yarn] of my occupations, my sentiments, my actions. The warp without that woof will never

**We keep moving with  
the winds of duty and accommodation  
until suddenly we realize  
we have been disconnected from our  
beginning commitment—  
to know God intimately.**

constitute a whole, or a pattern, and the tissue of life will never be woven. We will, in fact, give way to every solicitation.”

Andrew Murray reminds us that Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach, only how to pray. Murray did not speak much of what was needed to preach well, but much of praying well in his book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*. That is true and convictingly so. Do I know as much about praying as I do about preaching? Am I a student of prayer as much as a student of preaching? Is my love for prayer as strong as my affection for preaching?

How is intimacy with God possible without continuous prayer? How can closeness with God be cultivated aside from the fellowship of prayer? Does not this fellowship support both the necessity and the possibility of one’s life becoming a



prayer? Must we pass in and out of prayer as if we were changing lanes on a busy freeway? No! God calls us by His Spirit to a life of intimacy fostered and fed by the practice of continuous prayer; a mind and heart set on God.

## INTIMACY AND STRATEGY — IT'S RECEIVED AS A GIFT OF DIVINE GRACE

How do I experience intimacy with God? It involves journey, relationship, solitude, and prayer. But how? We must know. This is the bedrock of all we are, all we do, and all we hope to be — both in time and in eternity.

So far we have circled the wagons. We have listened to witnesses. We have tried to focus the subject. But now it is time to ask: How?

I don't have the exact answer, yet I think I have hold of an arrow that points the way.

How do you fall in love? Is it a matter of time? No. Some people claim a "love at first sight." Is it a matter of appearance? No. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and we have all witnessed persons deeply in love whose outward adorning is unimpressive. Is it a matter of presence? No. Some have fallen in love by correspondence. Do you get the point? There is something profound about falling in love, even on a human level, that defies definition and understanding.

It is here we have a clue. Intimacy with God is possible only because He wills it to be. It is His gift to us. It is a demonstration of His unmerited favor. He reaches out, and we are given the privilege of response. Our part is to remove the barriers, come

out of hiding, rid ourselves of shame, and receive the gift of His grace: intimacy.

All that has been said is part of the picture. But it is grace that adds the color and brings the landscape to life. Mysterious? Unthinkable? Beyond? Yes. But it is gloriously real and incredibly divine. It is a life of intimacy with God.

Urban T. Holmes, in *A History of Spirituality; An Analytical Introduction*, lists the rungs on the ladder of ascent for John of the Cross:

1. The soul becomes sick for the glory of God.
2. The soul searches for God unceasingly.
3. The soul is moved to do works for God.
4. The soul suffers, the flesh is conquered, and God gives joy.
5. The soul has an impatient desire and longing for God.
6. The soul runs swiftly toward God and senses His touch.
7. The soul acquires an ardent boldness.
8. The soul lays hold of God as the beloved.

## Never allow the pressures of ministry to move us away from the critical mission of our lives — to know God intimately.

9. The soul burns gently with love.
10. The soul is assimilated to God, apparently after death.

Let's join the climb. The view from an elevated place is inspiring and life-giving. We will climb until we arrive victoriously in His presence.

We have worked our way back, and the coffee is still warm. The passion for intimacy has been reignited, and we have been touched with a fresh wind of His Spirit.

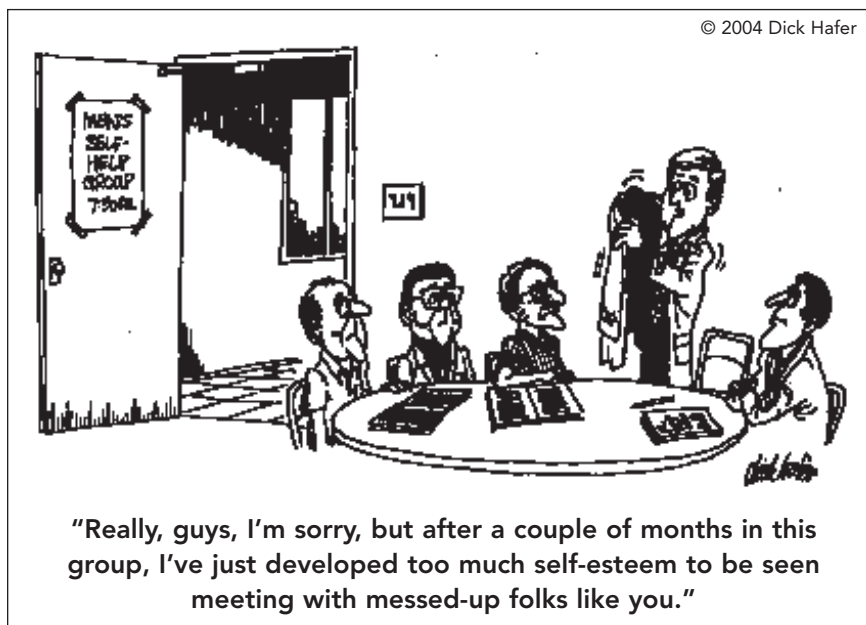
We are left "gasping for the breath of your truth."<sup>6</sup> ■



**RICHARD L. DRESSELHAUS, D.MIN.,** is an executive presbyter and former senior pastor, First Assembly of God, San Diego, California.

### ENDNOTES

1. Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend* (Harrisburg, Pa: Morehouse Publishing, 2001).
2. Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979).
3. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988).
4. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary* (New York: Image Books, 1981).
5. Donald G. Bloesch, *The Struggle of Prayer* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard Pub., 1989).
6. E.M. Blaiklock, *The Confession of Saint Augustine* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Pub., 1997).









# INTIMACY WITH SELF:

The lens through which  
we look at life and ministry

How comfortable are you with the person you're with when you are alone? How well do you think you know yourself? Do you tend to embellish yourself? Do you demean yourself? Would your spouse and family agree with your self-assessment?

---

B Y R I C H A R D D . D O B B I N S



Facing the complex challenges of contemporary ministry with a distorted and uncomfortable view of oneself can prove disastrous for both pastor and congregation. As healthy or flawed as it may be, our personality is involved in everything we do for the Lord.

Knowing this, one would think there should be more focus on our personality during our preparation for the ministry. Whatever issues we might need to deal with would be more easily addressed at that stage in our lives when our impact on other people is still limited. Yet, during our ministerial training we are given few opportunities to take an objective look at ourselves.

One cannot help but wonder how much more we might enjoy the work of the ministry and how much healthier and more productive our ministries might be if we were required

This is sometimes referred to as “the looking-glass self.” We get our early impressions of ourselves from the words, feelings, and facial expressions reflected to us by adults who interact with us when we are infants and small children. Young children believe everything adults say about them to be absolutely true. We need to remember that when we are conversing with children. No wonder Jesus is so harsh in His judgment on those who offend children (Matthew 18:5,6).

As you can see, each of us grows up in our own personal house of adult mirrors. Mirrors have a way of distorting reality; some more than others. They can magnify or diminish our blemishes. They can flatter or insult us. You cannot always trust what you see.

For example, when I was young my friends talked me into going into a House of Mirrors at a fair in our community.

Having fallen into this temptation, I found myself unable to believe my eyes. The first mirror I looked into made me look twice as tall and twice as thin as I was. Two or three steps later another mirror revealed me to be half as tall and twice as fat. These images of me were so distorted they were

ridiculous, yet they appeared to be real. That’s what made them so hilarious. Such experiences make us aware that things and people may not always be what they appear to be.

So it is with the pictures we have of ourselves today. Regardless of how flattering or grotesque they may be, these pictures grew out of the images reflected to us by the adults who surrounded us as children. If your parents and grandparents gave you healthy ways of feeling and thinking about yourself, consider yourself to be extremely blessed.

However, regardless of how healthy or unhealthy these self-portraits were, we carry them into our youth. They remain with us in our minds as we grow older. And we bring them into the ministry with us. Then we tend to believe adults in our congregation see us this same way. When we react to those adults as though they hold these twisted perceptions of us, they unconsciously respond in such a way as to confirm these distortions. Thus, our distorted views of ourselves become a self-fulfilling prophecy in our ministry. People reflect back to us the way we believe they see us. This can be disastrous for us, our ministry, and our churches.

Here are some of the damaging views of self we have discovered in our years of working with ministers and their spouses.

### **Inadequate self**

Often, these ministers grew up in homes where they were unfavorably compared to their brothers or sisters or to their stepsiblings. They may not have done well in school, which

## **Facing the complex challenges of contemporary ministry with a distorted and uncomfortable view of oneself can prove disastrous for both pastor and congregation.**

to face the urgent issues of our spiritual and emotional health before being ordained. Our marriages and families would benefit greatly from such an emphasis.

James reminds us that problems between people always have their roots in problems within people (James 4:1). So, the healthier the minister, the fewer church problems that will originate in him and the simpler it will be for him to deal with troubled people in his congregation.

Since it is never too late for the Lord to reveal to us things we need to see about ourselves, let’s look at possible unresolved issues from our personal history that we may have brought into the ministry with us.

### **WHERE DO WE GET OUR VIEW OF OURSELVES?**

None of us came into the world with preconceived ideas about ourselves. However, by the time we start to preschool our ideas about ourselves are so visible that any observant teacher can tell if we are sad or happy; confident or dogged by feelings of inferiority; friendly or withdrawn. Where do these ideas come from?

Babies do not arrive with an album of self-portraits in their mind from which they take their pick. As children we get our ideas about ourselves from what we see, hear, and feel reflected to us from the adults around us.

Small children do not become who they think they are. They become who they think *other people* think they are.

further affirms these feelings of inadequacy that were reflected to them in the home.

As ministers, they are easily intimidated by more confident peers or board members. Since they lack the social skills and confidence to creatively manage conflict, they seek to avoid it. They often fail to deal with congregational issues that need to be confronted in love. Or, if they do confront them, they do it in anger which only worsens the problems. Often they blame themselves for these difficulties. This leaves them even more crippled by the anxiety and guilt that fostered these feelings of inadequacy.

This crippling effect may leave the minister feeling overwhelmed by the demands of ministry. Some will attempt to compensate for these feelings of inadequacy by becoming workaholics, spending 60 hours a week, or more, doing the work of the ministry.

When a church does not respond to the exaggerated needs for approval and affirmation he brought with himself into the ministry, the minister feels discouraged and burned out. Within a year or two he seeks another pastoral change where the same cycle is likely to be repeated. In the meantime, the neglect of his marriage and family tends to leave his wife feeling resentful and bitter. For her, the church has become a *mistress* who has *taken* her husband away from her and their children.

### **Exalted self**

Children without siblings, born late in their parents' lives, and baby children are often coddled and overindulged. They grow up with a sense of entitlement that others resent.

In the ministry they are likely to be seen as self-centered, selfish, overbearing, and arrogant. They tend to impose their points of view on others. They make themselves the center of every conversation. They tend to see those who espouse any different perspective from theirs as impaired in judgment, non-compliant, and in opposition to their leadership. Pastor-board conflict seems to follow them everywhere they go.

### **Rebellious self**

These pastors have a history of conflict with authority figures. Their parents may have been overly strict and harshly punitive in their discipline. They may have deeply resented a compliant older or younger sibling whom their parents favored. Often, the rebellious behavior at home was carried over into their attitudes toward school authorities and other authority figures in the community.

This person brings his struggle with authority figures into the ministry. His sermons are filled with anger. Any skilled listener can hear it in the choices of words and the tone of voice the minister uses to express himself. Those in authority over him find him difficult to deal with and usually respond in a way that further antagonizes him.

### **Persecuted self**

Sometimes, when a child is a little bit different from his siblings and peers, he gets blamed for many things he did not do. This child feels picked on. Often this dynamic follows the person through elementary and high school.

When people like this come into the ministry, they are predisposed to taking the normal slights and thoughtlessness of people as deliberate and designed to persecute them. In most cases, nothing could be further from the truth. Nevertheless, haunted by the mental pictures of themselves they have carried from childhood, these ministers live with exaggerated feelings of persecution and rejection.

### **Sensual self**

Occasionally, for a variety of reasons, a baby may be held and cuddled too much. This can create an exaggerated need to be stroked and touched. They develop a tactile sense with an enormous need to be satisfied. As they grow up, they become a touchy-feely kind of person.

In the ministry this person can become easily misunderstood. Carelessness with personal boundaries when worshipers are encouraged to give each other a hug can result in a parishioner misreading his or her intent. Disaster is not far away.

### **Compulsive self**

Often, parents try to make the first child, or their only child, perfect. Every child is born with a desire for parental approval. When parental demands are too stringent or strict, they lie beyond the child's reach. Nevertheless, the child still tries to satisfy them. This can create a tyrannical conscience in the child that requires perfection from him or her.

As a result, the child frequently suffers from what I refer to as "the little old man or the little old woman syndrome." When talking to the child, other adults will remark, "You know, talking to this child is like talking to a little adult." Although this is often taken as a compliment, it is evidence that this person is being denied the right to a normal childhood.

When these people come into the ministry, they don't know how to spontaneously enjoy themselves. They know how to work, but not how to play. Their expectations of other people are likely to be unrealistically high.

On the other hand, since such ministers were seldom praised as children, they may become vulnerable to those in the congregation who meet these needs for them. When this is a person of the opposite sex trouble is not far away.

## **THE LENS THROUGH WHICH WE LOOK AT LIFE**

The above ideas we have of ourselves become our self-concept. They are the lens through which we look at life. The clearer and more accurate that lens is, the more realistic our



view of life becomes. The more distorted that lens is, the more twisted our view of life will be.

This is why seeing ourselves in a healthy way is so important to our effectiveness in ministry. Even seen through the healthiest eyes, the challenges of the ministry can be formidable. But none of us sees life like it *really is*. Each person sees life as it appears to him or her.

Taking a close look at ourselves can be anxiety provoking. It takes courage and honesty before God to engage in this kind of self-examination. However, Paul assures us that if we judge ourselves we will not be judged (1 Corinthians 11:28). He also stresses the importance of using the experiences of our adult lives to correct the views of life we held as children (1 Corinthians 13:11).



## CORRECTING THE DISTORTIONS

God is the only one who knows more about you than you know about yourself (Psalm 139:1-6). Be open to what He can teach you about yourself. This is the first step toward correcting a distorted self-image. And, in getting acquainted with ourselves, the first thing God says to each of us is not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought (Romans 12:3). He wants us to have a realistic view of ourselves.

God does not want us to look down on ourselves or

exaggerate our weaknesses. However, He does want us to honestly acknowledge areas where we need to grow.

Second, God wants us to know that we are *valuable*. He has established our worth with the price of our redemption (1 Peter 1:18,19). The richest of us can be worth no more and the poorest can be worth no less.

Third, He wants us to know that we are the objects of His love (John 3:16). And, His love for us is personal (Galatians 2:19,20).

Here are some questions that will help you arrive at a realistic view of yourself:

1. What are your three greatest strengths?
2. What are your three greatest weaknesses?
3. When people don't agree with your point of view, how do you feel about them? What do you say to them?
4. How would your friends describe you?
5. What is your greatest fear? Why?
6. Typically, what stresses you? How do you deal with stress?
7. In what situations do you feel most uncomfortable? Name two.
8. What drives you? Why?
9. What do you most admire in others? Why?
10. What is your vision for the future? How are you planning to achieve it?

## THE BENEFITS OF BEING COMFORTABLE WITH YOURSELF AND OTHERS

The minister who is comfortable with himself and others is much less likely to become:

**1. Involved in an extramarital relationship.** Contrary to what many think, extramarital affairs are more likely to result from a misguided search for intimacy than from a lustful desire for passionate sex. The people who get involved in extramarital relationships seldom feel comfortable with themselves.

**2. Sexually addicted.** The minister who is uncomfortable with himself and others often seeks escape in some dissociative experience like cyberporn. Until pornography was available on computers, the fear of being discovered kept the minister from bookstores and theaters that trafficked in pornography. However, cyberporn offers the illusion of anonymity. It is a self-indulgent pleasure that one can engage in all by himself. However, once sexual pleasure recedes and the minister re-engages himself with the real world of his calling, he feels defeated, ashamed, and afraid that his secret will be exposed.

**3. Driven by selfish ambition.** God wants us to be a people zealous unto good works, but He does not want us to be driven by selfish ambition (2 Corinthians 10:12; Ephesians 2:10). This is a temptation created by the institutional



church's insistence on rewarding growth with recognition.

Some people take increased attendance and increased offerings as undeniable evidence of success in ministry. However, the Lord's eye is not searching for the successful minister. He is looking for the *faithful* minister.

When the minister suffers from low self-esteem, he is tempted to establish his worth by setting unrealistic goals for growth in the attendance and offering statistics of his church. This misguided ambition is deceiving and self-defeating.

Someone will always have more rapid growth and larger offerings. Meanwhile, the minister driven by this kind of selfish ambition will wither in his soul, become burned out, depressed, and susceptible to the temptations of the devil. His work is driven by his ambitions instead of by his love for God and people.

**4. Depressed and overwhelmed by the ministry.** Much of the depression I have found in ministers has been aggravated by a discomfort with themselves that they brought into the ministry with them. The troubles and conflicts parishioners confide in the pastor can be overwhelming to him, especially if he is not comfortable with himself.

Even when he is comfortable with himself, the pastor must find effective ways of debriefing himself if he is to keep his spirit free from their burdens. I have found spending a few moments in prayer and meditation following each counseling session is helpful. I have also developed the mental discipline of closing the door of the room I have made for the person in my mind once I have prayed with him and the door of my office has been closed behind him.

However, if you are not comfortable with yourself or even if you develop effective ways of ridding your mind of other people's problems, you are left with your own discomfort.

The minister who is comfortable with himself and others is much more likely to:

**1. Focus on the important relationships of his life.** He takes good care of his marriage. He and his wife get away by themselves three or four times a year just to cultivate their relationship. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of these kinds of marital islands. He also takes the time to nurture his children (Ephesians 6:4).

He understands that his life communicates a more important message than his lips. He knows the best thing he can do for his people is to model for them in his personal life what he preaches to them from the pulpit. The state of his marriage is his passport to the pulpit. If he loses his marriage, he loses his ministry. He knows that the state of his marriage either enhances or erodes the credibility of his ministry.

**2. Involve others in the vision casting of the church.** He understands that the church needs a vision. Not his vision, but *their* vision. A healthy pastor does not see the church as an extension of himself. He sees the church as an extension of

Christ. He does not see the people as fulfilling his vision and professional ambitions. He sees himself as the servant of Christ and the servant of His church leading them in the fulfillment of their vision. This is true servant leadership.

**3. Take care of himself.** Some ministers foolishly boast that they "would rather burn out than rust out." They fail to see that God has not delighted himself in human sacrifice since the time of Abraham. He does not drive His servants; He leads us. He does not break us down; He builds us up. The minister who is comfortable with himself and others knows that the Lord's yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30). The pastor who takes care of himself regularly takes his day off each week. No pastor can work 10 hours a day, 7 days a week without eventually breaking under the load.

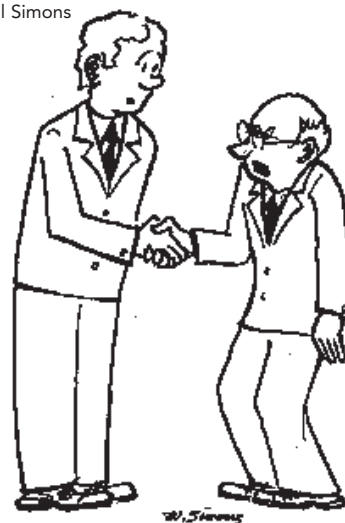
The healthy pastor spiritually nurtures himself through the Word and prayer. He maintains a fitness program and develops hobbies that give him regular breaks from the stresses of ministry.

**4. Have confidence in his unique gifts.** God gives each of us unique gifts. At times, when we see the effectiveness of others' gifts, it is easy to lose confidence in the gifts God has given us. Then we try to imitate the gifts of others.

Understandably, it may be confusing to a congregation when an insecure pastor imposes new methods of church growth on them every year or two — methods that he has learned from gifted pastors who have been effective in reaching their communities. However, these methods may not be effective in reaching his community. When one model of church growth doesn't work in 6 months or a year, he tries another.

Of course, we can learn from others, but the pastor who knows himself well and is comfortable with himself will not try

© 2004 Wendell Simons



"I, too, was six-foot-four when I first took up the ministry."

to imitate others. God would not have called you to your community unless He knew He had given you the gifts needed in reaching that church at that time.

**5. Value continuity in his ministry.** His commitment is to the Lord and the community. He refuses to be discouraged by the migration of church members to other communities or other churches. This is a sign of our times. A certain amount of this happens in all churches. The pastor who is comfortable with himself treats this as normal. Until God releases him and calls him to another community, he stays put and faithfully serves the Lord where he is.

When the Lord does call him to another community, he respects the value of the ministries that have preceded him by taking his time getting spiritually in touch with where the church is before making major changes. He understands that the way he approached his ministry in the last community he served may not work in this new community. He knows his judgment of what will or will not work is likely to be wiser if he takes the time to know his new church and community better before making any major changes.

## CONCLUSION

Your ministry can be so much more effective and personally rewarding when you are comfortable with yourself. If you find yourself anxious and stressed much of the time, reach out for help. Simply finding an older minister who will mentor you may be sufficient. Sometimes a healthy friendship with a peer can help you see yourself more realistically.

There are many personal inventories that can give you valuable information about yourself. A Christian counselor can provide these for you. I have included a simple, but useful self-awareness scale on page 14 of my book, *Invisible Imprint: What Others Feel When in Your Presence*. (See sidebar "Personal Presence Rating Scale.")

Don't neglect yourself. When you neglect yourself, you are neglecting your ministry. God seeks many years of effective ministry from the gifts He has given you. Take whatever steps may be necessary for you to get to know yourself well and become comfortable with yourself. You will be so much more effective in your marriage and family. The impact you have on others will be healthier and the harvest of your life will be greater. ■



**RICHARD D. DOBBINS, PH.D.**, is a clinical psychologist and founder and clinical director of EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio. *Invisible Imprint: What Others Feel When in Your Presence*, can be ordered by calling EMERGE at 1-800-621-5207, or Gospel Publishing House at 1-800-641-4310.

## PERSONAL PRESENCE RATING SCALE

Instructions: On a scale from 1 to 10 rate each of the following words to indicate your impressions of how other people generally feel when in your presence. Enter each rating by the appropriate word in the column marked, "Self." Then, give copies of the rating scale to your spouse or a family member, a close friend, and a fellow worker and have them use the same scale to rate how they feel when they are in your presence. Be sure they enter their ratings for each word in the appropriate column across from the word.

1=How they almost never feel when in your presence.  
10=How they almost always feel when in your presence.

	Self	Spouse or Family Member	Friend	Fellow
1. Affirmed	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Criticized	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Hopeful	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Depressed	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Encouraged	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Overwhelmed	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Loved	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Rejected	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Excited	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Inferior	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Reassured	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Belittled	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Enabled	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. Attacked	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Happy	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. Irritated	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. Accepted	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. Seduced	_____	_____	_____	_____
19. Valued	_____	_____	_____	_____
20. Deceived	_____	_____	_____	_____
Totals	_____	_____	_____	_____

**Scoring:** Place a minus sign (–) in front of the score for each even-numbered word. Then total each column by subtracting the minus scores from the plus (+) scores for the odd-numbered words. The higher the score the more positively people feel when in your presence.

**RICHARD D. DOBBINS, PH.D.**, Akron, Ohio. Reprinted from *Invisible Imprint: What Others Feel When in Your Presence*, published by VMI Publishers, Sisters Oregon, 2001. Used with permission. This book can be purchased through Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri (1-800-641-4310).







# the pastor & family intimacy

**M**y wife, Norma, and I have been in ministry together for over 39 years. I served as a youth pastor 8 years and a family-life pastor 4 years. We have spent the last 27 years directing a marriage and family relationship ministry. Best of all, we are about to

celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary.

Over the years I have learned and taught many lessons about relationships and intimacy. However, there is one truth that stands above the rest: Life is relationships; the rest is just details.

---

B Y G A R Y S M A L L E Y

Relationships are what truly matter in life. If you don't believe me, ask someone who is about to die what is most important. I remember the day my life changed forever.

A fresh morning breeze brushed my face; the music of birds and water splashing over stones in the nearby creek produced a sound of sheer delight. I took a deep breath. I thought, *It's good to be alive.*

My hunting partner, Junior, and I spotted a wild turkey. Although I had been an avid hunter as a boy, I fumbled with my gun. I thought it was the excitement of my first turkey hunt. But as I took aim, an unfamiliar discomfort gripped me; I was having trouble breathing.

As the trophy-sized turkey inched closer, I lowered my gun. I couldn't understand why I had no strength. *Something is wrong with me.* Junior's raspy whisper urged me: "Shoot ... Shoot!"

Again, I lifted my gun, aimed, and pulled the trigger. At the same moment I shot, the turkey fell, and I crumpled. As I lay moaning on the ground, Junior reached down to help me to my feet. I could feel something was wrong. I was having a heart attack.

As Junior ran for the truck, I lay on the ground paralyzed with pain. Yet, I'll never forget the peace that came over me. I was ready to die. "Lord, I'm ready to come home," I whispered.

However, at that moment, I had one desire: to see my wife and kids one more time. None of the books I'd written, videos I'd made, conferences I'd spoken at, couples I'd counseled, awards I'd won, or any other accomplishment mattered. At that moment, nothing else mattered, but to say good-bye to my family.

As Junior carried me out of the woods, I didn't know if I would live or die. Halfway down the mountain we connected with paramedics on a two-way radio. I was flown to a hospital about 50 miles from my home. Greg, my oldest son, lived there so he was the first to arrive at the hospital. As they wheeled me into the emergency room, my eyes locked onto Greg. *I made it!*

I don't remember much of what happened next. I recall frantically trying to tell Greg what to say to each family member. The more I tried to articulate my good-byes, the

them, how valuable they were, and most important, that they were loved.

Holding my son's hand, I thought about how much happiness and laughter filled my life as a father and grandfather. I felt fresh appreciation for the love I had received and given. Over the next 48 hours I had opportunity to ask myself what I had lived for — and what had given me such a sense of completeness and satisfaction. I realized anew that the most important thing in my life is relationships — not only with my family and friends and the people I meet all over the world, but with the God who walks with me "even through the dark valley of death" (Psalm 23:4, NLT).

## OUR IRRESISTIBLE LONGING FOR RELATIONSHIPS

The most miserable people are those who are emotionally alienated, disconnected from others, and alone. The most happy and fulfilled people are those who have close, quality relationships that endure through the good times and bad. Satisfaction in life, and completeness and fulfillment, are found in quality relationships.

Quality relationships start with an inner longing to experience the deep connectedness with another — to experience a sense of intimacy and closeness to family and acquaintances — husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and friend to friend. As people in full-time ministry we develop quality relationships by starting with the right foundation.

## THE FOUNDATION: SAFETY

We must understand the importance of developing intimate relationships with our family and loved ones. We face many of the same challenges as other families, but as ministry couples we deal with some unique challenges as well. Many times I felt the tyranny of the unfinished. There was always more ministry that could be done. I often became sidetracked into thinking ministry took priority over my family.

Although misaligned priorities do not strengthen family relationships, the main culprit that destroys intimacy is feeling unsafe in our relationships. When we feel unsafe, our

heart tends to close toward the other person. When our heart closes, we start to disconnect from that person. On the other hand,

when we feel safe, our hearts open and intimacy takes place. Thus, the foundational component for intimacy is a truly safe environment — one that is safe physically, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally.

People, by nature, want to be open and connect. No state of

**The most miserable people are those who are emotionally alienated, disconnected from others, and alone.**

more frustrated I became. Finally, Greg leaned over and said something that instantly calmed me. "Dad," he whispered ever so gently, "we know."

At that moment I realized my family already knew everything I wanted to tell them. They knew how proud I was of

being takes less energy to maintain than openness. Maintaining defenses and working to get people to see you a certain way by projecting images, or trying to get people to like or accept you, requires significant energy.

When people are together in a state of openness, intimacy occurs naturally. Intimacy is being close to others and openly sharing with them. This may or may not include words. It doesn't necessarily require work or effort. The mistake many make is trying too hard to be open or to create intimacy. This makes true intimacy harder than necessary. The easier approach to intimacy is to create a safe environment for yourself and your loved ones. When you and your loved ones feel safe, everyone will naturally be inclined to relax and be open. Then, intimacy will simply happen.

The best way to create a safe environment is to recognize the other person's value. This is the essence of Romans 12:10: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, preferring one another in honor." I've built my 39-year ministry on this one principle — honor. Honor is acknowledging the value of your loved ones. Safety is created when we act in accordance with that perceived value.

As a pastor, this is where I struggled within my family the most. Many times my family felt devalued compared to my ministry. This is tragic. My legacy is not based on the size of the church or ministry I leave behind, but by my family relationships. When I was having my heart attack, my thoughts were on my family, not on my ministry. Honoring or valuing our family and acting accordingly creates safety.

Once a safe environment is created, we can build on that foundation by understanding what our mate, children, and teenagers need to strengthen our intimacy.

## BUILDING INTIMACY WITH YOUR SPOUSE

If human relationships are to function as they were designed to, we must understand what each person needs to feel loved.

### What is an emotional or relational need?

We all desire a lifelong marriage. No one gets married thinking, *I can't wait to spend the next 2 years with this person*. We also desire a relationship that is enjoyable and thriving. To enjoy a lifelong and satisfying marriage, we must understand

what our mate needs within the marriage relationship.

Relational needs are our wants, desires, and the things that make us feel loved or cared for. Relational needs require constant attention. Sadly, relational needs are often neglected in our marriages. When your mate's relational battery is drained by living, working, children, friends, and just life in general, it needs to be recharged.

When needs are not being met, your marriage is at stake. Your mate can become defensive, argumentative, jealous, belligerent, withdrawn, or degrading of others. We also tend



to be irritated, discouraged, edgy, hypersensitive, and reactionary to average events that occur in a typical marriage.

Furthermore, the need for companionship in a long-lasting relationship is so strong that men and women will go to any length to satisfy it. But if marriage isn't meeting their needs, they may seek fulfillment outside the marriage through an emotional or sexual affair. They may also get these needs fulfilled at work, play, through relatives, friends, children, or in the community at large.

### Discovering your mate's needs

Before you can begin meeting your mate's needs, you need to know what they are. The first law of fulfilling needs is to realize that everyone's needs are different because they are based on personalities, backgrounds, and expectations. So you must first recognize your mate's needs, as well as your own. To

accomplish this, ask each other to respond to this statement: "I feel loved or cared for when you ...". Your answers will unlock the door to your greatest relational needs.

### Just 20 minutes per day

Your spouse's relational batteries will be recharged when you attend to his or her needs. According to Dr. John Gottman, this can take place in as little as 20 minutes a day. Gottman discovered the difference between a couple who divorces and one that is unhappy but stays together is where the couple spends 10 minutes a day "turning toward" each other. By "turning toward" he means interacting with each other every day through positive words or affirmative interactions.

Gottman also found that couples who stay together and are happy "turn toward" each other 10 minutes more each day than unhappily married couples. We can surmise 20 minutes a day of "turning toward each other" in substantial ways can make the difference between divorce and staying together in a happy, satisfying relationship. This was exciting news for my wife and me in full-time ministry. With all that happens with the kids, work, and church, 20 minutes per day feels completely realistic.

### Creating the ideal sexual environment

In many marriages, especially pastoral couples, creating the ideal sexual environment is an afterthought. We often don't spend consistent, purposeful energy on our sexual relationship. Why then are we perplexed when our sexual relationships are sources of pain and heartache rather than joy and satisfaction?

Consider John and Amanda. John is a pastor. They were married in their mid-twenties and both expected a great life in ministry together. From the beginning, however, there were

numerous differences and disappointments that surprised them both. They kept hoping they would eventually figure out how to really enjoy being together. Life continued, the church grew, kids arrived, and the little disappointments and struggles led to increasing distance and unhappiness.

One area of constant struggle was in the bedroom. Neither was happy and things only got worse. Sex went from infrequent to nonexistent. Their marriage was on the rocks. This was the primary reason John rarely preached on the subject of marriage and sex from the pulpit.

## Your spouse's relational batteries will be recharged when you attend to his or her needs.

I hear this all too familiar story of a pastoral couple experiencing relational misery. Yet, in this case circumstances and good counsel turned their marriage around. John and Amanda have now been married over 20 years and love their relationship. Amazingly, their sex life is active and mutually satisfying. How does a couple like John and Amanda move from being closed and distant to passionate and in love?

After working with hundreds of ministry couples like John and Amanda, I've come to a key conclusion about the way people generally feel about sex — most people would love to have a great sex life. This includes people who claim to be uninterested, bored, or even disgusted. Consider the following statement that we believe applies to almost everybody: A close relationship in a safe environment filled with romance and adventure allows sex to become natural and a welcome addition to an already good situation.

If having a great sex life sounds appealing to you, ask yourself, *How do I create a relationship in which we both look forward to sex and enjoy it?* The answer is to strive to create an ideal sexual environment. This task is always part of a great relationship and takes into account the likes, dislikes, feelings, needs, and natures of the people involved.

The easier approach to intimacy is to focus on creating a safe environment for yourself and for your spouse. You will be naturally inclined to relax and be open when both of you feel safe. Then, intimacy will simply happen.

Since sexual intimacy takes people to the most vulnerable places a relationship can go, the risks are great. A foundation of emotional safety built into your marriage makes opening up sexually significantly easier. When you and your spouse know that both of you are committed to creating a safe marriage, you avoid things that would cause hurt and begin building a foundation for a great relationship. A great sex life grows out of a great relationship.





### **Love and caring: getting warmer**

Safety is not all that is needed to create a great relationship and lead it to the ideal sexual relationship. A secure environment may be comfortable, but it also can be lifeless and boring.

The second component for a great sex life is deep caring and love. Caring about another person is always optional. It is also risky. When you choose to care you risk being hurt, rejected, and disappointed. Loving someone who does not return love can be a sad, lonely, and painful experience. The alternative is to choose not to care, or to limit your caring.

Choosing not to care is a strategy people use to connect without being hurt. Not caring may protect you from being rejected or disappointed, but this strategy achieves a hollow victory at great cost. Your ability to experience meaningful intimacy is a function of your capacity to love and care. Your “love hunger” will not be satisfied and will be grumbling for attention should you choose to not care.

People find many ways to address unmet longings: affairs, overeating, emotional distance, and numerous other escapes. All of them will leave people unfulfilled, and sadly, many of these ways to address unmet longings are unfortunate, unhealthy, or destructive.

The essence of genuine love and caring is connected to feelings and emotions. For a relationship to progress to the next level, emotions become central. People need to know others care about their feelings and consider those feelings extremely important. When you care about and accept how your spouse feels, this does not mean you agree or share the same feeling. It is more about communicating, “I care about how you feel because I love you and you matter to me; therefore, your feelings matter to me.”

For people to feel emotionally cared for, their feelings need to be accepted without judgment, and recognized as important and valuable. To judge, ignore, or try to change your partner's feelings communicates that his or her feelings are wrong, or that you don't care. Because people generally don't consciously choose their feelings, telling them their feelings

feels, he or she translates that into, “I care about you.” This message of love helps create an emotionally safe environment.

When you choose to care, you might think you are taking a risk and your spouse alone reaps the benefits. But when you choose to care, you create an opportunity to experience the love, warmth, and affection that go along with caring.

While choosing not to care may seem safer, not caring tends to create an empty, cold, and lifeless aftereffect. Choosing to care feels vital and alive. When experienced within the safety you have created in your marriage, caring allows love to flow freely — and that benefits everyone involved. Caring and love are clear indicators of a good relationship and increase the potential for a great relationship.

In the same vein, attempting to pursue sexual intimacy without love and caring feels unsafe and emotionally empty. People sometimes mistakenly assume sex is always an act of love. Sex is an act of love when it is expressed in a way that feels loving to the people involved. Sex is “making love” when it is an expression of love that already exists between two people.

Safety provides comfort in a relationship. Love warms things up. One more ingredient makes things hot.

### **Romance, adventure, and passion: now you're hot**

After creating a foundation of safety, then adding love and caring, the third component for a great relationship includes three elements: romance, adventure, and passion. These elements spice up a relationship and keep things hot throughout your marriage. Marriages can be functional without romance and passion. However, a marriage relationship without some adventure creates passionless sex and boredom. This is critical for a couple in full-time ministry.

Many people mistakenly associate romance with where you are or what you do. Cards, flowers, candlelight, and special places can enhance romance, but fascination sparks true romance. When two people allow themselves to be fascinated by each other and engage in a lifelong journey of adventure and discovery, romance flourishes.

## **The most happy and fulfilled people are those who have close, quality relationships that endure through the good times and bad.**

shouldn't exist or should be different puts them on the defensive. They instantly feel they are wrong for being who they are. Defensiveness is evidence of not feeling safe.

When you are in a relationship with someone who judges your feelings or doesn't care how you feel, it is difficult to feel safe. Additionally, when one spouse sends the message, “I don't care how you feel,” that message will never communicate love. When you communicate your care for how your spouse

Mutual discovery fuels a large portion of infatuation — infatuation that, in the early stages of a relationship, is exciting and intoxicating. The flames of romance dim when people believe they know all they can about their partner, allow the relationship to become routine, don't like what they find, or give up on building an interesting and exciting marriage.

Curiosity is natural for people; boredom is a man-made phenomenon. There is nothing inherently boring about the life we

have been given. We can choose to stop being curious or interested in learning and growing. But in reality, we can always learn something. We may think our relationship is boring, or our spouse is dull and predictable. However, couples never

absent. Your options for ongoing variety narrow and become somewhat restricted. But if each of you continues to learn, grow, and evolve, and your relationship continues to grow and change, you'll enjoy a newness and excitement, a relationship

## The foundational component for intimacy is a truly safe environment — one that is safe physically, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally.

know what tomorrow will bring. They may experience a crisis or challenge, sometimes a victory, tragedy, sorrow, or at times, joy and pleasure. Whatever occurs, we have the ability to learn, grow, and be curious and interested — this is the essence of romance and passion.

We can never fully know another human being, especially when he or she is continuing to learn and grow. By being willing to discover more about your spouse over time, your ongoing curiosity and discovery will keep the flames of romance burning. Stay curious and interested — to do so is your choice.

Fanning the flames of romance requires a willingness to continually learn and grow as an individual and as a couple. It requires an ongoing investment of time and energy, and the payoff is a journey that is fun, interesting, adventurous, exciting, and playful, depending on how you approach it. The journey can also turn into a chore if you view the time and effort as an unpleasant task. Your attitude is an important factor in keeping your relationship alive with passion, and makes difficult moments seem easier to handle.

You can significantly enhance the romance and passion in your marriage by finding out how to give and express love to your spouse. To speak to your spouse's heart often requires doing something different from what you are naturally inclined to do, or would personally prefer your spouse to do. Taking time to find out what makes your spouse feel loved and then acting on it, especially when it is not your natural style, communicates deep caring that tends to inspire good feelings in your spouse. The journey to discover what makes your spouse feel loved can be a wonderful part of the adventure.

When we choose to engage in the adventures of life with our spouse — learning and growing together through the unexpected turns of life — we experience a deepening closeness and an exciting sense of discovery. This sense of adventure is what continues to fuel romance and leads to a shared passion.

The potential impact on a couple's relationship can be significant. Romance and excitement bring a natural increase in interest and passion to be together sexually. Without the curiosity to embrace adventure, romance, and passion, dealing with intimacy tends to become tedious. You and your partner have seen the same bodies numerous times before and, as you age, you discover your youth is conspicuously

alive with passion, and a sexual intimacy that continues to be a wonderful expression of that passion.



### BUILDING INTIMACY WITH YOUR CHILDREN

One of my favorite quotes is: "Fifty years from now it will not matter what kind of car you drove, what kind of house you lived in, how much you had in your bank account, or what your clothes looked like. But the world may be a little better because you were important in the life of a child." I want to be important in the life of my children.

When asked about the privileges of growing up in a wealthy home, a young, successful attorney said the greatest gift he ever received was from his father. One Christmas morning among the piles of neatly wrapped presents was a small box. Inside was a note saying, "Son, this year I will give you 365 hours, an hour every day after dinner."





“This simple present became the greatest gift I ever had in my life” explained the attorney. “Because my dad not only kept his promise, but every year he renewed it. I am the result of his time.”

This story found in *God's Little Devotional Book for Dads* illustrates the key to developing a friendship with our children: scheduling special times with them. Friendships don't develop by chance or accident. Meaningful friendships are a result of spending time together on a regular — preferably daily — basis. Many times I've listened to preachers' kids talk about feeling neglected by their parents, especially their fathers. My own children felt that way from time to time.

It's easy to get caught up in the tyranny of the unfinished. As a pastor, I learned early that there is always more ministry that can be done. It's an endless parade of opportunities; and, if we are not careful, we can get swept up in the destructive cycle. We need to get into the habit of setting aside special

time for our children each day. For example, we could play a game together, read a book, have a special movie night, or go to our favorite park as a family. The important part is not what we do but that we all enjoy it.

Since everyone may enjoy different activities, solicit suggestions from family members to learn what would be their favorite ones. List each activity on a small piece of paper and stuff them into an empty fishbowl. Each week (or several times during the week) pick a different activity to do as a family. This way everyone will eventually get to do his favorite activity.

For parents of teenagers, I tweak this advice somewhat. I have found that one of the best ways for parents to spend time

## We need to get into the habit of setting aside special time for our children each day.

with their teenagers is to first understand something very important — teenagers are different than young children. Youngsters need us to set special times each day. Teenagers don't need or even want this same treatment. Most teenagers have busy lives (school, sports, clubs, youth group, and band), and they need us to become involved in their activities. Therefore, in addition to scheduled family time, teenagers need for us to attend their games, band or choir performances, and school plays. A deeper friendship can develop as we get excited about participating in their activities because this conveys a valuable message: “Your interests are important to me.”





## Become available to your children

Having scheduled time with your children is important. However, if you are to strengthen your relationships with them, you need to be available during unscheduled times as well. It is important for us to make time when our children need it — watching for teachable moments. There are times when we are reading the paper, studying the Scriptures, preparing for a sermon, watching TV, or fixing dinner, and one of our children might say, “Mommy, read me a story.” or “Daddy, will you throw the football with me?”

At these times, we must be careful what we communicate. If we say, “Not now, I’m busy,” they’ll observe what we are

doing and compare their importance to it. The worst thing for our children’s spiritual development is for them to feel less valuable compared to our ministry.

At times we can drop what we’re doing, because our children are simply more important. It’s helpful to remember that most children don’t expect their parents to drop all of their activities and always be instantly available. But children need to see that these activities are not as valuable as they are to their parents.

This same advice is true with teenagers. Teens have a great need to develop friendships in different peer groups. For this reason, teens usually spend more time away from home, and

# BALANCING FAMILY, MINISTRY, AND WORK

Life can be a balancing act, especially if your family is in full-time ministry and your spouse is employed outside the home. Many ministers’ wives have secured employment to supplement income, obtain health insurance, or pursue a career, while serving with their husbands in ministry.

Ministerial families encounter various and unique demands, pressures, stresses, and expectations not placed on other families. The minister is expected to care for church families and adherents and be responsible for the people who serve with him on staff or as volunteers. A pastor directs and oversees many aspects of the church and the ministries in his care — all ministries if he is the senior pastor. Most people do not comprehend the ministers’ responsibilities. They also do not understand the extra stresses of ministerial families who have a spouse employed outside the home.

It is challenging to balance ministry, family life, and time with your spouse when he or she is employed outside the home. However, it can be done. I know, because my wife has worked outside our home for most of our marriage and ministry. Here are a few helpful suggestions for the pastoral family who has a spouse employed outside the home.

1. Put God first. Prayer, Bible study, worship, and time with God will refresh your spirit and edify you personally.
2. Make time for your spouse. Join your spouse for a meal at your favorite restaurant. Plan trips for just the two of you.
3. Spend time together as a family. Take your children on special dates occasionally. They will appreciate time spent with just you. Take days off and take vacations.
4. Visit with minister friends over a meal, coffee, or some enjoyable activity. All ministers need to develop friendships with fellow ministers.
5. Join an accountability group. This will allow you to share personal needs, develop spiritual relationships, and grow in your faith.
6. Spend time praying with your spouse and family to promote family growth and set important priorities for life.

7. Develop friendships in your ministry setting. A minister can have meaningful friendships in the church he serves, even though he must not share deep personal needs and concerns.
8. Be patient with work schedules. Some employers will expect your spouse to work overtime. At times work schedules will change, and this may require adjustments in your home and schedule.
9. Share some of the home responsibilities. Some are: transporting children to school or baby-sitters, cooking, cleaning, and supervising home activities. Ideally, it is wise to share home responsibilities whether or not your spouse works outside the home, because working in the home is a full-time job.
10. Attend sectional, district, and national conventions as time allows. Additional training and personal seminars will help you grow in your ministry.
11. Visit a professional Christian counselor, if needed. Counselors can provide valuable assistance to the pastoral family.
12. Make exercise and a healthy diet part of your routine. You will feel better, look better, have more energy, and be healthier.
13. Maintain and nurture a positive, pleasant, and productive attitude (Philippians 4:8). A good sense of humor is also a blessing (Proverbs 17:22).
14. Read uplifting Christian literature. Select such topics as time management, marital relationships, personal growth, and pastoral enrichment.
15. Do not degrade yourself or feel guilty because your spouse maintains employment outside the home.

Each family is unique and will devise methods of coping with work schedules and the demands and stresses of ministry life. God is concerned with meeting your needs (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19; 1 Peter 5:7). Your attitude, spiritual life, and personal relationships will be healthier as you take steps to manage the unique stresses of ministry, family life, and work schedules.

**JERRY NEWSWANDER**, Platte City, Missouri

talking with friends, either in person or on the telephone. Whereas the family is the primary supplier of a child's emotional needs, peer group friendships provide teenagers with additional opportunities for emotional intimacy, support, and understanding as well as companionship and fun. As parents we must not become discouraged. Instead, we need to learn how to complement a teenager's need for outside friendships.

A good way for parents to complement a teen's need for peer relationships, while continuing to develop their own friendship, is by being available. Teens might go a whole day without seeking our help. But, as Ross Campbell, M.D., explains in his book, *How To Really Love Your Teenager*,

that his or her parents are available when needed. But teens also need to see that it's OK to want peer group friendships as well.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Life is relationships; the rest is just details. These eight simple words tell me that we were made for relationships. We will find fulfillment and joy nowhere else. The aspects of life that are important, necessary, and highly prized, in the absence of satisfying relationships, have no power to bring us real happiness.

We were also designed to experience significant levels of connection and intimacy within our marriage and family

# Although misaligned priorities do not strengthen family relationships, the main culprit that destroys intimacy is feeling unsafe in our relationships.

teens have something like a "container" built within them and occasionally they run out of "emotional gas." This is when they come up and need to be close to us. They need touching, listening, understanding, and our time. When they come to us, we must be careful what we communicate. If we say, "Not now, I'm busy," like young children, they'll observe what we are doing and compare their importance to it.

After we have filled their "emotional gas tank" they usually are off to be with their friends. Maybe we haven't explained everything we wanted to say, but they're filled up. And that's OK. A teenager needs to know that he or she is valuable and

relationships. For many good reasons, however, we often find intimacy difficult to achieve and sustain. Sadly, many of us experience relationships that fall below what we might enjoy or want. As a pastor or person in full-time ministry, you know the challenges we face in creating the ideal relationship with our spouse and loved ones. The list of reasons why are long and painful. But there is hope.

Take time to review the components in this article. As you begin to practice these, you will increase the likelihood of having a great marriage, great family relationships, and develop your potential to move toward greater intimacy.

Coming together occasionally, hoping all the pieces will fall perfectly into place, will not achieve the true intimacy God desires for our marriages and families. It is possible that frenzied, half-hearted preparation for intimacy can create the illusion of success. However, with a little forethought, a mindset that strives to create safety, love and caring, fascination with your loved ones and special time together, this illusion of success changes quickly into concrete reality. Best of all, you can experience enjoyable relationships for a lifetime. ■

© 2004 George Crenshaw



"Don't think for one minute that you can go over my head!"



**GARY SMALLEY** is founder and chairman of the board of the Smalley Relationship Center, Branson, Missouri. For additional resources for pastors and family relationships see Smalley's newest book, *Men's Relational Toolbox* or visit his website at [www.smalleyonline.com](http://www.smalleyonline.com).

ENDNOTE  
1. Anonymous



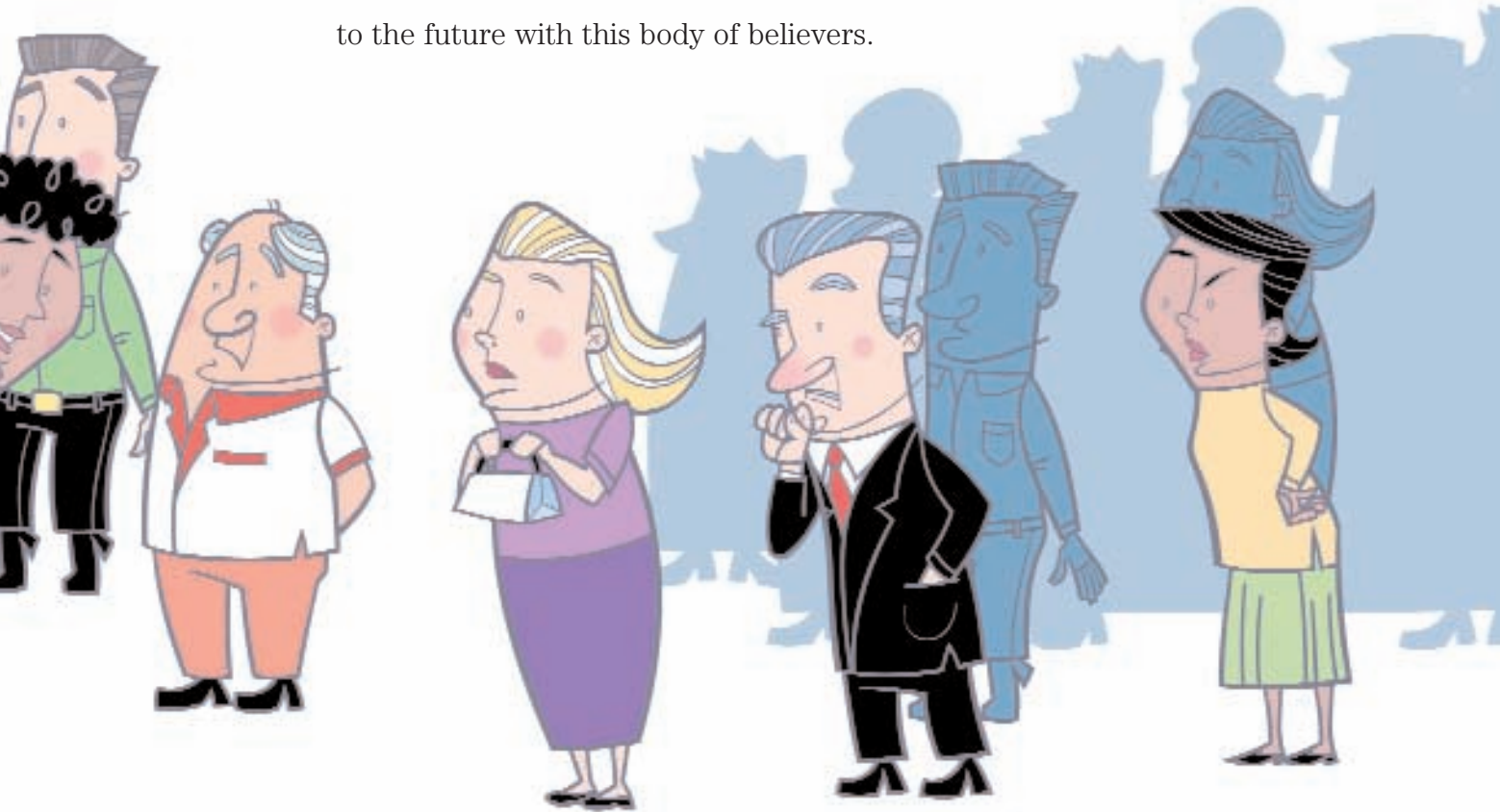
# surviving the parsonage—



Intimacy Issues for the Pastor's Wife



**B**asking in the glow of a surprise anniversary celebration, I exited the church beside my friend, who was also a pastor's wife. Our congregation had gone to great lengths to express its appreciation for our 10 years of ministry to them. The day was filled with warm expressions of love. They presented us with flowers, gave us a reception, and blessed us with a generous check. We received numerous cards containing words of appreciation and blessing. I felt loved and embraced. The close relationships we had built with our congregation were evident by their expressions. I looked forward to the future with this body of believers.



---

B Y G A B R I E L E R I E N A S

With a twinkle in her eye, my friend asked, “Do you feel loved?” My reply was a strong affirmative. She wisely advised, “Tuck the memory of this feeling away for the days when you will need it.” A knowing look passed between us. She was not necessarily prophetic, but she was experienced. She was referring to the challenges a pastor’s wife has and the ups and downs of ministry.

## DEAL WITH EXPECTATIONS THROUGH A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

Being married to a pastor is similar to being married to the president of the United States. Even though the husband takes the official role of leadership, there are expectations and responsibilities that are inherently passed on to his wife — whether she likes it or not.

I am always troubled and perplexed by the wistful statement from the pastor’s wife who says, “I was never called into the ministry like my husband was.” I understand that the underlying inference is that “the ministry” carries a set of expectations, standards, and requirements that she does not feel she can live up to.

Many people have a mental picture of what a pastor’s wife should be. They may expect her to look, act, or dress a certain way. They may expect a specific kind of church involvement or prefer certain personality traits. The expectations vary from congregation to congregation and culture to culture and are often not articulated until she fails to live up to them. This results in unexpected criticism or tension.

Many times criticism comes because we have not built close relationships with others. This lack of understanding can produce unmet expectations for both the pastor’s wife and the congregation.

**Even though the husband takes the official role of leadership, there are expectations and responsibilities that are inherently passed on to his wife — whether she likes it or not.**

Early in our ministry I was criticized for wearing casual pants to the grocery store. My accusers never faced me. I heard it third-hand. I remember feeling defensive, hurt, and betrayed. I was trying to be a good pastor’s wife, and this criticism was unanticipated and seemed petty. Even though I was outwardly indignant, at a deeper level I felt I had failed.

Dealing with expectations requires a realistic view of oneself. A healthy self-image goes a long way in developing the confidence you need as a pastor’s wife.

As a pastor’s wife I must remember that I am a person first — uniquely created by God for a special purpose. My Creator,

who knew me before I was in my mother’s womb (Jeremiah 1:5), gave me a special mix of personality traits and internal gifts to accomplish that purpose. When we embrace and develop what God has given us, we feel fulfilled and significant. When we try to be something else, we feel frustrated and out of sorts.

There are some expectations that are reasonable for a pastor’s wife. It is reasonable to expect her to pray for her husband and the church, for her to actively support the church, and for her to make her home a safe haven for her family. (*See sidebar “Ways a Pastor’s Wife Can Support Her Husband.”*) However, there is room for individuality and variety that makes a unique contribution to the kingdom of God. A pastor who supports his wife in this liberates her greatly. The congregation will follow and be freed to do the same in their lives.

## UNDERSTAND THAT CONFLICT COMES FROM A LACK OF INTIMACY

Criticism is a fact of life. Learning to deal with it can help us grow. Church life is particularly vulnerable and susceptible to criticism. A congregation is like a family. People have spiritually, emotionally, and financially invested in the direction of the church. They take ownership of what happens and how the leadership accomplishes things. Discomfort arises when they have unmet expectations or feel excluded from decisions. When people feel their intimacy and trust have been violated, they often express their discomfort in critical, punitive ways and conflict enters the picture.

The painful reality is that sometimes friendships are broken and people leave the church as a result of conflict. This can be tremendously painful for the pastor’s wife. People who are unhappy with the pastor tend to distance themselves from his

wife whether she is directly involved or not. Occasionally, I have experienced a perplexing coldness from church members I happened to encounter around town. Later, I discovered they were upset about an issue that was church related but had nothing to do with me. After these frustrating experiences, one is tempted to become self-protective and distant, holding people at arm’s length.

Dealing with difficult church members is also a challenge. Is there a seasoned pastor’s wife who has not been accosted in public with complaints and criticisms from people who have an uninformed, skewed perspective? Others prefer to vent on

## WAYS A PASTOR'S WIFE CAN SUPPORT HER HUSBAND

1. Frequently find positive things to say about his sermons.
2. Express appreciation, affirmation, and admiration, privately and publicly.
3. Refuse to entertain negative comments or criticisms about him by directing complainers back to him.
4. Laugh at his jokes.
5. Use advice sparingly and with permission.
6. Make home a safe, warm place.
7. Actively pursue personal growth in your relationship with Jesus.
8. Define and develop your own personal strengths and gifts, incorporating them into the ministry of the church.

**GABRIELE RIENAS**, Aloha, Oregon

the pastor's wife, choosing a nondirect way to voice their concerns instead of dealing with issues head-on. (See sidebar "Dealing With Conflict," page 66.)

The Bible encourages us to live in peace with one another. This is the goal of building intimate relationships. When we build close relationships, we are also trusting each other, peace prevails.

Romans 12:18 adds to the perspective: "As far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Do not take revenge, for God will take care of that. He will punish those who do not take care of others. Do not be angry, for God will be angry with you. Do not take revenge, for God will take care of that. He will punish those who do not take care of others."

Scripture suggests we take responsibility for the issue over which we have control. If there is a specific complaint that there is, determine what needs to be done and take the steps to do so. If you are reluctant or unable to define their needs, create terms. This reluctance is a sign of content and may be projecting the unhappiness on others. Trying to appease them is similar to trying to appease a charging lion by a friendly wave and smile. It is better to pray hard for God to stop the lion in its tracks.

Nothing has more potential to get under my skin than uninformed, critical comments about our church. I feel defensive and protective of my husband. My first impulse is to fix everything because I know the

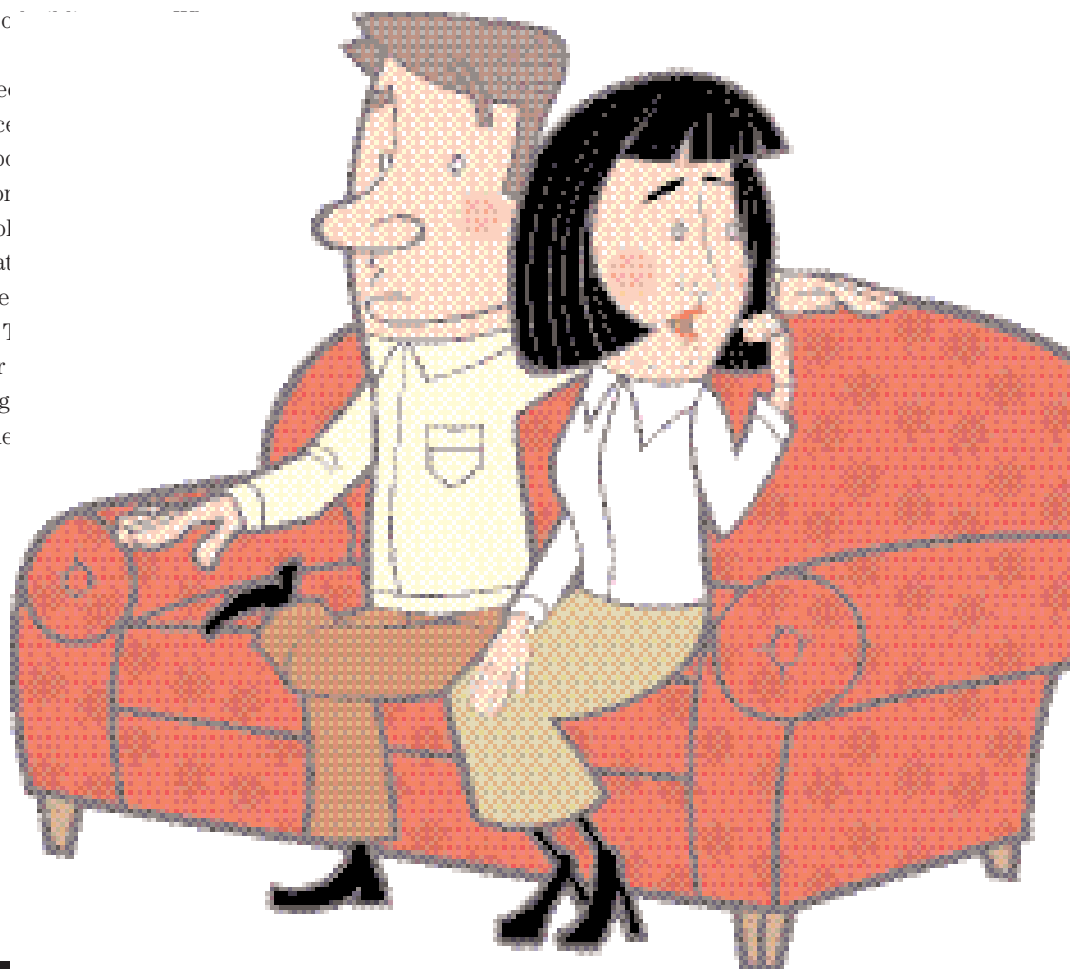
painful consequences of conflict and dissatisfaction in the church. Unfortunately, my desire to educate, inform, rescue, resolve, or correct rarely brings the desired result. The Book of Proverbs wisely teaches that getting in the middle of someone else's conflict is foolish — "Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own" (Proverbs 26:17). I no longer entertain conversations such as these. I direct the complainer to the person who is directly responsible. If it is my husband, I trust him to work it out the way he thinks best and to learn from that experience. In this way I step out of the middle of things and relinquish control.

Giving up control forces me to confront my fear of conflict. I have learned to cling to God's absolute promise of guidance and protection. The promise of Jeremiah 29:11 is a life preserver: "For I know the plans I have for you ... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

## BUILD AN INTIMATE MARRIAGE

Marriage is difficult in the best of circumstances. Ministry brings extra challenges to the husband-wife relationship. Time management is a constant challenge. Sometimes there are not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything we want to for the kingdom of God.

All too easily, the marriage





## DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Conflict can only be resolved if both parties are willing to be honest and to entertain another perspective. If not, the process is unproductive and painful.

### **LISTEN ACTIVELY**

- Ask questions.
- Rephrase what you are hearing.
- Be nondefensive.

### **CLARIFY THE ISSUE**

- What's wrong?
- Ask, "Why is this issue important to you?"
- Validate their perspective — "I can see this is important to you."

### **ASK FOR SUGGESTIONS**

- Ask, "What is your solution?"
- Define changes in behavioral terms — "What can I do differently?"
- Define what would resolve it in his or her mind — "How will we know that things have changed?"

### **SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE**

- Stay calm — your demeanor can defuse or escalate things.
- Give information.
- Clarify your perspective.
- Find something in his or her complaint that you can agree with — "I do have a tendency to be abrupt sometimes. I will work on that."

### **NEGOTIATE A SOLUTION**

- "I can do \_\_\_\_\_; but it would help me if you would \_\_\_\_\_"
- Affirm his or her willingness to negotiate.
- Set a date to review progress.

**GABRIELE RIENAS**, Aloha, Oregon

totally occupied with church work and exclude time with his family. It is difficult to argue with his service for the Kingdom.

Then, too, the pastor's marriage is public. Their interactions are watched, scrutinized, and copied by others. If there are challenges, it is difficult to know where to turn. Pastors preach messages on marriage and advise couples with problems. Reaching out for help can be humbling and unsafe. In some cases it can jeopardize their ministry.

Trust is also an issue. The pastor is as susceptible to moral downfall as anyone. His image as a spokesperson for God makes him an attractive figure to women who are needy and unfulfilled. The challenge is to maintain a strong and open marriage and face temptations together.

The basic ingredients of a healthy marriage are unconditional love, positive regard, and unwavering commitment. In this atmosphere, a relationship will flourish and overcome obstacles. A successful marriage may have problems, but the husband and wife will successfully navigate trouble as a team. When ministry challenges begin to affect the marriage, it is a sign of underlying problems in the relationship.

One day a ministry couple sat in my office in great pain. She was bitter,

## Scripture suggests we take responsibility for the part of the issue we have control over.

resentful, and threatening to leave. He was alternately emotionally broken and defensive. Their list of complaints was long, but centered mainly around ministry issues. She complained: he was never around when she needed him; he was the life of the party at church, but emotionally unavailable or bullying at home; he was an absent father for the children. He complained that she was cold and critical, unsupportive, and preoccupied with her secular job. She blamed the ministry; he blamed her lack of involvement in the ministry. I pointed out that the ministry was not their problem — their inability to negotiate the challenges together was the problem. For healing to take place, they had to refocus their energy on their relationship and the dynamics between them that were keeping them from working together on the conflicts.

Each couple must negotiate the wife's degree of church involvement that helps produce a healthy marriage. Her contribution will vary from couple to couple. As a team, a healthy separateness in husband-wife ministry allows the pastor to answer to God in his calling of leadership and make the final decision on issues. I am happy when my husband discusses major church decisions with me but there are times when I feel anxious about his direction. There was a time when I actively attempted to influence his decisions with my perceived wisdom and insight. After all, my life and future were at stake and his wrong decisions would also affect me. He became defensive and conflict arose. I felt insecure, and my husband felt unsupported and criticized.

One young pastor's wife secretly shared with me her feeling that her husband was largely incompetent in certain areas and believed he would fail if she didn't help him. I doubt he had the same perspective. He began to share less and less with her about his daily activities, avoiding her unsolicited input and suggestions. She, sens-



about his daily activities, avoiding her unsolicited input and suggestions. She, sensing his distance, pursued him even more and conflict intensified in the relationship.

Relinquishing control and releasing one's future into the hand of God are difficult, but it is liberating and tremendously relieving to a marriage. When I see my future in the hand of my husband, I can become anxious and fearful. When I see it in the hand of God, I am comforted and at rest.

Ministry couples should be constantly working on their marriage. Regular maintenance on the relationship is a must.

## BUILDING A STRONG MARRIAGE

1. Communicate respect and affirmation.
2. Express appreciation frequently.
3. When in doubt, speak less and pray more.
4. Make your home a place of safety and comfort.
5. Practice accountability.
6. Invest heavily in marriage-building activities — time away, books, seminars, counseling.
7. Seek outside help when needed.

**GABRIELE RIENAS**, Aloha, Oregon

Spending time away, authentic interaction with other couples, and marriage-building events are critical to marital health. For needed help, biblical counseling or mentorship can be the difference between a bright future together or a devastating, destructive breakup. (See the sidebar *"Building a Strong Marriage."*)

## AVOID ISOLATION BY BUILDING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

The most common concern of ministry wives is loneliness. A generation ago, it was believed that pastors' families should not develop close friendships with people in their congregations for a variety of reasons. Now, clergy couples are more open to friendships, yet the loneliness remains.

Most ministry couples experienced the pain of betrayal and disloyalty in the ministry. It seems to be a universal experience. Long-term friends that seemed close and loving suddenly distance themselves, drop out of leadership positions, and finally leave the church altogether. The pain caused by this loss of fellowship is wrenching.

Pastors' wives often do not know where to turn. There is an intense feeling of isolation that arises in a woman's heart when she is confronted with a painful situation and realizes she does not know someone with whom she can share it. Too often, the list of possible confidants is meager.

Still, we were created for meaningful connections with others. Solid, safe relationships are important to our well-being.

Pastors' wives are not exempt from this need, though many factors threaten close bonds. I suggest that the pastor's wife develop a few relationships with people who are not connected with the church. This provides a place for her to step out of her specific role, and provides relationships that are not influenced by church issues.

Early in our ministry I sought out a large, community-based Bible study because I wanted to blend in with the group and not be recognized. Even though I loved being a pastor's wife, on another level I longed for anonymity and freedom from scrutiny.

The wives of fellow ministers make great friends because of their common experiences. An older, more experienced pastor's wife to confide in can be a treasure, especially for the younger pastor's wife. Whether they meet monthly for coffee or prefer a structured mentorship program, the goal is the same: to learn from someone else who has been there. The years teach us not to take things so seriously, to trust ourselves more, and to be less anxious to please others. Seeing these lessons modeled in someone else's life brings encouragement and a renewed perspective.

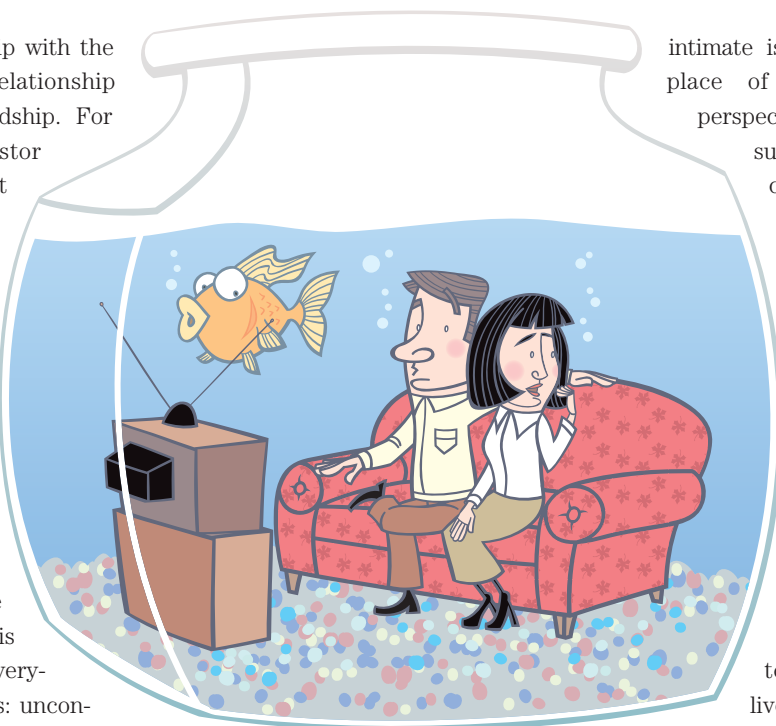
Friendships within the church are also important. In relationships there are both safe and unsafe people. There are certain characteristics of safe people such as maturity, confidentiality, honesty, and forthrightness. Looking for certain traits can help us choose wisely and avoid situations caused by our lack of discernment. (See the sidebar *"Friendships in the Church—Factors To Consider."*)

We must also be aware that church issues do affect church rela-



also has a relationship with the pastor. This dual-relationship can affect the friendship. For example, if the pastor makes a decision that negatively impacts the friend's leadership position, it may bring strain to the friendship. Being aware of this reality helps us to objectively view this kind of difficulty.

The most intimate relationship we have is with our Savior. It is one where we find everything our soul desires: unconditional acceptance, approval, love, direction, and comfort. The potential to grow closer and more



intimate is limitless. It is the ultimate place of rest, healing, wholeness, perspective, and comfort. It is the one support system that is instant, constant, and consistent. We must invest heavily in this relationship.

Being a pastor's wife has its shares of ups and downs. Yet, it is both challenging and rewarding. Navigating the ups and downs requires resilience and commitment to personal growth. Fortunately, God has made a firm commitment to see us through if we willingly submit to His participation in our lives. "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's pur-

pose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21). ■

## FRIENDSHIPS IN THE CHURCH — FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. There are certain people you are more compatible with than others because of personality and personal preference. We are required to love everyone; however, we are not required to maintain the same level of closeness with everyone.
2. Watch people first for maturity and confidentiality. Work into the relationship gradually looking for red flags, like possessiveness or gossip. Be cautious with people who want to become very close, very quickly.
3. Remember that your husband is their pastor. The way they feel about him and the church has the potential to affect your relationship. This is a risk you take.
4. Do not discuss your problems with your husband with your friend. It will affect the way she perceives his leadership and will undermine his pastoral role in her life.
5. Do not entertain complaints about your husband or your children or try to explain their behavior. Don't get caught in the middle. Point people back to the source of their complaint — "You will have to talk to him about that; I do not know what he was thinking."
6. Maintain healthy boundaries in all relationships. Do not become too close to someone and depend on that person to meet your intimacy needs. Guard yourself against jealousy, gossip, possessiveness, and sharing personal things about your marriage.

**GABRIELE RIENAS**, Aloha, Oregon



**GABRIELE RIENAS** has been a pastor's wife for 23 years and is currently at Christian Life Center in Aloha, Oregon. She is a professional counselor with Christian Counseling Center of Oregon, and also does Teambuilding Seminars with churches and businesses. She can be reached at 503-649-4444.

© 2004 Jonny Hawkins





# how to in love fall with your CHURCH







“Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage,” the song goes. But centuries before that song was written, the apostle Paul wrote similar lyrics about love and marriage that may never have been matched to a melody. The two songs agree — love and marriage do go together.

However, the apostle adds several significant components to his song. In the short 11 verses of that lofty, though difficult passage in Ephesians 5:22–33, Paul discusses a pure, holy, radiant church; the headship of Christ over the church; mutual submission; and love between wife and husband. Then, as if the ideas were too mind-boggling for even him, Paul wrote this vigorous sentence, “This is a huge mystery, and I don’t pretend to understand it all” (Ephesians 5:32, *The Message*).

---

B Y N E I L B .  
W I S E M A N

Commentators argue whether “mystery” refers to *marriage* or *church*. I think both. Every happily married couple knows marriage is a miracle and a mystery and a satisfying connection — all rolled into one. Who can explain how a woman and a man so different from each other physically, emotionally, and hormonally can build a happy life together? Paul is right — this is a huge mystery.

As one reads this Scripture passage and tries to unpack its meaning, it speaks profoundly concerning how ministers can develop a happy, loving relationship with their congregations.

Listen with your heart as Paul describes Christ’s love for us and for His church: “Christ’s love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything He does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness” (Ephesians 5:26,27, *The Message*).

Our love can never compare with Christ’s love, yet He is our pattern. To complicate our assignment even more, some churches are easier to love than others. The same is true of pastors.

## THE LOVE CONNECTION — AN ESSENTIAL FOR MINISTRY

Easy or hard, a love connection must be forged between pastor and people because a church’s effectiveness depends on healthy relationships between the congregation and its minister.

A two-way love relationship between pastor and congregation is not the only thing that matters in a church, though little else matters much without it. Sadly, this love factor seems nearly nonexistent in too many congregations.

Here are ways you can deepen your love connection with your congregation and cause them to love you more.

### Start right — could this be love?

When the first flicker of a call to a church comes to a prospective pastor, it’s time for the minister to ask, Could this be the start of something wonderful? Is God bringing us together? Would I fit there? Is this love at first sight? Is the chemistry right?

## Tell your people how privileged you are to be their pastor.

Like a marriage, the answers will be uniquely personal. Ask any married couple how they met and fell in love. The story will likely be unique and sometimes almost ludicrous. Even those who have been married 50 years may giggle like teenagers as they tell their story. As their story unfolds, the ingredients of their relationship may not sound like a solid basis for a strong marriage. But that is exactly what they have built. How it looks to an outsider is not really that important.

In a similar way, strong, affectionate, spiritual-emotional chemistry between a pastor and a congregation is needed at the start of the relationship. Like a marriage, the ingredients will be unique. But the prospective pastor needs to be convinced a loving relationship can be established and maintained or there is no point in going to a new assignment.

### Say, “I love you.”

Tell your people how privileged you are to be their pastor. I heard about a pastor who was always in love with his previous assignment and talked about it often. One wag in his present church said, “Maybe he’ll love us more after he is gone.” An unspoken implication seemed to be, “Maybe it should be soon.”

There is a better way. Speak up. Then watch how much good comes when you communicate love. Every loving word reminds someone of the love of Jesus. Every loving word serves as a boomerang; someone in the congregation will return that love to the pastor. And every loving word grows the soul of the one who originates it.

Practice the words at home and in your study so you can say without a hint of hesitation, “I love you with the love of the Lord.”

### Thank them for loving you.

Some pastors live in a state of perpetual fear because they think their church doesn’t do as much for them as the church across town does for its pastor. Such an attitude may be as silly as comparing two engagement rings. The least costly one may represent the greatest level of devotion and love.

Others believe a church is obligated to treat them like royalty. At midlife and beyond some pastors believe they have

“paid their dues” and the church owes them something for their years of service. That false notion does not sound like the sacrifice, obedience, and death-to-self that starts at the Cross.

Think how rich you really are — a child of the King in service to the King’s people. We preach from His pulpit and work in His office. We represent the King every day among His people. We speak for Him and oversee His church. But we wisely remember we are not the King. The King never intends that any of us be exalted or pampered.

### **Be worthy of honor.**

Every pastor knows the biblical admonition given to the people of God to give special honor to their spiritual leaders. Paul gives the honor charge in two of his epistles. In the Thessalonian passage he said, “Friends, we ask you to honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm them with appreciation and love!” (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13, *The Message*).

Again Paul suggests honor, even double honor: “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17).

In *Pastors at Greater Risk*, H.B. London and I tell the story of a lay leader who helped the church where he served do everything possible to honor, even provide double honor, for their new pastor. But then he asked the church consultant who had helped the church find a new pastor, “Does anybody remind pastors that the Bible passages about honor have two sides?”

## **Easy or hard, a love connection must be forged between pastor and people because a church’s effectiveness depends on healthy relationships between the congregation and its minister.**

That faithful layman is right. The passage says the pastor’s side of honor is to work hard, lead the church, and admonish the people of God. Double honor is for those who teach and preach.

In the day-by-day details, the awe of being set apart for ministry by the Sovereign Lord tends to grow dim. A renewed sense of responsibility is needed to do ministry well and please God. Then, too, a deepening realization of a final accountability for our pastoral service must also shape our long-term thinking.

### **Love people unconditionally.**

Cherish people as trophies of grace. The basic distinctive of the New Testament church is a love that heals shattered human relationships, melts destructive misunderstandings, fosters wholehearted forgiveness, encourages authentic

fellowship, and motivates effective witness.

God created His church for people, not for denominations, theological systems, social action, or even pastors. He wants the church to win people, develop people, and to involve people in service to the world.

One veteran pastor said, “The primary purpose of sheep is to complicate the life of the shepherd, and no one needs to teach them how to do it.” If we wait to love people until they become what we want them to be, we may wait a long time. Our task, by God’s grace, is to love them the way they are while believing in their potential.

Don’t be shocked by the variety in people. Some people are magnanimous, others cantankerous; some gentle, others goofy; some wonderful, others weird; some sensitive, others self-centered; some dependable, others worthless; some thankful, others touchy. And all of them need a shepherd to love them enough to show them the way home to God.

C.S. Lewis opened up the positive possibilities of diversity: “For the church is not a human society of people united by their natural affinities but the body of Christ, in which all members, however different, must share the common life, complementing and helping one another precisely by their differences.”<sup>1</sup>

The church exists for people. Believe in them. Care about them. Help them discover their full potential.

### **Commit to a lifelong courtship.**

The story is from the Sunday newspaper in our city. A man, now well into his 80s, was asked as his 67th wedding anniversary approached, “What advice do you have for younger husbands?”

He replied, “You have to keep doing what you did to win her heart in the first place.” There is something good and useful in that advice for a pastor’s love relationship to a church.

But what about times when feelings of love have evaporated? Ann Landers once counseled her readers, “Keep doing acts of love and the feeling will follow.”

### **Preach love.**

Go back to the Bible and feed your soul by reading the love passages. Teach your people over and over that our love for one another grows naturally out of God’s love for us. Show them that love is a gift we receive from God and pass on to those around us. Try building a spiritual atmosphere in your church that fulfills this biblical challenge: “Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t





love to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that" (Ephesians 5:2, *The Message*).

### **Become a whole person.**

Character counts. Personal piety is expected. Being comes before doing, and character is the wellspring of conduct. Most congregations, if they had to make a choice between a skillful minister and a holy minister, would choose holy.

In this age of unprecedented dysfunction and brokenness, the church sometimes becomes the last stop for hurting, confused, messed-up people. And what a welcome refuge it is for them. As a result, many find a brand-new life in Christ, a life of transformed new beginnings. But in the process some have a persistent problem or two — a habit, a scar, a tender spot, or a secret sin. If you are in that group, do whatever it takes to mend those broken places and heal those hurts.

A close second to the need for having brokenness healed is the need to be utterly dependent on God. The pastor who tries to minister in human strength has no more to give than the attorney, engineer, or doctor. It is that something extra in our lives — the grace, presence, and power of God — that makes us victorious and effective and helps convince people that what we preach is authentic and true.

## **The church exists for people. Believe in them. Care about them. Help them discover their full potential.**

The apostle Paul emphasized the matter of being whole in this powerful summary statement: "Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity. Stay at your post reading Scripture, giving counsel, teaching" (1 Timothy 4:12,13, *The Message*).

### **Do your congregation a favor; try to understand yourself.**

How do you think? What are your predictable reactions? What is the driving force in your life? What are your motives?

Self-understanding is an important key to understanding others. Question your motives by asking, *Why did I do that?* Cross-examine yourself about the way you chair meetings. Check yourself on how you spend your money. This reveals a lot about your character. Question yourself to determine if you manipulate administrative tasks to get your own way, then justify your action by calling it the will of God.

### **Consider your call as a divine assignment.**

The apostle Paul looked at his work as an assignment from







God. For example, he said to the Galatians, “When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood” (Galatians 1:15,16, KJV).

## **Failure to use strong people and a desire to control every ministry or program, are two significant factors that keep churches small.**

What a declaration! Look at the components of the apostle’s call: set apart for ministry before he was born; called by grace; a credibility and joy as Jesus was revealed in his life and ministry; and a divine call to the heathen, probably the Jews of his time.

A divine call provides muscle, might, and motivation for ministry. It helps develop a sense of mission and an awareness of holy enabling, so the man of God can attempt and accomplish more than he thought he could. The call lived out gives an authority for preaching, perseverance, and empowerment to love all whom the Lord loves — that is, everyone we meet.

### **Enjoy ministry as a way of life.**

Though ministry may be viewed both as a profession and a calling, its essence is the greatest cause known to humankind. Like parenting, ministry is day in and day out, year in and year out. This reality of ministry can be happily accepted or resisted with kicking and screaming, but it is still a fact.

### **Refuse to be a professional recluse.**

Pastors are sometimes taught to believe they are supposed to live in professional isolation. I was trained that way. The idea is to have surface relationships with everyone and not allow anyone to get too close to you. The rationale for this advice is if someone gets too close, others will be jealous. And if people get too close, they will break your heart when it’s time to leave.

The logic is laughable, isn’t it?

In the closing days of my first pastorate, I followed the prevailing custom of isolation. I announced, “In the will of God, we are leaving to take a new assignment. That means no letters, no greeting cards, and no phone calls will be either sent or received.”

One of the older women in the church thought my position a bit strange. Soon after we were settled in our new assignment, our first child was born. Within 2 weeks of his birth, our baby received a letter from this older woman at our former church. Among other things it said, “Your daddy told us we could not write him, so I am writing you. Please tell your mommy and daddy that we love them and always will.”

Could it be that many frustrations in ministry are rooted in social isolation? While we talk about love, fellowship, and community, we practice suspicion, privacy, and individualism.

### **Check God’s perspective of your assignment.**

When God sends you to a place, He knows all about that place and He knows your abilities, background, and potential. When an assignment is offered or taken that seems in the will of God, ask yourself what God has in mind for you to accomplish

in that place. When God sends you, you need to remain there until His plan has been accomplished.

### **Share dreams, imaginations, and creativity.**

The church often seems incredibly bound by her traditions. The amazing, maybe humorous, reality is that much of what is considered tradition in our time started out as a new adventure in some previous era. The history of Sunday School, modern missions, and scheduling service at 11 a.m. on Sunday to give farmers time to finish their chores before coming to church were all cutting-edge innovations in their day. And the people then were probably saying, “We never did it that way before.”

Keeping the future, past, and present in a healthy balance is hard work in the ministry. Every church and individual is shaped by their history. Traditions have to be acknowledged, and change sometimes comes slowly. Meanwhile, the present is significant and the future is as bright as the promises of God.

Some ministers spend their days hoping against hope for a future that never comes. Others live in the present, without much regard for what was and without dreaming about what could be. Often their work is like a cut flower — beautiful but with no roots. A good remedy is to think of the past, present,

© 2004 Steve Phelps



**“When the music stops, everyone sit down. The one left standing is the new board chairman.”**

and future, as history, hope, and achievement, and to keep them in a creative tension in your mind. Every day in a ministry partnership with God is a good day if we know what to do with it.

### **Grow great people.**

For decades, church growth and outreach programs have provided ways to grow great churches. Could it be that when a congregation grows great people, the result of their relationships with the Lord and each other is the growth of great churches?

Build great people by encouraging them to give themselves to a great cause. A poet said, "Give yourself to a great cause. You may not do the cause much good, but the cause will do you a lot of good."

### **Give people value when they come to church.**

Every service should add easily identifiable value to the lives of those who attend. Every person has a right to be fed, encouraged, and inspired when he comes to church. People need instruction, inspiration, encouragement, and hope.

## **The pastor who tries to minister in human strength has no more to give than the attorney, engineer, or doctor.**

People do not need to be scolded, insulted, or talked down to. That happens often enough in the world. A church's attendance can often be increased dramatically by making the services more relevant, more inspiring, and less boring. As you prepare each service, ask yourself, *What would people love to receive at church the next time we meet?*

### **Take love into parishioners' crises.**

Loss, accident, sickness, or brokenness eventually come to every human being. To be the flesh-and-blood representative of Jesus in times of pressing need stands at the heart of Christian ministry. Be there. Go in love and go often until the crisis is past. Those going through the valley will love you forever. When others observe you offering loving care to those who need it most, increased ministerial credibility will result throughout the church.

### **Cherish Christian service as a love gift from God.**

Today, many people who attend churches are spiritually overweight from too much fast food and not enough meat and substance. They need more exercise in service to God and people.

Many possibilities are wrapped up in the three essential foci of Christian service. Think of them as legs on a three-legged stool. First, service is what we do for God. Second, service is what we do for others. Third — an often overlooked component

— is our personal enrichment when we serve others.

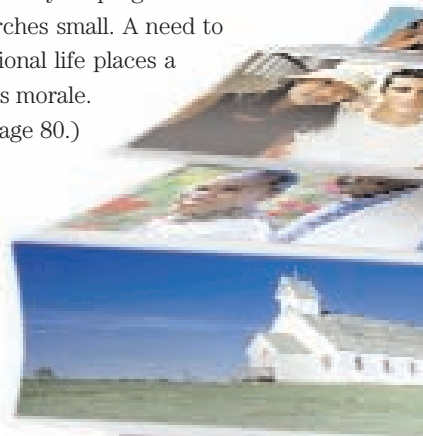
The preacher preaches for God to help others know God better. But when he preaches, the Word seeks him out and he becomes better and develops a bigger soul in the process.

The Sunday School teacher teaches for God to help others learn how to apply Scripture to life, and also grows in his or her own spiritual well-being. This view moves service from duty and obligation to privilege and blessing.

### **Accept and involve strong people.**

Some pastors feel threatened by strong, capable people. Some feel uneasy when anyone asks, "Why?" Other spiritual leaders question the motives of strong people, especially those who want excellence and effectiveness. Failure to use strong people and a desire to control every ministry or program are two significant factors that keep churches small. A need to control every detail of congregational life places a ceiling on growth and undermines morale.

(continued on page 80.)





# DOES YOUR CHURCH HAVE A HAPPY MARRIAGE?

Why do so many pastors resign after 3 or 4 years, when long-term pastorates serve the best interest of all parties concerned? Three factors, each of which has its parallel in a marriage, can be helpful in building healthy relationships between the pastor and church.

## COURTING

Ideally, a man and woman considering marriage should spend at least a year or more learning about each other before they promise their "I dos." Time alone reveals our inmost feelings and idiosyncrasies. Each person in the marriage has expectations of what the other mate's role and attitudes should be.

Courting is intended to reveal these differences. When courting fails to reveal the differences between two people so each reconsiders the wisdom of uniting, the result is a high-risk, and not infrequently, short-term marriage.

Churches and pastors have their own distinctive traits, styles, and expectancies that will largely determine the success of their marriage. Indeed, within the same congregation one encounters varying expectancies.

Churches differ in the kind of lifestyle they expect of their pastor and his or her family. Churches, like people, have their own temperaments that make them incompatible with some pastors.

As in marriage between a man and woman, churches and pastors need a courting period that is sufficient to disclose their compatibilities or incompatibilities. Mutual expectancies should be understood and evaluated. Pastor and church members alike should sense a mutual witness of the Holy Spirit that their union is of God. Their courtship should make this clear.

Because many church policies and traditions allow only a short courtship, it is imperative that a thorough mutual understanding be established at once. At best there will be many gaps in expectancies on both sides because of the brevity of this period.

## CARING

One of the most disturbing factors in marriage is the tendency for husband and wife to take each other for granted. Even though other needs are fulfilled, if one partner feels unappreciated the marriage has drifted into the danger zone.

Pastors and congregations tend to take each other for granted. They need, instead, the caring spirit that can be measured by their giving to each other. The pastor's first concern should be his congregation, not himself. Somebody has said that there are two types of leaders: those interested in the flock and those interested in the fleece. If the pastor's chief concern is himself, he will be driven by love of money or love of power. In either case he will neglect the spiritual oversight of his people and will give little of himself to minister to their needs. One cannot seek his own gain and spend himself for others at the same time.

In most respects, a pastor is just like every other redeemed sinner. However he may appear on the outside, his soul always remains a potential battlefield for the conflict between self and Christ. In the words of Paul Rees, "Either self will be crucified or Christ will be crucified afresh.

If the Lamb of Calvary does not possess him, the lion of conceit will destroy him." "The idolatry of self," wrote Charles Jefferson, "always leads to hell and never so swiftly as when the sinner is a minister."

Let's look at several ways a congregation can show its care. One that is as obvious as it is easy to measure is the pastor's salary. As in most occupations, pastor's salaries seem to be determined largely by what pastors in similar situations are paid. Judging by their practice, some congregations evidently believe they should pay the bare minimum.

Still another way a congregation can show it cares about the pastor is to provide time and money for his professional growth and personal renewal. One study suggests that most clergy today are "leading lives of quiet desperation." How many churches recognize this? How many are doing anything about it? Is not this also a responsibility of those who care?

Who cares? That is the question that cuts both ways in any marriage.

## COMMUNICATING

Marriage counselors claim that one of the worst hindrances to a happy marriage is lack of communication. This is no less true of the marriage between a congregation and its pastor.

The art of communication is one of the chief and most prized skills of life. No pastor can get along without it. He must be able to communicate well both in the pulpit and outside of it. He must know how to adapt his preaching style to his congregation.

Every pastor must be able and willing to adapt himself to his congregation. If he will not, or cannot, the marriage will most likely be brief.

Every marriage needs some formal or informal system of resolving differences. No human relationship is without its differences of opinion, philosophy, taste, and interest. A wise congregation has a system that provides opportunity to resolve differences that surface in its pastoral relationship. Some churches have a committee that meets at least once annually with all staff members for a mutual discussion of their ministries. Everyone is encouraged to be forthright and direct. Communication of this kind can take place only in an atmosphere of encouragement.

A major key to a happy marriage between a church and its pastor is the pastor's continuing growth and development. Congregations put confidence in a leader who shows signs of spiritual and professional growth. They will listen to the pastor whose life gives evidence that he is progressing in the truth of Christ, and they will follow him as well. A growing pastor makes for a growing congregation.

A pastor may get by for a while on his charisma or gusto. But for the long haul, progress is essential. This is why a wise congregation will invest in its pastor's ongoing development. Their marriage resembles that of the man and woman who constantly encourage each other's progress and growth, thus strengthening each other's self-identity and joy in fulfilling God's purposes for their lives.

Adapted from an article by H. Bruce Chapman, Sun City West, Arizona, on the Trinity International University website. Used by permission of the author.

(continued from page 78.)

### Take leadership of the family of God.

The biological family is under terrible siege. Nearly everyone needs help to strengthen his or her family. Some need a surrogate family to take the place of the family they never had or the family they lost. Many people have broken hearts. The

## Love the people God has given you to serve and they will love you back in ways beyond your loftiest dreams.

friendship, acceptance, support, and accountability of a loving church are needed now more than ever before. Call your opportunity to lead the family of God anything you want: head of the clan, leader of the lost extended family, founder of the surrogate family, or pastor of the family of God. But be sure the work gets done and caring relationships are created.

### MINISTRY PRESENTS MAGNIFICENT OPPORTUNITIES TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

Remember who you were when you were called? Remember how God used your love for Him to help you see the needs of His world? What a defining moment for your ministry. That day the Sovereign Lord summoned you to unknown territory with the promise to be with you, empower you, and love you unconditionally.

Many Scriptures help us understand the work of ministry. Other passages charge and challenge us with the task and the

need. But over and over the motive, mood, and meaning for ministry is love.

The importance and priority of love is shown clearly in Jesus' response to the question, "What is the greatest commandment?"

Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first

and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

Then He added an incredible summary sentence, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus considered love for God and neighbor important.

Following the example of his Lord, Paul also put love at the center of our work when he wrote, "[Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7).

After reading these passages, the evidence is incontrovertible — ministry is love for God, for neighbor, and for self. This love for God and neighbor gives us a lifetime ticket to private and public places and to sad and cheerful places. Love for Jesus gives us opportunity to represent Him at weddings, gravesides, baptisms, hospital waiting rooms, Communion services, worship, and preaching. The joy and adventure of ministry need to be emphasized over and over with words like *delight*, *gladness*, *pleasure*, *serenity*, and *eternal accomplishment*. A pastor sees more of what God is doing in a week than most people see in a lifetime.

Love for Christ helps keep ministry focused. When the love dimension seems to be burning low, take a reality check and it will glow again. Among the components of your reality check are: God loves you. Most, if not all your people love you and you get to love them back.

Wrap your arms around your ministry. Love the people God has given you to serve, and they will love you back in ways beyond your loftiest dreams. ■



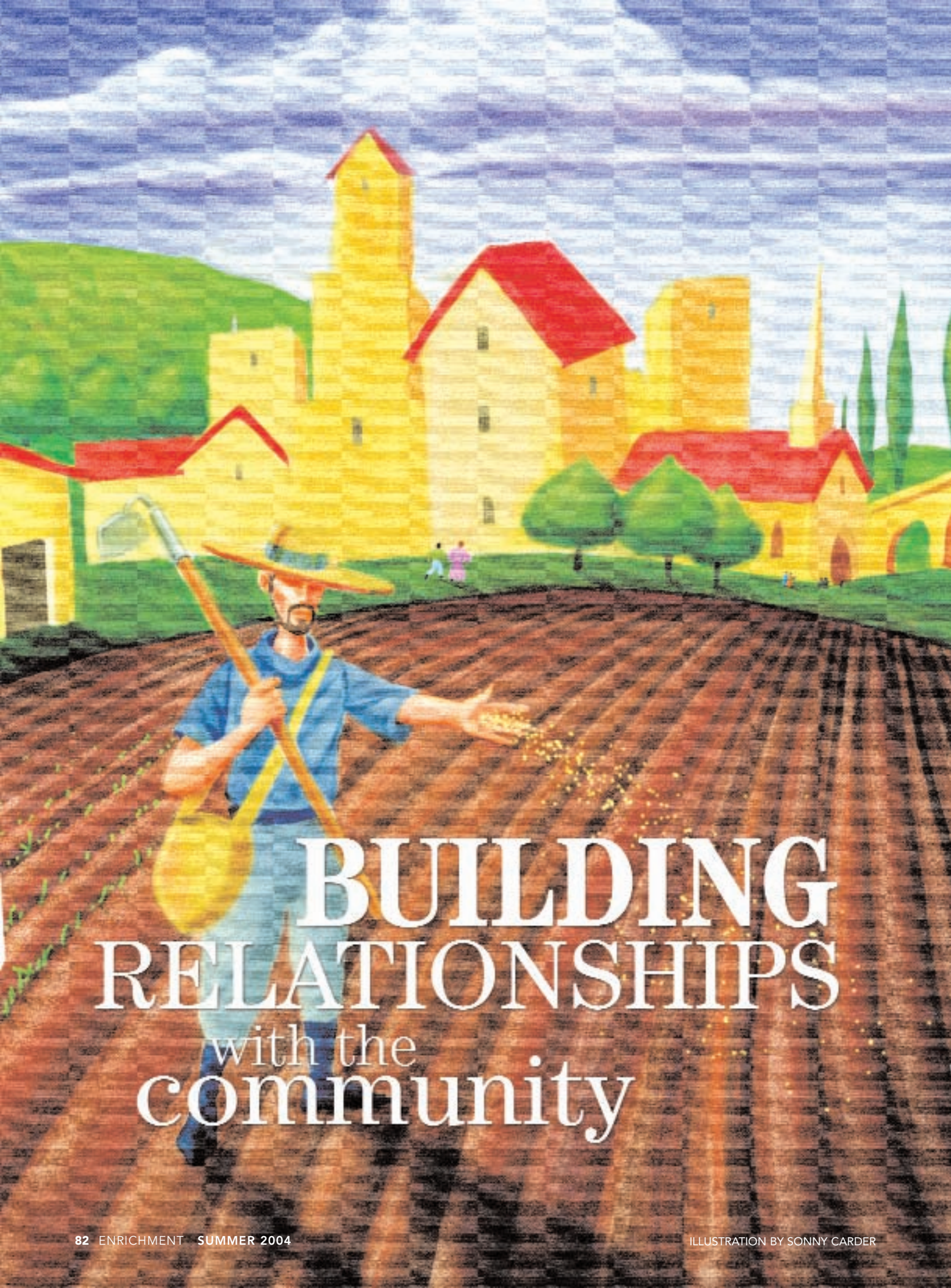
**NEIL B. WISEMAN** is a writer, speaker, and educator. He also serves as founder and director of the Small Church Institute. He resides in Overland Park, Kansas.

#### ENDNOTE

1. Wayne Martindale, and Jerry Root (Contributors), *The Quotable Lewis*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1989), 105.





A vibrant, stylized illustration. In the foreground, a man with a beard, wearing a blue shirt and light blue pants, stands in a dark brown, furrowed field. He holds a long wooden staff with a yellow bag slung over his shoulder. He is sowing small yellow seeds from his outstretched hand into the soil. In the background, a village with yellow buildings and red roofs is visible under a blue sky with white clouds. A green hill is on the left, and a church with a tall spire is on the right. The overall style is painterly and optimistic.

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

with the  
community





**The love for God that we express in church,  
as well as the love for people, needs to result in  
outreach and relationships within the community.**

**"H**ow many attend your church?"

This question annoys me. To show my bad attitude I always answer with a noncommittal, "It depends on when you count 'em."

We may be counting the wrong things in church resulting in a warped view of success in ministry. Everyone seems interested in how many attend the Sunday morning worship service, but hardly anyone is interested in how

many seeds you have planted. Sunday morning attendance does not reflect how many people you ministered to that week. It doesn't measure how many will come to Christ a year from now. Paul said one plants, another waters, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). Someone has observed that anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the apples in a seed.

---

B Y J O S E P H B . F U I T E N



We need a new way of thinking about church. Our relationship with God is not purely private and personal. It should produce fruit within the church and within the community. The love for God that we express in church, as well as the love for people, needs to result in outreach and relationships within the community. Before we can win people to Jesus, we need to build close, intimate relationships with them.

We need a seed-planter's mentality. If we are going to plant seeds, we need to get out of the silo and into the field. Building quality relationships in the community requires a seed-planter's vision for the future.

In our planting and harvesting analogy, the community is the place for planting. Ministers need to develop positive relationships in a community for several reasons. First, relationships are an important measure of our qualification for ministry. Second, the community is the place where we most readily reflect our obedience to the second commandment. Third, it is the place where we enter into the normal elements of life in our common cause with society. Finally, developing positive community relationships might help us put more people in the pews on Sunday morning. Let's consider these four areas.

## RELATIONSHIPS — MEASURING OUR QUALIFICATION FOR MINISTRY

When Paul gave Timothy the character traits of good pastors or overseers, he said the pastor "must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap" (1 Timothy 3:7). Imagine the kind of pastor a church might have if the townspeople who don't attend the church could vote.

A good reputation is not the same as lacking a bad reputation. You can be a do-nothing person and not have a bad reputation in the community. A good reputation requires positive interaction with outsiders. Paul had many hostile encounters with the public because of the gospel, but was also rescued by "outsiders" who were his friends (Acts 19:31). On more than one occasion outsiders saved his life.

Paul understood the importance of having friends in the

community and urged Timothy to make a positive reputation a requirement for persons wishing to engage in ministry. A good diagnostic question is, *If I got into difficulty, who in this community would come to my aid simply because they like me?*

Here is the irony: We are supposed to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus, but they may end up saving us. Jesus saves them in eternity through our ministry, but they save us on the earth through their skills, knowledge, or wisdom. Before this dynamic can take place, we must build close relationships with those outside the church.

## LOVING OUR COMMUNITY

The second broad category of community relationship developments as we fulfill the second great commandment — to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:34–40). When we love people, we develop deep and lasting relationships. When you help people in need, they never forget it. The Good Samaritan probably had a deep and lasting relationship with one scarred guy in the community.

In the last decade there has been a tremendous increase in the ministries of love carried out by churches and their members. Our church has been a part of that movement.

Two weeks ago I received an e-mail from a woman who was desperate. Her car was broken down and she had no money to repair it or to buy another one. She couldn't get to work without a car. Even though she went to another church, she wrote me because she knew we repaired cars in our mechanic's ministry. We have four full-time mechanics and charge fees on a scale based on income to assist those who can't afford to get their cars fixed at other repair facilities. In the end, we did not fix her car. Instead, we sold her one in good working order, and we carried the financing. Like the Samaritan who bound up the wounds of the man lying alongside the road, we bound up her automotive wounds and got her on her way. This built good relationships with a whole family.

A few months ago a baby in our community died. The family was not connected to our church. At the Chapel of the

Resurrection, Cedar Park Assembly's funeral home, we do not charge for the funerals of infants. We provided all the necessary services for that family without cost to them.

Several times a week people from the community drive onto our campus and stop at the ministry house. They visit the food bank stocked with fresh and canned food. In the clothing bank they can choose from attractively displayed new or quality used clothing. The furniture bank supplies household needs. Those with chronic needs are encouraged to join training classes to address long-term solutions. Many churches have found these ministries to be great ways to build relationships with people in the community. The gift, giver, and recipient are linked together in a positive relationship.

A few days ago a girl in our community was brutally assaulted. She came to our state-licensed counseling center. Counselors who specialize in immediate-trauma response ministered to her. They involved her in our long-term support program. We hope her tragic experience will be turned into memories of loving people who were there for her. One thing is sure, even though she does not attend our church, we have a special place in her heart.

These acts flow from our belief that loving one's neighbor requires tangible acts. Love not shown is not love at all. This kind of activity is not optional for the gospel or Christians.

Even non-Christians understand that Christianity involves love. When we find ways to bless them, even if they pay a portion of the cost, they understand they are being loved. By these acts of love we are winning the right to be heard. We are not afraid to lead with words of witness. We have found that words of witness receive a friendly response when the heart has been prepared by a loving *act* of witness.

Jesus taught righteous living requires almsgiving as well as prayer and fasting (Matthew 6:3,4). A minister is not qualified unless he or she has a positive relationship with outsiders. In the same way, a Christian has not yet acted in a Christian manner unless he has loved someone through an act of kindness or almsgiving. We should tangibly love people because the gospel requires it. We are also building relationships and planting living seeds in the lives of people in our community. We don't perform acts of love primarily to achieve relationships, but they are an inevitable result.

Pastors sometimes worry about being bled dry if they help people. In fact, just the opposite happens. When people see you are unselfishly helping others, they want to become involved. Generosity inspires giving, but hoarding shuts off the supply. Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38). Meeting people's real needs fulfills the second commandment — to love our neighbors. It also taps into one of God's great laws of supply. This applies particularly to helping those who are in need.

## USING THE NORMAL ELEMENTS OF LIFE

The third category of community relationship develops as we enter into the normal elements of life. In other words, living your life like everyone else.

Jesus attended a wedding and joined in the festivities. He was probably invited because He was a friend of the couple getting married. Jesus was living a normal life and participating in a normal activity. But this normal event provided an opportunity for Jesus' first miracle.

When we become Christians we are not immediately ruptured. We live on this planet with all the usual duties and joys that come to all people. We go to work. We play sports. We have kids and become involved in Little League or Saturday morning soccer. I am a Christian, but I am also a citizen. When we combine Christianity and community, we find the city of God has a common cause with the city of man. The best opportunities we have as ministers may come because we are living a normal life and participating in normal activities.

I have enjoyed politics since high school. But when I became a pastor, I didn't resign my political affiliations. My work outside the church includes leading a statewide political

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH COMMUNITY EVENTS

A couple came to our church in Lake Stevens, Washington. Both were heavily involved in local planning committees. One is an elected member of the Lake Stevens City Council. As the Lord began to move in their hearts, they both rededicated their lives to God. On Easter Sunday I married them in a local park. The mayor of Lake Stevens was the best man.

Through these friendships we developed a relationship with our mayor, police, and fire chiefs. We are now working on the second annual breakfast for public school teachers in Lake Stevens. During the recent school strike the attacks against the school superintendent became personal. I had breakfast with him and had an opportunity to minister to him that would not have been possible had I not reached out to him through these annual breakfasts. I am hopeful this year's breakfast will help the process of healing needed in our school district.

Our community's big annual event is called Aquafest. I attended their planning meetings and offered to serve in any capacity. At first they were apprehensive, but soon saw my commitment was genuine. The president of Aquafest asked if I would hold Sunday services on the main stage during Aquafest. I didn't have to pray about that. It was an open door to preach at an event that draws from 20,000 to 30,000 people to our city.

**BARRY PARDUE**, branch pastor, Cedar Park Family Church of Lake Stevens, Washington

## BUILDING BRIDGES TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Two years ago I began a relationship with the fire chief of our city. Through that relationship we found new ways of building bridges to our community. Our city has a celebration every year to commemorate its founding. We applied for a vendor's booth at the city celebration and were approved. Our booth had a large banner reading, "Test Your Spiritual IQ. Take Our Quiz and Receive a Free Gift." We developed a quiz using the Romans road and trained workers how to use the quiz as a witnessing tool. We purchased bottled water with printed labels with our church's name and logo. We gave the water as the free gift. Based on the number of quizzes people turned in, and the

amount of water we gave away, we had at least 350 one-on-one conversations with people about the gospel. The concrete results of something like this are hard to calculate. No one was saved during the event, and only 15 people visited the church the following Sunday as a result of that 1-day outreach. But the gospel was presented to a few hundred people, and 25 members from our church gained valuable witnessing experience. These open doors occurred because we built relationships with the community.

**JOHN SIMS**, branch pastor, Cedar Park, Northshore, Washington

organization. It has been fun, has been part of being a good citizen, and has also become a treasure trove of contacts and relationships. I regularly pray at political events and at the regular sessions of the legislature. I don't claim divine revelation for every position I take politically. I simply try to live out the biblical imperatives and let them form my political and civic thoughts.

Political friends sometimes offer me perspectives I could not have found elsewhere. The close relationships I have built with politicians have provided opportunity to share the gospel. Because I am involved with them, they are willing to be involved with me. Even non-Christian politicians have asked questions. I was on their turf so they felt comfortable taking the next step of relationship building. I have prayed with several politicians and led them to accept Christ. These opportunities would never have come had I not been a normal citizen trying to do my duty to our country.

The membership recruiter for the local Chamber of Commerce is a Christian and wanted to see more Christian influence in the Chamber. As a result, I was invited to join. At first I wondered what place I would have in the organization. Even though we are one of the larger employers in the area, we did not think of ourselves as a business.

Many relationships within the Chamber center around lunch. Many times over a Chamber lunch, questions and comments left the door open for witness. I enjoyed a pleasant lunch and made a few friends for the Lord and for the church.

Many pastors have found that service groups like Kiwanis or Rotary are fertile groups for meeting people. Sometimes a relationship with a pastor is all people need to start attending church. Many times you may start with a friendship, which leads to a discussion, and later results in them coming to church. The seed-planter understands that planting and harvesting may not happen on the same day.

Our Christian schools also create opportunities. Many of the students will never attend our worship services, yet we have a tremendous impact on their lives. In many circles our church is known by our schools rather than the other way around. I have

many relationships with grateful parents and grandparents who are not part of our church. We have approximately 180 different churches represented in our schools. Many pastors and churches see our church as the supplier of the educational needs of the Christian community. As a result, we have built relationships with the pastors and churches of our area.

Over time, these relationships bring surprising twists to our lives. On two occasions independent churches in our area were having difficulty. They lacked the strength that comes from being part of a larger denomination. Because I had built relationships with some of their leaders, I was invited to help mediate and resolve issues. Had I remained cloistered inside our four walls those opportunities would never have come.

## HARVESTING THE SEED

Throughout the years building relationships with the community has helped our church grow. Many of the seeds we planted have been harvested by the church and now make up our Sunday morning attendance. On the other hand, there are thousands of people in our area who do not presently have a worship service relationship with us. They have a relationship with us, just not a worship relationship. However, I am confident that the thousands of seeds planted will produce a harvest. My seeds may show up in worship attendance. They might become a blessing and witness for the kingdom of God. They might be in worship attendance in another church. I can live with that.

I am not called to build the biggest church with the highest Sunday morning attendance. I am called to sow the seed of the gospel through my preaching, my living, and my relationships. We have a strong church with many effective ministries. Only God knows the future harvest potential of the relationship seeds we are now sowing. ■



**JOSEPH B. FUTEN, D.MIN.**, is senior pastor, Cedar Park Assembly of God, Bothell, Washington.





# FEATURE INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH GARY R. ALLEN, CHARLES E. CRANK, RON MCMANUS, AND THOMAS E. TRASK



## MINISTRY GROUP DEVELOPMENT: A NEW LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

The pressures on pastoral leadership today have reached frightening levels. In part, this is due to the rapid pace of societal change, the false demands of success that all who are in the ministry feel, and lack of leadership skills necessary to grow a church or ministry to the next level. Not only are pastors discouraged and disillusioned, but they lack the resources and relationships that are necessary to their continuance and future success in ministry.

*National and district leadership are focused on their purpose of existence: to serve the local church and pastors. Knowing full well that no church will grow beyond its pastor's leadership skills and that leadership training for pastors is best accomplished in the context of relationships, the Office for Ministry Group Development was established in January 2004. The office, under the direction of former Indiana District superintendent, Charles E. Crank, will work with district leadership to implement a new ministry-group structure that brings pastors and ministers together in meaningful, ministry-building relationships.*

*Gary R. Allen, national coordinator of Ministerial Enrichment, and Ron McManus, president of the Center for Leadership and Church Development, will partner with the Office for Ministry Group Development by providing leadership training materials as part of the overall process as well as assist in working with the districts.*

*Enrichment journal's managing editor, Rick Knoth, visited with General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask and the leaders of these offices to discuss this new ministry-group initiative.*

### IN WHAT WAYS CAN NATIONAL AND DISTRICT LEADERSHIP BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF PASTORS?

**MCMANUS:** The new generation of ministers coming into church leadership today are interested in two things from national and district leadership: resource and relationship. National and district leadership must be conduits of these two things so we create a culture where pastors are committed to each other's success and learn and grow together.

Churches change, people change, and pastors change through process. Pastors tend to be event-oriented, but ministry development is a process, not an event. If we can get pastors meeting together, praying together, learning together, and growing together, the chance of change in the pastor and church becomes phenomenal. No church will grow beyond its pastor's leadership skills. If we can grow a pastor, we can grow a church.

**ALLEN:** The Ministerial Enrichment office will come alongside this process by providing resources for the personal and family development of the pastor. Growing the pastor involves the personal development of the pastor's character and integrity and

his or her leadership skills must be anchored in strong interpersonal skills. When we develop healthy relationships we build a process for dealing with critical issues of life and ministry.

### IN YOUR WORK WITH DENOMINATIONS OVER THE YEARS, YOU'VE DISCOVERED FOUR KEYS TO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP. WHAT ARE THEY?

**MCMANUS:** The first key is helping a church and pastor understand and act on God's vision and plan for that church.

The second key is creating a learning environment. Status quo is unacceptable for a pastor. We must create a culture that says it is unacceptable if you are not learning and growing as a pastor. Pastors are expected to keep learning, growing, and moving forward because the church will not grow if pastors don't grow.

The third key is creating interdependence. Some churches act like independent franchises. Every pastor has his church, paddles his own canoe; and, if the pastor up the road learns something, he is not going to share it with a neighboring pastor because his church might grow too and we wouldn't want that. So we compete with each other, and everybody has to learn on his own. Unfortunately, some pastors never make it.

We are told in evangelical circles that 50 percent of those who go into ministry today will not be in the ministry 10 years from now because they will become discouraged and disillusioned. We want to create an interdependence so when pastors meet together, pray together, grow together, and commit to each other's success, we will see incredible transformation happen in local churches and pastors.

The fourth key is creating accountability. Though there is accountability through the denominational and district structure, the most effective accountability is peer accountability. When pastors hold each other accountable, lives change. We believe every pastor needs peer accountability.

These four things are the keys to transformation. When pastors meet together in small groups to learn and grow together, churches and pastors change.

### IS THERE A STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS KIND OF TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL WITHIN THE FELLOWSHIP? EXPLAIN.

**TRASK:** Yes. In the Vision for Transformation meetings we have been concerned about how we can be more intentional in helping pastors. We discussed the ineffectiveness of the sectional fellowship meeting structure that has been in place from the early days of the Assemblies of God. It served well in the past but is now ineffective. My desire is to fix that model, but it needs to be done through the district, not the national office. Charles Crank saw this need and under his leadership the Indiana District made changes.

The Office for Ministry Group Development was established in January 2004, and Charles Crank serves as the director for Ministry Group Development for the Fellowship. He is now working with district superintendents at their invitation to implement a new structure to facilitate a ministry-group approach. The current structure in the Indiana District will serve as the model for this process to see that these changes become reality.

The partnership of the Office for Ministry Group Development, the Center for Leadership and Church Development, and the Ministerial Enrichment office will be a tremendous resource to our districts.

### WHAT WAS THE PROCESS THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THE MINISTRY-GROUP MODEL IN THE INDIANA DISTRICT AND HOW WAS IT IMPLEMENTED?

**CRANK:** When Superintendent Trask encouraged congregations and districts to envision what they would like to see the Fellowship be in the 21st century, the Indiana District appointed a Vision 2000 committee with 12 pastors. The committee talked about what we were doing effectively. The conversation then centered on what we were not doing effectively, and on our relationships with one another. We did not have meaningful, ministry-building relationships among our pastors and ministers. Relationships were somewhat surface.

Pastors said they were doing great, but in reality many were hurting. So we surveyed them. We asked, "How many sectional meetings have you attended in the last year?" Forty-three percent said they had attended three or less sectional meetings in the last year. Since then, we have surveyed three other districts. We asked, "How many ministers do you regularly meet with to pray and talk about ministry?" Forty-eight percent of the ministers said none. If you add those who said one, the number rises to 64 percent.

This survey helped us recognize that our pastors were experiencing isolation and loneliness. We asked, "During the past 12 months have you had difficult circumstances in your ministry or family when the encouragement and prayers of a ministering friend were greatly needed?" Eighty-four percent said yes. We then asked, "Did the Fellowship provide the support and encouragement needed?" Fifty-three percent said no. We realized the old system was not meeting the needs of our pastors.

The committee began to talk about what we could do to meet those needs. We felt we needed a dramatic change in the structure and way we related one to another. We developed ministry groups. Instead of having geographical sections, we developed ministry groups of 8 to 10 pastors who meet once a month to engage, equip, and encourage each other. In the first 20 minutes of the meeting pastors get reacquainted. The next

hour the ministry group leader leads a discussion on a ministerial subject. An equipping guide is provided by the district and together these ministers talk about ministry-related issues. At the conclusion of the meeting, pastors share victory reports and then individual ministers pray for one another. All of our pastors and ministers are engaged in a ministry group.

The testimonies coming from these groups are outstanding because the group is meeting a need and providing encouragement. Several have said they might not be pastoring today had it not been for the strength they received from the ministry group.

### HOW WILL THE OFFICE FOR MINISTRY GROUP DEVELOPMENT WORK WITH DISTRICTS TO IMPLEMENT THIS MODEL AND WHAT RESOURCES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ASSIST IN THE PROCESS?

**TRASK:** The districts should view the national office as a provider of services and ministries. Districts do not need to

districts, we can help our pastors and ministers grow and be more effective leaders.

**MCMANUS:** We also want to develop national coaching teams. These coaches will develop pastors in their churches. They will also be available to resource districts. In an effort to bring together all the best resources available, we are developing a leadership website that will cover the many resources available for pastors.

Many pastors are not aware of the variety of excellent resources available to them through the national office. We want to help districts and local churches understand how to connect with these resources from the Fellowship.

Also, instead of the Office for Ministry Group Development telling pastors and districts what they need, they are going to tell us what they need. We will then develop the resources to serve them. My role with Charles Crank is to serve him, provide the leadership training that is needed for those who are facilitators and mentors, assist with his work with the



*Several have said they might not be pastoring today had it not been for the strength they derived from their ministry group.*  
— Crank

adopt the Indiana model, only the principles and philosophy behind it. The Indiana model can be tweaked to fit the individual needs of the district if that is the desire of the district leadership. Charles Crank will assist superintendents and help them steer clear of any possible pitfalls.

In the Indiana model, ministry group leaders were appointed by the district. That will not change. The discussion materials were also provided by the district. However, under this new program the national office provides discussion materials for the groups, equipping guides, and group leaders manuals.

The skill level and abilities of our pastors and ministers need to be raised so they will be encouraged to believe they can take a church or ministry to the next level. If we are to grow large churches and more effective ministries, we must grow pastors and ministers who are able to lead them. If you take a large church and bring in a pastor who doesn't have the needed skills, he brings that church down in size to the level of his skill. That is tragic, and it happens across our Fellowship more than we care to say.

Our desire is to grow effective pastors and ministers using the ministry-group relationship model. We believe working through the districts is the best way to accomplish this. By establishing group development models throughout the

districts, and continue my role in expanding the leadership development part of this process.

**CRANK:** Ron McManus and I discussed developing a 3-year program with discussion guides for ministry groups. This will provide a structured path to discuss subjects regarding the characteristics of a healthy pastor and church. We are also talking about bringing together a committee of pastors who will give input into developing these materials. We are on track now to develop the materials that will be used within the groups and in the leadership process.

**TRASK:** This is very similar to the cell group model in the local church. When I pastored I had 40 of them. I wrote the material, and the groups met and built relationships. That's much like what will happen for our pastors. We will provide materials so they know what to cover.

### WHAT WILL SEPARATE THESE MINISTRY GROUPS FROM JUST ANY OTHER SUPPORT GROUP?

**MCMANUS:** Learning is the crucial aspect of these groups. This is what separates ministry groups from support groups. Also, ministry groups create interdependence and



accountability, which are the keys to transformation.

These ministry groups will provide prayer and support as well as an incentive to keep growing and learning in leadership and ministry so they can effectively do what God has called them to do.

Training takes place in the context of relationships. We are moving from the Greek classical model of education that is passive and theoretical to the Hebrew model, the coach model, which is on-the-job training and experiential in nature.

**CRANK:** The strength of the ministry group comes from the eight to ten pastors participating. They come from various experience levels and can share with one another. The more experienced can help the less experienced. Everyone will have something to give and gain. The leader will function as a facilitator to build community and establish a sharing group in a mentoring context.

#### WHAT ABOUT MINISTRY GROUPS FOR MINISTERS WHO ARE EITHER RETIRED, SEMI-RETIRED, OR HAVE MINISTRIES OUTSIDE THE LOCAL CHURCH? IS THIS BEING ADDRESSED?

**CRANK:** Yes. We recommended in our Indiana District bylaws that every senior pastor provide a ministry group for every credentialed minister associated with his church. This picks up the young men who have credentials, but haven't yet moved out into ministry. It also involves ministers who have ministries outside the local church as well as the semi-retired and retired minister.

Having the senior pastor lead the ministry group for the credentialed ministers in his church can remove the barriers among ministers in the pastor's congregation. When he shows an interest in them and reaches out to strengthen them, they will ask, "What can we do to help you? How can we be a part of the ministry of the church?" Every minister, then, can be a part of a ministry group.

#### WHAT ABOUT MINISTERS WHO WANT TO FORM THEIR OWN GROUP?

**CRANK:** We tell those who ask this that we will help them find a group they will be satisfied participating in. We have one couple who drives 2 1/2 hours to get to their group meeting. They are one of our most faithful couples. They asked to be in that group because of relationships they had previously.

We are getting back to the heart of what the Assemblies of God is about. The word *fellowship* implies relationship.

#### YOU JUST MENTIONED "COUPLE." IS THERE A PLAN TO INCORPORATE THE SPOUSE IN THESE MEETINGS?

**CRANK:** The spouse is encouraged to be a part of the

ministry group meetings. This is one of the group's strengths. Many times the spouse is a motivator for the pastor. We have had instances where a topic was discussed in the ministry group meeting. Later a pastor faced a similar situation and his wife said, "Wasn't that mentioned in the ministry-group meeting? Why don't we try what they suggested?"

**MCMANUS:** We have discovered that success improved when spouses were present. We invite pastors and their spouses for all training opportunities. The accountability process when both pastors and their spouses are present is incredible.

**ALLEN:** Ministerial Enrichment has found that often the spouse feels isolated and alienated and is looking for more personal and ministry resources. This is an excellent means of closing this gap by establishing connectedness with other spouses.

#### HOW WILL YOU MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE MINISTRY GROUPS?

**CRANK:** We surveyed Indiana District ministers this past summer after they had been in this structure for 2 years. We asked, "Are you active in your ministry group?" Eighty-four percent of our pastors answered yes. We also get a report from ministry group leaders each month. The report shows that 67 percent of our pastors attend their ministry group in a given month. Occasions come up when pastors have emergencies or scheduling conflicts and can't be at their meeting. But we feel ministry groups have been very effective.

**ALLEN:** We will be able to see measurable results in the lives and ministry of our pastors in the volume and kinds of calls we receive on the pastors 1-800-Helpline. The ministry groups can help in lowering the tension and frustration level of ministry and thus provide a healthier and happier pastor's home.

**MCMANUS:** We also need to ask, "Are we creating healthy, effective churches?" I think we will be able to measure that as we move forward. Church health and effectiveness are what a district superintendent has to evaluate success by, not on how many programs have been implemented or how many events have been scheduled. As we start we will measure success in terms of commitment to the process. But down the road, if pastors are learning, there will be measurable changes in the church.

As our districts develop relational models and structures they are going to see more effective ministry across the district. The future of the church will not be built on denominational structures, or geographical structures; it will be built on relational structures. ■



## JOHN BUNYAN: THE FAITHFUL TINKER FROM BEDFORD

Who was John Bunyan, and what can we learn from his life?

In the 1660s, Charles II, King of England, asked John Owen (1616–83) why he went to hear the preaching of an uneducated tinker. The King was amazed that Owen, a prominent preacher, would stoop to associate with a tinker. After all, there was quite a contrast between the two.

At that time, most ministers in England graduated from Cambridge or Oxford. Owen had entered Queen's College, Oxford at age 12, took his B.A. in 1632 and M.A. in 1635. On the other hand, the tinker possessed no formal education beyond the second grade. Owen had written voluminously; the tinker did most of his writing while in jail.

The tinker lived in a small cottage in the obscure village of Bedford, but Owen served as chaplain to Cromwell, walked in kings' palaces, was respected by many of the nobility, and had preached to Parliament and in England's great cathedrals. The tinker preached to a church that met in an old barn and at its peak may have numbered 300.

Looking the King in the eye, Owen answered, "May it please your Majesty, could I possess the tinker's ability for preaching, I would willingly relinquish all my learning."<sup>1</sup>

The tinker was John Bunyan (1628–88), the Puritan pastor and author of *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Bunyan was an old man when Owen first heard him. "The soul-experiences through which he [Bunyan] had passed," notes one biographer, "had done more to equip him for what God had so definitely called him than any academic training could do."<sup>2</sup>

"I preached what I startlingly did feel,"<sup>3</sup> Bunyan later noted.

The source of Bunyan's influence over Owen and others was his passion in the pulpit that flowed from his personal experience of the Bible's power and his frequent persecution. He was Bible-saturated. As Charles Spurgeon later noted, "Prick him anywhere; his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him."<sup>4</sup>

Owen would not have been surprised to learn that Bunyan's most influential work, *Pilgrim's Progress*, would be translated into more languages over the next 400 years than any book except the Bible.

How did the writing of an uneducated tinker become the most widely read piece of 17th-century English literature? Who was John Bunyan, and what can we learn from his life?

## EARLY LIFE

Little is known about John Bunyan's youth. He was born in 1628 in Elstow, a little village 50 miles northeast of London. The exact date of his birth is unknown. At age 16 he enlisted in Oliver Cromwell's army and fought with the Puritans against King Charles I. He was discharged in his early twenties and married. His first wife (her name unknown) bore him four children. The oldest child, a daughter, was born blind.

He was converted in his mid-twenties after a lengthy agony-of-soul similar to Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*. At age 25 he began to preach, and by 30 he was a part-time village preacher. He worked the forge and anvil by day and preached the gospel at night.

## PERSECUTION

We often take religious toleration for granted. But tolerance of multiple denominations in one state was a novel idea in the 1650s. Intolerance had been the norm for 1,000 years. Most English Christians were Anglican paedobaptists. But under Cromwell's new policy of tolerance, the Baptists were beginning to flourish and many Englishmen were nervous.<sup>5</sup>

Bunyan belonged to a small Baptist church of about 60 people. They were called *independents* because the Anglican Church — the only church sanctioned by the English government — did not control them.

Cromwell died, and in 1660, King Charles II came to power. He was

determined to eradicate Cromwell's radical religious tolerance and stamp out all denominations except the State-sanctioned church. Parliament cooperated, passing a series of laws designed to persecute the independents out of existence. Bunyan suffered dearly.

In this setting Bunyan received Christ's call to preach. He knew it would be costly. To complicate matters, his wife died, leaving him with four children. Bunyan knew he would be jailed soon, so he asked a woman in his church named Elizabeth to marry him so his children would be cared for while he was in prison. Zealous for God and His people, she agreed to marry John and serve the church in this way. In later years Elizabeth and John fell deeply in love.

When Bunyan refused to obey Parliament's new mandates forbidding him to preach as an independent, the English government imprisoned him. He languished in jail without a proper trial for 12 of the best years of his life: age 32 to 44.

## THE SOURCE OF BUNYAN'S INFLUENCE OVER OWEN AND OTHERS WAS HIS PASSION IN THE PULPIT THAT FLOWED FROM HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE BIBLE'S POWER, AND HIS FREQUENT PERSECUTION.

During these years the government persecutors ravaged what was left of Bunyan's flock, fining immense sums on people who were already poor by 17th-century standards. Often government officials would arrive at their homes with a cart and take everything they owned — furniture, clothing, and cooking utensils — leaving these poor saints utterly destitute.<sup>6</sup>

The experience of a poor widow named Mary Tilney characterized the treatment of Bunyan's flock: "They carried away all the Goods in her House they thought worth their labour, as Tables, Cupboards, Chairs, Irons, Feather-beds, Blankets, the very Hangings of the Room, and Sheets off her bed, insomuch that the Widow was forced that night to borrow Sheets of her Neighbors to lie on. ... Yet the poor Mrs. Tilney was more troubled at the crying and sighing of her poor Neighbours about her ..., than for the loss of her Goods, which she took very cheerfully."<sup>7</sup>

Such was the spirit and attitude of these poor, oppressed saints.

## JAIL LIFE

Meanwhile Bunyan languished in jail. Seventeenth-century English jails were not pleasant. Unlike today, he had no color TV and no weight room. Food was meager. He slept on a flea-infested straw mattress in a small room crowded with other prisoners. He had no heat in winter. He lived with lice, fleas, poor sanitation, and little privacy. Many fellow prisoners died of disease.

Despite these hardships, the fate of his wife, Elizabeth, and his four children was his greatest concern. There was no welfare to provide for them, so he cast his family upon the mercy of his small congregation, already impoverished by persecution. His children grew up poor and fatherless.

"The parting with my Wife and poor children hath often been to me in this place as the pulling of the Flesh from my Bones," he later wrote. "And that ... because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries and wants that my poor Family was like to meet with should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind Child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides; O the thoughts of

the hardship I thought my Blind one might go under, would break my poor heart to pieces. ... Yet recalling myself, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. O, I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his Wife and Children. Yet, thought I, I must do it, I must do it."<sup>8</sup>

## DURING HIS PRISON YEARS, HE FAITHFULLY DEVOTED HOUR AFTER HOUR TO BIBLE STUDY, NEVER KNOWING HOW OR WHEN GOD WOULD USE HIM, OR IF HE WOULD BE RELEASED.

He was finally released from prison, and for the next 3 years he returned to preaching. Deepened by suffering, Bunyan's preaching had a new measure of power and authority.

He was jailed a final time for 6 months. During this incarceration, he received the dream that inspired *Pilgrim's Progress*. He finished the manuscript in prison.

From his middle forties to his death at age 60, he was the pastor of a small, growing Bedford congregation. He was

also in growing demand to supply pulpits in neighboring villages. His reputation preceded him, and increasingly the great congregations of London called him to preach. It was at this time that John Owen heard Bunyan and began attending his lectures whenever he was in London.

### LESSONS FROM BUNYAN

First, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). God lifted Bunyan high because he went so low. Looking back on his imprisonment he quietly noted: "I was made to see that if ever I would suffer rightly I must first pass a sentence of death upon everything which can properly be called a thing of this

life, even to reckon myself, my Wife, my Children, my Health, my Enjoyments, and all as dead to me and myself as dead to them. And second to live upon God that is invisible. I see the best way to go through suffering is to trust in God through Christ as touching the world to come; and as touching this world to count the grave my House, and to make my Bed in darkness."<sup>9</sup>

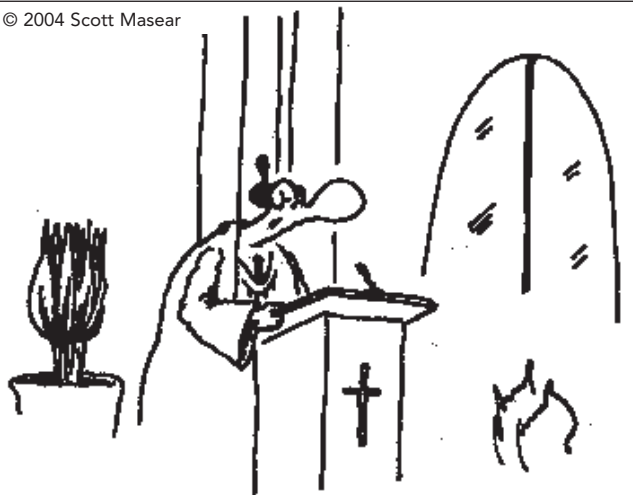
Second, Bunyan persevered in his calling. He was unaware of the vast harvest that would come through his writing after his death. During his prison years, he faithfully devoted hour after hour to Bible study, never knowing how or when God would use him, or if he would be released. He determined to be faithful trusting the harvest to God.

Bunyan didn't measure success by large numbers or by fine facilities. He measured it by faithfulness. To what has God called us? Are we devoting our lives to it? Are we discouraged by meager results? Take courage. Bunyan measured success by faithfulness, trusting God for results as He saw fit to produce them.

From an earthly perspective, Bunyan saw few results during his life. He is enjoying his reward now in eternity. If we persevere in our calling, we will have the same reward. Emulate John Bunyan. He was a faithful man.

History is His story. ■

© 2004 Scott Masear



**"First, I want to say a few words about church board micro-management."**



**WILLIAM P. FARLEY** is pastor of Grace Christian Fellowship in Spokane, Washington. He is the author of *For His Glory*, *Pinnacle*, and *Outrageous Mercy*, Baker. You can contact him at 509-448-3979.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Andrew Thomson, *John Owen, Prince of Puritans* (Fern, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1996), 54.
2. Frank Mott Harrison, *John Bunyan* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1964), 71.
3. *Ibid.*, 73.
4. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Pictures From Pilgrim's Progress* (Rio, Wis.: Ages Software, 1998-2001), 4.
5. For more background on this subject see the column on Oliver Cromwell in Spring 2004 *Enrichment*.
6. John Brown, *John Bunyan* (North Haven, Conn.: Archon Books, 1885; reprint, 1969), chapter 9.
7. *Ibid.*, 207.
8. *Ibid.*, 178.
9. *Ibid.*, 178.







## THE HOLY SPIRIT — GOD AT WORK

**T**he believer who sets out to study the person and work of the Holy Spirit is not merely concerning himself with abstract theology, but with the personal reality of God himself. The Holy Spirit is truly God at work.

The Holy Spirit works in and through the believer. God's dynamic to live the Christian life is made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit, whom every regenerated person possesses. The normal Christian life is (not should be) the Spirit-filled life.

So who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Bible teach about His person and work? What is the Holy Spirit's relationship to the believer's life? To His witness for Christ? This article will address and answer such questions.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

Before one can properly understand the work of the Holy Spirit, he must know the Spirit himself. I suggest one of the errors in writing a theology of the Holy Spirit is to overlook Him as a Person. If the Holy Spirit is a Person and part of the Godhead, a Christian is performing

## BEFORE ONE CAN PROPERLY UNDERSTAND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, HE MUST KNOW THE SPIRIT HIMSELF.

a grave injustice by not recognizing Him as a Person (as God) and offering Him worship, faith, and obedience.

The Early Church was born and filled by the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:1–4; 4:8; 13:1–3). However, it took until the writings of Augustine (A.D. 354–430) for the church to clearly and solidly affirm the deity of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> From Augustine onward orthodox school of theology has declared the Holy Spirit is divine and is a Person.

There are several distinct lines of proof in the Bible that the Holy Spirit is a Person. First, the Holy Spirit was named as God. A number of Scriptures interchange the Holy Spirit with “God” or “Lord.” For instance, Paul wrote, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6).<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit was on equal level with God. Similarly, liberty was equally credited to the Lord or to His Spirit: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Acts 5:3,4, clearly presents the Holy Spirit as God.

## GOD SENT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE WHOLE CHURCH, BUT A PERSON MUST RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Second, the Bible ascribes characteristics of personality to the Holy Spirit. What are distinctive traits of personality? The power to know, to feel, and to will, to name just three. The Holy Spirit knows facts (1 Corinthians 2:10f). The Holy Spirit has feelings and can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). The Holy Spirit also has a will (Acts 13:1–3).

God’s gracious dealings with the people and said, “You [God] gave your good spirit to instruct them” (Nehemiah 9:20). It was clear the acts the Holy Spirit did could only be ascribed to the person of God.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT CREATES LIFE IN THE BELIEVER

When it comes to faith, there is no doubt in the presentation of the Scripture that this is a gift of God brought about in an individual’s life by the Holy Spirit. No one is able to make the confession “Jesus is Lord” without the Holy Spirit enabling him to do so (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The church today must stress about the Holy Spirit what the Bible stresses about Him: He is “the spirit of faith” (2 Corinthians 4:13). Michael Green was right when he wrote: “It is due to the work of the Holy Spirit that we become Christians at all. He is the Spirit who adopts us into the family of God (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6).”<sup>3</sup>

### THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT MUST BE RECEIVED

The place for the student of Scripture to begin to see that the Holy Spirit must be received is Acts 8.<sup>4</sup> Philip had been sent to Samaria and there he preached (Acts 8:5). Many believed the gospel, trusted Christ as Lord, and submitted to baptism in the city (Acts 8:12). When news of the revival in Samaria reached Jerusalem, the believers sent Peter and John to Samaria. Why? So the two apostles could pray for believers to receive the fullness of the Spirit.

Luke wrote the record: “When they [Peter and John] arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them” (Acts 8:15f). Let it be clearly stated that every believer has the Holy Spirit within him.

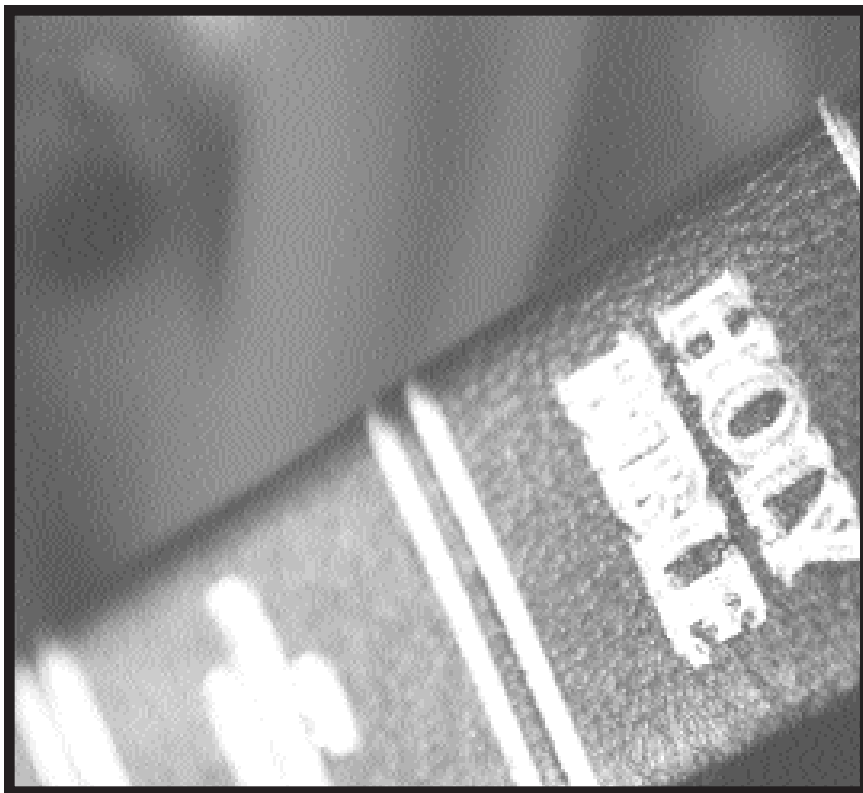
“If anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9). There is, however, a difference between a person belonging to Christ and having the Holy Spirit within him, and a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> The Early Church believed this as was seen in Acts 8:12–17. Paul also believed this as can be seen by his question to the Ephesian believers: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (Acts 19:2).

God sent Christ to the whole world, but a person must receive Christ to be saved. God sent the Holy Spirit to the whole church, but a person must receive the Holy Spirit to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

A.J. Gordon held this view. He wrote, “It seems clear from the Scriptures that it is still the duty and privilege of believers to receive the Holy Spirit by a conscious, definite act of appropriating faith, just as they received Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

D.L. Moody preached that the fullness of the Spirit must be received and was not automatic at salvation. He declared, “The Holy Spirit dwelling in us is one thing. ... And the Holy Spirit upon us for service is another thing.”<sup>7</sup> Moody’s colleague, Dr.

Third, the Holy Spirit performs acts only God could do. Revelation 2:7 says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” In this Scripture the Holy Spirit is not set before the Church as an impersonal influence, but as a Person who speaks for God. The Old Testament stresses the same fact. Nehemiah summed up



R.A. Torrey, also held that the fullness of the Holy Spirit must be received after salvation.<sup>8</sup> In this generation Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "It is possible for us to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ without having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup> The fullness of the Holy Spirit must be received by an individual Christian.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS FOR WITNESSING

A careful examination of every passage in which the fullness of the Holy Spirit is mentioned will uncover it as being for the purpose of testimony and service (see Acts 1:5,8; 2:4; 4:31,33). One work of the Holy Spirit is to sanctify the believer (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11). This is a general work of the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> The filling of the Spirit is "not for the purpose of cleansing from sin, but for the purpose of empowering for service."<sup>11</sup>

Jesus promised His disciples the Spirit would be sent to them. He additionally revealed the purpose of the Spirit's coming in relationship to their lives. He said, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of

## EVERY PREACHER MUST HAVE A RELIANCE AND DEPENDENCE UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT.

truth, who goes out from the Father, He will testify about me. And *you also must testify*, for you have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26f, emphasis added). What was the job of the Holy Spirit in the disciples' lives? To empower them to be witnesses of Christ.

The Christian life must never be reduced to a normal life. It must pulsate with power. The power must be rooted in the Holy Spirit. Churches today need the Spirit vitally active in their gatherings. C.H. Spurgeon's statement was right in his day and is still accurate today: "I think I speak not too strongly when I say that a church in

the land without the Spirit of God is rather a curse than a blessing."<sup>12</sup>

Every preacher must have a reliance and dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Preaching is more than an able man, fluid in speech and well trained, standing before people to speak. Acts 4:8 records, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them ... " and he launched into his speech. That relationship with the Holy Spirit in the pulpit can and must typify preaching today. To quote Spurgeon again: "If you have not the Spirit of God, Christian worker, remember that you stand in somebody else's way; you are as a tree bearing no fruit standing where another fruitful tree might grow. This is a solemn work; the Holy Spirit or nothing, and worse than nothing."<sup>13</sup>

The Holy Spirit is a divine Person. His coming to the believer allows spiritual life to be created. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is a necessary privilege every believer may receive, though it is not automatic. His presence in the believer will accomplish unexplainable acts in the world today. The Spirit yearns to deal and relate with the believer today.

May the church open her doors to the Holy Spirit! ■



**THOMAS H. LINDBERG, D.MIN.**, senior pastor, First Assembly of God of Memphis, Cordova, Tennessee.

### ENDNOTES

1. For a brief discussion on the history of interpretation of the Holy Spirit, see L. Thomas Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1962), 47f.
2. Scripture quotations in this article were taken from *The Holy Bible: The New International Version*.
3. Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 74.
4. The writer purposely did not begin in Acts 2. Although the disciples were Christian prior to Pentecost, it could be argued that they could not have received the Holy Spirit before Acts 2 because "up to that time the Spirit had not yet been given" (John 7:39). For an excellent discussion on the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals before Pentecost, see Leon Wood,

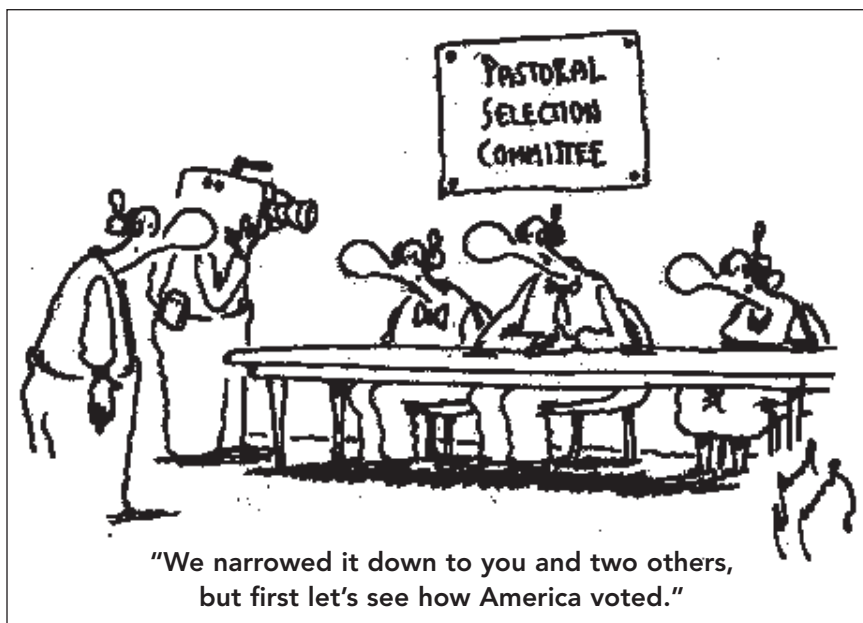


*The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), especially 39–77.

5. The writer believes it is worthless to argue over phrases for the Spirit's fullness. Just within the first two chapters of Acts, the experience of Pentecost was described as "the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4), "being baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5), "receiving power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8), "being filled with the Spirit" (Acts 2:4), and a "pouring out of the Spirit" (Acts 2:17). The writer chose the term "filled with the Holy Spirit." Dr. Thomas Small wrote an excellent word to this battle over slogans: "By whatever name — receive!" *Reflected Glory: The Spirit in Christian and Christians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 137ff.
6. A.J. Gordon, *The Ministry of the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1964 rep. ed. [1894]), 68.
7. D.L. Moody, *Secret Power* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1987 rep. ed. [1881]), 47.
8. R.A. Torrey, *The Baptism With the Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1972 rep. ed. [1881]), 13–17.
9. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Joy Unspeakable* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1984), 21.
10. Lloyd-Jones distinguished the regular work of the Spirit from the Spirit's exceptional work. His regular work was sanctification; His exceptional work was filling for power and service. For example, Lloyd-Jones wrote, "In Ephesians 5:18, as I want to show you, he is

dealing with sanctification. That is more or less his regular work. ... But I want to suggest that a man can be filled with the Spirit in terms of Ephesians 5:18 and still not baptized with the Spirit." *Joy Unspeakable*, 67.

11. Torrey, *Baptism*, 18.
12. C.H. Spurgeon, quoted in Moody, *Secret*, 70.
13. *Ibid.*, 70. The writer does not agree with Barthian theology, but no wonder many Barthian theologians maintain the Bible is not so much the Word of God, but that it becomes the Word of God when the Spirit uses it in preaching.



# THE HEBRAIC GOSPEL OF SALVATION

**E**sther Rosenberg, a New York transplant in California, needed a grand series of miracles. This suicidal Jewess required an immediate remedy for her despairingly difficult second marriage. She craved a cure for her pain-ridden back and direction for her three disorientated Jewish teenagers. Esther did not want more religion, professional counseling, the awaited surgical procedures, or sedation for her offspring. Esther yearned for rescue in real life; she hungered after genuine biblical salvation. Immediately prior to committing the act that would end her life, she cried out, “God, is there any hope for me?”

God answered her with one word: “Jesus.”

Esther immediately connected with our Assemblies of God Jewish ministry in North Hollywood and came to experience God’s salvation in Jesus. Her sins were forgiven, her marriage restored, her back miraculously healed, and the lives of her three Jewish children were redeemed. Esther was indeed saved.

## IS SALVATION HEBRAIC OR HELLENIC?

When Paul wrote, “All Israel will be saved,” did he envision an other-worldly after-life Jewish experience? Was he alluding to an intangible belief system that included the legally decreed divine justification of “national Israel”? Or was this apostolic rabbi prophesying a pending group spiritual encounter with Christ that would climax in the corporate regeneration of the Jewish people? Paul’s concept of the “salvation of national Israel” (see Article 14 in the official Assemblies of God *Statement of Fundamental Truths*) certainly encompassed all of these but, significantly, much more.

The deliberate downsizing of the enormity of biblical salvation into the more manageable spiritual confines of a mysterious eternal future was a Hellenic imposition on the Hebraic context of Scripture. Both Testaments were inspired by the Holy Spirit within the social milieu of Hebraic religious influence with its concrete emphasis on the present real life. It was only in the early centuries of the post-apostolic period that new Christian thinkers, preconditioned by Greek philosophy, began composing theological concepts often destined to divorce common Christian conviction from Jewish apostolic perspective. While salvation meant more to sincere New Testament believers than traditional rabbinical Judaism could have ever advocated, paradoxically, common Christian teaching on salvation simultaneously came to mean less.

The Hebrew Bible conceptualizes God’s salvation as divine intervention with specific assistance to preserve society or one’s own life; communal deliverance from plague and disease; military victory over enemies without, or legal conquest over enemies within; and the maintenance of the general collective welfare by divine supply of agricultural products and related provisions. Salvation, as perceived in the Hebrew Bible, is present-life oriented and not primarily concerned with next-world issues. The Hebrew focus on “forever” is centered on the perpetuity of Israel’s seed as sheltered and preserved by compliance with God’s enlightened Word.

Salvation in the intertestamental apocryphal writings focused on deliverance from enemies, especially when life was threatened. God was viewed as the One who rescued the righteous from injustice, demonic powers, or catastrophic circumstance. God’s wisdom was the agent of redemption. The later Dead Sea Scrolls depicted God as the intervening deliverer from wicked oppression, external enemies, or internal temptations. There is little intimation of the hereafter.

The Gospels and Paul’s writings were plainly Holy Spirit-inspired within the Hebraic context of first-century Jewish understanding. While written in the Greek *lingua franca* of the era, the fully Hebraic-conditioned text of Matthew through Revelation offered an expanding illumination on the nature of God’s salvation, and embraced a strong emphasis on life in the hereafter inclusive of the resurrections of the dead, the judgments, and eternal life. In the New Testament, salvation (*soteria*) continues the same Hebraic emphases of deliverance from wickedness, preservation, recovery, restoration, cure, and well-being. The New Testament revelation enlarges upon salvation themes to offer a clearer and broader picture of the eternal benefit of salvation, and

fully identifies Christ as its exclusive source. But it is not true that the New Testament in any way negates, cancels, or downplays the Spirit's revelation of the essence of salvation, as had been earlier Spirit-inspired in the Hebrew Bible. The Spirit's teaching on salvation is progressive, but entirely consistent from Genesis through Revelation.

## THE FIRST PENTECOSTALS EMBRACED HEBRAIC UNDERSTANDINGS

The first-century Pentecostal Jewish believers were perfectly at home with the broader implications of their salvation in the Messiah Jesus for both eternal matters and the present reality on earth. They celebrated their spiritual wholeness in Christ and their assurance of life eternal, but did not ignore God's intended mastery of their lives and circumstances in the real world. They did not perceive Jesus as Lord only in a generic or futuristic sense but recognized Him to be presently Lord of all. Jesus claimed authority not only in eternal realms but also within the time and space of the present life of Israel, of all the redeemed, and of all the nations.

Consistent with their understanding of salvation, the early Jewish Pentecostal generations of the Early Church expected the imminent return of Christ and the immediate "salvation of national Israel." They did not hesitate to preach "healing in the atonement," as God had clearly demonstrated His concern for the earthly physical well-being of His people.

While Christian tradition is sometimes confused, history demonstrates that the gospel continued to seriously impact the Jewish world for a full century after Christ's resurrection. The gospel presented to the house of Israel signaled God's real activity in the present, and His intervention in the human experience. Israel's God was fully operational in time and space, both in His

reproving of sin and effecting wholesome salvation for the faithful. The early Pentecostal emphases on deliverance from the clutches of wickedness, supernatural healing, Spirit-empowerment, the Second Coming, and pending salvation of national Israel had great appeal to tens of thousands of Messianic Jews in the first and second centuries.

## HELLENISTIC IMPOSITIONS ON HEBRAIC REVELATION

The Greek philosophical conditioning of later converts to Christianity impacted giant intellects to compose new and variant Christian theology. The Greek and Latin fathers read the New Testament through Hellenic lenses and missed much of the down-to-earth application of Christ's salvation. Their anti-Judaic predispositions caused them to filter out many present implications of salvation so evident to Hebrew-informed believers. Heresies among some Jewish Christian groups, e.g., the Ebionites, so distressed many church fathers that they categorically rejected any Jewish or Hebraic understanding of New Testament revelation. In their misguided quest for orthodoxy they even denied Israel its biblically promised perpetual role as God's chosen people.

The Church fathers' replacement of Israel theology (e.g., supersessionism) generally coincided with the doctrine of cessationism, the teaching that the charismatic manifestations of the Spirit had been discontinued after the apostolic period. Such theological elimination of divine activity from the earth to heavenly realms not only discounted the need for both Jews and Pentecostals but also pushed the real meaning of salvation off into the esoteric realm of eternity. The Dark Ages soon set in as the light of biblical salvation was dimmed.

## MODERN PENTECOSTALS TO THE RESCUE

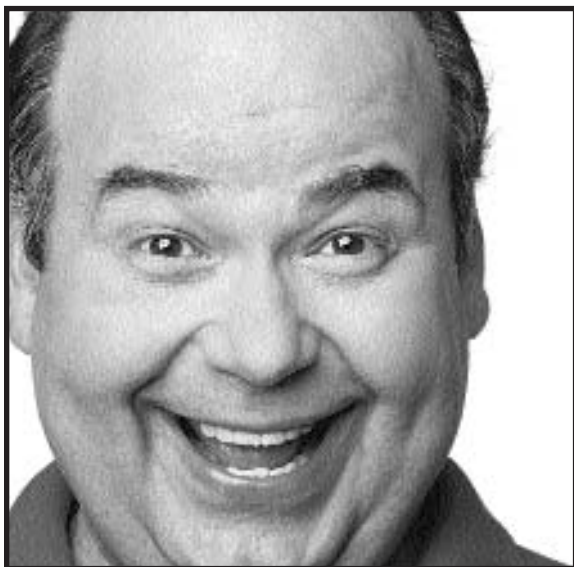
The restorationist moorings of modern Pentecostalism predisposed the movement to embrace a fully revived first-century Christianity replete with all the *charismata*, global apostolic enterprise, and the expectation of the pending salvation of Israel. For restorationist Pentecostals, salvation in Christ had immediate and life-changing implications for the present. Miraculous deliverances from the clutches of evil and divine healings of broken or diseased bodies were readily available through faith in the Savior. There was healing in the Atonement. God's salvation was a daily life experience and could include divine provisions of living accommodations and foodstuffs. The human reality in the world was incorporated back into the field of divine activity. The Savior was presently at work, not only forgiving sins against a day of judgment, but also healing the sick, rescuing the perishing, and preserving rebuilt modern lives.

The antimissionary efforts of contemporary Jewish organizations have suggested that the Christian Messiah is irrelevant to Jews since faith in Christ has not yielded the promised messianic results in the earth. The Jewish culture today is still present-reality oriented. It is no wonder then that 80 percent of all Jewish believers in Jesus are Pentecostal/charismatic. The genuine impact of the Messianic Savior is unquestionably felt in their Jewish lives as He dramatically saves and bears them up every day. The Pentecostal presentation of the gospel to the Jewish world has earthly significance. Faith in Jesus is absolutely relevant to the present. Just ask Esther Rosenberg who, still in North Hollywood, is enjoying and openly sharing

complete salvation in Jesus. ■



**RAY GANNON, PH.D.**, is U.S. Missions national representative for Jewish ministries, Springfield, Missouri.



## CHARACTERS: TAKING ADVANTAGE OF GOD'S GIFTS

How pastors can unlock a world of talent that is hidden by the glare of character deficiencies.

**E**very church has a cast of characters, and every character provides an opportunity to be used in creative ways.

When talking about characters, I am talking about people pastors normally try to avoid. These people have a single character trait that dominates everything they do.

Instead of wondering *Why me, Lord?* we need to find creative ways to utilize these active people. How can we take advantage of a special ability or a flower waiting to bloom that is hidden by an overbearing character flaw?

I recently came across an article, "Every Meeting Has a Cast of Characters: Don't Stifle Them," by Professor Virginia Kidd, department of communications, California State University, Sacramento, California.

Though it is not a church-based article, I recognized some of the characters I have known in my 30 years of church involvement. I saw Chris the critic, Louie the life of the party, and Molly the monopolizer.

More important, I was stirred by two thoughts: *How have I used or abused such people?* and *How can I take advantage of God's gifts to my church by enabling these characters in a positive way?*

Perfectly charming people with multifaceted personalities can become single-minded, repetitive, and downright annoying when they come between you and the ministry you envision for your congregation. But what if we took advantage of the things these individuals are good at doing? Could we turn a disturbance into a blessing? We need to think on a broader scope and face these characteristics in a proactive, not reactive manner.

### IDENTIFY BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS AS TASK ROLES

A seminal report by Kenneth Benne and Paul Sheats entitled, "Functional Roles of Group Meetings," from the *Journal of Social Issues*, No.4, 1948, identifies behavior patterns the authors labeled "task roles":

**The initiator** defines problems, contributes ideas, and proposes solutions.

**The information seeker** asks for clarification, promotes participation by others, and solicits facts.

**The energizer** prods members into action.

**The orientor** keeps the group on track and guides discussion.

**The secretary** keeps track of group progress and recalls past actions.

Do you recognize any of these characters on your deacon board?

Benne and Sheats also consider social activities as maintenance activities for meetings and identify five major roles in this area as well:

**The encourager** provides support, praise, and acceptance.

**The harmonizer** resolves conflict and proposes compromise.

**The comedian** injects humor and relaxes people.

**The gatekeeper** controls communication channels by allowing each person who wants to contribute a chance. The person in charge of the meeting generally performs this role.



**The follower** accepts the others' ideas and goes along with the group.

Do you recognize any of these characters sitting in a pew near you?

In any congregation, some members may be more focused on individual aggrandizement than on the collective good. We need to find ways of turning these individuals into all-minded people — people who will act for the betterment of the whole.

Could the person who seems to keep record of everything be assigned to keep records of important meetings, give reports on the outcome of an evangelism event, or receive and report on newsletters from missionaries?



Could your encouragers and comedians head up the welcoming committee, serve as greeters, and plan social activities?

Could the information seekers do research for church projects, sermon background information, or have possible future ministry involvement in the congregation?

## DIRECTING DIFFICULT PEOPLE

In today's church, some characters are dominant and some are passive. Let me share a few from my background.

**Molly the monopolizer** was one of those persons who never let others speak. It was hard to realize that in the midst of all her words, she did have some useful suggestions. With Molly, I started by seating her as close to me as possible

simply to prevent eye contact, which releases a person to speak. When she got on a roll, I interrupted by saying, "That's an interesting point; let's see what everyone thinks of that." You can also cue the group: "I'd like to hear the ideas of those who have not had opportunity to express themselves yet." If these don't work, talk to her individually, or even ask her to help draw others out.

**Sally the silent member** was not noticed much, but contained a wealth of ideas. The problem was getting her to contribute. Two approaches worked well with Sally. First, she needed to get to know people before she felt safe. After she developed comfortable friendships, she was more likely to interact. Second, I asked her for feedback away from the crowd to get her honest thoughts. When the Sallys of your congregation do interact, respond positively and affirm their participation.

**Wendell the withdrawn** was an apathetic person and often felt he was unnecessary. He needed an important assignment. I realized he might not complete the assignment, but having responsibility gave Wendell a sense of involvement. Taking class attendance, preparing refreshments, or serving on a low-key committee was the answer to drawing him into an ownership level.

**Louie the life of the party** provided tension release, but his passion for laughter was causing tension. I confronted the problem gently, with the understanding that good humor can be useful to a group. We agreed privately that he should tone it down a bit. At the same time I took advantage of his upbeat demeanor by placing him on the men's ministry board and putting him in charge of church picnic activities.

**Chris the critic** attacked ideas, yet was not a hindrance to our congregation. When channeled in the right direction, Chris was a vital component to clarification and decisionmaking. The absence of dissenters can result in disaster. A congregation of yes people is not always the most successful in stewardship; sometimes a critic will make you stop and take another look at your motives.

**Andy the arguer**, unlike the critic, did not help clarify issues. Andy was involved in a role struggle. The surface arguments were a way of getting his needs across. I tried to keep my good humor, sift out the useful arguments, and remember that sometimes argument can keep a group on its toes. If the conflict got out of hand, I tried to resolve the differences by talking to Andy through a third party I trusted.

The church needs to be creative in using the characters God has entrusted into our care. Let us find ways to turn pieces of coal into diamonds, problems into possibilities, and buds into blossoms.

With conflict intervention and by skillfully directing problem people, pastors can unlock a world of talent that is hidden by the glare of character deficiencies. Then we will look forward to walking into our congregation and seeing the Andys, Sallys, and Wendells as the blessings God intends them to be. ■



**CLYDE W. HARVEY** is Chi Alpha campus ministries director, University of Wisconsin/Superior, and lay ministries director, Central Assembly of God, Superior, Wisconsin.



# PREACHING THAT CONNECTS

BY CRAIG BRIAN LARSON

## PREACHING THAT PROMOTES SELF-CENTEREDNESS

How to avoid stirring up the wrong motives.

**H**ow is a sermon like aspirin? You take aspirin with one purpose in mind, but it has unintended side effects, both good and bad. If you take aspirin for a headache, you get pain relief and a secondary benefit: studies show that an aspirin a day can reduce the risk of a recurrence of heart attacks or strokes.\* On the other hand, you might suffer the side effect of an upset stomach.

Sermons, too, have side effects. One is what we say about motives for obedience. For example, if the text calls people to use their spiritual gifts, we could offer many reasons to obey: the desire to be a faithful steward, to serve God, to build the church, to grow personally, to fulfill one's purpose, to express love to others, to say thank you to God, to imitate Jesus, or to glorify God.

### CHOOSING PROPER MOTIVES IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS THREE CHARACTERISTICS: WHAT WE DO, HOW WE DO IT, AND WHY WE DO IT.

Whichever motivations we choose, we teach an important lesson about proper motivations. When your sermon says, "Use your spiritual gift because you will build the church," you say indirectly, "Building the church is a good thing that should motivate you." This is indirect because normally we do not take time to justify that motive.

#### WHY TEACH WHY

Choosing proper motives is important because righteousness has three characteristics: what we do, how we do it, and why we do it.

If I am a restaurant cook, the *what* of righteousness is to do what my employer requires: prepare orders according to house recipes. The *how* of righteousness is to cook in a sanitary way — do not put potatoes that have been dropped on the floor into the pot. Finally, the *why* of righteousness is to cook to please the Lord. I must not cook motivated by greed and selfish ambition — to curry favor with staff and

customers so I can steal them away when I start my own restaurant.

Each week our sermons train believers in the third characteristic of righteousness: *why* do right. Usually this message is unintended; it is the hidden sermon. This indirect sermon can have harmful side effects.

#### UPSET STOMACHS

Our greatest challenge in training motives is to change the believer's orbit. Under the full control of their sinful nature, people are self-centered. They have the planetary mass of Jupiter, with God and other people orbiting around them like tiny moons. When people turn to Christ in faith, God begins the revolutionary process of transforming them to be God-centered and other-centered. They begin to see themselves in proper relation to the greatness of God and to the value of others. Increasingly they orbit the massive, glorious sun of God's will.

Self-centered deeds do not please God. "All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord" (Proverbs 16:2). "[The Lord] will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

The harmful side effect of some preaching is that we appeal to self-interest in a way that encourages hearers to continue in an utterly self-centered way of life.

Not that we should never appeal to self-interest. Jesus did constantly. He asked, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" (Luke 9:25). While Jesus said deny yourself and take up your cross, He also said, "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38), and "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20).

Jesus and the New Testament writers teach both a denial of self on the one hand and a sanctified self-interest on the other. With sanctified self-interest we seek what is best for ourselves in a different way and for a different reason.

We seek our interests God's way for God's glory, rather than our way for our glory.

Theologian Wayne Grudem lists the following as examples of motivations. The:

- desire to please God and express our love to Him.
- need to keep a clear conscience before God.
- desire to be a "vessel for noble use" and have increased effectiveness in the work of the Kingdom.
- desire to see unbelievers come to Christ through observing our lives.
- desire to receive present blessings from God on our lives and ministries.
- desire to avoid God's displeasure and discipline on our lives (sometimes called the fear of God).
- desire to seek greater heavenly reward.
- desire for a deeper walk with God.
- desire that angels would glorify God for our obedience.
- desire for peace and joy in our lives.
- desire to do what God commands, simply because His commands are right, and we delight in doing what is right.

## FINDING RIGHT MOTIVES

How do we select the right motive to emphasize? The good news is the correct motives for obedience are almost always given in our sermon text. Preaching the motives in the text keeps us from defaulting to an appeal either to self-centeredness, to self-interest alone, or unthinkingly, almost as a cliché, to the glory of God. Either way, we may overlook the *why* in the text. When we fully illumine the text, our hearers are most likely to develop holy motivations.

For example, we might be surprised at the variety of sanctified reasons/motives Paul offers in 2 Corinthians 9 for giving money to Kingdom purposes:

- To be a good example to others (verses 1–5).
- To avoid shame (verses 1–5).

## WHEN PEOPLE TURN TO CHRIST IN FAITH, GOD BEGINS THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF TRANSFORMING THEM TO BE GOD-CENTERED AND OTHER-CENTERED.

- To keep your promises (verses 1–5).
- To delight the Lord (verse 7).
- So God's grace will abound to us, resulting in financial abundance that will both meet our needs and enable us to give even more generously to others (verses 6,8,10,11).
- To grow in righteousness (verses 9,10).
- To meet the needs of God's people (verse 12).
- To prove ourselves as obedient followers of Christ (verse 13).
- So people will express more thanksgiving and praise to God (verses 11–13).
- So others will pray for us (verse 14).

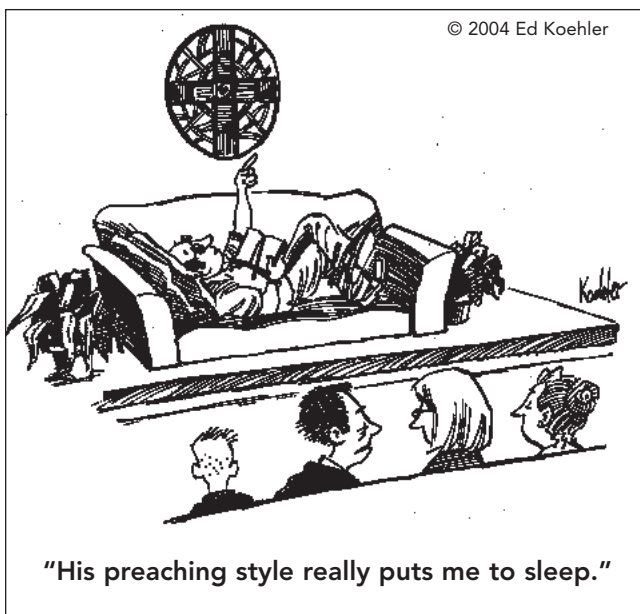
The sermon on this text that appeals to self-centeredness focuses on give-to-get and can foster greed. It ignores the clear principle that we are to replant the increased harvest from the seed of giving. The more we receive the more we give. Further, we give not just for our own benefit but also for God and other believers.

At the other end of the spectrum, the sermon uncomfortable with sanctified self-interest tries to explain away the harvest principle. It suggests that to give to receive

is ignoble. This, too, distorts the text. We may take this approach because of an either-or-mentality about motives. In reality, people rarely make choices for just one reason, but rather, for many.

When we appeal to the motives in the text, we develop highly motivated, God-centered disciples who obey Christ for the right reasons and please God to a fuller degree.

\* Check with your physician before starting a daily regimen of aspirin. ■



**CRAIG BRIAN LARSON** is editor of *Christianity Today* International's preaching resources—[PreachingToday.com](http://PreachingToday.com) and *Preaching Today* audio—as well as pastor of Lake Shore Church (Assemblies of God) in Chicago. He is coauthor of *Preaching That Connects* (Zondervan, 1994).

### ENDNOTE

1. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 757,758.

# BUSINESS & MINISTRY MYTHS

Consider these myths that might indicate an unhealthy perspective in your relationship between business and ministry.

**T**he business component of ministry is becoming increasingly important each year as financial, legal, administrative responsibilities, and other opportunities for churches and leadership create a complex maze of fiduciary responsibilities.

Evangelical and Pentecostal churches of the 20th century often viewed business and administration as worldly exercises, and for some, a necessary evil that distracted from ministry. At best, churches hired a business administrator to handle church business so ministers could focus on the spiritual.

Healthy, effective churches of the 21st century recognize that the application of business and stewardship principles grounded in Scripture is not only a spiritual matter, but it lays a foundation for success in all areas of ministry.

Consider these myths that might indicate an unhealthy perspective in your relationship between business and ministry:

## MYTH #1: PROFIT MAKING IS BAD FOR MINISTRY

God's promise of provision and blessing includes increase. There can be no increase without a profit. Profit is the increase that results when we are good stewards of our time, talent, and treasures.

In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30), Jesus made it clear that we are not to break-even in our endeavors. The steward who didn't make a profit lost his resources to the one who did.

Proverbs 21:5 says, "The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty."

There is no biblical basis for breaking even in any aspect of ministry. While excess accumulation may be bad stewardship for a church when many needs and opportunities exist, this does not mean that profit is unspiritual. Rather, being good stewards of our resources helps ensure our ability to continue giving in increasing measure to His purposes.

Is your ministry characterized by increase and multiplication? Material fruitfulness comes about through strong biblical stewardship and accountability.

## MYTH #2: PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE OPPOSES SPIRITUALITY

In the recent past and even today, churches have a relatively low regard for achieving professional excellence. Excellence in financial, legal, and administrative matters was seen as a secular exercise. In some denominational circles, professionalism was seen as sin.

From a biblical perspective we are encouraged to pursue professional excellence. We are instructed to excel in the vocation where God has placed us for His glory. Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." How much more should the business of ministry reflect professional excellence?

The Bible is an excellent source of business knowledge. Applying biblical knowledge to church business promotes spiritual unity in the body of Christ. Consider the churches and ministries that had tremendous ministry vision and spirituality but were destroyed because of poor business practices.

More ministries have been destroyed by bad stewardship than from a lack of



vision. Luke 14:28–30 says, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’”

King Solomon’s construction of the temple provides a profound example of using worldly expertise (1 Kings 5). God provided detailed plans for His house. David told Solomon all the details. This is the only time God has ever given such meticulous details for an earthly project. When everything was ready, David sent Solomon to a neighboring king for expertise in helping with this spiritual masterpiece.

Building the temple was a momentous spiritual matter for the nation of Israel, yet God chose to use ungodly expertise to fulfill this important part of His redemptive plan. Why? In God’s eyes, the intellect, wealth, and resources of the world belong to Him and can be used for His purpose and His good pleasure.

Proverbs 1:5 says, “Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.”

### MYTH #3: CORPORATE STRATEGIES DON’T WORK FOR MINISTRY

Many in ministry fear the discipline of proven corporate strategies. An outstanding corporation will:

- Have a mission and long-term vision with strategies and tactics to meet clearly articulated goals and objectives. This is the essence of a purpose-driven church (Proverbs 29:18).
- Treat each employee as equally important, no matter his or her position (Romans 12:4,5,10,16).
- Be customer-driven, not internally focused. (In the church, reaching the world is an outward focus.)
- Generate a surplus from its activities

(as in Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14–30, discussed above).

Most characteristics of corporate excellence apply to the church. Occasionally, negative corporate characteristics are found in ministries. While corporate greed exists, so do greedy, ineffective churches and ministries.

## PROFIT IS THE INCREASE THAT RESULTS WHEN WE ARE GOOD STEWARDS OF OUR TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES.

One common characteristic of corporations that is seldom found in churches is the evaluation of effectiveness. In secular business, leaders must evaluate the effectiveness of their business or they go bankrupt. Unfortunately, many ministries are bankrupt and don’t know it because they have no mechanism to measure effectiveness.

Effective churches of the 21st century are recognizing that good stewardship and godly accountability require them to measure their effectiveness in every area of ministry. Corporate systems that teach stewardship of those we serve, effective use of resources, and team-building principles within the context of planned-for results are helping scores of churches become part of the church-multiplication movement. Such efforts don’t compromise, but complement spiritual growth and unity.

### MYTH #4: BUSINESS ASPECTS OF CHURCHES ARE NOT PART OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Just as some churches demonize professional excellence and profitability, they also separate business from the Great Commission.

The Great Commission for many churches is relegated to specific church programs. When the unsaved copier salesman, plumber, or electrician arrives at a church, the Great Commission can be far from our minds.

Many businesspeople dislike doing business with churches or ministers because: churches expect or demand the work to be done for below market rates (often to the point of abusing the contractor, supplier, or laborer); don’t pay their bills in a timely fashion; or are unprofessional in responding to business issues and concerns. Colossians 4:1 says, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven” (KJV).

It is no wonder the church sometimes fails to be light and salt to the world. If the way we conduct church business does not provide a witness by deeds, attitudes, and relationships, our communities will view our evangelism programs as hypocritical.

The spiritual principles of lifestyle evangelism apply to churches and organizations. Do we practice organizational lifestyle evangelism? Do we reach our business community as an organization? Do we reach out to our schools, government, and local compassion ministries? Do we embrace those of other faiths with lifestyle evangelism?

### CONCLUSION

When we embrace professional excellence and healthy business models rooted in biblical truths, we will discover an empowering alignment of business and ministry that can help us fulfill both the creation mandate (family and work) and the Great Commission. ■



**RANDALL K. BARTON** is president and CEO of the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, Springfield, Missouri.

# WELCOME TO FATHER'S HOUSE —

## A Practical Guide for Taking the First-time Guest From the Door to the Core

**A**s an ex-military wife, I have moved 24 times in 38 years of marriage. Prior to coming to Springfield, Missouri, in 1990, to serve as vice president of finance at Central Bible College, my husband, Bob, was a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army.

God birthed the ministry of Christian hospitality in my heart because I have always been the guest or newcomer. Our family has been in wonderful churches and military chapels all over the world where Christians took time to walk across the aisle, or meet us in the foyer or parking lot, or simply greet us with a big, heartwarming smile, and welcome us to their church.

I know what it is like to be lonely in a crowd. I know what it is like to walk into a new church and not know one person. I also know what it is like to move children and teenagers when they did not want to leave their established friends. I know what it is like to be in another country, far from family, and desperately needing the fellowship that is available in the local church family.

Because I had to rely on people to accept and love me in many congregations due to military transfers, I became sensitive to the ministry of hospitality in local churches. My husband and I have served in small churches, large churches, military chapels, and everything in between. In many churches, we were graciously received immediately. In others, we were made to feel we had to earn our acceptance. It was in one such church where we were attempting to earn our acceptance that God began to deal with me about the proper way to assimilate the guest or stranger into the church.

Now, years later, as I travel and hold seminars and workshops on Christian hospitality, I am amazed at what God is doing through this ministry. Hospitality is a ministry for people and ministered by laity. Most people in any congregation can be involved. This multifaceted ministry involves loving, caring, sensitive, and positive people. It should include young adults, college students, singles, middle-aged people, and senior adults.

Why do I place a high priority on this ministry? First, because it is scriptural and falls under the ministry of helps mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:27,28 — “those able to help others.” In this passage the apostle Paul is speaking about the different gifts

and facets of the body of Christ.

What is *hospitality*? Consider the following definitions:

- “Receiving and entertaining guests generously and kindly.”
- “Kindness and generosity to guests or strangers.”
- “Liberal receptivity.”

The root word comes from two Greek words, *philo*, which is translated “loving” and *xenos*, which is translated “strangers.” These Greek words combined are *philoxenias* — “the love of strangers” (*Zondervan's Greek Lexicon*).

Notice, it is not translated “the love of your best friends”; rather, “the love of strangers.” This same word is used in Hebrews 13:2: “Be not forgetful to *entertain strangers* for thereby some have *entertained angels unawares*” (KJV).

I grew up in a wonderful Christian home where good Southern hospitality reigned supreme. Mom and Dad would often bring strangers who were traveling and needed a place to stay for the night home from church. They would let them stay in our guest bedroom, fix them a huge breakfast, and send them on their way the next morning. We never saw most of them again. This was truly “lodging of a stranger.” Today, many

would consider this dangerous due to our demented society. I am grateful for a heritage that taught me to receive the strangers God sends into my life.

In two words in Romans 12:13, the apostle Paul commands Christians to “practice hospitality.” God desires that we practice hospitality, and He richly blesses us as we are obedient.

Let me share a few Scriptures on hospitality.

## **Bishops**

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality” (1 Timothy 3:2, KJV).

## **Widows**

“Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet” (1 Timothy 5:10, KJV).

## **Hospitality**

“Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (1 Peter 4:9, KJV).

“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers” (3 John 5, KJV).

“We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth” (3 John 8).

“For I was ahungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:35,36,40, KJV).

As we reach out to others, we can readily observe the reciprocal grace of God working in our lives. I am grateful that God spoke to me many years ago about cheerfully and joyfully communicating Christian hospitality.

Once He has spoken to you about this

ministry or starting a hospitality ministry, consider the following:

1. Make sure His is your heartbeat and the heartbeat of your staff and other leadership. This is a key element to ensure success.
2. Pray for a God-called leader. A highly motivated member of the laity is a great asset. While this ministry does not require that a member of the pastoral staff lead it, it should fall under the umbrella of one of the pastors on staff for accountability. The leader of this ministry needs to love people, be an organizer, motivator, and sensitive to the Spirit of God.
3. Have an organizational meeting with you and your leadership present. Invite everyone in the church to attend. Many times people in your congregation who are not involved in any other ministry will be eager to work in the hospitality ministry. Build enthusiasm by having a guest speaker or a hospitality coordinator from a church where this ministry is in place.

As you contemplate launching a hospitality ministry, ask the following questions:

1. Is our church growing?
2. Are we retaining members?
3. Do most of our first-time guests return for a second or third visit?
4. What are our church’s goals?
  - a. Have the goals and mission statement been clearly defined?
  - b. Is the majority of our church committed to achieving these goals?
  - c. Are we willing to change to reach our desired goals?

When we consider the lovely worship facilities God has given to us in America, we should be mindful of our God-given responsibility to “Go out and compel them to come.” Once they attend our churches, we must make sure there is a reason for them to stay. We must assimilate the newcomers as quickly as possible, or we will lose them. I call this taking the guest from the door to the core.

People are drawn to a church where warmth and concern for their needs are shown. Remember: you never have a second chance to make a good first impression. Your first-time guests decide within the first 11 minutes if they will return to your church.

## **HOW DO YOU TAKE A FIRST-TIME GUEST FROM THE DOOR TO THE CORE?**

A multifaceted hospitality ministry can include but is not limited to:

### **Parking lot attendants**

These people greet guests as they get out of their cars, assist with umbrellas in inclement weather, and in some churches provide valet parking or a shuttle service.

### **Greeters, hosts, and hostesses**

Greeters, hosts, and hostesses need to be at every door each service. A major difference between a greeter and a host or hostess is the greeter never leaves the door. The host or hostess stand several feet behind the greeter and takes guests where they need to go — the sanctuary, nursery, or a Sunday School class. They should always escort guests. Never give verbal directions and expect guests to find their own way. Walking with your guests is an excellent way to get to know them better.

### **Sanctuary door greeters**

Sanctuary door greeters are necessary in case people were not greeted at the door when they entered the building. These greeters can also help the ushers find comfortable seats for guests or regular attendees. Some large churches have five or six

doors leading into the sanctuary, making a sanctuary door greeter indispensable.

## **Ushers**

The usher ministry can be challenging. Excellence and professionalism are important. We need dedicated, trained people who view this ministry as a crucial public relations role.

## **Dial-a-Visitor**

Dial-a-Visitor is a telephone ministry. A trained member of your laity calls each local visitor within 24 hours of his or her visit. If possible, these calls should be made Sunday afternoon to invite the visitor back for the Sunday evening service. This makes a huge statement to the visitor who just left your church a few hours before. This is not a theological call — rather a “thank you for being our guest for worship this morning.”

## **Letters**

On Monday a letter from the senior pastor is mailed to every guest that filled out the guest register. Enclosed in that letter are two items: First-Timer Response Card and a printed invitation to the Newcomers Class.

## **Newcomers class**

This is a 45-minute review of the church's ministries. This includes Sunday School classes, service times, youth and children's programs, and outreach ministries. The Newcomers Class is taught each Sunday as a Sunday School class. An announcement about the purpose and location of this class is mentioned in the bulletin each Sunday. Staff pastors, the senior pastor, and deacons drop by this class to meet guests. Refreshments are served and each guest receives a gift. The probability that these people will join the church rises considerably as a result of attending the class because they now:

- understand the mission of the church.
- know what Sunday School class or small group they want to visit.
- are personally introduced to many of the pastoral staff and leadership.

Several couples can alternate hosting this class so the same couple is not hosting every Sunday. Hosts need to be professional and have a good understanding of the facilities and the ministries of the church.

## **Coffee with the pastor**

Coffee with the pastor is held once a quarter. This works well following a Sunday evening service. The entire church staff and deacons with their families share a time of food, fellowship, and introductions. This is a time for newcomers, staff, and the leadership of the church to get better acquainted. The hospitality ministry of the church is all about building relationships.

## **Hospitality center**

The hospitality center should be manned before, during, and following services. Guests will gravitate to the center for information. Having a phone at the hospitality center is a plus and greatly aids the congregation when there is an emergency.

## **Dinners for eight**

This ministry of hospitality is held in the homes of your regular attendees. Newcomers are invited to participate. The meetings can take place four-to-six times

a year depending on the groups' preferences.

## **Fifth-Sunday fellowships**

Fifth-Sunday fellowships are held each month that has five Sundays and are hosted by a different adult Sunday School class each time. This gathering provides time for fellowship between regular members and newcomers. Remember, the regular, faithful members of your congregation need fellowship as much as the guests.

## **Family or benevolence meals**

Meals are provided for families in bereavement, with serious illnesses, or who have had surgeries. This ministry to the entire church falls under the hospitality ministry.

## **OFFSPRINGS OF CHURCH HOSPITALITY**

### **Family spotlight**

Have a 5-minute segment on Sunday evenings to spotlight a family. Use new families, established families, and singles.

### **Hospitality coordinator**

Have a hospitality coordinator for each adult Sunday School class. This frees the teacher from becoming a social director.

### **Operation Blessing**

Operation Blessing is a ministry to help the needy, train workers to help with Convoy of Hope, a local mission, or a homeless shelter.

### **Designated seating**

Designate areas in the sanctuary for hosts to sit and watch for newcomers. Choir members can scout the audience for new people while they sit in the choir loft and make a concentrated effort to greet them immediately following the service.

Everyone in the church needs to be taught to become a self-appointed



greeter, and to not assume someone else greeted a newcomer. Your warm and sincere greeting to a person who is feeling down may be the catalyst that brings a victory into that life.

### **Welcome Wagon**

A Welcome Wagon can be used for the church as a whole. The youth can take part in this ministry. Members of the Welcome Wagon take a small gift to the home of a newcomer. These gifts can be cookies, a devotional book, a telephone-address book, or a video of your church ministries. Include information in the packet about hospitals, doctors, dentists, grocery stores, drivers license information, a map of the city (free at the local chamber of commerce), and other information a new resident needs.

### **Adopt-a-Student**

The Adopt-a-Student program works great in a college town. Springfield, Missouri, has seven colleges. Churches in this town try hard to be the students' home away from home.

### **Adopt-a-Grandparent**

I recently read about a church that has an Adopt-a-Grandparent program for senior adults who do not have family in town.

## **HOSPITALITY FOR A CHURCH NEVER ENDS IF WE ARE INTERESTED IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.**

Hospitality in your church starts with you and your leadership and a passion to reach and keep your community and world for Jesus.

When a congregation truly understands the meaning of Christian hospitality and puts it into action, it is amazing what this ministry will do to strengthen the body of Christ.

As you develop this ministry, your people will invite their friends, neighbors, and coworkers to come to church and experience what God is doing in your services. When these guests come, greet them in the parking lots, at the doors, sit with them in church, walk them to the altar, and pray with them for their needs and situations.

May the hospitality ministry of your church be filled with people who radiate the love of Jesus. And on each Lord's Day, may we be present, willing, and trained to be servants for Him in His house so we can joyfully say to every person who enters, "Welcome to Father's house." ■



**ARLENE PATTERSON**, Springfield, Missouri, is a Christian hospitality consultant. For information on having a hospitality seminar in your church, call 417-833-5831, e-mail: [Arlene@hospitalityplus.org](mailto:Arlene@hospitalityplus.org), or visit: [www.hospitalityplus.org](http://www.hospitalityplus.org).

## EFFECTIVE HOSPITAL VISITATION

**H**ospital visitation is an important aspect of pastoral ministry. With approximately 38 million Americans being admitted to hospitals annually, pastors can anticipate that some of their members will be among them. With this in mind, a hospital visitation card has been designed to provide ministers with hints and reminders concerning hospital visitation. (See attached removeable pocket card.)

Here are some ways pastors can increase the effectiveness of their hospital visits.

### BIBLICAL BASIS

When we think of ministry, we often think of the words of Jesus in the Great Commission, “Go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). Jesus, however, also said something about caring for the sick. In relating the final judgment of the nations, Jesus said of the righteous, “I was sick and you looked after me” (Matthew 25:36). Furthermore, when He sent out His disciples for ministry, Jesus commissioned and empowered them to “heal every disease and sickness” (Matthew 10:1). In each of the Gospels the healing ministry of Jesus clearly illustrates His concern and compassion for the sick.

Jesus’ example of caring for the sick was followed by the Early Church and has been practiced up to the present. Within the Pentecostal church the importance of meeting the physical needs of the sick is evident by the belief in and practice of divine healing. We earnestly believe that deliverance from sickness is provided for in the Atonement and is the privilege of all believers. Therefore, our understanding of the Christian responsibility for caring for the sick traces its origin not only to the earthly ministry of the Good Shepherd and His apostles, but is found in the doctrine and practices of the Assemblies of God.

### COMPASSION AND PASTORAL CARE

The foundation of pastoral care is compassion. Historically, the Church has valued ministry to the sick as an important component of pastoral care. Our understanding of pastoral care is critical and directly related to the effectiveness of our ministry when visiting church members who are hospitalized.

In his book, *The Compassionate Visitor: Resources for Ministering to People Who Are Ill*, Arthur Becker states, “Pastoral care is providing compassion — being with people — just as God is ‘with us’ in Jesus Christ (Immanuel — Matthew 1:23).”<sup>1</sup> The pastor visits because of compassion for the one who is sick or suffering to alleviate the anxiety, fear, and despair that accompanies sickness and endeavors to replace those emotions with hope, courage, peace, and the ability to cope. The author of Hebrews provides insight into the importance of the Incarnation in pastoral care when he says, “For this reason he [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (Hebrews 2:17).

David Switzer believes there is a link between caring, agape love, and empathy.<sup>2</sup> In the context of caring, agape love is defined as “action for the well-being of another, regardless of feeling or the nature of the relationship.” Switzer believes our love for God forms the basis for the ministry of taking care of those in need. With respect to empathy, unless the caregiver is able to view the other person’s situation as if he or she were that person, the caregiver would not be able to provide effective and meaningful pastoral care.

The ministry of caring for the sick is a time-honored practice of the church and an act of agape love exemplified by Jesus’ compassion for those who were suffering. If we desire to increase the effectiveness of our hospital visits, we must seek to exemplify the same traits of compassion, agape love, and empathy that characterized the ministry of the Jesus.

### THE PASTOR AND THE HEALTHCARE TEAM

Another factor that increases the effectiveness of hospital ministry is a collegial relationship with the hospital staff. A good place to start is the hospital chaplain who can arrange for introductions to key members of the hospital staff. If

there is no staff chaplain, the director of the volunteer department or nursing service can usually assist. To become familiar with the layout of the hospital, the location of the waiting rooms, and nursing units, an orientation visit is recommended. During the visit, inquire concerning the policies for clergy visitation and access to critically ill patients.

Recent regulations require healthcare providers to enact policies regarding confidentiality and sharing patient information. There are provisions, however, for the disclosure of directory information: the patient's name, location, and religious affiliation to pastors visiting their members. Pastors are encouraged to determine the location of these directories and ensure their churches are included in the appropriate faith-group designations.

## EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

A fourth area that is needed in making meaningful hospital visits is the minister's emotional and spiritual preparation. It is important that you know yourself to be an effective caregiver in the hospital setting.<sup>3</sup> Included in knowing yourself is knowledge of your role as a minister, your emotions, mortality, and faith. For example, in respecting a patient's point of view, it is important that we avoid clinging to the status given to us by patients, but show our willingness to come alongside the patient and to have a relationship that is to and for the person.

As pastoral caregivers we should anticipate that some of our visits with patients and relatives will be exhausting and draining. It is essential therefore, that we know our emotional limits and avoid allowing our irrational emotions to gain control. In situations involving death and dying, it is vital that we have resolved our own issues concerning death and grief and are able to cope with these issues in a manner that will help the bereaved.

It is critical that we are grounded in

our faith so we can respond to questions about healing, suffering, and forgiveness that are raised by patients and relatives. Although the hospital room is not the place for theological arguments, there is a need for pastors to respond to these issues based on their knowledge of God, the Bible, and their church's doctrine.

## THE VISIT

Having examined some ways to increase effectiveness in hospital visitation, here are some helpful hints for pastoral visits to hospital patients.

### Do's

Call the hospital prior to your visit to determine if the patient is well enough for a visit and what would be a good time.<sup>4</sup> Stop at the nursing station and introduce yourself. Knock on the patient's door and wait to be invited in. Observe any signs that may be posted on the door regarding infection control procedures. If you are uncertain about the procedures to be followed, ask the nurse for clarification. Monitor the length of time of your visit. Watch for cues from the patient that might indicate you need to leave.<sup>5</sup>

Introduce yourself to the patient, especially if you do not personally know him or her. Sit, if possible, where you can maintain comfortable eye contact with the patient. Be cheerful and make pleasant conversation that focuses on the patient. Ask open-ended questions, "Tell me what brought you here, and how long do you expect to be here?" Display concern for the patient's illness and respect for his or her feelings. Watch for doors that lead to the feeling level of communication and be alert for negative feelings.<sup>6</sup>

Shape the tone and substance of your conversation from cues, verbal and non-verbal, offered by the patient. Listen attentively and be empathetic. Take notice of what is not said as much as what is said. Let the patient know he or she can talk about sensitive subjects. Offer to leave the room if medical personnel enter to perform a procedure unless requested to stay. Share Scripture and ask patients if they have special needs as you prepare to pray. A gentle touch on the hand or cheek lets a patient know you care. If you have not previously met the patient, ask permission.

### Don'ts

- Don't be insulted by a patient's words and attitudes or register shock at a patient's appearance.
- Don't offer false optimism about a patient's recovery or participate in criticism about the doctor, hospital, or treatment.
- Don't touch equipment even if requested by the patient, or sit on the patient's bed.
- Don't tell the patient unpleasant news including your troubles.
- Don't whisper when talking to relatives or medical staff in the patient's room.
- Don't break hospital rules or violate confidentiality issues.

## HOSPITAL VISITS

Do —

1. Call first to determine patient's availability for a visit.
2. Knock before entering a room and depend on the Lord to direct your visit.
3. Observe sign, notices, and precautions on patient's door.
4. If possible, sit where you can maintain comfortable eye contact with the patient.
5. Be cheerful, make pleasant conversation.
6. Shape the tone and substance of your conversations from cues offered by the patient.
7. Listen attentively by giving the patient your undivided attention.
8. Let patient know he/she can talk about sensitive subjects.
9. Excuse yourself when the doctor enters the room unless requested to stay.
10. Share Scripture and ask patients if they have special needs as you prepare to pray.
11. Inform the Pastoral Care Department of your visit if possible.

## CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES

[www.chaplaincy.ag.org](http://www.chaplaincy.ag.org) • [www.enrichment.ag.org](http://www.enrichment.ag.org)

## HOSPITAL VISITS

Don't —

1. Be insulted by patient's words/attitudes or register shock at a patient's appearance.
2. Offer false optimism or participate in criticism about the doctor or the treatment.
3. Touch equipment or sit on a patient's bed.
4. Tell patient unpleasant news — including your troubles.
5. Whisper when talking to family members or medical staff.
6. Break hospital rules or violate confidentiality issues.
7. Awaken the patient unless the nurse gives approval.
8. Help patient get out of bed or give food or drink without nurse's approval.
9. Assume anything.



**CHAPLAINCY  
MINISTRIES**

1445 N. Boonville Ave. Springfield, MO 65802-1894  
(417) 862-2781, ext. 3281 • [www.chaplaincy.ag.org](http://www.chaplaincy.ag.org)

- Don't awaken a sleeping patient unless the nurse approves.
- Don't help patients get out of bed or give food or drink without the nurse's approval.
- Don't assume a comatose patient cannot hear.

While the above lists of do's and don'ts are not inclusive, they contain the primary hints that will enhance the quality of our hospital visitation. For more helpful hints, consult the resources mentioned in the endnotes.

Through the application of the above ideas and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, our ministry to the sick can become more effective. ■



**EMMANUEL L. WILLIAMS**, healthcare chaplaincy representative of the Assemblies of God, East Point, Georgia.

### ENDNOTES

1. Arthur Becker, *The Compassionate Visitor: Resources for Ministering to People Who Are Ill* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 27.
2. David Switzer, *Pastoral Care Emergencies* (Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 14.
3. Neville Kirkwood, *Pastoral Care in Hospitals* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 153–170.
4. Katie Maxwell, *Bedside Manners: A Practical Guide to Visiting the Ill* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 30.
5. Lawrence Reimer and James Wagner, *The Hospital Handbook: A Practical Guide to Hospital Visitation*, revised ed. (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing, 1988), 13.
6. Perry Biddle Jr., *A Hospital Visitation Manual* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 29.





# HIT BY A TON OF BRICKS



When pastors' kids abuse drugs or alcohol — One pastor's story.

**T**he Sunday afternoon call from our son started out ominously. “Mom and Dad, are you sitting down? Stephanie is using heroin.”

The emotional shock of learning our daughter was using heroin went beyond description — devastation,

fear for her life, guilt, and questions about our parenting skills. Our wonderful daughter had fallen into the world of heroin without our knowing it. *What signals had we missed? How could we have been so blind? How had she been so successful in lying to us?*

My wife Susan and I knew we had to act. We were living in Phoenix; our daughter was living in Denver. But we could not locate her. Where was she? It turned out she was in Juarez, Mexico. *Was she alive? Was she in prison? Was she in prostitution?* The fearful questions tore at our minds like ravaging dogs; we seemed defenseless to stop the flood of fear. God seemed so remote; faith seemed so ineffectual.

That day of pain, which was so deep it has no name, was also my first Sunday as pastor at Bethany Community Church. I had resigned as president of Phoenix Seminary to return to pastoral ministry. We were not new to the area but new to the church. *What would the church think? Would they want me as their pastor?* The church's response was love, affirmation, advice, and help.



Her response was: “OK. But I will not go cold turkey because I have tried to quit 10 times and thought I was going to die each time.”

As it turned out, she had cried out to

God many times for deliverance. Her purse was full of cards with Bible verses related to God's protection and deliverance. But God had a different plan for her — a plan that included a lot of hard and diligent work.

Stephanie went to detox in Denver and then chose to come to Phoenix for treatment at the hospital where my brother had been chief of staff of cardiology. When she checked in, we were asked by a number of people if she was related to Dr. Michael Vawter. That was an initial embarrassment, but we soon got over it because we realized our daughter's treatment and sobriety were most important.

But how does this happen? I was a pastor; I had been the president of a seminary; my wife and I met when we were staff members with Campus Crusade for Christ; we had dedicated our children to Christ as infants and had prayed diligently that they would

**SEVENTEEN PERCENT OF THE  
PASTORS IN AMERICA HAVE A CHILD  
WHO IS ABUSING OR HAS ABUSED  
DRUGS OR ALCOHOL.**

We discovered Stephanie was returning to her home Monday night. We went to Denver, made arrangements for her at a detox center, and waited. When she was home, we walked in unannounced and said, “We know you have been lying to us and that you have been using heroin. We want you to come with us to get help.”

love God and live lives of purity. Plus, we are abstainers and spoke against drugs and alcohol when our children were younger and into their teen years.

It would have been easy to blame God, and I must confess that for a few moments I was tempted to do so. Gratefully, I quickly got away from that line of thinking because: (1) I believe God did not cause or plan for my daughter to be a heroin addict; (2) He would remain faithful, true, and close to Susan and me in spite of heroin having invaded our family; (3) such thinking was negative and would prove to be nonproductive because it would only focus our attention on the past and not motivate us to look forward to a drug-free and Christ-honoring future for our daughter; and (4) Jesus said, "The rain falls on the just and the unjust." The proof of our faith and His faithfulness is how we respond to the rain in our lives.

There are many instances of God visiting Stephanie and manifesting himself in her life. Susan and I were allowed to visit her at the 48-hour mark in detox. This is when withdrawal is most intense — with the patient experiencing excruciating pain and illness as the drug works its way out of the body. When we arrived she was sitting on the patio in a dress, having just showered. She greeted us with these words, "Mom and Dad, I am not sick. God must be answering your prayers."

Later, the psychologist at the treatment center told Susan and me, "I have never had a heroin patient who has gotten back their mental faculties as quickly as Stephanie."

It would be wrong to formulate some kind of absolute principle out of how God has worked in Stephanie's life. God is God, and He chooses to work however He wills. Although He has done profound and remarkable things in her life, she continues to live one day at a time because she is still tempted to medicate herself against reality by using drugs or alcohol. As she tells us in

her experience with Alcoholics Anonymous, "There are some from whom God has removed the desire to drink or use drugs in powerful ways. There are others for whom it is a daily walk of faith and vigilance."

## IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY TO BLAME GOD, AND I MUST CONFESS THAT FOR A FEW MOMENTS I WAS TEMPTED TO DO SO.

As I write this, Stephanie is just days away from celebrating 53 months of sobriety — one day at a time. When I complimented her for her hard work, she responded, "Dad, I would rather work hard at staying off heroin than be working hard to find heroin."

Stephanie is in college studying to be a drug counselor. She has taught a Sunday School class for mentally challenged adults and gone regularly to a women's prison to talk about drugs and alcohol. As she says, "I had to dance with the devil to come back to God."

### LESSONS LEARNED

Susan and I have learned a lot in the past 4 years. God is using our experience to encourage others. He comforts us in our afflictions so we may comfort others in theirs. God has also led us to start You're Not Alone, a ministry for pastors whose kids are abusing drugs/alcohol.

Here are some highlights — negative and positive — we have learned in the past 4 years:

- People abuse drugs or alcohol to medicate themselves against emotional pain and the realities of life instead of giving them to God who tells us in 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

As someone said of drugs, "It feels good not to feel anything."

- The Barna Group, in a study we commissioned, informed us that 17 percent of the pastors in America have a child who is abusing or has abused drugs or alcohol. Sadly, only 24 percent of those families have gone for help. We have had pastors from every theological background at our conferences for pastors whose kids abuse.

- There is great value in support groups. Susan and I attended Naranon, a support group for people whose loved ones use drugs. As I listened to others tell their stories, I realized these people were committed to getting healthy, learning not to enable the habit or behavior of their addicted

© 2004 Kevin Spear



**"If you play with me, Dad, it can mean the difference between a heartwarming sermon illustration and a poignant one."**

loved ones, and trusting God however they understood Him. Although the meeting was not Christian, God spoke to me. I learned that often fathers of the addicts want to do serious physical harm to the drug dealers who supplied their child. I must confess I felt this temptation. I had to confess my hatred and let Christ cleanse me.

- Parents must focus on their own emotional and spiritual health. Too often the addict becomes the total focus of the parent, and damage is done to all other relationships, including one's relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Parents must focus on their marriage. Drugs do bring tremendous stress into the family. It is easy to blame one another for the child's mistakes. Issues and feelings need to be dealt with honestly.
- Parents must be proactive. If the child is underage, he or she must abide by parental rules. If parents suspect or confirm drug/alcohol abuse, I recommend a drug assessment at a treatment center.
- Parents, even Christian parents, cannot be naïve. Drugs/alcohol and lying go hand-in-hand. If children are abusing, they probably will lie to their parents about it. This is why we recommend searching their rooms for evidence if use is suspected.
- Parents must admit their child is abusing drugs/alcohol. This is difficult. Often parents do not know where to turn. But it is only that which we keep in the dark that keeps us from getting well. Parents must admit the problem so they can honestly call out to God for His help.
- There is no one correct answer in getting clean and then maintaining that lifestyle. We are careful not to say the way God dealt with our daughter is the way He will deal with everyone else's child. But, we do say working with a drug counselor and

having a drug evaluation are vital to recovery. And we are not averse to secular treatment centers. Many of the programs use similar methods. In many cases insurance coverage is the deciding factor.

Not many organizations speak to the issue of pastors' kids abusing drugs or alcohol. Our website, [www.notalone.org](http://www.notalone.org), can help. We continue to put information on the site that has proven to be helpful to other pastors whose kids are abusing. For information on conferences for pastors, missionaries, and Christian workers whose kids abuse drugs or alcohol, visit our website, or call 480-752-8994. ■



**JOHN VAWTER, D.MIN.,**  
director, You're Not Alone  
Ministries, Scottsdale,  
Arizona.





# LET'S TALK ABOUT ISLAM

## Understanding Contradictions and Conflicting Values in Islamic Culture

Islam is a complex system. Austere living is admired and strict codes of mores are the norm. Adherence to high moral standards is expected from everyone, especially women. Yet, sexual permissiveness is not unusual. Dishonesty in financial dealings and trading is often praised. Homosexuality, though attributed to different reasons from those espoused by the West, is not uncommon. As long as such acts are done undercover, and as long as participants do not bring shame or scandalize the community, immorality can go unchecked. Using technological advances such as Western business, household machines, and the Internet is accepted and encouraged, but freedom of thought is resisted.

How do we understand and analyze a culture full of contradictions and conflicting values? I would like to deal here with three questions that are being asked in many circles today.

### WHAT IS THE SECRET BEHIND THE ENORMOUS NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ADHERE TO ISLAM?

How is it possible that one-fifth of the world population pays their allegiance to Muhammad? We would need more space than this entire publication to discuss the dozens of answers to this question. But briefly, Muslim men are allowed up to four wives at a time. They are also allowed an unlimited number of concubines. This is an important factor in the phenomenal numerical growth of Islam around the world. Even in countries where polygamous unions are illegal, some Muslims marry multiple wives in religious ceremonies. These marriages are not declared to the state. A casual observer might think that these men have mistresses. Yet, in the eyes of Islamic law, these are lawful unions.

Taking multiple wives results in large biological growth. Consider Osama bin Laden. He is the founder and leader of Al-Qaeda, and mastermind of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States. Osama is one of 54 children born to Muhammad bin Laden from his wives and concubines. Some years ago, a Muslim

leader in France made this statement: "We will conquer France by the bellies of our wives."

Islam champions many acts of compassion. Since Muhammad himself was an orphan and his mother was a widow, he defended the cause of orphans and widows. Various Muslim associations and groups around the world offer financial aid, free health care, and free education to those who are in need. For poor or disenfranchised individuals or groups, this is a powerful incentive to convert to Islam.

Legally, in Muslim societies, Islam is a one-way street. There is no way out for the convert to Islam, or for the one born Muslim. The penalty for apostasy is severe: "If they turn apostate, take them and kill them wherever you find them. Never take from among them a friend or a helper" (*Quran* 4:89).

Financial laws in some Islamic countries favor Muslims. They are given priority in job placement, housing, and educational opportunities. Non-Muslims are less privileged. To become a Muslim is to become privileged.

Early on, gifts played an important role in the advance of Islam. Muhammad sent spoils, presents, and money to non-Muslims whom he sought to have as friends and allies. Even today, in places from Africa to America, Muslims use the same strategy. A prospective convert can be given a wife, a job, a generous amount of money, or a home to encourage him to convert to Islam.

and religious magnet that draws people together. Think of it as being in an evangelical conference with 2 million born-again Christians.

Islam contains many features that appeal to human desires. A Muslim sheikh stated that one reason for the phenomenal spread of Islam is that it is a religion that accommodates man's nature, desires, and behavior.

The doctrine of the absolute oneness of God is Islam's main focus and emphasis. It seems to have powerful appeal, even though it encounters some serious problems when subjected to the test of logic.

Further, it is easy to convert to Islam. A person does not have to sacrifice anything of importance or endure any particular hardship to follow his new religion

## MUSLIM MEN ARE ALLOWED UP TO FOUR WIVES AT A TIME. THEY ARE ALSO ALLOWED AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF CONCUBINES.

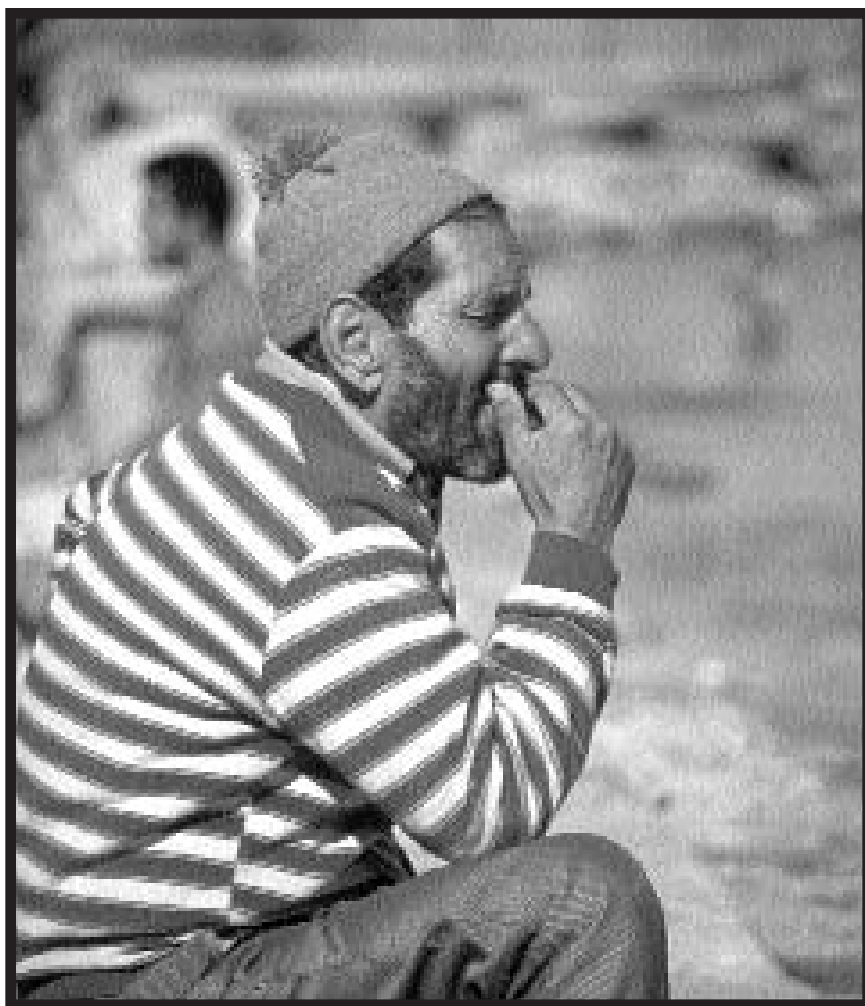
In Muslim countries Islam is the protégé of the State. Muslim missionaries are sent, backed, and financially supported by the government. For example, vast amounts of money were given by Saudi Arabia, Libya, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Jordan to build the Islamic center in Toledo, Ohio.

There is also the appeal of the community of the faithful. This is called the "*umma* (nation) of the Prophet." This is the community all Muslims belong to. No matter where they are in the world, they are all brothers and sisters. They are all equal. They all belong to each other. They are united with strong bonds — one confession, one common history, one book, one law, and one Prophet. This gives them a sense of security. Again, this is appealing, especially to the forlorn, dejected, and destitute of the individualistic Western societies.

Mecca is the visible, magnetic focal point of Islam. It is toward Mecca that Muslims face five times a day in prayer. It is to Mecca that they make their pilgrimage. There, as in no other place, they feel emotional excitement, unity, equality, strong brotherhood, and self-respect. Mecca also gives the follower of Islam a powerful sense of security. There, among 2 million other coreligionists, he sees that he is not alone. This is a powerful sociological

of Islam. Usually, the transition is a simple task.

Another reason Islam is attractive is it addresses the issues of daily living. Muslim codes have rules and laws for almost every practice in daily life: eating, washing, praying, working, traveling, sex, and interpersonal relations. This feature makes Islam appealing because it supplies regulations for everyday activities and answers to down-to-earth problems.



Islam is also appealing because it is a set of beliefs and rules that include the educational, social, and judiciary aspects of life. Many find this quality attractive.

## WHAT MAKES A SUICIDE TERRORIST?

Suicide terrorists kill themselves to kill others and destroy their property. The perpetrator cannot reach a goal through negotiations, so he brings destruction to himself and others. The following are samples of news headlines:

- Suicide Bombers Destroy the Barracks of the U.S. and French Military in Lebanon, Killing 241 Americans and 58 French.
- Terrorists Kill 3,000 and Bring the Twin Towers Down.
- A Suicide Bomber Blows Himself Up in Jerusalem Killing 20 People.
- A Woman Suicide Bomber Kills Herself and 10 Others.
- Second- and Third-Generation Palestinian Americans Cheering Suicide Bombers!

Although various groups have used the tool of suicide terrorism throughout history, it has reached a colossal scale in recent years. Dying while fighting a holy war (*Jihad*) guarantees a Muslim a place in paradise. Once the leaders declare a battle a holy war, invariably people are willing to die, and guarantee for themselves a place in

## THEY [MUSLIMS] ARE UNITED WITH STRONG BONDS — ONE CONFESSION, ONE COMMON HISTORY, ONE BOOK, ONE LAW, AND ONE PROPHET.

heaven. One Muslim leader stated that “the weapon of martyrdom ... is easy and costs us only our lives. .... Human bombs cannot be defeated, not even by nuclear bombs.”

Suicide terrorists are driven by the strong conviction that their cause is right, be it religious or political. When fundamentalist Muslims try to live by the letter of the Islamic law and subject others to the religion of Islam only to see their plans stymied, their hopes dashed and defeated by their own institutions from the inside, and by other factors from the outside, they turn to terrorism.

Far from being the scum of society, as some might believe, suicide terrorists are often highly educated and from well-to-do families. I believe they have a superiority complex. They are very conscious of being Muslim and are extremely proud of their identity. They believe Islam is the only religion that has a right to exist. They strive to remove or take over whatever stands in their way — civil authorities, religious authorities, political powers, or military forces.

I believe another factor is the sweeping victories of Arab troops in the early history of Islam have planted an irreversible and unbendable sense of triumphalism in the minds, emotions, and wills of Muslim peoples. The result is seen in their attitude today. When they decide to do something, they do it, no matter what means they have to use or what the results may be. Allah has favored them, and given them superiority over all others, so how can they accept being less? This mindset is inconceivable.

## WHERE IS THEIR ALLEGIANCE?

Islam sees the world as dichotomous: *dar-ul Islam* (house of Islam) and *dar-ul harb* (house of war). The faithful belong to the house of Islam. Secular societies and non-Muslims belong to the house of war. Seyyed Qutb expresses this clearly when

he says: “Islam knows only two societies (in the world), a Muslim society and a pagan non-Muslim society.”

The Islamic system demands allegiance. A true Muslim cannot be faithful to a non-Muslim system. This would be outright treason. So a Muslims’ true identity is tied to Islam, not to the country where they live. Their first loyalty is to the community of Islam.

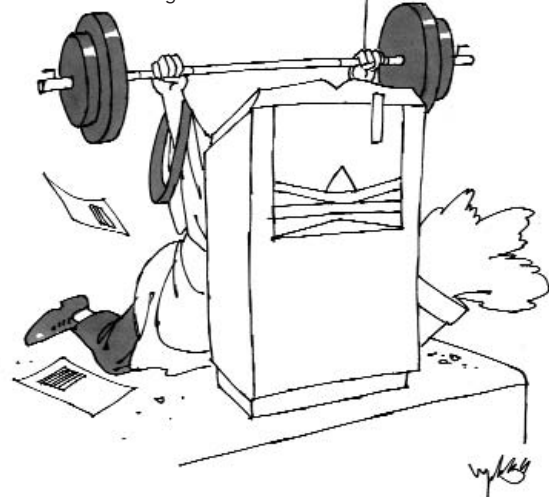
## CONCLUSION

Numbers can be intimidating and terrorist acts are revolting, but we must see Muslims as needy people. They need Christ. They, as any other people who have not accepted the expression of God’s love at Calvary, have no true peace of mind, joy, or fulfillment. They are driven by sets of strict rules and laws that are based on do’s and don’ts. Only God’s grace can bring them forgiveness, freedom, and life. It is my strong conviction, to achieve that goal, we need to love Muslims deeply, and then open our mouth at every occasion to share Christ with them. ■



**SOBHI MALEK, D.MISS.,** missionary to Muslims and visiting professor of Islamics in several seminaries around the world.

© 2004 David Harbaugh



**“This visual aid supports this morning’s sermon about lifting life’s burdens. Would an usher give me a hand, please?”**

# WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH

BY TOM MCDONALD

## THE WORSHIP ESSENTIAL

How to conduct worship services that exalt the Lord and edify the flock, regardless of the generations present.

I recently addressed a group of Evangel University students on the subject of worship. Qualifications for attending the seminar were: involvement in campus worship and a relationship with the campus' worship coordinator.

After I was introduced, I described church music as equal sides of a triangle. Worship music is volatile, beautiful, and necessary.

### VOLATILE

Music is volatile because parishioners often disagree about which styles appropriately assist their worship. Some historic Pentecostal churches have pockets of resistance regarding either the use of organs or rhythm sections. Without pastoral teaching, resistance can lead to embitterment, sporadic attendance, and eventually lukewarm results. Where one finds a war over worship in church, inevitably there is also a lack of love. This is serious.

### BEAUTIFUL

Music is beautiful. Church music, because of its aesthetic properties, can calm our spirits and raise our awareness of God's grace in our lives. Music ennobles its text. Thinkers throughout the ages agree. Augustine said, "He who sings, prays twice."

Philosopher Bernard Kelly commented, "The apprehension of beauty awakens the deeper, more searching activity of the mind."

The poet Longfellow penned,  
The night shall be filled with music  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents ...  
And as silently steal away.

### NECESSARY

Music has an indefinable capacity to enhance ministry in church, thereby making church worship music a necessary tool in our pursuit of God's presence. Without music we would be limited to the spoken word. Americans have increasingly shorter attention spans and diverse ways of learning. That combination of data processing bespeaks the challenge of 21st-century preaching.

Preaching is linear. Line upon line. Truth upon truth. However, if one's primary mode of learning is visual or kinesthetic, adult learning theorists contend we need a variety of stimulation, besides lecture, to internalize information. Thankfully music is kaleidoscopic.

Musical presentations appeal to the eye, ear, and heart. If the music of worship is authentic and the preaching is transformational, the faithful experience a greater capacity to hear from God without distraction. Music is a large factor in aiding our quest for the presence of the Lord in church, especially when the church is in unity, accepting one another's stylistic preferences as we sing.

### PLANNING THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Having discussed these assumptions that triangulate music in the church today, I inquired, "Now what are you going to do about it?"

That is the question of the hour. How will we, as worship leaders, tame the fractious nature of music and conduct worship services that exalt the Lord and edify the flock, regardless of the generations present?

I contend the issue is not the music itself, but the heart of the worship leader that is called into question. Hence the title of my lecture: The Worship Essential

### PERSONAL PREPARATION

If a worship leader will approach the choice of songs for worship with the same protocol a pastor uses to prepare a sermon, much of the controversy and conflict would dissipate. A pastor retreats alone with God and listens before choosing a text, analyzing the Scripture, formulating illustrations and applications, and writing an altar call. So, too, the worship leader must plan strategically, incorporating spiritual formation issues into the pursuit of a song list.



Planning well is the key. James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (NASB). Worship leaders who know how to disengage from the world and engage the Lord choose songs for worship that minister grace, not controversy.

## MUSIC ENNOBLES ITS TEXT. THINKERS THROUGHOUT THE AGES AGREE. AUGUSTINE SAID, "HE WHO SINGS, PRAYS TWICE."

In private, the worship leader deals with ego and motive — the need to show off on Sunday, or the desire to let Jesus show up instead. In private, the worship leader deals with choice and method — the songs that will formulate the path the congregation will use to minister to the Lord, and whether the songs will become a concert (people watching the leader), or a medley allowing people to touch "the hem of His garment" as they sing.

### PROPHETIC PREPARATION

Finally, in private, the worship leader deals with the prophetic — whether the lyrics fit into a paragraph of love to the Lord and whether that paragraph will also have in it a word for the congregation.

Pentecostal worship leaders often misunderstand the use of exhortation. The context of an exhortation — the gift of the Spirit that encourages hurting congregants during or immediately after the songs of worship are sung — is available during preparation. As the worship leader is quiet before the

Lord, as he plans the worship service days before the worship service, the Holy Spirit can provide the discerning he needs for that service.

Planning worship is one side of the coin; presenting the worship is the other. The worship essential is this: we must *be* with God before we can *do* for God. If we as worship leaders will draw close in private, He will draw close in public.

On the morning of my lecture my wife and I inverted our schedules. My wife had to be in class so I stayed home to care for our sick son. After class I met her, exchanged our son from car to car, and made my late morning appointment. As Gabriel and I drove out of our neighborhood toward my wife's college he asked, "Daddy, can we hear some music?"

I pushed the dial and immediately heard, "Draw me close to You, never let me go!" No musical introduction or DJ. We simply heard the song from the first phrase. It confirmed to me that the Spirit wanted to drive this truth — the worship essential — home to the Evangel University students that day.

If you and I as worship leaders take seriously the chief objective of our office — to hear from God in private before singing to God in public — He will confirm His desires, week by week.

That is our heritage as Pentecostals. We believe in miracles. We believe that God still speaks to His people and directs His leaders from the Bible. We believe in being led by the Spirit.

I love the pen of Henri Nouwen, who wrote the following about Christian leaders and the 21st-century challenge: "For Christian leadership to be truly fruitful in the future, a movement from the moral to the mystical is required."

The worship essential is precisely that — seeing the invisible before singing. ■



**TOM MCDONALD, PH.D.**, is director of the national Music Department for the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

© 2004 Ed Koehler



"Then the committee said to me, 'If Charles Wesley wanted us to sing only verses 1,2,3, and 5, he wouldn't have written verse 4.' "

## GOD IN GOVERNMENT ROMANS 13:1–7

### INTRODUCTION:

God believes in order and organization. Even the new world will be organized into nations (Revelation 21:24). He has ordained institutions to maintain order among nations and peoples.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. God's role in government (Daniel 2:20).

- a. Government is ordained of God (Romans 13:1).
  - (1) God set Nebuchadnezzar over a kingdom and later removed him from it (Daniel 4:28–37; 5:18–24).
  - (2) God put Joseph in government

in Egypt (Genesis 41:37–40; 45:7,8).

- (3) God made Saul and David kings over Israel (1 Samuel 10:1–24; 16:1–13).

- b. Those in government are God's ministers, His servants (Romans 13:4).

#### 2. The government's role in society (Romans 13:3).

- a. It provides order.
- b. It provides protection.
- c. It is held accountable to God.

#### 3. The Christian's role in government.

- a. The laws of the land should be obeyed (Romans 13:1,5).

- b. Those in authority should be honored (1 Peter 2:13,14).
- c. Those who resist government resist God and will be judged (Romans 13:2).
- d. The voting privilege should be used to further godly influence in the land.

### CONCLUSION:

Those who tolerate disrespect for any law breed defiance to all law. Believers should set the example by obeying and upholding the laws of God and government.

—Donald L. Golden  
Hillsboro, Missouri

## THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT LUKE 4:14,15

### INTRODUCTION:

Jesus was unique to the people of His day. His teaching was different. His miracles were unprecedented. His logic was amazing to the scholars He encountered. His compassion became legendary. What empowerment did Jesus have to accomplish such acts?

In our extraordinary times extraordinary people are needed. People are needed who stand out, who deal in the miraculous, who are great in the faith, who have great compassion and yet have power to put devils to flight. The power of God is needed if we are to be used of God in these areas. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit witnessed in Jesus' ministry is what we need in our ministries today.

The power of the Holy Spirit characterized Jesus' life. He was conceived when the Holy Spirit came upon His mother. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon Him at His baptism. The Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness temptation.

The Holy Spirit directed Jesus to return to Galilee. Jesus was led by, filled with, and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

That same Spirit can empower us to be extraordinary people in God's service.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. The power of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus.

- a. The power of the Holy Spirit directed Jesus into the wilderness and back to Galilee (verse 14).
- b. The power of the Holy Spirit placed Jesus in Galilee (verse 14).
  - (1) Galilee was a populated place.
  - (2) Galilee was a needy place.
  - (3) Galilee was a fertile place.
- c. The power of the Holy Spirit inspired Jesus' teaching, which soon became known in that region (verse 14).

#### 2. Three corresponding lessons we can learn.

- a. The power of the Holy Spirit is needed to know the mind of God.
  - (1) The Holy Spirit directs men and women into the will of God.
  - (2) The Holy Spirit's leading in the life of the believer is highly valued.
- b. The power of the Holy Spirit is needed to guide His servants into a

place of ministry.

- (1) Ministry to hurting people.
- (2) Ministry to evident needs.
- (3) Ministry to those hungry for God.
- c. The power of the Holy Spirit is needed for extraordinary ministry.
  - (1) The believer who is filled with the Spirit has all the power, tools, and knowledge needed to accomplish any task.
  - (2) The Spirit-filled church has every gift necessary to do the work of God.
  - (3) The Holy Spirit-empowered church will be known in the community and beyond.

### CONCLUSION:

Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit's guidance, returned to Galilee from the wilderness. We, too, need the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the will of God today.

—Gary A. Denbow  
Columbia, Missouri

## THE RESULTS OF PENTECOST ACTS 2:22-47

### INTRODUCTION:

On the Day of Pentecost, 120 received the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. There were people present from all parts of the world for the feast of Pentecost. They heard the wonderful works of God spoken in their own languages. They wanted to know the meaning of this amazing event. Peter, a short time before, had denied Christ. Now, he had received the Holy Spirit. In his address to the crowd he explained the meaning of what they had witnessed. The result was 3,000 converts added to the church.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Great Report (verses 22-36).

- a. Past. Peter quoted the Old Testament to explain how this occurrence fulfilled prophecy concerning Christ (verses 22-31).
- b. Person. Jesus was raised from the dead. There were many witnesses of this fact (verse 32).
- c. Position. Jesus, being exalted by the right hand of God, "hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." The 120 had received the promise Christ had spoken of in Luke 24:49.
- d. Proof. David, who lived many years before Christ, knew of the coming

Messiah (verses 34,35; Compare with Psalm 110:1.).

- e. Power. God made Jesus, whom the Jewish people had crucified, both Lord and Christ. Peter explained to the crowd that Christ was the Messiah they had rejected.

#### 2. Great Repentance (verses 37-41).

- a. Conviction. They were convicted and asked, "What must we do?" The Holy Spirit can convict when people pray (verse 37).
- b. Conversion (verse 38).
  - (1) Repent. To repent means to change and to be sorry enough to forsake all sin. All things are new (2 Corinthians 5:17).
  - (2) Be baptized. We repent, then we are baptized. Baptism does not produce salvation. (See Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12.)
  - (3) Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The same experience as Acts 2:1-4.
- c. Complete. The promised Holy Spirit is for all people of all generations (verse 39).
- d. Change (verses 40-41).
  - (1) Redemption. Change your ways. Be born again (John 3:1-8). Know the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:17.
  - (2) Results. 3,000 converts (verse 41).

#### 3. Great Results (verses 42-47).

- a. Faithfulness. They continued in the apostles' doctrine, and had fellowship in breaking bread (verse 42). (Compare with Psalm 122:1; Hebrews 10:25.)
- b. Fear. They had honor and respect toward God. "Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles" (verse 43). (Compare with Mark 16:17-20.)
- c. Fellowship. They sold their homes and gave money to the church to help the poor and needy (verses 44,45).
- d. Firm.
  - (1) Service. They served God daily.
  - (2) Soul winning. New converts were added to the Church daily. They obeyed the Great Commission (Mark 16:15).

### CONCLUSION:

The people recorded in Acts 2 had five qualities that helped them change their world. First, they were serious and sincere in their relationship to God. Second, they sought God and prayed for His guidance. Third, they served God faithfully. Fourth, they surrendered their hearts to God. Last, they continued steadfastly in the study of God's Word.

—Croft Pentz  
Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

## THREE APPEARINGS OF JESUS HEBREWS 9:26-28, KJV

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. To ransom all who will believe.

"Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (verse 26).

#### 2. To receive all who have believed.

"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (verse 28).

#### 3. To recompense judgment to all who have not believed.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (verse 27).

—R.C. Cunningham

## KEEP ON KEEPING ON ACTS 2:41-47, KJV

### INTRODUCTION:

Numerous evidences of revival are in our nation. One cannot scripturally separate this present outpouring of the Spirit from the end of the age. The Word of God clearly defines an end-time scenario in which two diametrically opposing forces will be highly visible. Sin and evil of the worst magnitude will be present, but at the same time there will be a spiritual awakening without equal.

The words “continued steadfastly” provide a double emphasis. They “continued” — but it was a top priority, for they continued “steadfastly.” Every other schedule was rearranged to fit this overwhelming spiritual desire. So it is in every true revival. There were four activities and four authenticating results of the activity.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Activity of revival.

##### a. Apostles’ doctrine.

- (1) The message is about Christ (Acts 2:14–39).
  - (a) Jesus is the Son of God.
  - (b) In God’s plan, He was crucified and rose again.
  - (c) The appropriate response of mankind should be to repent of sin, receive Him by faith, and receive eternal life.
- (2) Everything we preach and teach should have Christ at its center.
- (3) Cardinal doctrines.
  - (a) Salvation.
  - (b) Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
  - (c) Diving healing.
  - (d) Second Coming of Christ.

##### b. Fellowship.

- (1) “Fellowship” is identified with doctrine in this passage.
- (2) Koinonia is a decisively New Testament word.
- (3) Believers were taught by word and example.
- (4) Communion of this nature also

implies a spirit of unity. At Pentecost they were in “one accord.”

- (5) Any revival movement has fellowship (church) frequently.

##### c. Breaking of bread.

- (1) This is relationship building in a private, vulnerable setting.
- (2) There are some powerful examples in Scripture.
  - (a) After His resurrection, Jesus met with two on the way to Emmaus. He was “known of them in breaking of bread” (Luke 24:35).
  - (b) After the Resurrection, Jesus prepared a meal for fishermen who had worked all night and caught nothing (John 21:1–14).

##### d. Prayers.

- (1) Repentance precedes other types of prayer. Repentance is the key to any revival.
- (2) Worship (who He is).
- (3) Praise (what He does).
- (4) Petition.

#### 2. Authentication of revival.

##### a. Revelation.

- (1) “And fear came upon every soul.” They began to reverence God (Acts 2:43).
- (2) Proverbs teaches about the “fear of God.”
  - (a) It is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).
  - (b) It prolongs life (10:27; 14:27; 19:23).
  - (c) It provides strong confidence (14:26).
  - (d) It hates evil (8:13; 16:6; 23:17).
  - (e) It is better than riches (15:6).
  - (f) It leads to riches and honor (22:4).
- (3) Pentecostal informality and familiarity with manifestations may lead to irreverence, even

disrespect.

- (4) “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Psalm 89:7).

##### b. Manifestations.

- (1) “Many wonders and signs were done by the hands of the apostles” (Acts 2:43).
- (2) Miracles were a normal part of New Testament life.
  - (a) Shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15).
  - (b) Handkerchiefs and work aprons of Paul (Acts 19:11,12).
  - (c) Peter imprisoned, church prayed (Acts 12:5).
  - (d) The church at Antioch prayed; Paul and Barnabas were selected (Acts 13:2,3).
  - (e) Paul and company directed to preach in Philippi (Acts 16:6–12).
- (3) You are here because of divine intervention (miracle).

##### c. Application.

- (1) “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44).
- (2) Practical application — “shoe leather” — Christianity always follows revival.
  - (a) They were unselfish, sacrificially generous, hospitable, and considerate (verses 44,45).
  - (b) John reminds us that it is quite impossible to love God whom we have not seen, if we cannot love our brother whom we have seen (1 John 4:20).
- (3) It doesn’t matter how high you



(*Keep On Keeping On continued*)

jump when you shout, just be certain that you walk straight when you hit the ground.

d. Infiltration.

(1) "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (verse 47).

(2) We should be salt and light in our culture (Matthew 5:13–16). In a true revival it will not be necessary to outmaneuver

politicians.

(3) Give me a little girl in Naaman's house that will say "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kings 5:3).

(4) Give me an Esther who will say, "If I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16).

(5) Give me a Daniel who "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with ... the

king's meat" (Daniel 1:8).

(6) We must begin to infiltrate the wicked culture with godly love.

## CONCLUSION:

Surely, there will be battles along the way. Evil is all around us and false prophets are successfully deceiving many who are sincere in their pursuit of God. In spite of such things be encouraged to keep on keeping on.

—H. Maurice Lednický  
Springfield, Missouri

## TRUE CITIZENSHIP IS TRUE PATRIOTISM

PSALM 137:1–6

### INTRODUCTION:

The people in Psalm 137 were prisoners of war. This Psalm expresses their sadness, yet it also expresses their love for their country.

While we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), we are still citizens of our country. We have a responsibility to live like citizens.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. A patriot is marked by an intense love for one's country.

- Patriotism is demonstrated in wartime by many enlisting in the service.
- Many have demonstrated their patriotism in wartime by working in war plants.
- Jesus' intense love for Jerusalem was demonstrated when He wept

for Jerusalem (Luke 13:34,35).

#### 2. A patriot is marked by an intense hatred of the forces that would destroy his country.

- Any force that would destroy government by the people.
- Any force that would destroy morality.
  - Immorality in literature.
  - Immorality in broadcasting.
- Any force that would destroy its people: alcoholism, etc. (Proverbs 23:29–32; Ephesians 5:18).

#### 3. A patriot is marked by God-fearing qualities.

- A patriot believes the Bible and makes it the guidebook for good citizenship (Romans 13:1–7).
- A patriot has accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord of his life.
- A patriot prays for his country and

its leadership, his family, and friends.

d. A patriot honors Sunday and spends that day drawing near to God.

#### 4. The patriots who founded America were religious.

- Pilgrims and Puritans settled New England.
- Dutch Protestants settled New York.
- Quakers settled New Jersey and Pennsylvania.
- Roman Catholics started Maryland.
- Covenanters settled the Carolinas

### CONCLUSION:

Let's be Christian citizens. Let's pray that God will save our country and keep her strong until Jesus comes.

—John F. Walker

## SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY 3 JOHN 2

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Increased desire for church attendance (Luke 24:52,53).

#### 2. Increased knowledge of the Word of God (Acts 17:11).

#### 3. Increased desire to work for God (Isaiah 6:8).

#### 4. Increased Christlikeness (Ephesians 4:13).

#### 5. Increased joy and peace (Romans 14:17).

—Lawrence Posey  
Sun City, Arizona

# MINISTRY IDEAS

## ADOPT-A-CLASS

Many churches seek ways to build relationships among age groups while effectively tapping people resources. One way to utilize the life experiences of senior adults is through an Adopt-a-Class. Adopt-a-Class is designed to connect senior adults with children and youth through the church's Sunday School. The following guidelines will help you implement this ministry in your church.

### Recruitment

Share with your senior adult class that you are seeking individuals and couples to form mentoring partnerships with other classes. Provide interested persons with a printed description of the ministry and include information about how to get involved.

### Execution

Have those who respond give a brief profile of their interests and experience. Use this profile to match senior adults with available classes. A successful approach will include the following:

- Mentors should participate in classes at least once a month. Consider promoting this in the church bulletin as Adopt-a-Class Sunday.
- Provide social interaction between mentors and class participants.
- Inform mentors of class events (birthdays and graduations) and needs (family and health).
- Classes should bless their mentors (gifts, help with house and yard care).

Adopt-a-Class has the potential to break down barriers and help the church function as the family of God.

*Gaylord A. Lemke, Oshkosh, Wisconsin*

## HELPING THE DISABLED

Many persons with disabilities feel lonely in most churches. Welcoming them does not simply mean having a ramp to the church door. It means opening eyes, hearts, and pocketbooks to fill a need.

Here are some practical ideas that have worked in our church:

1. Visit the disabled and elderly members of the church to discover their needs.
2. Encourage church members to become friends with the disabled and elderly members and include them in their social life.
3. Offer to perform jobs or chores not possible for the disabled.
4. Remember the disabled can do certain things. One of our paraplegic members printed colorful banners for church functions on her printer. She also contributed writings to *Sharing*, our monthly testimonial magazine for the membership, as well as articles for the *Evangel*.

*Douglas Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas*



## SINGLE-PARENT MINISTRY

A friend who was recently divorced said to me, crying, "I don't know how to do the many things Tom did for me. Who can teach me?"

I wondered, *How would I manage as a single parent?*

I talked with several church leaders, and we brainstormed about how to minister to single parents.

First, we prayed for them and about how our church could help.

Second, we surveyed the needs of single parents in our church and to our surprise found we had many single parents. Some were inactive members and were excited about having a single-parent ministry.

Third, we provide a free supper for single parents where in a relaxed atmosphere they can present their needs. We offer free childcare to single parents. We ask church members to go to single-parent homes and help with projects, such as cleaning out a garage or gutter. Both men and women are involved in this event held twice a year. A prior sign-up is required with a specific job request to post.

On Mother's Day or Father's Day, one parent offers to take his/her child shopping for the other parent. In the case of a single parent, who will help shop for special occasions? My friend was elated when I took her daughter out to buy her mom a gift. She gave her daughter some money to buy the gift, and I made a small contribution too.

The church has special speakers who offer free seminars on financial planning, tax forms, and home repair. Childcare is provided.

Special times are scheduled for single parents to pray together. We also match newly divorced or widowed singles with older same-gender persons who can offer advice.

Single parents have many needs. Be open to how your church can minister to this group.

*Malinda Fillingim, Rome, Georgia*

## POSTGAME SHOW

A great mission field in America is junior and senior high schools. Many teens believe in God and want to go to heaven, but they do not come to church because they think it is boring. God can change them if we get their attention. Our youth ministry developed a creative idea to reach teens with the gospel in a way that appeals to them. We call it the “Postgame Show.”

Here is how to have a Postgame Show. Choose three home basketball games after which you would like to have the show. Publicize the event weeks in advance with flyers and free tick-



ets for church teens to give to their friends. Talk to the school's athletic director and see if an announcement can be made during halftime.

Include incentives to draw unchurched teens to the show. Serve free pizza and soda. Give away CDs, T-shirts, and video games as door prizes. Have video games for them to play. Use a short, funny drama that makes a biblical point.

Invite a Christian coach or teacher to share his or her testimony, or interview this person. Ask a few funny questions as well as questions about family and college. At the end of the interview, ask about his or her personal walk with Christ.

Mingle and have fun. Get to know the teens. You have brought your mission field to your church, so take advantage of it.

*Kevin Moore, Madison, Indiana*

## SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Small groups can preserve the intimate interaction of a small group while reaching out to others. A shared ministry project can benefit those you serve and also build a bond among group members. Decide what ministry will be right for your group. Here are a few ideas:

When someone is moving into a new home, offer to help with cleaning or painting to prepare the house for occupancy. This expression of love will be appreciated by the new owner, will provide opportunity to invite others to church, and will bless your group.

Pray for members on short-term mission trips. Pray for each individual as well as the entire team. Personal contact between a group member and the missionary can form a bond that will continue long after the mission trip is over.

When someone in the church faces surgery or bereavement,

have group members pray for him or her. Prepare heart-shaped pieces of paper. On one side of the heart write Jeremiah 29:13. Write a prayer for the person on the other side.

Give ministry projects an evangelistic thrust. Any activity can be an evangelistic tool when directed to unbelievers. Contact recent visitors to your church. They may become committed to Christ with a little encouragement.

When your group sponsors a social event, invite friends or relatives. Having fun with Christians makes the gospel more attractive to unbelievers.

Encourage group members to use their gifts. Those with an outgoing personality can visit the sick. Cooks can prepare meals for shut-ins. Carpenters can build shelves for the library or repair a broken piece of furniture. Any interest or talent can be put to work for God.

Through team effort and individual projects, your group can be a strong outreach arm of the church.

*Esther M. Bailey, Phoenix, Arizona*

## FIVE WAYS TO TAKE THE “DIS” OUT OF DISABILITY

Fifty-four million people in our country live with a disability. Only 20 percent of these people attend church. How can we change this and adopt the “all” perspective of Jesus? These five steps will help you take the “dis” out of disability and establish a deep-rooted, all-centered ministry.

First, ask, *Do I want to see everyone saved or only a select group?* We must see each person as Jesus did — an individual who needs His saving touch.

Second, tear down physical barriers. Small groups or Sunday School classes need to take place in areas with easy access and wide aisles or doorways.

Third, tear down functional barriers. Put yourself in the position of a person who may require assistance. Remove the obstacles that hinder optimum participation. Use large-print handouts and overhead transparencies. Make sure tables are at the appropriate height for wheelchair users. Have individuals with hearing difficulty sit closer to you.

Fourth, encourage equal participation. Ask members with or without disabilities to speak or assist with the class through Bible reading, class projects, teaching, and other activities.

Fifth, look at the ripe harvest fields. Too often pastors avoid special accommodations because they don't think anyone in the group requires special assistance. Change this attitude by becoming others-centered. View church as a beacon for everyone in the community rather than a shelter for those inside.

Taking the “dis” out of disability requires that we think big and accommodate the entire community in advance.

*—Marshall Gisondi, South Bend, Indiana*

# ILLUSTRATE IT

## STAKES ARE MISTAKES

I read a fascinating story in Bobb Biehl's book, *Increasing Your Boardroom Confidence*. I love wild animals, and this story is about elephants.

Biehl, at one time, worked at a circus. Nothing very elegant — he moved props from one of the three rings to the next, getting hot, dirty, and blistered. He wrote: "During one of the breaks I started chatting with a man who trained animals for Hollywood movies. I asked him, 'How is it that you can stake down a 10-ton elephant with the same size stake you use for this little 300-pound fellow?'"

"The trainer replied, 'It's easy when you know two things: Elephants really do have great memories, but they aren't very smart. When they are babies, we stake them down. They try to tug away from the stake maybe 10,000 times before they realize they can't possibly get away."

"At that point, their elephant memory takes over and they remember for the rest of their lives that they cannot get away from that stake.'"

I tell parents in our church to watch what kind of stakes they use to mentally tether their kids. You tell a young man he is not handsome or a girl that she is ordinary, and it drives a stake around the child's mind.

Biehl concluded, "Often as adults we are still held back by some inaccurate one-sentence stake put in our minds when we were younger." Biehl is right. If you tell people they have committed the unpardonable sin, you have driven down a stake from which they may never break away.

I learned long ago that many of the stakes people imposed on me early in life are no more than toothpicks in the sand. Pull up those stakes, good friend. Rise — and shine.

*Copyright © 2002 Media Ministries of the Assemblies of God. Reprinted with permission. ByLine With Dan Betzer is a radio ministry of Media Ministries of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.*

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

Few will question the value of a strong missions program. The following story proves that the message of Christ will impact the world.

Francis Peabody, professor at Harvard, had a caring heart for people and often prayed for their salvation. On one of his trips to the Orient, his guide took him on a tour through rural areas. He saw miles of dilapidated homes, abject poverty, and villages that were more like garbage dumps.

After several days of travel, the road led over a hill into another city. This town was different. The little houses had gardens, and the windows had

attractive curtains. Unlike the other places, children played happily in the streets, and adults were busy at jobs and business.

When Peabody asked his guide why this town was different, the guide replied: "Christianity has already reached these folks."

Christ does make a difference. It is within our power to change the world for the better if we will sacrifice some of our wealth to replace the poverty of the world.

*David G. Rose, Houston, Texas*

## TWO PERSPECTIVES

Jane Smith went to church on a particular Sunday morning. She heard the organist miss a note during the prelude, and she winced. When everybody was supposed to be bowed in silent prayer, she heard the teenager in the pew behind her talking. As the offering plate was passed, Jane felt the usher was watching to see how much she put in, and it made her boil. During the sermon, she caught the preacher making a slip of the tongue seven times by actual count. The choir hit an off key, and she noted that. As she slipped out through the side door during the closing hymn, she muttered to herself, "Never again. What a bunch of clods and hypocrites."

Linda Jones went to the same church that Sunday morning. She heard the organist play an arrangement of "A Mighty Fortress" and was thrilled by the majesty of it. During the service, she was moved by a young girl's simple testimony of the difference her faith had made in her life. When the offering was taken, she was glad to learn that this church was giving a special donation to the starving in Central Africa. Linda especially appreciated the sermon that Sunday. It had answered a question that had bothered her for a long time, and she was inspired to make a life change because of the challenge. She thought as she walked out the doors of the church, *How can a person come here and not feel the presence of God?*

Perception is an individual and tricky thing to deal with. Correct perception is vitally important to the way you live your life.

Sweeping across Germany at the end of World War II, Allied

forces searched farms and houses looking for the enemy. At one abandoned house, almost a heap of rubble, searchers with flashlights found their way to the basement. There on the crumbling wall, a victim of the holocaust had scratched a Star of David. Beneath it in





rough lettering was this message:

I believe in the sun ... even when it does not shine;  
I believe in love ... even when it is not shown;  
I believe in God ... even when He does not speak!

Your individual perspective on life can make or break you. As you look at a glass with water to the halfway mark, is it half-empty or half-full? It's all in how you perceive it. How about your life — half-full or half-empty? It depends on you.

—Robert Strand, *Springfield, Missouri*. Reprinted from Moments for Mothers. Used with permission

## REVEALED BY DEATH

A pastor received a call from a new father. The father explained that he wanted the pastor to be present when the mother came out from under the anesthetic and would be told she had given birth to a beautiful baby boy — healthy in every way — but the newborn had no ears.

When the pastor arrived, the nervous father and the doctor went into the room where the mother lay on her bed, now recovered after a hard birth. The doctor explained that the baby had auditory openings and all the inner ear parts necessary to receive sounds but no fleshy part outside that we call the ear. The doctor assured the parents that the problem would be corrected when the child's growth was completed and a matching donor was found.

School was a tough experience for this little guy. Many times he would come home crying, "I'm a freak! I'm nothing but a freak!" He was well aware of the stares, whispers, taunts, and nicknames given to him by the other kids. Junior high was the worst of his growing up experiences, but the young man began to adapt and learned to live with his disfigurement. He became an excellent student and entered college on a scholarship with plans to study geology.

One spring day, when he was a sophomore in college, his father phoned him and said, "Well, Son, we've finally found an ear donor for you. The operation will take place this summer."

The operation was a rousing success. This young man was so happy as he returned to college in the fall. His new ears were beautiful, and life took on new meaning for him.

He graduated with honors, and his parents were so proud of him as he left to take a job in the Midwest. Life was great. Then a call came from his father who said, "Son, your mother has had a heart attack. Please come right home."

The young man arrived on the next flight, only to learn his mother had died before his arrival. The next day at the funeral home, his father walked with him to the casket where she lay and pushed back his mother's hair to show the son ... his mother didn't have any ears.

She gave a part of herself to meet her son's need.

The love of God is greater even than this mother's love. God

gave us more than ears ... He gave His Son.

Robert Strand, *Springfield, Missouri*. Reprinted from Moments for Mothers. Used with permission.

## WASHINGTON WILL SUCCEED

You may read in United States history how George Washington found rest and relief in prayer during the trying times he and his soldiers passed through at Valley Forge. With all the cares and anxieties of that time upon him, he had recourse to prayer. One day a farmer approaching the camp heard an earnest voice. On coming nearer, he saw George Washington on his knees, his cheeks wet with tears, praying to God.

The farmer returned home and said to his wife: "George Washington will succeed. The Americans will secure their independence."

"What makes you think so, Isaac?" asked his wife.

The farmer replied: "I heard him pray out in the woods today, Hannah, and the Lord will surely hear his prayer. He will, Hannah; thee may rest assured He will."

*Sunday School Times*

### To Quote—

Freedom comes by filling your mind with God's thoughts.

—Erwin W. Lutzer

The only lasting treasure is spiritual; the only perfect freedom is serving God.

—Malcolm Muggeridge

The only freedom that man ever has is when he becomes a slave to Jesus Christ.

—R.C. Sproul

The important thing about a man is not where he goes when he is compelled to go, but where he goes when he is free to go where he will.

—A.W. Tozer

Freedom does not mean I am able to do whatever I want to do. That's the worst kind of bondage. Freedom means I have been set free to become all that God wants me to achieve, to enjoy all that God wants me to enjoy.

—Warren W. Wiersbe

The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.

—Theodore Martin Hesburgh

No man is poor who has a godly mother.

—Abraham Lincoln

I learned more about Christianity from my mother than from all the theologians of England.

—John Wesley

Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.

—Mark Twain

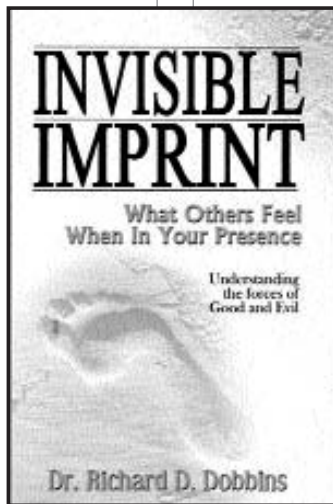
## INVISIBLE IMPRINT:

### What Others Feel When in Your Presence

Richard D. Dobbins

(Totally Alive Publications, 195 pp., hardcover)

**R**ichard Dobbins says, "Every person has a presence! Your presence is the most enduring part of your life. It leaves traces of you like an invisible imprint on everyone you meet in life, especially on those who are the closest to you."



that contains the entire text of the book. If you desire to use the material for a study group, you need only purchase workbooks.

*Reviewed by Gary R. Allen, D.Min., executive editor of Enrichment journal and national coordinator of Ministerial Enrichment, Springfield, Missouri.*

*Invisible Imprint* is a most helpful book in gaining insight into your own life and how your presence impacts others, both positively and negatively. Dobbins describes God's presence, human presence, and the presence of evil and how these interact on your presence. He supports these principles with his scholarly research, stories of his own life, and years of counseling experience.

The author does an outstanding job describing the origin of sin, the imprint that sin has on your humanity, and the power of God's presence to transform you with His imprint on your life. Dobbins gives hope to everyone, especially those who view themselves as hopeless victims of others and of life's circumstances.

Dobbins also describes how you can change your presence and become healthier within and in the imprint you leave on others. In the chapter "Making Your Presence His Presence," the author provides several practical steps to take to make a change in your presence.

This book has a companion workbook

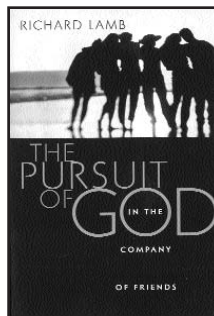
## THE PURSUIT OF GOD IN THE COMPANY OF FRIENDS

Richard Lamb

(InterVarsity Press, 228 pp., hardcover)

Easily eclipsed in the activism and even professionalism of pastoral ministry is the simple proposition that the kingdom of God is, at its core, relational. *The Pursuit of God in the Company of Friends* depicts a God-pursuing kind of spiritual journey that requires us to move "from individualism to community, privacy to openness, superficiality to authenticity and justification to sanctification."

This is not primarily a book about small groups. Neither is it a call to a communal lifestyle impractical for most Western Christians. Rather, it is an "invitation ... to make two moves simultaneously:



(1) to move with our friends to grow toward God, and (2) to move in our relationship with God to grow in our friendships."

Lamb effectively mingles relational insights from events in Jesus' life with an interesting assortment of personal experiences taken from his own 20 years of pastoral ministry to university students. In the process he covers in very practical ways such subjects as finding and deepening friendships, influencing people without manipulating them, articulating open questions, listening, reconciling, avoiding unhealthy competitiveness and building mission-centered small group communities.

Lamb's conclusion wraps up the spirit of the book. "I cannot keep time — it slips through my fingers at an alarming rate of speed — but I can invest it so I can gain wealth I cannot lose: deeper knowledge of God and friends committed with me to the enjoyment of God forever."

*Reviewed by James Bradford, Ph.D., senior pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.*

## BEING LEADERS:

### The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership

Aubrey Malphurs

(Baker, 239 pp., paperback)

If you are looking for a participatory, interactive, and response-based learning experience on the subject of spiritual leadership, you will want to consider Aubrey Malphurs' *Being Leaders*.

Malphurs reacts to the plethora of current leadership theories that are more secular and popular than biblical and spiritual. The corrective for him is a thorough evaluation of leadership models that emerge in the narrative of Scripture.

Beyond the solid examination of Scripture is an inclusion of helpful diagnostic tools designed to measure a wide variety of pastoral and congregational priorities: Natural Gifts and Abilities Indicator, Passion Audit, Relational Skills Inventory, Task Skills Inventory, Leadership Style Inventory — to name just a few.

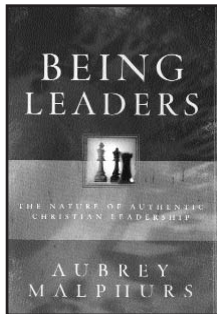
The reader is invited to shift from narrative to evaluation in

appropriate places. In this way the reader interacts with subject matter through a process of inventory and audit. It is this response that gives the book a sense of relevance and practicality.

Here is a presentation on leadership that should not be bypassed by pastors and church boards. Especially helpful is the section on matching pastoral strengths and congregational requirements in the selection process of new leadership. If heeded, mismatch can be avoided and valuable resources preserved.

There is a crisis in the church, and it is consistently a crisis of leadership. Here is a balanced and thorough biblical treatment of spiritual leadership that addresses this crisis in a most practical and helpful way.

*Richard L. Dresselhaus, former senior pastor, First Assembly of God, San Diego, California.*



## THE YOUTH BUILDER

*Jim Burns and Mike DeVries*  
(Gospel Light, 325 pp., hardcover)

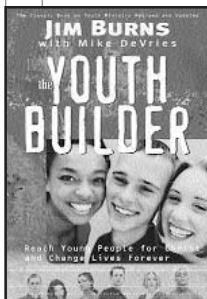
Every generation is given a moment in history, and in that moment they need stability, true relationship, and an encounter with God. In youth ministry today, you cannot afford to be under

prepared, and no one can confuse principles and programs anymore.

*The Youth Builder* is a highly effective book in preparing workers in every facet of youth involvement. It lays foundational principles, such as relationship-based youth ministry, with basic and valuable lessons every worker needs in dealing with leadership, counseling young people, preparing youth for practical ministry application, strategic programming, and helping students' families.

This book is an updated from a previous version written by Burns in 1988. At that time it was considered the handbook for youth workers for more than a decade. In this new version, Burns and DeVries give the principles and strategic planning needed to help the basic foundation for anyone involved with students.

This handbook will easily continue



its timeless ability to help educate and prepare youth workers to effectively minister to this generation.

Whether you are a teacher, youth pastor, youth sponsor, or

even a parent, this book can help in training and equipping your students. Help your students have an impact in their moment of history by being prepared to teach them the principles they will need to excel.

*Reviewed by Dave Rumley, young adults pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.*

## CAN THE PASTOR DO IT ALONE?

*A Model for Preparing Laypeople for Lay Pastoring*

*Melvin J. Steinbron*  
(Regal Books, 258 pp., paperback)

Melvin Steinbron's desire to equip

called lay pastors resulted from his personal frustration to adequately meet his congregation's needs and the scriptural directive to effectively equip church members for works of ministry (Ephesians



4:11–13). He discovered that God-called and properly equipped laypeople are able to extend the vocational

pastor's ministry through quality pastoral care.

Members who sense a lay pastor's calling are identified and interviewed by pastoral staff. Those with the gift of pastoring attend 12 equipping sessions. Following training they are assigned 5 to 10 families to whom they provide pastoral care. Each lay pastor is accountable to a trained lay shepherd and church pastor. Lay pastors complete reports for all ministry provided to their flock. Sessions are conducted for encouragement, reports, assessment, and further equipping.

*Can the Pastor Do It Alone?* can be utilized as a lay-pastor training manual and addresses three phases of lay-pastor equipping ministry: 1) Development — putting the program together; 2) Implementation — getting it off the ground; and 3) Maintenance — keeping it going. The book includes a leader's guide, and the appendix contains forms used for this ministry.

Pastors will benefit from this material as they equip laypeople for works of ministry.

*Reviewed by Jerry Newswander, pastor, Christ Chapel of the Assemblies of God, Platte City, Missouri.*

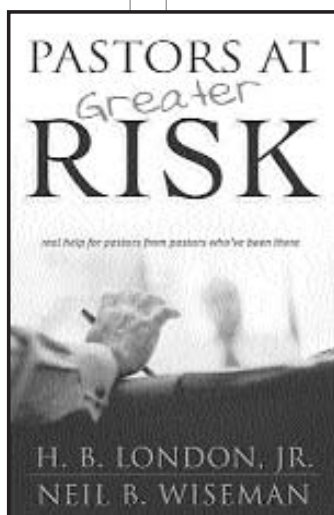
## PASTOR AT GREATER RISK

H.B. London and Neil B. Wiseman  
(Baker Book House, 201 pp., paperback)

**R**esearch indicates that 90 percent of pastors work more than 46 hours a week, 80 percent believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively, and 90 percent feel they are inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands. Most alarming is the fact 40 percent of ministers say they are ready to leave the ministry. With these and other alarming factors in mind, this book addresses many of the areas of stress and pressure in the ministry through three major divisions: Recognizing the Risks in Your Ministry, Conquering the Risks in Your Family Life, and Overcoming the Risks in Your Personal Life.

There are also factors that affect the local congregation as well as the person and ministry of pastors. Ninety percent of churches are in a survival mode. This affects the health and motivation in both the pulpit and pew. There must be an intentional effort on the part of both the congregation and pastor to overcome this survival/defeatist mentality.

London and Wiseman utilize the expertise and experience of several



others including James Dobson, Gordon MacDonald, Kay Warren, Archibald Hart, and Jerry Bridges to provide insight as to how to minimize stress and pressure in the ministry.

This updated version of the authors' earlier work is a must read for all pastors. It would be

especially helpful for pastoral training and for pastoral accountability groups.

*Reviewed by Gary R. Allen, D.Min., executive editor of Enrichment journal and national coordinator of Ministerial Enrichment, Springfield, Missouri.*

## MINISTRY BETWEEN MIRACLES

Thomason K. Matthew  
(Xulon Press, 168 pp., paperback)

*Ministry Between Miracles* addresses many aspects of ministry to hurting people. Portions of the book detail the history of pastoral care throughout the Old and New Testaments, Middle Ages, Reformation, and pastoral care in America. *Ministry Between Miracles* also recognizes the progress, and sometimes lack of progress, ministry has made toward reaching hurting people.

Matthew addresses the heart of pastoral care and how it relates to theology and practical approaches in

our culture. His ability to show how psychological aspects of relationships

intermingle with Spirit-led ministry is appreciated.

As a minister, licensed social worker, and leader in a hospice program, I find Matthew provoking and

challenging. He confirms that Spirit-led ministry is an avenue of service.

*Ministry Between Miracles* will enhance your God-given gifts as you care for others, bring a healing touch to hurting people, and provide wisdom to develop caring skills.

*Reviewed by Greg Wood, executive director for hospice, Ponca City, Oklahoma.*

## THE HOSPITAL VISIT: A PASTOR'S GUIDE

Michael L. Kirkindoll  
(Abingdon Press, 96 pp., paperback)

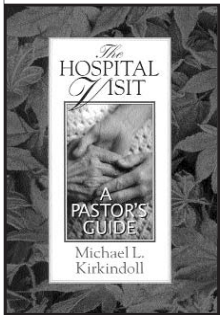
Having written this book with the student pastor and pastors who are in the early years of their ministry in mind, the author establishes foundational guidelines in providing effective pastoral care in the healthcare setting. He believes that effective pastoral care only strengthens the credibility of the pastor.

Kirkindoll taps into his experience both as a pastor and as a volunteer chaplain as he weaves stories and experiences to illustrate the facets of pastoral care. He focuses on the importance of the presence of the pastor during the times of change, crisis, and grief in the lives of his or her congregation. The pastor's presence reflects the hope of Christ's healing and presence, comfort in times of hurt and grief, and provides



opportunity to assist people to grow through the phases of life.

The author devotes a chapter to understanding the role of the hospital chaplain and how the pastor and chaplain function together as colleagues to provide care to the patient and family. There may times when the pastor cannot respond immediately.



The hospital chaplain can be present to care for the family.

The last chapter addresses the subject of the pastor as the patient. After providing care to

hurting people, the pastor may become emotionally and spiritually drained. Kirkindoll underlines the value and importance of tending to the interior life and physical health of the pastor.

I recommend this book as a valuable resource for the person providing pastoral care. The book was insightful and enjoyable.

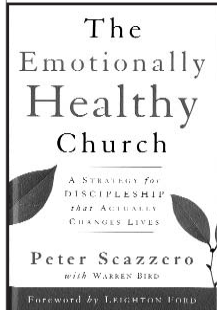
*Reviewed by Larry Cooper, chaplain, Cox Health Systems, Springfield, Missouri.*

## THE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHURCH

*Peter Scazzero*  
(Zondervan, 224 pp., hardcover)

After his wife threatened to leave the congregation he was pastoring, Peter Scazzero reassessed his spiritual and emotional health and found it wanting. He now says, "The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership. In fact, the key to successful pastoral leadership has much more to do with the leader's internal life than with the leader's expertise, gifts, or experience."

Currently the pastor of New Life Fellowship in Elmhurst, New York, Scazzero has written a discipleship strategy for developing emotionally healthy leaders and believers, who in turn become an emotionally healthy congregation. He insists that one cannot be both spiritually healthy and emotionally ill.



The book includes a helpful emotional/spiritual health inventory. It is also full of biblical and contemporary examples

of both emotional health and illness. Scazzero reminds us that Jesus was fully human and expressed His emotions, including joy and frustration.

New believers at New Life Fellowship are encouraged to fill out a genogram, a map of their family history. Scazzero does speak of generational sin, and the therapy offered is either topical Bible studies or referral to a professional counselor. Some Pentecostals will be disappointed that he does not address the pros and cons of spiritual formation approaches such as Cleansing Streams or Encounter weekends.

Scazzero's book will be helpful to many pastors who have already discovered that repeating the sinners' prayer does not necessarily cure all emotional ills.

*Reviewed by Paul E. Grabill, lead pastor, State College Assembly of God, State College, Pennsylvania.*

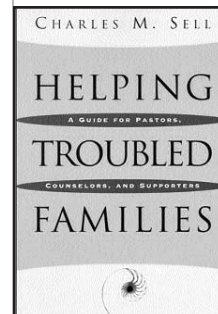
## HELPING TROUBLED FAMILIES

*Charles M. Sell*  
(Baker Book House, 208 pp., paperback)

Our nation is racked with pain, disillusionment, and confusion, and

many are frightened about the institution of marriage. The enemy has attacked the home because it is important to God and to the emotional health of people. Whether we like it or not, the homes of America desperately need help, and the church is the safest place to provide that help.

Charles M. Sell hits the nail on the head as he addresses issues that many church families do not want to face. However, if we want to reach



families for Christ, we must provide a way for them to be healed.

Dysfunctional families are all around us and abusive situations are

looking pastors in the face each Sunday morning. Many couples will never admit it, but when their tension explodes, their minister usually has to deal with it.

Sell addresses violence, exploitation, lack of care, authoritarian control, sexual abuse, eating disorders, marital problems and divorce, and mental or emotional disorders.

*Helping Troubled Families* not only paints an accurate picture of the American home but also gives the church some remedies for this ugly setting. The author talks about how to find recovery and renewal, how to help children with broken homes and addicted parents, how to break the chain of bad habits, how to help people get over their pasts, and how to use the church community as a safe place for people to grow in their healing process and become stable Christians.

*Reviewed by Wayde I. Goodall, pastor, First Assembly of God, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*

# NEWS & RESOURCES

## A/G NEWS

The Assemblies of God online news source, A/G News, is available free to anyone with e-mail access.

A/G News offers subscribers late-breaking news, feature stories, updates, reports, and other events in the Assemblies of God. This e-mail newsletter is sent out three times a week.

Many of the stories appearing in A/G News include links to websites where information about outreaches, organizations, and events can be obtained. Also, at the bottom of each issue is a link to the online A/G Calendar of Events

For a free subscription to A/G News, send an e-mail to [news@ag.org](mailto:news@ag.org) and write "subscribe" in the subject line.

## BENEVOLENCES CHRISTMAS SUNDAY IS JULY 25

In Matthew 24 Jesus speaks of helping those in need: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (verse 40).

The holidays can be a lonely, depressing time for many people. Your Benevolences Christmas offering is a tangible way to bless the senior-retired ministers on the Aged Ministers Assistance rolls, the young women at Highlands, and the boys and girls at Hillcrest Children's Home.

Send your Christmas offering to: Benevolences Ministries, 1445 N. Boonville, Springfield, MO 65802-1894. For more information visit [www.benevolences.ag.org](http://www.benevolences.ag.org).

## HILLCREST BACK-TO-SCHOOL DAY

A rebellious teen-age girl taken from her mother by the courts was placed with her father in hopes he would be a better parent. Instead, he molested her and she had to appear before a judge to testify against him. The courts then placed her at Hillcrest Children's Home.

This is only one of the many stories that can be told of the boys and girls at Hillcrest Children's Home. The children who come to Hillcrest enjoy a stable environment, sometimes for the first time. At Hillcrest they have an opportunity to grow and develop as normal children and find healing for their emotional and physical scars. Many come with only the clothes on their back. Hillcrest provides these children with shelter, food, and their other needs. Most accept Christ as Savior.

August 8 is Hillcrest Back-to-School Day. The cost of new clothes, shoes, backpacks, and other supplies needed to send the average child back to school is expensive. Multiply that by several dozen children, and you will understand how much it costs to prepare the Hillcrest children for school.

Log on to [www.hillcrest.ag.org](http://www.hillcrest.ag.org) to view a Back-to-School needs list, or send a designed Hillcrest Back-to-School offering to Benevolences Department, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

## A/G FACULTY SEMINAR

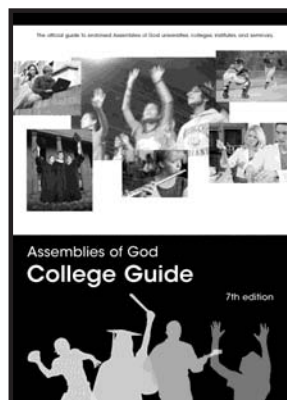
To foster a sense of community between various disciplines in our Assemblies of God schools, the third Assemblies of God Faculty Seminar will be held in Springfield, Mo., July 20-23, 2004.

Academic disciplines included during this 4-day event are business, education, communications, library science, physical education, science, and math. Faculty from all 19 endorsed Assemblies of God colleges and universities will attend.

General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask will address the faculty and administrators. Sessions of general interest will be offered as well as workshops designed for specific disciplines. Opportunities to network with faculty in the same disciplines will be provided.

The seminar is funded by the Assemblies of God Executive Presbytery and sponsored by the Board of Administration and the Commission on Christian Higher Education.

## NEW SEVENTH EDITION COLLEGE GUIDE



The seventh edition of the *Assemblies of God College Guide*, a free resource highlighting all 19 endorsed Assemblies of God colleges, is now available.

This full-color catalog includes current information about each school: tuition costs, majors and minors offered, admission requirements, housing, financial aid resources, ministry opportunities, and music and athletic programs. Business-reply postcards, stitched into the catalog, can be returned directly to the schools to request additional information.

To receive free copies of this guide for your church library and college-bound students, contact the Christian Higher Education Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3315, or [www.colleges.ag.org](http://www.colleges.ag.org), and request item #747001.

## NEW BOOK COMING FROM PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL BOOKS

Pentecostal Evangel Books, a 5-year-old coventure of Gospel Publishing House and *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, is scheduled to release its sixth title this summer. The 200 plus-page book, *Q&A: Conversations with 50 Inspiring People*, will be an exclusive compilation of some of the best conversations that have appeared in *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* during the past 5 years.

Among the interviews included in the book are Pat Boone, Auntie Anne's Pretzels founder Anne Beiler, Josh McDowell,

# NEWS & RESOURCES

VeggieTales creator Phil Vischer, Rebecca St. James, John Tesh, Jim Cymbala, Michael W. Smith, Dallas Holm, former NFL great Cris Carter, and Hillsong worship leader Darlene Zschech.

*Q&A: Conversations with 50 Inspiring People*, along with other PE Books titles, may be ordered by calling GPH Customer Service at 1-800-641-4310 or by visiting [www.GospelPublishing.com](http://www.GospelPublishing.com).

## SHORT-TERM MINISTER ABROAD PROGRAM

Are you preparing to go overseas? Have you been invited by a missionary, or do you plan to minister in a foreign country? Assemblies of God World Missions wants to connect with you. Contact AGWM Special Ministries office to learn about the Short-Term Minister Abroad program and to:

- confirm district and AGWM approvals for your ministry trip.
- obtain the required overseas travel insurance.\*
- open an AGWM account for financial contributions.
- ensure your supporting church receives World Ministries Credit.

For more information contact: AGWM Special Ministries, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894; 1-417-862-2781, exts. 2089,2090, e-mail: [STMA@ag.org](mailto:STMA@ag.org); or visit: [www.worldmissions.ag.org](http://www.worldmissions.ag.org) (use quick navigation tool)

\*Your health insurance policy may not offer you coverage while you are overseas; most policies do not cover the required medical evacuation or repatriation of remains.

## REGIONAL SINGLE ADULT/YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCES

Single Adult Ministries is sponsoring several regional conferences designed to raise awareness of the need for young adult and single adult ministry on a local, regional, and national level. The purpose of these conferences is to train volunteer and paid leaders and to help single adults and young adults grow spiritually and relationally.

### Locations:

Evangel World Prayer Center, Louisville, Ky., May 28–30, 2004  
Lakeview Christian Center, Indianapolis, Ind., Oct. 22, 23, 2004

For further information contact the Single Adult Ministries Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 4125, or visit [www.singles.ag.org](http://www.singles.ag.org).

## SINGLE ADULT DAY KIT AVAILABLE

National Single Adult Day is Nov. 7, 2004. The Single Adult/Young Adult Ministries office has created a CD to help you honor the single adults in your congregation. The CD includes:

- facts about Single Adult Day.
- ideas for Single Adult Day.

- three skits.
- several articles about Single Adult Ministry.
- two PowerPoint presentations.
- a 4.5-minute promotional video.

Celebrate this day set aside to recognize and honor single adults for the contribution they make to the church and the Kingdom. For further information, contact the Single Adult Ministries Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 4125, or visit [www.singles.ag.org](http://www.singles.ag.org).

## SINGLE ADULT MINISTRIES ADDS YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES EMPHASIS

Young Adults 18 to 35 are one of the largest unreached groups in our culture. To assist churches in ministering effectively to this postmodern generation, Jim Bittinger has recently joined the Single Adult Ministries staff as development coordinator. His responsibilities include: developing ministries to young adults and their leaders, networking leaders, developing resources, planning regional conferences, and developing a website. You can contact Jim at 417-862-2781, ext. 4127, or e-mail [jbittinger@ag.org](mailto:jbittinger@ag.org).

## FREE HELP FOR NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR

September 26 is National Sunday School Day. The theme is “Learning Together,” built on “Learning To Live the LIFE,” the new vision for Sunday School introduced in 2003. The new vision’s strategy for Sunday School is to prepare God’s people to live like Jesus. LIFE is an acronym for the four traits of strong Sunday Schools:

- Learning together
- Including all who come
- Finding others who need to know
- Emerging for ministry

In 2003, the national Sunday School Department mailed a LIFE vision video and sample booklet to every Assemblies of God church. Beginning in 2004 and continuing through 2007, the department will design and promote resources to strengthen Sunday Schools in the four areas of the vision.

A free national Sunday School Day planner is available that includes ideas to help your Sunday School increase attendance, promote biblical learning, plan activities, and thank teachers throughout the Sunday School year. To request your free planner and learn about additional resources visit [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org), e-mail [sspromotions@ag.org](mailto:sspromotions@ag.org), or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4012.

Other free resources include a downloadable Sunday School logo, ad slicks for church bulletins, websites, or newsletters, and commitment cards to print and distribute to your members.

# NEWS & RESOURCES

## NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL A.S.S.E.T.

What is the most important asset of your Sunday School? Trained, enthusiastic, committed, Pentecostal teachers.

This year the national Sunday School Department is introducing Accelerated Sunday School Enrichment & Training. The goal is to maximize the ministry potential of Sunday School teachers.

There are three components to the A.S.S.E.T. process.

The first component is attending a 1-day A.S.S.E.T. seminar. At the seminar teachers receive an overview of four of the five books required to complete A.S.S.E.T. The fifth book is an age-level training book.

The seminar introduces teachers to methods that attract and keep students through recognizing and meeting basic felt needs, learn ways to teach that will make a difference, and discover strategies for connecting the effectiveness of Sunday School with the overall strength of the church.

The second component of A.S.S.E.T. is completing the study guides included in the 1-day seminar booklet. The five books required to complete A.S.S.E.T. training can be purchased at an A.S.S.E.T. seminar, from a GPH field minister, or by calling 1-800-641-4310.

The third component of A.S.S.E.T. is completing the examination included at the end of the seminar booklet. After completing the books and study guides, the exam is mailed to the training coordinator in the national Sunday School Department, who will issue a certificate of completion and enter the teacher's name in the national training database.

The A.S.S.E.T. process will increase the effectiveness of Sunday School teachers in the church. To schedule or to learn about A.S.S.E.T. seminars in your area, call the Sunday School training coordinator at 417-862-2781, ext. 4003.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL ON THE WEB

April 2, 2003, marked the launch date for the Assemblies of God national Sunday School website. Visits to the site quickly topped 100,000 a month. "We're happy to see so many churches visiting the Sunday School site," states Wes Bartel, director of the national Sunday School Department. "Thousands of pastors, teachers, and administrators are finding resources to help them improve the quality of Sunday School."

Pastors will find articles about church growth, strategies for developing lay leadership, sermon outlines, and PowerPoint and Flash files for increasing the visibility of Sunday School.

Administrators can download samples of forms and policies, gain insights into developing an adult elective curriculum, scan through evangelism and assimilation tips, and learn strategies for making the most of facilities.

Teachers will like the quick tips and age-level insights for babies through adults. A lesson-planning chart and inspirational articles will help them stay prepared and refreshed.

The site also has information and training for the new Sunday School vision — Learning To Live the LIFE. Information on Sunday School events such as national Sunday School Day and Teacher of the Year is also available on the site.

The Sunday School Department is committed to regularly updating the site with added resources that focus on increasing the visibility and improving the quality of Sunday School.

Visit [www.sundayschool.ag.org](http://www.sundayschool.ag.org) and discover for yourself the many resources for your Sunday School.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS PRAISE NEW CONFERENCE

Sunday School Administrators Conferences have been spreading throughout the districts of the Assemblies of God. The conferences were established in response to renewed interest in Sunday School. Pastors around the country are recognizing the link between spiritually healthy, growing Christians and an effective Sunday School. Thom Rainer, author of *High Expectations*, discovered that churches that successfully reach and keep people have pastors who "consider Sunday School to be their most essential strategy for not only keeping people, but also for preparing them for ministry."

By investing in Sunday School leaders a pastor raises the expectations of what Sunday School can achieve. Each Sunday School Administrators Conference provides an environment where Sunday School leaders can draw strength, encouragement, and ideas from one another. Administrators who have attended conferences during the first year list these benefits:

- Practical skill building
- Ideas for building relationships with teachers
- Strategies for restructuring Sunday School
- Ideas for implementing Christian education in the community
- Written samples of how to start, keep, and refresh a Sunday School ministry
- Insights into recruiting teachers and helpers

At each conference, every participating church receives a copy of the new, reproducible *Sunday School Administrators Reference Manual*, a \$24.95 value (for English, use order number 714 520, for Spanish, use 714 521). The manual becomes a road map for ministry after the conference. Every participant is also given a note-taking device that functions as a quick reference tool.



# NEWS & RESOURCE

Administrators leave the conference feeling encouraged and equipped.

For more information concerning these conferences contact your district Christian education director. Each conference is cosponsored by a district, the national Sunday School department, and Gospel Publishing House.

## U.S. MISSIONS CONFERENCE

U.S. Missions biannual missionary and chaplain conference will be Aug. 7–11, 2004, in Springfield, Mo. This conference will provide the tools to recharge and refocus the ministries of those who attend.

On Saturday, Aug. 7, each department will sponsor a reception. Sunday will be a time of corporate worship and fellowship. Each department will offer seminars and classes on Monday and Tuesday providing helps to advance the ministry of each U.S. missionary. Tuesday night's banquet will feature a unique presentation. Following the conference on Wednesday and Thursday missionaries will receive training to aid them in raising financial support.

Missionaries and chaplains wanting more information about the conference and support-raising seminar should contact U.S. Missions at 417-862-2781, ext. 3254.

## NATIONAL YOUTH WORKERS CONFERENCE

Youth leaders across the nation will gather at the Adams Mark Hotel in Tulsa, Okla., for the national Youth Workers Conference Sept. 23–25, 2004. There will be more than 70 workshops and speakers, many emphasizing volunteer youth leadership in the Assemblies of God.

"This conference will powerfully impact any youth worker," says Tom Greene, director, A/G Youth Ministries. "The general sessions and workshops are designed to promote an attitude of worship and motivation and will facilitate interaction between conference participants."

The 3-day event features the 25-year celebration of Youth Alive — a student-led campus ministry — with a banquet Friday evening. Other highlights include worship led by the Terry Kelley band and a Speed-the-Light banquet. There will also be performances by other Christian music artists.

The conference will have a wide range of speakers leading the workshops and general sessions, from lay leaders to youth ministry veterans. Featured speakers are the leadership from the national Youth Ministries team and Thomas E. Trask, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God.

Registration is \$89 per person and accommodations are \$72

per night. Full-time students are eligible for a discounted conference rate of \$79.

The registration fee includes two special meal functions and an abundance of books and resources.

To participate in this dynamic event, log on to [www.youth.ag.org/nywc](http://www.youth.ag.org/nywc), or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4030, or visit [www.youth.ag.org/media](http://www.youth.ag.org/media).

## NATIONAL YOUTH MINISTRIES LAUNCHES MEDIA WEBSITE

National Youth Ministries Director Tom Greene announces the launch of [www.nymedia.ag.org](http://www.nymedia.ag.org), a comprehensive media library for Assemblies of God national youth ministries. The site contains brochure information and current press releases as well as downloadable photos, advertisements, and other resources. The site is updated regularly and contains nym-related articles from Assemblies of God publications dating back to 2000.

"The beauty of nymedia is that it can help anyone plug into what's happening in Assemblies of God youth ministries. And it's free," Greene says.

According to nymedia creator and content manager Amber Weigand-Buckley, the text-driven site was manufactured with the user in mind. Articles, news about upcoming national events, and ads can be cut and dropped into church bulletins and flyers.

"Nymedia is a valuable resource for youth ministry event planning. There's some incredible stuff available that will enhance your ministry to teens just a few mouse clicks away," James Pauls, national Youth Ministries public relations coordinator, says.

Greene concludes, "This is one more statement of our desire to enhance every youth ministry in America. Check it out today. If you need more, let us know. Tell us how we can help you win, build, and send students for the cause of Christ. We are here to serve you."

## NATIONAL FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

National Fine Arts Festival will be held Aug. 2–6, 2004, in Austin, Tex. Fine Arts Festival is open to students in grades 6–12 (as of Sept. 1, 2003) who attend Assemblies of God youth groups.

National FAF participants must perform and qualify on a district level for the invitation to vie with other participants nationwide for the Award of Merit, the Festival's top honor. For a list of FAF categories, log on to [www.faf.ag.org](http://www.faf.ag.org) to download a copy of the 2004 Official Fine Arts Festival Rules book.

For more information e-mail [faf@ag.org](mailto:faf@ag.org), log on to [www.faf.ag.org](http://www.faf.ag.org), or call 417-862-2781, ext. 4035.

# WITH CHRIST

**John W. Acker, Sr.**  
Springfield, Missouri

**Earl B. Adamson**  
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

**Woodrow Blackman**  
Wewahatchka, Florida

**Virginia L. Boulware**  
Brighton, Colorado

**Otto Boyet**  
Sullivan, Missouri

**Eunice M. Brown**  
Van, Texas

**A. Wilber Burdine**  
San Jose, California

**Clifford L. Burnside**  
Tuckerman, Arkansas

**Darrel R. Bush**  
Springfield, Missouri

**Howard C. Campbell**  
Trenton, Tennessee

**Ethel A. Carter**  
Jonesboro, Arkansas

**Luther A. Cayton**  
Luling, Texas

**Marcilio Collazo**  
Holland, Michigan

**Lee V. Cossey**  
Russellville, Arkansas

**Thelma B. Cox**  
Lawton, Oklahoma

**Mary V. Creamer**  
Eastpoint, Florida

**Kathaleen Duke**  
Nixa, Missouri

**Ray E. Duncan**  
Centralia, Washington

**Howard D. Elrod**  
DeWitt, Arkansas

**Jorge Frade**  
Mountain View, California

**Ralph W. Gaither**  
Fresno, California

**Ruben B. Garza**  
Abilene, Texas

**George Goomas**  
Duncanville, Texas

**Mildred R. Greene**  
Bossier City, Louisiana

**James B. Griffin**  
Waco, Texas

**J. Peter Hamelink**  
Vesper, Wisconsin

**Charles L. Hann**  
Bath, New York

**Wesley D. Hansen**  
Warden, Washington

**Alfred J. Hanson**  
Longview, Washington

**Derrel D. Harris**  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

**Richard B. Havner**  
Tyler, Texas

**Comer L. Hawkins**  
McMinnville, Tennessee

**Michael J. Henderson**  
Phenix City, Alabama

**Everet W. Holder**  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

**Cameron C. Holland**  
Washougal, Washington

**Ara Vay Holtzclaw**  
Cotton Valley, Louisiana

**Carrie B. Hunsberger**  
Portland, Indiana

**Dale E. Hunsdoerfer**  
Laguna Woods, California

**Henry D. Irish**  
Newton, Iowa

**Billy R. Jackson**  
Alford, Florida

**Nadine Kindler**  
Modesto, California

**Rheba N. King**  
Yuma, Arizona

**Robert C. Kirby**  
Amity, Arkansas

**Jim D. Koller**  
Swifton, Arkansas

**George E. Lautz**  
Scottsdale, Arizona

**June D. Ledbetter**  
Fort Worth, Texas

**Edward L. Long**  
Copperas Cove, Texas

**Jacob H. Lowrey**  
Century, Florida

**Vera Martin**  
Gresham, Oregon

**Kenneth C. McComber**  
Laguna Hills, California

**Lester W. McDonald**  
San Jose, California

**Winford T. Meadows**  
Columbus, Georgia

**Thomas M. Mears**  
Chipley, Florida

**Henry E. Mock**  
Greeley, Colorado

**Eloy Montoya**  
El Prado, New Mexico

**Grace E. Murrell**  
Pinole, California

**Michael L. O'Barr**  
Birmingham, Alabama

**Frederick C. Packer**  
Surrey, England

**Charles E. Peak**  
Springfield, Missouri

**Richard H. Philp**  
Tacoma, Washington

**Madison I. Pierce**  
Mooreland, Oklahoma

**David J. Pillow**  
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

**Warren V. Pine**  
Riverdale, California

**Samuel H. Reaves**  
Seymour, Iowa

**Joe C. Reed**  
Foley, Alabama

**Loren E. Rentschler**  
Portage, Indiana

**Amos C. Rogers**  
Mount Ayr, Iowa

**Daniel Ronsisvalle**  
Leeds, Alabama

**Richard R. Rose**  
Roundup, Montana

**Elmer L. Royer**  
Logan, Utah

**Coy J. Scroggins**  
Locust Grove, Oklahoma

**Noial Self**  
Jonesboro, Arkansas

**Ervillene Shaffer**  
Saginaw, Texas

**Don R. Shockley, Sr.**  
Van Nuys, California

**Allen V. Stoker**  
Colorado Springs,  
Colorado

**Kenneth Stottlemeyer**  
Marmarth, North Dakota

**Willard R. Tanner, Sr.**  
Olympia, Washington

**Belva M. Tisdalle**  
Santa Ana, California

**Kiem Ngoc Tran**  
Charlotte, North Carolina

**Alma L. Turnage**  
Texarkana, Texas

**Kathryn Vanderwert**  
Pinellas Park, Florida

**Thomas G. Wade**  
Phenix City, Alabama

**Virgle Weeks**  
Farmington, Missouri

**Alvis D. Weaver**  
Prattville, Alabama

**Wesley W. West**  
Brooks, Oregon

**Gaylord C. Wilson**  
Murrieta, California

# INTIMACY — THE FOUNDATION FOR HEALTHY MINISTRY



**W**hen we hear the word intimacy, we sometimes think of sexual intimacy. But intimacy involves more than the physical. True intimacy is demonstrated through healthy relationships.

According to Webster's, the word *intimate* means "belonging to or characterized by one's deepest nature"; "marked by very close association, contact, or familiarity"; "marked by a warm friendship developing through long association."

Webster's definition describes the essential elements necessary in our relationships with God, family, church and community. Unless we allow these definitions to describe our lives we will be lacking in our personal relationships.

God desires that we have an intimate relationship with Him. Because we have been transformed by His power, we have taken on His nature — a nature that desires intimate fellowship with His creation. His Holy Spirit draws us to that intimate relationship with God. But we must yield to the Spirit as He leads us into that deeper relationship.

We cannot let the busyness of our schedules keep us from the most important meeting of the day — time alone with God. As we spend time with Him in prayer and in His Word, and allow Him to mold us into His image, we will be able to build healthy relationships with others. Remember, intimacy with others will not take place until we have developed intimacy with God.

Next to your relationship with God,

the most important relationship you have is with your spouse and children. Building intimacy with your family takes time. It means communicating and sharing dreams and needs. It involves encouraging and helping each family member become all God wants him or her to be. If we are not careful, we spend our best energy on the ministry and give our families the leftovers. We cannot afford to be a success at ministry and a failure with our families.

The church should be the one place in the world where true intimacy takes place. The deepest part of our nature has been changed through our relationship with Christ. We are now partakers of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The close associations we have with each other and the warm friendships we develop as we spend time together demonstrate the love that typifies the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; 13:1–13). But why is this not the case in some churches? Perhaps some have not understood the importance of intimacy — developing healthy relationships.

Many problems in the church come from a lack of intimacy. True intimacy in the church will not be developed until we learn to talk with each other, trust each other, and share our feelings with each other. This can only come as we lower the barriers of pride and selfishness and value others as those who have also been redeemed by Christ's blood. When intimacy is evident in a congregation, its people will care for others and reach out to those in need. Their caring will extend beyond the walls of the church and into the community. People will be drawn to your church because of the loving, caring relationships they see in your people.

Building healthy relationships also involves understanding who we are. We must evaluate ourselves and detect any character flaws that keep us from developing an intimate relationship with God and others. We cannot allow past experiences to hinder us from being the person that God wants us to be.

Since intimacy is so important in our lives, in our families, and in the church, then as pastors we need to lead our families and church members in developing healthy, intimate relationships. To do this we must let God's Word determine the way we live and develop relationships.

I trust that as you have read and reflected on this issue of *Enrichment* journal, you've gained an understanding of the importance of intimacy as the basis for building healthy relationships with God, self, family, church, and community. Without intimacy you will not fulfill all God has planned for you, your family, and His church. As Gary Smalley said, "Life is relationships; the rest is just details."

**RICHARD L. SCHOONOVER** is associate editor, *Enrichment* journal, Springfield, Missouri.

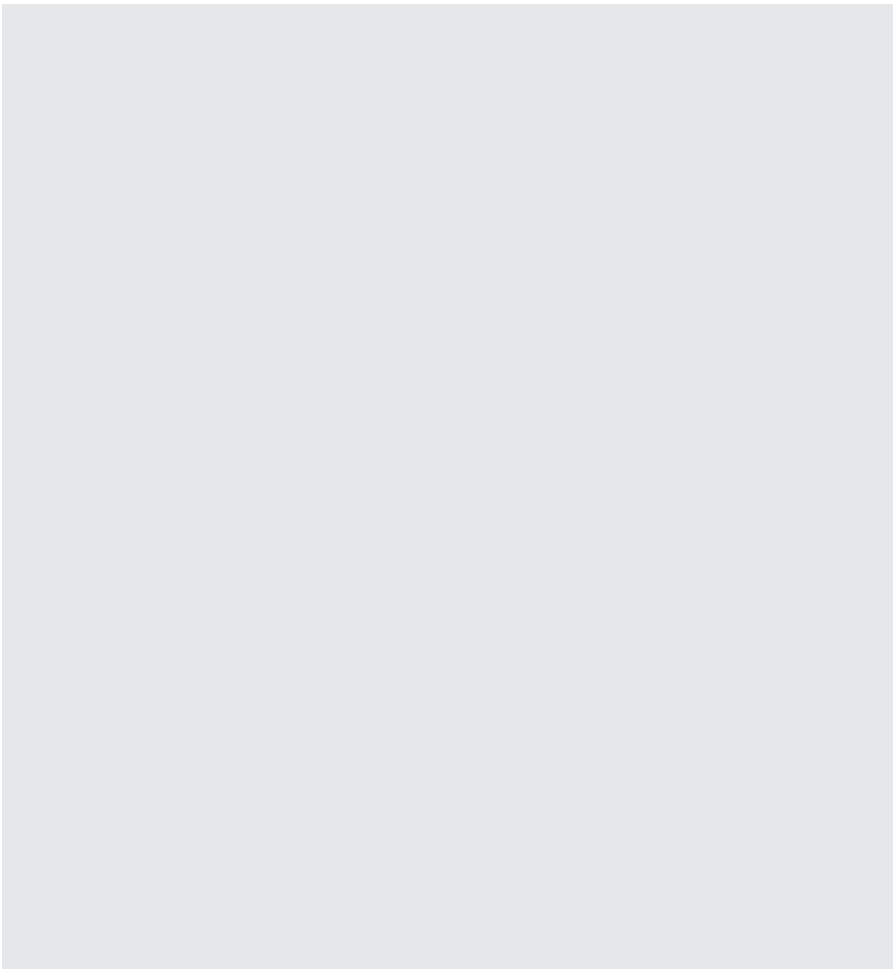






# ADVERTISING INDEX

Acrylic Podiums .....	143	Marriage Encounter/MarrigeRestored .....	143
Advance/Pulpit .....	115	Media Ministries .....	144
AG Bible Alliance .....	inside front cover	Ministerial Enrichment Office .....	142, 143
AG U.S. Missions .....	75	National Prayer Center .....	143
Asia Pacific Media Ministries .....	99	National Sunday School Department .....	5, 137, 138
Benevolences .....	49, 136	National Youth Ministries .....	69, 144
<i>Beyond the Gates of Splendor</i> .....	27	North Central University .....	41
Carpenter Bus Sales .....	118	Office of Public Relations .....	81
Central Bible College .....	15	Robison Gamble Creative .....	6
Commission on Christian Higher Education .....	136, 143	<i>Paraclete</i> .....	115
ConnectionPower .....	28	Pentecost Sunday .....	57
Districts Insurance & Risk Management ..	inside back cover	Southwestern Assemblies of God University .....	2
<i>Enrichment journal</i> .....	95, 142, 144	Speed-the-Light .....	69
Global University .....	76	<i>Today's Pentecostal Evangel</i> .....	87, 136
Highlands Child Placement Services .....	111	U.S. MAPS .....	114
Life Publishers .....	61	Women in Ministry Website .....	143



The form is a detailed financial statement, likely for a church or ministry. It includes sections for income, expenses, and a summary table at the bottom. The form is filled with handwritten and printed text, including dates, amounts, and signatures.

Category	Amount	Amount	Amount
Income			
Expenses			
Summary			